

## Model of the Dazaifu Government Offices

This is how the Dazaifu administrative complex would have looked in the tenth century, a time defined by the Silk Road trade and strong ties with China and the Asian continent. Chinese influences can be seen in the aesthetics of the structures and in their symmetry, a common feature of Chinese palaces.

The buildings were painted a bright vermilion, also known as Chinese red. The color carried associations with life and rebirth and was thought to ward off evil. The buildings were constructed following the Chinese philosophical theories of wuxing—a concept based around the interconnection of five phases or five elements—and feng shui. The main administrative hall was built facing south, which offered positive feng shui, and its location at the base of Mt. Shioji offered natural protection.

The roofs of the halls featured *onigawara* “demon” tiles to scare off evil in a similar fashion to gargoyles on medieval cathedrals in the West. The *onigawara* on display was excavated in Dazaifu and the open maw and bulging eyes accentuate the creature’s wrathful features. Inside the halls, square and triangular tiles adorned with flower and plant imagery were used for the floors and stairs.

The grounds where the administrative complex once stood are directly outside the Exhibition Hall. While only foundation stones remain today, it was once an expansive and grand complex befitting the powerful and cosmopolitan city of Dazaifu.