

Rebuilding the Dai-Tenshu and Sho-Tenshu Keeps

Kumamoto Castle's two keeps (*tenshu*) were originally built in the first decades of the seventeenth century. They burned down in unexplained circumstances in 1877, just before the Satsuma Rebellion when the castle—then the headquarters of the Sixth Division of the imperial army—was unsuccessfully besieged by insurgent forces. The castle remained an army headquarters until 1945.

In 1960, the keeps were reconstructed based on old photographs and drawings, to mark the 350th anniversary of the death of Kato Kiyomasa, the lord of Higo Province (now Kumamoto), in 1611. In order to preserve the surviving original walls, the keeps are raised above them on 40-meter-high concrete pilings. Kumamoto citizens contributed to the reconstruction, donating funds for individual roof tiles. A large-scale project to reconstruct many of the other castle buildings was launched in 1998; this effort is the reason so many of the turrets and gates date from the early 2000s.