

History of Takayama: Takayama Castle

Kanamori Nagachika (1524–1608) built Takayama Castle in 1588. He had taken control of Hida Province three years earlier from Mitsuki Yoritsuna (1540–1587), whose family had ruled the region since 1558.

Nagachika served under all three of Japan's "great unifiers": Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598), and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616). After Nagachika captured the castle at Matsukura for Hideyoshi, he was awarded control of Hida domain. To secure his control, Nagachika had Takayama Castle built on the 687-meter-high promontory near the intersection of the Miyagawa and Enako Rivers.

Located in the innermost bailey, a Japanese castle's main keep was its stronghold, and it was rare for the daimyo to live there. However, Takayama Castle's main keep had dozens of rooms, including bath and a tea room (*chashitsu*) that looked out over the town, indicating that guests may have been entertained there.

Nagachika's descendants governed Takayama until 1692, when the Tokugawa shogunate transferred the Kanamori family to Kaminoyama domain (in what is now Yamagata Prefecture). Hida domain was ruled by the powerful Maeda family for three years until the shogunate took direct control of the region. The castle, including most of its stone fortifications, was dismantled, but some of its buildings were saved and relocated. The long storehouse at Takayama Jin'ya, the former administrative headquarters of the domain, is likely to have been the old castle's rice storehouse. The main hall of Hokkeji Temple is also thought to have been part of Takayama Castle.