

### **Ritual Objects Found on the Island**

Over a period of some 500 years, Okinoshima was a destination for people seeking divine protection on dangerous sea journeys. According to research, the island was not necessarily on the established route between Japan and the Korean Peninsula, thus entailing a special effort to visit. A series of excavations made from the 1950s through the 1970s unearthed over 80,000 artifacts, which were designated National Cultural Treasures and moved to the Shimpokan Museum in Munakata, Kyushu. Most of these are votive objects that were offered to the local deity, and many are made from exotic materials using techniques that were considered advanced at the time. These objects tell of developments across the Asian continent, for example: which countries were forging trade alliances, or where metalworking and glassmaking technology was flourishing.

Since Japan was at the end of the Silk Road, which reached its peak during the sixth to ninth centuries, items from as far afield as the Sasanian Empire in Persia (224–651) were discovered here. Some 60 bronze mirrors of Chinese origin, researchers speculate, may signify diplomatic relations between China and the Yamato court, which ruled over much of Japan between the third and eighth centuries, and had close links to Okinoshima. Each object, whether ornamental or functional, has a fascinating story to tell.