**Hidden Himeji: The Upside-down Butterfly**

When Himeji Castle was refurbished in the early 2010s, workers noticed something odd on the roof of the keep: a tile bearing a clan crest, one of nearly 500 on the structure, was installed upside down. The crest was the swallowtail butterfly of the Ikeda clan, the lords who built the keep in the early seventeenth century. Historians say upside-down crests were sometimes installed intentionally as a ward against evil spirits, but they were usually placed on a building’s northeast side—a direction that was considered unlucky. The butterfly tile is on the keep’s southeastern side. A simple builder’s error, perhaps? The significance of the tile, if there is any, remains a mystery.

Roof tile bearing an upside-down butterfly crest

Location of discovery

There are 482 round-ended roof tiles on the keep’s gables. Two were lain upside down.

**A Second Mysterious Butterfly Tile**

This flat rectangular tile was found during the mid-twentieth century renovation of the Bizen Bailey—the enclosure immediately below the main keep. Like the upside-down tile on the roof, it bears the Ikeda clan’s swallowtail butterfly crest. The tile has four nail holes and might have been designed to be hung on a wall, but what it was used for and why it was made remain unknown.