

### **Byakkoro and Soryuro Towers**

The sloping eaves and decorative turret-like structures of the Byakkoro and Soryuro towers replicate larger towers that would have stood at either side of the State Hall of the Imperial Palace of Heiankyo. Apart from their decorative role, they may have served as lookout posts.

The Byakkoro and Soryuro are named after the White Tiger of the West and the Azure Dragon of the East, two of the celestial guardians of the four cardinal directions in ancient Chinese astronomy. The four celestial guardians were part of the *wuxing*, or five elements concept fundamental to Chinese philosophy, which described interactions and relationships between phenomena and governed everything from cosmic cycles to geomancy in ancient China.

The *wuxing* concepts influenced the location and design of the Heiankyo capital, as they had at Chang'an (present-day Xi'an), the capital of Tang China (618–907). The influence of Chinese geomancy and philosophy can also be seen on the purification fonts inside the Otenmon Gate, which feature carvings of a White Tiger, and an Azure Dragon.