

Flooring from the Former Gifu Prefectural Office

This is a section of floor taken from the council chamber of the former Gifu Prefectural Office building. The building was constructed in 1924 to replace the original building, which had begun to deteriorate. The new building's interior had many decorative elements, including stained-glass windows, an art-deco mantlepiece, and this colorful mosaic tile floor. The building was used until 1998, when it was torn down to make room for a new reinforced-concrete structure.

The mosaic tiles used for the floor were originally produced in Tokoname, Aichi Prefecture, another historic ceramics center. The tiles were later brought to Gifu, where they were laid in this hexagonal pattern. A cross-section of the segment shows that the pigment was mixed directly into the clay itself, not applied as a glaze. This approach had two advantages: unglazed tiles are less slippery, which is important for flooring, and they are more durable than glazed tiles, which would have quickly been worn away. Close examination reveals that some of the tiles are chipped, but because the coloration extends through the clay, the damage is much less noticeable.