

### ***Sakazuki* and Ichinokura**

The ceramic-producing village of Ichinokura has specialized in the production of *sakazuki* cups for more than two centuries.

*Sakazuki* are small, rimmed, saucer-shaped sake cups of about six centimeters in diameter. They are one of the oldest forms of ceramic sake vessel, and similar earthenware cups have been found that date back to the Kofun period (250–552 CE). People also used wood and lacquer *sakazuki* over the centuries, but porcelain ones of the sort displayed in this museum were not widely used until the early nineteenth century, when drinking warm sake (*atsukan*) became popular. In modern times, *sakazuki* have fallen out of favor for casual drinking, but they are still used during formal occasions.

In the Mino region, each ceramics-producing area had its own specialty. As Ichinokura had fewer deposits of clay and was located in the hills far from the main commercial centers, local potters decided to focus on small, easily portable ceramic ware. They began producing *sakazuki* along with the small cups customarily used for drinking *sencha* tea. By the end of the nineteenth century, more than half of the *sakazuki* made in Japan came from Ichinokura. Although *sakazuki* are no longer produced on a large scale, they continue to be made at many of the 50 or so kilns that are still operating in the area.