

### **【*Omote Goten*】**

In contrast to the popular image of the medieval castles of Europe, which were residences as well as strongholds, the daimyo of Japanese castles typically lived in luxurious quarters that were separate from the main keep. These buildings are referred to as *goten*. Beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, a castle's *goten* served dual purposes as both the residence of the local lord and the public office for administrative and bureaucratic matters. These two purposes were clearly delineated into two areas: “back” (*oku*) residential area, and the “front” (*omote*) administrative area. The *goten* at Hikone Castle comprises some 30 buildings from between 1615 and 1622. During this time the lord of the castle, Ii Naotaka (1590–1659), lived in separate quarters in the main bailey.

Hikone Castle's *goten* was demolished in the late nineteenth century, but in the 1980s the grounds were excavated, and the building was rebuilt as the site of the Hikone Castle Museum. The building's exhibit space and archives were reconstructed using reinforced concrete, but the residential areas and exterior were restored using traditional wood-joining techniques and period-accurate materials.

### ***Omote Goten* Noh Stage**

When a daimyo met with visiting officials or other samurai, he did so in the *omote goten*, which commonly had a number of tearooms for conducting these meetings. Some *omote goten*, including the one at Hikone, contained a Noh stage that could be used when hosting eminent guests or for the entertainment of the daimyo. The stage in the center of the museum was built in 1800 by Ii Naonaka (1766–1831), who purportedly loved Noh theater and had several private Noh performers hired on his behalf. This is the only surviving Noh stage to have been built inside a daimyo's residence. It was relocated repeatedly after the *goten*'s destruction in the late nineteenth century, and in 1987 it was finally returned to its original location in the restored building. The stage is still used regularly.