

Skimping or innovation? Mysterious roof tiles unique to the Naniwa Palace



Late Naniwa Palace

Round eaves tile with a concentric circle pattern

Flat eaves tile with a concentric circle pattern

Nara Period / 8th century

The Naniwa Palace (Late Naniwa Palace) built by Emperor Shomu in 726 is characterized by its unique eaves tiles: the round eaves tile engraved with concentric circles and the flat eaves tile engraved with parallel arcs. Typically, ancient eaves tiles have a lotus-flower pattern, but the roof tiles of the Naniwa Palace, including decorative roof tiles, were decorated simply with arcs. The ancient people who designed these novel and unique patterns may have drawn inspiration from the waves lapping endlessly against the shores of Naniwa-zu, a port which served as a hub of exchange with East Asia.