

***Kofun* Artifacts**

Many of the artifacts discovered in the *kofun* burial mounds on Iki reflect the island's strong ties with mainland Japan, the Korean Peninsula, and China in the sixth and seventh centuries.

The largest *kofun* are thought to have been built for high-ranking warriors who fought for the Yamato government, which dominated the Japanese archipelago at the time. Swords, metal arrowheads, and saddlery make up a significant share of the finds. The most notable is a turtle-shaped piece of saddlery made of gilt bronze that was possibly used to decorate a horse's forehead, found in the Sasazuka *kofun*. Items with similar motifs have been discovered near the Yamato capital in what is now Nara Prefecture, suggesting a connection with the centralized state. Another notable artifact that could have belonged to a Yamato commander is a gilt-bronze sword pommel decorated with the likeness of a *ho-o* (*fenghuang*), the mythological East Asian phoenix. The pommel was unearthed from the Soroku *kofun*, one of the largest and most centrally located *kofun* on Iki.

Artifacts such as a painted ceramic cup from the Chinese state of Northern Qi (550–577) and an ornate incense bowl from the Korean kingdom of Silla, both discovered in the Soroku *kofun*, were items of enormous value at the time. They are likely to have only been possessed by a king or chieftain with influence over trade with the continent. The presence of items from Silla, an enemy of the Yamato, suggests that the people of Iki may have developed commercial relations of their own with the Korean kingdom and may have acted as intermediaries between Silla and the Yamato court.