

## **The Kano school and Momoyama shoguns: an intimate dialogue in Authority.**

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Castle architecture began during the Momoyama period 1573-1615 after the arrival of Portuguese merchants and missionaries and the introduction of firearms. Like other visual arts, castle architecture reflected the shoguns history of political and military power struggles in which Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu were the main protagonists. Both Nobunaga and Hideyoshi were highly sensitive to the value of public and private symbols of authority; they understood the inherent aesthetics of art and architecture, as well their iconographic ability to represent issues of political, economic and military power. Thus artists and artisans were needed to fulfill these functions and the Kano school of painters succeeded better than any other in satisfying these needs, as can be seen in Nobunaga's Azuchi and Hideyoshi's Osaka and other castles.

During the Ashikaga period 1392-1573, the Kano school had achieved prominence since their patrons were shoguns and provincial warlords. Their artistic forte was in adapting Chinese landscapes, bird, flower and figural themes to the requirements of interior decoration. In particular Kano Eitoku 1543-1590, further developed the Kano style, catering to the growing demand for opulence and monumentality in architecture. Developing themes with symbolic overtones and in relation to the function of each room, Eitoku established the role of art as an embodiment of political and military authority.

A common language was needed for artists to interpret their patron's attitudes and ideas, and the Kano school, as a hereditary line of artists, provided the artistic authority for this dialogue. Technical mastery, knowledge of Japanese and Chinese history, art and iconography paralleled the shogun's learning in the battlefields and political arena, When they came together, images and words resonated, creating an intimate dialogue based on their personal grasp and understanding of authority.