

●Shinagawa Historical Museum Explanatory Sheet

The Large *Tokoname* Ware Urn

This large urn was made in the 15th century in the region that is today Tokoname City, Aichi Prefecture, and somehow made the long trip to Shinagawa, Tokyo. Just how was this urn made, how was it brought to Tokyo, and what was it used for?

About the Urn

This urn is preserved in a surprisingly pristine state, with only slight chipping. The inside of the urn shows signs of cracks and holes being repaired with cement, and the portion below the mouth of the urn that has flaked off is wrapped with wire. The urn is 58 centimeters across at the mouth, 94 centimeters across at its widest point, and 22.8 centimeters across at its base, with a total height of 74.8 centimeters.

Large urns were first made starting from their base. After the base was complete, clay was rolled into a long, thin cord, and then wrapped over itself in layers to form the sides. The faint diagonal lines of these layers can be found along the side of the urn, and the traces of the carefully laid horizontal layers can be found around the mouth. The inside of the urn shows signs of being pressed with the fingers. Horizontally pressed marks can be found in two levels along the widest portion of the urn.



▲The Large *Tokoname* Urn (Shinagawa Historical Museum Collection)

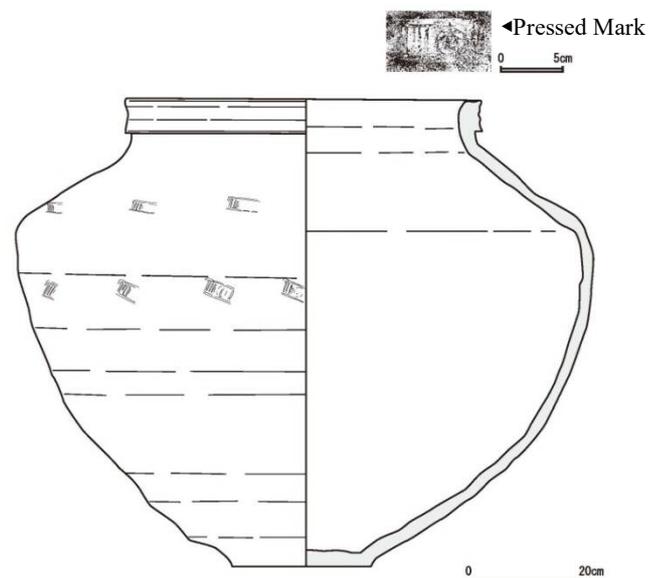
How did the Urn Come to Shinagawa?

When a survey was conducted in 1980 as part of land development, the owner of the land donated this urn to Shinagawa City. The landlord stated that the urn had been in his possession since before World War II.

From the 12th to 15th century, routes developed throughout Japan to transport goods between the various regions, and a vast amount of goods were brought from western Japan to the eastern destinations by Pacific coast liners. Shinagawa thrived as a port city during this time, and was a hub that connected the goods from many regions. It is believed that this urn was purchased in Aichi Prefecture and brought to Shinagawa along the Pacific Ocean sea lane as a commodity. Similar urns have also been discovered in the Tamagawa River region, and it is believed the port city of Shinagawa played a role in their arrival in that region.

When was the Urn Made, and How was it Used?

Previous research suggests that this urn was made in the 15th century. While many urns were used for water storage and the like, some were also used for holding sutra scriptures, the remains of the deceased, and even money.



▲A diagram of the large urn