



CHAPTER 5

Splendor Regained

THE CREATIVE REVOLUTION OF THE MOMOYAMA AND EARLY EDO PERIODS

Although a period of cultural flowering, the Muromachi period (1392–1573) had also witnessed Japan's most extended and destructive period of social and political disorder. The Ōnin War of 1467 to 1477 and the ensuing century of the Sengoku Jidai (*Age of the Country at War*) devastated Kyoto and raged over the length and breadth of the country. By the middle of the sixteenth century, all power had long slipped from the hands of the Ashikaga bakufu and the provinces were held more or less autonomously by the daimyo who had survived the wars. Mirroring their official regard for the emperor as head of the nation, most of the daimyo of the first half of the sixteenth century professed at least in words, if not in action or heart, allegiance to the Ashikaga shogun. The battles of the Sengoku Jidai were primarily concerned with clan feuds and territorial rights evolving out of the Ōnin war. However, a few daimyo began to consider ways in which the country could be united under themselves, and even how they might snatch the titles of government to which the Ashikaga and their retainers still clung.

From Azuchi to Momoyama

It was the daimyo Oda Nobunaga (1534–82), the son of a minor vassal, who managed to forge the alliances and win the battles necessary to unify the nation once again under a single administration. By 1568 his formidable army could march on Kyoto and take control of the government, and five years later he was able to chase the last of the Ashikaga shoguns from the city. Among his generals were Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–98) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616). The political course of the nation would be shaped by these three men over the course of next fifty years, and their patronage and tastes would determine aesthetics and fashion from literature to the visual arts.

Given Kyoto's poor condition—it had burnt again in 1573 when the Ashikaga were chased from the city—Nobunaga decided in 1576 to start anew, and established the headquarters of his government on the shores of Lake Biwa to the north of Kyoto at a small village named Azuchi. The village soon grew into a small city as Nobunaga's magnificent palace took shape. A great many of Kyoto's and the nation's best craftsmen and artists had converged on the site, but Nobunaga also obliged Kyoto's principal merchants and his own retainers to establish their bases there. The palace-castle was seven stories high and he employed the most renowned artist of the period, Kanō Eitoku (1543–90), to oversee the decoration of its walls, screens (*byōbu*), and sliding doors (*fusuma*). After more than a century of political chaos, Nobunaga's overlordship was, to say the least, an uneasy position. While he had pacified the principal, eastern half of Honshū, the daimyo of the western half and the islands of Shikoku and Kyūshū—the so-called western provinces—were either unreliable allies or openly against him. One of the reasons he had decided on Azuchi as his headquarters was so that he could better oversee this western frontier. Although Nobunaga laid the foundation for unification, he cannot be said to have completed it. He never assumed the title of shogun or established his government as a *bakufu*. In June 1582, Nobunaga made an ill-fated journey to Kyoto. While there, Akechi Mitsuhide (1526–82), one of the western daimyo but also one of Nobunaga's main allies, led a surprise attack on him in his residence at Honnōji. Trapped and wounded in the fighting, Nobunaga took his own life in the depths of the burning temple. Mitsuhide then marched on Azuchi and burnt it to the ground.

A month later Mitsuhide's coup was utterly crushed by another of Nobunaga's generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi. He quickly consolidated his former lord's holdings, and advanced

Nobunaga's plan for unification by subjugating the daimyo of Kyūshū in the following year. It would take fourteen more years to bring the entire archipelago under his control, but that was finally achieved with the help of Tokugawa Ieyasu in 1591. The latter had begun as one of his main competitors in the bid for leadership, but quickly conceded the contest to Hideyoshi, deciding to wait and try again another day. The character of Hideyoshi was both unique and extraordinary within the ranks of Japan's ruling elite at that time. While both Nobunaga and Ieyasu came from daimyo families of middle or low status, Hideyoshi's pedigree was of such low rank amongst the samurai class that his family were virtually peasants. Joining the service of Nobunaga as a foot soldier, he worked his way up through the ranks by his own wits and bravery. He was noted for his exceptional ugliness, and was given by Nobunaga the apparently affectionate sobriquet of "The Monkey" (Saru). He was also noted for his unusual energy. In 1592, he launched the first of two invasions of the Choson kingdom of Korea (1392–1910). Both invasions were ultimately unsuccessful, achieving primarily the utter devastation of Korea's cities and countryside. Perhaps the most notable acquisition the Japanese made from these invasions, aside from a sense of themselves as a conquering nation, was the many thousands of slaves brought back as war booty. In particular, hundreds of Korean potters were captured, and it is due to them that great advances in ceramic—and particularly porcelain—production would be made in the succeeding Edo period (1615–1868).

Significantly, although Hideyoshi did not form a *bakufu* or take the title of shogun, he did take the title of *taikō*, or retired regent—a title once held by former Fujiwara *sesshō* in the Heian period (794–1185)—conferred on him by the imperial court in 1592. His energy was directed not only toward military conquest but also toward administrative and cultural affairs. He took a very active role in the rebuilding of Kyoto, from such grand schemes as the imperial palace and city walls to smaller projects involving Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines. Indeed to prevent the city of Kyoto from becoming once again a battleground for large armies, he commanded the narrowing of the broad Tang Chinese-style avenues laid out when the capital was first built in the late eighth century. Fundamental to Hideyoshi's administrative and cultural policies was his desire to project himself as an effective ruler who governed by virtue of his wisdom, his knowledge of historical precedents, and his respect for tradition. By 1583, he had already completed his elegant mansion of Jurakudai in Kyoto, entertaining the emperor there in the same year. To further publicize his noble virtues, he often engaged in lavish displays: pilgrimages in the company of his daimyo vassals and their servants to view the cherry blossoms at Yoshino, elaborate tea ceremonies for all the people of the Kyoto area at the Kitano Shrine, organized by his tea master Sen no Rikyū (1522–91).

Rikyū, the son of a merchant family from Sakai, near Osaka, served as tea master to Nobunaga before serving Hideyoshi and significantly influenced the development of the

tea ceremony, moving it toward his own concept of *wabi*. Rikyū's delineation of the paraphernalia required for the appropriate practice of the ceremony was an especial boost to the ceramic and lacquer industries. However, given Hideyoshi's taste for splendor and excess, Rikyū had a sometimes troubled relationship with his lord. Ultimately in 1591 he was obliged to commit suicide, some sources attributing Hideyoshi's displeasure to Rikyū's refusal to give his daughter to the *taikō* in marriage.

Hideyoshi built several castles, but the most important was his castle–palace of Momoyama, built in 1593 on the hill of Fushimi to the south of Kyoto. By all reports, it outdid in sumptuousness Nobunaga's Azuchi, and has given its name to the period of Nobunaga's and the Toyotomi family's regimes (1573–1615)—also known as the Azuchi–Momoyama period. Although no longer extant today, parts of Momoyama Castle can still be found all over Kyoto, because when it was dismantled in the subsequent Tokugawa regime whole sections of its fabric were gifted to different Buddhist temples in the city. One measure of Hideyoshi's success is that, unlike other samurai leaders of the time, his death in 1598 was a natural one. Hideyoshi left a five-year-old son, Hideyori, as his heir and a council of daimyo vassals to govern during the child's minority. Disputes soon broke out within the council, and it split into two factions, one loyal to Hideyoshi's son, the other to one of the council members, Tokugawa Ieyasu. In 1600, the situation came to a head in the battle of Sekigahara, with Ieyasu achieving a tentative victory. Once again, it was the indecisiveness of the coalition of western daimyo about which faction to support that ultimately gave Ieyasu his complete victory.

Tokugawa Ascendancy

Hideyori's supporters withdrew with him to another of Hideyoshi's great strongholds, Osaka Castle. Like Nobunaga before him, Ieyasu had the certain loyalty of the eastern half of Honshū, but in the western half and the islands of Shikoku and Kyūshū his influence was much less significant. For this reason he did not move immediately to eradicate Hideyori, who still held the title of *taikō* inherited from his father. Instead, he played the political game that has shaped so much of Japanese history—paying lip service to an opponent while preventing him the exercise of power and taking that privilege upon himself. Therefore, in 1603 Ieyasu had the emperor confer on him the title of shogun, and reinstated government by *bakufu*, installing it at his fortress at Edo, present-day Tokyo. In 1590, when Hideyoshi had awarded Ieyasu with the entire Kantō region of eastern Honshū as his domain, Ieyasu had established a stronghold on the coast at Edo, to the northeast of Kamakura. Once he became shogun, he obliged his principal daimyo to send him family members as hostages to be kept in Edo to ensure their loyalty to him. Such hostages had become a standard transaction between the daimyo of the

medieval period to seal bonds of alliance and loyalty. Ieyasu himself had spent almost his entire childhood and youth as a hostage to ensure his family's loyalty to a more powerful daimyo. Then, in 1605, he avoided Hideyoshi's mistake of leaving unprepared heirs and passed the position of shogun to his adult son, Hidetada (1579–1632).

As retired shogun, however, Ieyasu kept his hands very much on the reins of power. Nine years later he finally judged the time right and moved against the Toyotomi at Osaka Castle. Hideyori's support had diminished somewhat, but this last battle was not brief. It lasted from the winter of 1614 and into the summer of 1615, with Hideyori's 90,000 men arrayed against Ieyasu's 180,000. The winter campaign cost Ieyasu's forces alone 35,000 lives and in the summer he resorted to deceit, and thereby managed to take Osaka Castle. Hideyori committed suicide, his young sons killed, his supporters executed, and the castle razed to the ground. Two hundred and fifty years of uncontested Tokugawa rule then began.

Ieyasu died a year later and the sons and grandsons who succeeded him as shogun carried on his work of bringing the daimyo and nation firmly under their control. In the first part of the seventeenth century the *bakufu* formulated a series of edicts meant rigidly to restructure the class system which had broken down in the chaos of the previous century. One of Oda Nobunaga's first acts in the 1570s had been to disarm the peasants and townsfolk who armed themselves out of self-defence during the desperate times of the Sengoku Jidai. Hideyoshi reinforced this policy, and Ieyasu and his heirs set it in stone. The sixteenth century had also been a period of Japanese travel and of many foreigners coming to trade in Japan. Not all the roaming Japanese were merchants or pilgrim monks; the Japanese had a nasty reputation, long before the invasion of Korea, for piracy along the Korean and Chinese coasts. It was at this time that the first European traders arrived, and with them came Christian missionaries, in particular priests of the Franciscan and Jesuit orders. There is a genre of screen painting, known as *namban* screens, devoted to images of these outlandish foreigners. The missionaries had a certain amount of success, even converting some leading daimyo, however they were largely met with suspicion by the ruling elite. In 1587, Hideyoshi prohibited the practice by Japanese of Christianity, and chased the Jesuits from the port of Nagasaki—they had been given it by the local daimyo. Then, in 1598, the year of his own death, he created Japan's first Christian martyrs at Nagasaki with the execution of twenty-six Spanish and Japanese Jesuits and Franciscans.

Ieyasu and his heirs also took a dim view of Christianity and by extension the foreign influence exerted by the Portuguese and Dutch traders at the nation's ports. In particular the Europeans favored the ports of the island of Kyūshū, the loyalty of whose daimyo the Tokugawa were the least sure. The island's main port of Nagasaki, however, was closest to the European traders' continental markets, and Ieyasu was unsuccessful in trying to persuade them to come instead to the port of Edo. The conversion of another of these Kyūshū

daimyo to Christianity further compounded the problems. Ieyasu's heirs issued a series of edicts in the 1620s and 1630s gradually reinforcing the prohibition of Christianity and increasingly limiting the population's access to foreign influences. This seclusion policy was completed between 1635—when Japanese were forbidden to travel abroad—and 1641—when the Dutch, alone of the Europeans, were allowed to stay, but limited to a trading post on Deshima Island in Nagasaki harbor. The Chinese were also confined to a quarter within the city itself. This hermetic sealing up of the nation marks the end of the relatively freewheeling social and cultural spirit that dominated the Momoyama and very early Edo periods. Over the following two hundred years, Japan and the Japanese would turn in on themselves, and yet, true to their fashion, would still manage to enjoy one of the most vibrant periods in the history of their culture.

Urbanization and the Seeds of Social Transformation

In large part this was due to the urbanization of Japanese society that occurred between 1580 and 1640. Kyoto itself was returned by Hideyoshi to its previous splendor, and Edo after 1603 became a rapidly growing metropolis as the center of the Tokugawa *bakufu*. Ports such as Nagasaki in Kyūshū and Osaka (formerly Naniwa) also flourished during this period. However, other new cities grew up around the castles of several of the major daimyo. Among the most important of these castle towns were Himeji, Kanazawa, Wakayama, Kōchi, Hiroshima, Okayama, Kōfu, Sendai, Kumamoto, Hikone, Yonezawa, Shizuoka, and Nagoya. Their creation during this period has been characterized by the historian John Whitney Hall as perhaps the most intensive urban construction in world history. Although peace had returned to the nation, the lot of the farming peasants could not be said to be an improvement on their situation in either the Heian or medieval periods. They were still little better than bonded serfs and the burden of taxation only increased as the Edo period went on. Furthermore, the upheavals of the Sengoku Jidai had deprived many of them of their traditional land holdings. Thousands fled to the new towns to find work in the craftsmen's guilds or as merchants.

Although these two groups of townsfolk, or *chōnin*, represented the very lowest rank of the social order, they had also already begun in the late medieval period to represent the wealthier portion of Japanese society. By the Momoyama and early Edo periods the wealthier, educated sections of the artisans and merchants had formed a distinct demographic within the *chōnin* class. Throughout Japanese history there had always been a group of nonpolitical but grand families primarily involved in manufacture and trade. The most prominent example were the Hata, who in the fifth century are credited with the first real development of sericulture and silk weaving in Japan. Of foreign origin, possibly Chinese or Korean, the

Hata nevertheless from the fifth century onward had close relations with the imperial court, intermarrying with the aristocracy, albeit with those of lower rank. The abortive capital of Nagaoka was built on land purchased from the Hata, and during the Heian period they established many Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines in the capital and the surrounding area.

By the late sixteenth century, quite a few such manufacturing and trading families had grown up in the cities and formed close ties with both the samurai and the court aristocracy. They looked ultimately to the latter, however, as their cultural model. Many impoverished aristocrats had turned to such merchants to resolve their financial difficulties, and not infrequently ended by tutoring their children. The first evidence for these lower-class literati can be found in the *tonseisha* or monks of low birth, and then simply in men of low birth whom the Ashikaga cultivated as their cultural advisers from the late fourteenth century onward. By the Momoyama and early Edo, not a few acknowledged experts in calligraphy, the classics, Chinese painting of the professional and literati styles, the ancient traditions of *yamato-e* and of newer traditions such as the tea ceremony (*chanoyu*) and the dramatic arts were men of the *chōnin* class.

The most famous cultural hero of the time, Sen no Rikyū, came from a wealthy *chōnin* family, the artists of the Muromachi period Ami school were certainly of the *chōnin* class, and the authenticity of the Kanō school's claim to a samurai ancestor has been questioned. By the time Nobunaga took control in the 1570s, the Kanō school had eclipsed the Tosa artists of the imperial court and reigned supreme as the artistic force in the capital. The artists who studied in their ateliers came almost totally from the *chōnin* class and would in the course of the late sixteenth century become the arbiters of taste for *taikō*, shogun, and daimyo.

Unlike the Ashikaga, the samurai elite of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were self-made men who did not look overmuch to either the court or the great religious establishments for their advisers. Indeed, many of the religious establishments themselves—a great many of which were rebuilt and resuscitated during this period—also increasingly looked to the secular culture of the *chōnin* for their artistic inspiration. The art of this time, therefore, is notably more secular in its themes. It has two distinct phases. The first phase is roughly contiguous with the regimes of Nobunaga and Hideyoshi and is characterized by their exuberant expansiveness, the second begins with the Tokugawa ascendancy and is marked by self-assurance, a spirit of reflective introspection, and a calculated return to historical precedents.

Men such as Nobunaga and Hideyoshi were pragmatic and astute with little formal education, but with confidence in their military prowess and their administrative ability. While taking guidance from others, they also had their own ideas of what they wanted from art, and that was a brash and bold statement. The arts most characteristic of this first phase employed brilliant colors, gold-leaf grounds, and strong decorative patterns. In painting, the preferred formats were sliding-

door panels, known as *fusuma*, and folding screens, or *byōbu*. One reason for this is the large castle residences being built during this period. Because they retained a primarily defensive nature, they often had dark interiors. Filling the rooms with screens and door panels painted with scenes on golden backgrounds not only changed them into impressive palaces, but also made optimum use of any light that might penetrate into a given room. The collective term for this type of painting is *shōheki-ga* (or alternately *shōbyō-ga*). The average screen is about 5 feet (1.5 m) tall and around 12 feet (3.5 m) long, while *fusuma* are tailored to fit a specific architectural space, with sets of them that can range up to thirty feet or more in length.

Although the second phase of this artistic revolution actually overlaps with the last decade of Hideyoshi's regime, it gained its true momentum with the Tokugawa ascendancy. Particularly important for setting the mood of this second phase were a group of artists whose tastes had been formed within the world of the wealthy and educated *chōnin* and who imposed their ideas on their patrons. In their work can be found a return to older traditions of painting, although reworked and adapted to the desire for monumentality or eye-catching design so much enjoyed in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The greatest of these artists, Hasegawa Tōhaku (1539–1610), Kaihō Yūshō (1533–1615), and Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558–1637), were all apprentices in the Kanō atelier, but went on to careers in which they created their own distinct and refined aesthetic. Tōhaku and Yūshō did this largely within the traditions of Chinese-style paintings, but Kōetsu, in partnership with the artist Sōtatsu (act. 1600–40), revived *yamato-e* style in both calligraphy and painting. Tokugawa Ieyasu was so taken with Hon'ami that, in the same year he wreaked utter destruction on the Toyotomi, he granted Hon'ami an estate to the northwest of Kyoto where he could create a quasi-Buddhist community of artists and craftsmen. As an artistic community, Takagamine would thrive until Hon'ami's death two decades later, and out of the traditions established there would grow the **Rinpa school**, the stylistic repercussions of which are still being felt in the Japanese arts today.

Architecture

Two new forms of building were developed during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries to meet the needs of the new elite: the castle and the *shoin*. The former encapsulated the country's military vigor while the latter established a form of residential building that has proved a model for Japanese architecture ever since.

CASTLES

The period of constant warfare launched by the Ōnin War caused the creation of a unique and wholly indigenous building—the Japanese castle. Before the late Muromachi period,