

Stone Walls at Himeji Castle

Three kinds of stone retaining walls can be found at Himeji Castle, each corresponding to a different phase of the fortress's construction.

***Nozura-zumi* (Piled-stone wall)**

These walls date to the late sixteenth century and the time of the great warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598). The stones are mostly tuff, chert, and mudstone, and their sizes vary widely. At times the builders repurposed old grinding stones, gravestones, or stone caskets. Small, round stones called *mazume-ishi* strengthen the wall by filling gaps between the larger stones.

***Uchikomi-hagi* (Wedged-stone wall)**

These walls were built by Ikeda Terumasa (1565–1613), the daimyo lord who expanded and renovated the castle at the start of the seventeenth century. Other *uchikomi-hagi* walls were added by the daimyo lord Honda Tadamasa (1575–1631) during his 1618 repairs to the Third Bailey (*sannomaru*). The shaping and placement of the stones remains somewhat rough, but the walls are reinforced at the corners by more precisely cut stones stacked in an alternating, brick-like formation known as *sangi-zumi*. Like the earlier *nozura-zumi*, the *uchikomi-hagi* walls still have gaps between the stones, which are filled with smaller *mazume-ishi*. The primary stone used was tuff—some of it pale yellow and the rest either dark gray or black. The walls slope gradually inward in a concave arc.

***Kirikomi-hagi* (Trimmed-stone wall)**

Walls of this type are found in part of the Third Bailey (*sannomaru*) and were also built by the daimyo lord Honda Tadamasa. They are the newest stone walls at Himeji Castle. Builders used chisels to cut the stones into precise blocks of similar size and shape, then stacked them without gaps. Unlike *uchikomi-hagi* walls, which are slanted inward for nearly their entire height, the top third of the *kirikomi-hagi* walls is often a sheer vertical.