

## **Fujioka Historical Museum**

### **Other Artifacts**

#### **Fuhon-sen Coins**

By the Kofun period (ca. 250–552), Japan's trading with other Asian countries had become quite advanced. Japanese people used this trade to acquire and develop know-how while independently advancing their own technology.

*Fuhon-sen* coins date from the late seventh century, making them among the earliest coinage produced in Japan. Fujioka is the most easterly location in Japan where *fuhon-sen* coins has been discovered. Based on Chinese models, the coins are metal, with holes in the middle (not unlike Japan's current 5 yen and 50 yen coins). The word *fuhon*, (富本), which means "source of fortune," appears on the coins. The coins are also decorated with a hexagon of seven dots, what is called a "seven-day star." The dots represent yin and yang (the sun and moon) and the five natural elements (fire, water, wood, metal, and earth). In Japan, these seven components are also represented consecutively in the kanji characters used for the seven days of the week.

The coins were made predominately of copper, with traces of silver and bismuth. Scholars debate whether the coins were used as currency or were merely talismanic. If they were used as currency, they would be the oldest money used in Japan.

#### **Sue Pottery**

Sue Pottery is a blue-gray ware that was introduced to Japan by settlers from the Korean Peninsula during the Kofun period. As in earlier periods, the pottery was produced by coiling strands of clay into the desired pot shape and then beating the shape's surface to make it smooth. The firing techniques used for Sue Pottery were more advanced, using relatively sealed kilns and higher firing temperatures (as high as 1,000°C).

When Sue Pottery production began, glazing techniques were not yet known. Sometimes ash melted accidentally onto the pottery during firing to produce the glaze-like surface. Potters working in this style produced strong roof tiles as well as various daily objects.

The museum's collection of Sue pottery dates largely to the Heian period (794–1185). Other Heian period pottery on display are sherds of celadon-glazed bowls imported from China.

#### **Metal Artifacts**

The museum also has several Heian period metal artifacts. Dominating the display is a horseshoe-shaped piece of metal that was the cutting edge of a spade (the remainder of the tool would have been wooden). There is also a hatchet blade, a scythe blade, and a spindle whorl, all tools of those times.

#### **Castle Sites**

Fujioka was a significant center of regional defense during the Muromachi period (1336–1573) and a number of castle sites remain. Japanese castles during this time were principally mounded earth fortifications of campsites, often surrounded by a trench-like dry moat.

The sites of Hirai Castle and Kanayama Castle, both constructed in the mid-fifteenth century, are two examples of this type of castle. Hirai Castle was built on a slight hill, while Kanayama Castle was a mountaintop fortification that would have allowed lookouts to keep watch for approaching enemies. Both castles had fallen out of use by the mid-sixteenth century.