

Site of Higashi-Ōbangashira Quarters and Barracks

During the Edo period (1603–1867), Osaka Castle was guarded by 12 special units of samurai, called *ōban*, who reported directly to the shogunate in Edo (now Tokyo). Two of these units were stationed at the castle in rotating deployments that lasted a year. The *ōban* had their barracks in the southern part of the castle's outer bailey, while the living quarters for the captain (*ōbangashira*) of the eastern *ōban*, were located here. The *ōbangashira*'s 50 elite warriors and their subordinates, comprising some 200 men in total, lived in a nearby complex of residential buildings. The *ōban* residences burned down in 1868 when the castle was briefly abandoned during the outbreak of the Boshin War (1868–1869) and looters from the surrounding castle town flooded the compound.

A military prison later occupied this site until 1939. Akira Tsuru (1908–1938), a poet who was court-martialed in 1931 for distributing communist literature to members of his army unit, was one of the inmates here. Tsuru, who died of dysentery while serving another prison sentence in 1938, specialized in satirical *senryū*, a form of short, playful poems similar to haiku. A poem stone bearing one of his works has been erected nearby as a memorial:

*Akatsuki wo
idaite yami ni
wiru tsubomi*

Clutching the dawn
the flower bud holds fast
against the darkness