

Tenshukaku: The Rebuilt Keeps

The keeps of Kumamoto Castle are modern reproductions called *tenshukaku*. The original keeps burned down just before the 1877 samurai revolt known as the Satsuma Rebellion. The current keeps were built of reinforced concrete in 1960 from designs by architectural historian Fujioka Michio, based on old drawings and photographs. The Dai-Tenshu (main keep) is 30 meters high, with six stories above ground and one below, while the Sho-Tenshu (small keep) is 19 meters high, with four stories above ground and one below. On the Dai-Tenshu, notice the oriel window topped by a gable with an undulating curve (*karahafu*), and the exposed white-painted wooden beams above the stone base. On the Sho-Tenshu, notice the inverted spikes topping the stone base. The strong contrast between the white plaster and black wooden weatherboards is an iconic feature of Kumamoto Castle.