**Kizeto-Style Flower Tile**

This is an example of a *shikigawara*, a type of ceramic paving stone that was a precursor to tiles in Japan. *Shikigawara* were laid over earthen floors but not secured with mortar. Their slightly rounded corners made each stone easier to slot in place.

The flower-patterned *shikigawara* on display is similar to tiles found in residential buildings from the end of the nineteenth century, and it was probably made in Seto around that time. The yellowish glazing is a style unique to this region called Kizeto (Seto yellow), which is created through the uneven application of brown iron and green chalcanthite glazes.

*Shikigawara* were introduced to Japan as an aspect of Buddhist architecture, which spread from Korea in the sixth century. However, wood flooring was more common in Japan, and *shikigawara* were not used widely until the end of the twelfth century, when Zen Buddhism became popular. Domestically produced *shikigawara* usually had a silvery-black *ibushi* (“smoke”) coloration, created by oxidizing a layer of carbon in a special smoking process.

In 1652, *shikigawara* were produced in nearby Seto for the mausoleum of Daimyo Tokugawa Yoshinao (1601–1650). Seto potters learned the techniques for making the tiles and began producing them locally, expanding beyond the typical black glazing to encompass other traditional Seto styles.