

Cut Glass from Iran

This fragment, believed to be part of a glass bowl, is a unique find among the objects left as offerings on Okinoshima. Dating to the sixth century, this is an example of fine craftsmanship from the Sasanian Empire (present-day Iran), a distance of at least 7,000 km from Okinoshima.

Ancient Persia had a great deal of cultural influence, and there is ample evidence of trade and diplomatic contact between Persia and ancient China via the Silk Road, which is likely the route that this bowl took to Japan. Similar examples have been found in the Chinese tomb sites of high-ranking officials. The glass fragment is thin and semi-transparent, and contains part of the distinctive, circular patterning in relief that would have covered the entire surface. This sophisticated effect could only have been achieved by inflating the glass into a mold, known as mold-blowing.