

Gilt-Bronze Dragon Heads

This pair of ornamental, gilt-bronze dragon heads dates to the mid-sixth century and was excavated at a ritual site on Okinoshima. Each is about 20 centimeters in length, and although very similar, they bear slight differences in expression. The heads are likely to be finials, which were attached to the top of a flagpole or parasol. This pair is thought to have been imported from China. Similar dragon heads adorning objects can be spotted in the cave paintings of the Dunhuang Caves in northwest China, which date to the Tang dynasty (618–907).