

## **Takoishi Stone (Octopus Stone)**

To reach the innermost bailey of Osaka Castle, a visitor—or attacker—had to first pass through this fortified square. The massive stone walls that enclose it were once topped by long, wooden galleries from which defenders could monitor the Sakuramon Gate. Those galleries were burned down in 1868, during the chaos of the Meiji Restoration, but the huge granite stones remain. They were laid in 1624 by Tadao Ikeda (1602–1632), the daimyo lord in charge of rebuilding this part of the castle after its destruction during the War of Osaka (1614–1615).

The largest stone is known as *takoishi*, the “Octopus Stone.” Weighing 108 tons, with a visible surface area of nearly 60 square meters, it is the largest stone in the castle complex. Ikeda had it quarried in Bizen (now Okayama Prefecture) and transported more than 100 kilometers to Osaka castle. The nickname “octopus stone” was given for the mottled pattern on its lower left corner, which is said to resemble the shape of an octopus.