

Kushima Castle Site

Kushima Castle occupied a commanding position on a small peninsula jutting out into Omura Bay. It was the home of the Omura family from the sixteenth to nineteenth century.

The castle was built in 1599 on the orders of Omura Yoshiaki (1569–1616), the first lord of the early modern Omura domain (*han*). Yoshiaki was given his title by imperial regent Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), then de factor ruler of Japan, for his support in Hideyoshi's campaign to conquer Kyushu in 1587. On Hideyoshi's death, Yoshiaki took steps to maintain his control of Omura, anticipating the power struggle between the rival Toyotomi and Tokugawa families. He ordered the construction of Kushima Castle on Omura Bay, and moved his family from their smaller inland castle to this more fortified position after it was completed in 1599.

The castle was protected by a series of moats connected to the sea, with substantial stone walls and wooden watchtowers. The lord lived in a single-story residence inside the innermost walled enclosure of the castle.

The castle complex underwent significant changes under Sumiyori (1592–1619), the second lord of Omura. In 1607. He expanded the castle and strengthened its defenses with advice from veteran warlord and general Kato Kiyomasa (1562–1611). Kiyomasa had overseen the design of Kumamoto Castle, which was considered impenetrable, and later withstood an almost two-month siege in 1877.

Kushima Castle served as the home of the Omura family until 1871, when it was abandoned and razed after the rule of the Tokugawa shoguns ended in 1867. Omura Shrine was relocated from an inland site to the castle grounds in 1884 to enshrine generations of the Omura family. The castle walls and its moats are now part of Omura Park.