

A Treasury of Ancient Ritual Records

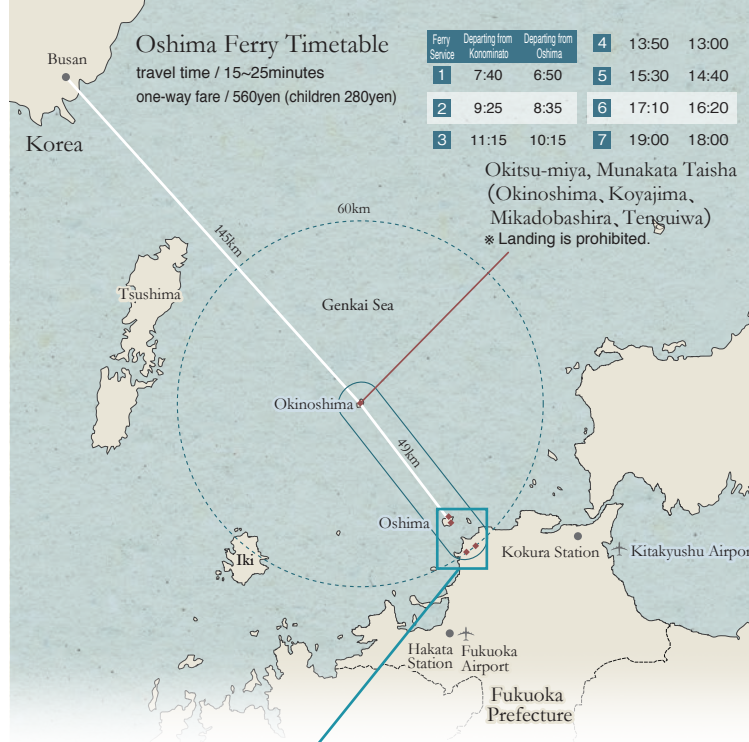


Among the huge rocks on Okinoshima are several ancient ritual sites that have been miraculously preserved in nearly pristine condition, together with vast quantities of ritual objects discovered there. These precious votive objects were offered in various locations that are separated according to historical period. The ritual sites on the island date to a period of some five hundred years, from the second half of the fourth century to the late ninth centuries, and they are unique in that they show how the rituals there changed over time.

In the latter half of the seventh century, similar rituals also came to be performed on Oshima and on the main island of Kyushu. The kami faith of Okinoshima is connected to the worship of the three female kami of Munakata, a tradition that has been passed down to this day.

Evidence for Overseas Exchanges

The large quantity of votive objects that was used in ancient rituals conducted on Okinoshima to pray for maritime safety bears witness to Japan's active engagement with neighboring regions and countries throughout East Asia. Researchers have discovered objects brought from mainland China, the Korean peninsula, and even Persia (Iran). Ocean voyages hold a special significance in the island nation of Japan, and the three female kami of Munakata enshrined in Munakata Taisha were originally guardian deities that protected the vessels that traveled these maritime routes.



Exhibitions and Visitor Centers

1 Shimpokan Museum of Munakata Taisha

Hours: 9:00 - 16:30, every day of the week
Okinoshima ritual objects and Munakata Taisha history

2 Uminomichi Munakatakan Museum

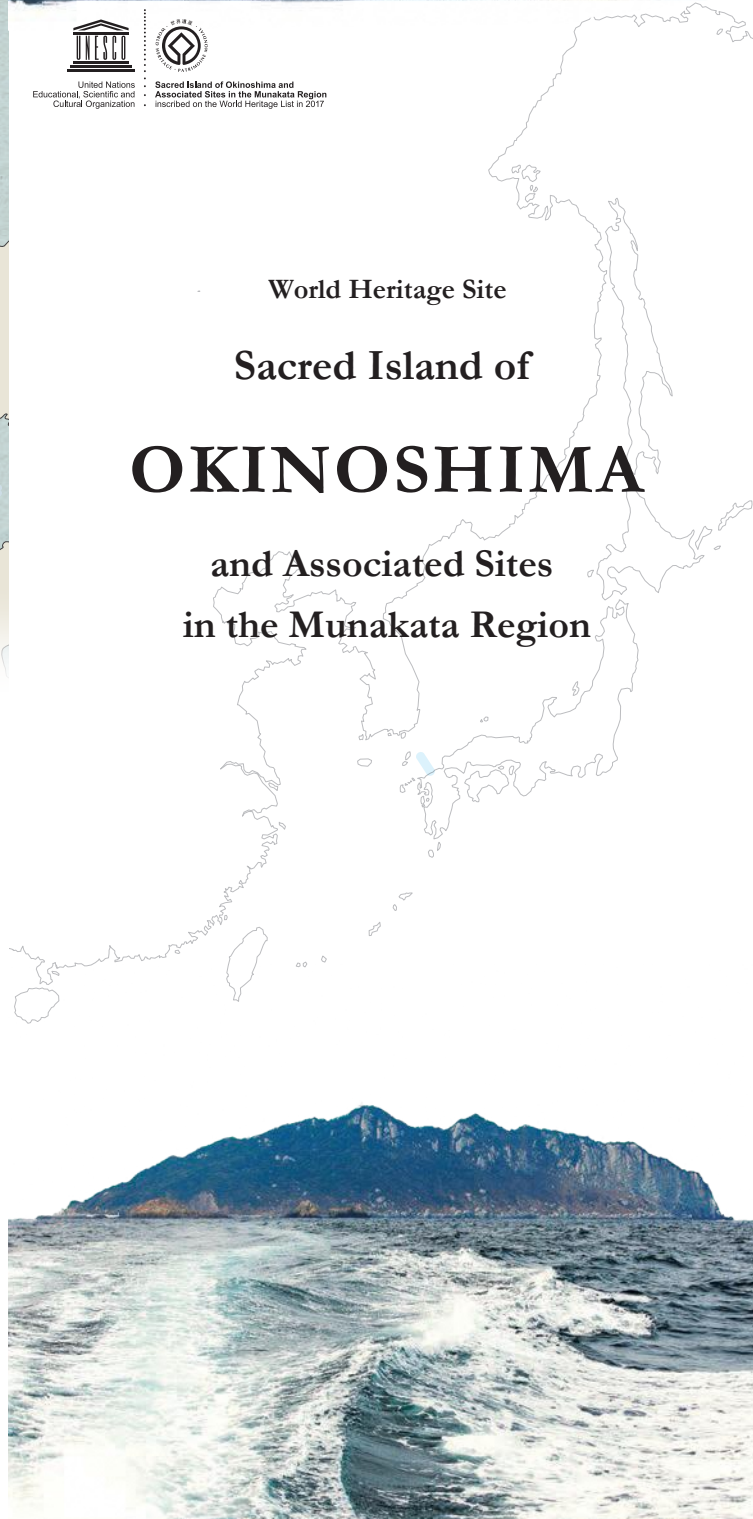
Hours: 9:00 - 18:00 daily.
Closed Mondays.
Commentary on entire World Heritage site group and 3D theater

3 Oshima Koryu-kan

Hours: 10:00 - 16:00 daily.
Closed Tuesdays.
The Component Sites of Oshima

4 Camellia Stage

Hours: 10:00 - 20:00.
Closed Tuesdays and the last Wednesday of every month.
Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group



United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region
inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2017

World Heritage Site
Sacred Island of
OKINOSHIMA
and Associated Sites
in the Munakata Region

The Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites
Preservation and Utilization Council

Secretariat: Fukuoka Prefectural Government
Phone : 092-643-3162 Fax : 092-643-3163
www.okinoshima-heritage.jp



The Cultural Tradition of Worshipping an Island “Where the *Kami* Dwell”

The island of Okinoshima, which is located approximately 60 kilometres from the main island of Kyushu, as well as its associated sites on Kyushu and Oshima, are exceptional examples of the cultural tradition of worshipping a sacred island as it has evolved and been passed down to the present day.

Ancient ritual sites linked to prayers for maritime safety remain on Okinoshima today, dating from the second half of the fourth century to the late ninth century. These rituals developed at the same time that active exchanges that were occurring among the Japanese archipelago, Korean peninsula, and Chinese mainland.

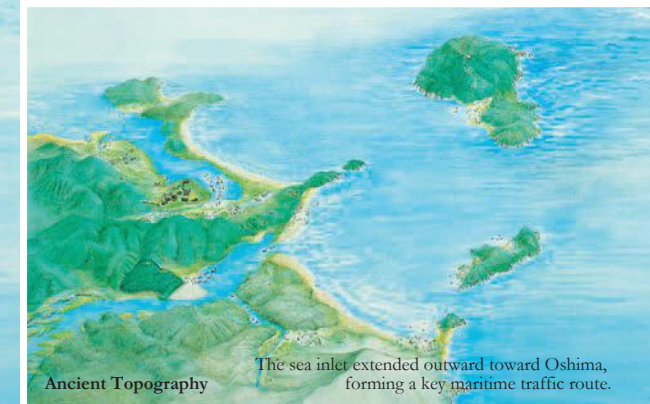
The ancient Munakata clan worshipped the *kami* that dwelled on Okinoshima, and their faith later led to the worship of the three female *kami* of Munakata. Okinoshima forms one part of Munakata Taisha, which enshrines the three female *kami* of Munakata. This sacred tradition has been passed down to the present day, including its taboos and the practice of worshipping the island from afar.



View of Okinoshima from Okitsu-miya Yohaisho, Oshima

The Sacred Traditions in the Munakata Region

Munakata Taisha is composed of three separate religious sites that are situated within an area of some 60 square kilometres: Okitsu-miya on Okinoshima, Nakatsu-miya on Oshima, and Hetsu-miya on the main island of Kyushu. All three shrines are places of living worship that are also originally ancient ritual sites. The Munakata clan's faith in the *kami* of Okinoshima gave rise to a tradition of faith in the three female *kami* of Munakata that has survived to the present day.



Korean peninsula ↗

Okitsu-miya, Munakata Taisha
- Tagorihime-no-kami -
Koyajima, Mikadobashira,
Tenguwa and Okinoshima

Illustration by Yoko Kitano

Hetsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

Ancient rituals similar to those performed on Okinoshima were conducted at this site, which is located near the ritual site of Takamiya Saijo, on the slope of Mt. Munakata. Shrine buildings were constructed there at a later date. Situated on the bank of the Tsurikawa River, which was formerly a sea inlet, this place represents the cradle of faith in the three female *kami* of Munakata.



Nakatsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

Ancient rituals similar to those performed on Okinoshima were conducted on the summit of Mt. Mitakesan, and a shrine hall was constructed at the base of the mountain. The footpath that leads up to the peak of the mountain offers a view of Okinoshima and the surrounding vista of land and sea.



Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group

This mounded tomb group provides evidence for the existence of the ancient Munakata clan, whose members nurtured the tradition of faith in Okinoshima. Five keyhole-shaped tombs and 41 other tombs of various sizes are constructed along this plateau, which offers a view of the sea that includes Okinoshima and Oshima.



Okitsu-miya Yohaisho, Munakata Taisha

Built on the northern shore of Oshima, this is a place for worshipping the sacred island of Okinoshima from afar. On clear days the form of Okinoshima is clearly visible from the site, and it serves as a symbol of the tradition of Okinoshima faith.

