

Hideyori's Last Stand and Site of Kokubōkan Military Museum

Osaka Castle was first built in the late sixteenth century by the warlord Hideyoshi Toyotomi (1537–1598) and inherited by his son, Hideyori (1593–1615). Hideyori was positioned to become the new *kanpaku*, or chief advisor to the emperor. This would have functionally made Hideyori the leader of Japan, but he was still a child when his father died. Until Hideyori reached a suitable age, Ieyasu Tokugawa (1543–1616), his father's trusted advisor and lieutenant, stepped in to fill the power vacuum. However, Ieyasu attacked Osaka Castle in 1615 with the goal of killing Hideyori before he could claim his hereditary position. This section of the castle is where Hideyori is said to have made his final stand against Ieyasu's forces. According to traditional accounts, Hideyori committed ritual suicide by disembowelment (*seppuku*) as the castle burned to the ground.

During World War II, the area contained a military museum and exhibition hall called the Osaka Hall of National Defense (Osaka Kokubōkan). Built in 1940 by the Imperial Army to celebrate Japan's victories on the Asian mainland and help increase public awareness of national defense, the hall was open for just two years. The army quietly closed the Kokubōkan in 1942 as the tides of war turned against Japan. It was later used as a dormitory for female radio operators who worked at the Air Defense Command Center located on the castle grounds.