



The shrine buildings of Okitsu-miya, set amidst gigantic rocks.

Chapter

2

Description

2.a Description of the Property

2.b History and Development

Description

2.a Description of the Property

2.a.1 Overview

This property is an exceptional example of the cultural tradition of worshipping a sacred island as it has evolved amidst a process of dynamic overseas exchange in East Asia and has been passed down to the present day, directly linked to the living tradition of offering prayers for maritime safety.

The property consists of Okitsu-miya, Okitsu-miya Yohaisho, Nakatsu-miya, and Hetsu-miya, which together form the compounds of Munakata Taisha (Munakata Grand Shrine); and the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group. The origin point of this property is the island of Okinoshima, located in the strait between the Japanese archipelago and the Korean peninsula, 60 km northwest of the Munakata region of northern Kyushu (Figure 2-a-1). Okinoshima served as an important landmark for those voyaging from Japan to the continent, and because of its awe-inspiring appearance it came to be worshipped as a sacred island.

Along this maritime route, the people of the Munakata clan¹, a prominent family in ancient Japan², played an important role in overseas exchange due to their excellent navigation skills. The Munakata clan dominated the Munakata region and conducted rituals on Okinoshima. As exchanges between Japan and the Chinese and Korean dynasties became active in the late fourth century, people began to conduct rituals on Okinoshima to pray for safe voyages and successful overseas missions. The large-scale rituals that were performed on Okinoshima are described in this document as “state rituals,” sponsored by the ancient Japanese state³, to distinguish them from smaller local rituals. Only through its ties with the Munakata clan could the ancient Japanese state conduct these “state rituals” and engage in exchanges with its Chinese and Korean counterparts.

The ancient ritual sites on Okinoshima are preserved today almost intact due to the island’s remote location and local taboos limiting access to it. Ritual styles on the island changed over a period of some 500 years, from the late fourth century to the end of the ninth century, in four stages: they were first performed atop huge rocks on the island, then in the shadows of these rocks, then partly out in the open, and finally entirely out in the open. Archaeological excavations on Okinoshima have yielded some 80,000 precious ritual artifacts, all of which have been collectively designated as a National Treasure of Japan since 1962. The nature of these artifacts changed as ritual styles evolved, but they include rare objects from abroad that reflect the kinds of overseas exchanges that were taking place in each period. Moreover, these ritual offerings include some of the same objects that were used in the formal ritual framework systematized by the centralized Ritsuryo state, called “Jingi ritual”, which took on a form that is directly linked to the Japanese religious tradition called “Shinto” today. Shinto is the living indigenous belief

1 In this document, the phrase “Munakata clan” is used to refer to the political authorities who governed the Munakata region and those who occupied various official ranks under their rule.

2 In this document, the “ancient” period of Japanese history refers to the period from the third to the eleventh centuries.

3 In this document, the phrase “ancient state(s)” of Japan refers to the Yamato court and/or the Ritsuryo state, the political powers that existed at that time in the Japanese archipelago.

The Yamato court was a political authority established through an alliance of powerful clans in the Kinai region (central Japan) from the middle of the third century to the end of the seventh century, which was also called ‘Wa’.

The Ritsuryo state that followed it was the ancient centralized state of Japan that developed from the Yamato court and was established with the constitution of the Taiho Code or Taiho Ritsuryo in 701 (*ritsu* and *ryo* refer to the criminal and administrative legal codes, respectively).

system of Japan, for which has no written records dating earlier than the eighth century survive; the ritual archaeological sites on Okinoshima, however, date back to the latter half of the fourth century. The development of early ritual forms on the island bears witness to how indigenous Japanese beliefs formed. The Okinoshima ritual sites are the only archaeological sites in Japan that bear witness to the process by which ancient nature worship developed into a form that still survives today.

The Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group is a group of Munakata clan tombs. Members of the clan had excellent navigational skills and engaged in overseas exchanges, and built 41 mounded tombs of various sizes on a plateau overlooking a sea inlet, during a period when ritual practices were flourishing on Okinoshima. The view from atop this plateau extends seaward to the island of Oshima and beyond it to Okinoshima and the Korean peninsula. The location of the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group is intrinsically connected with Okinoshima, a landmark on that sea route, and bears witness to the local population that conducted rituals on the island for safe sea voyages.

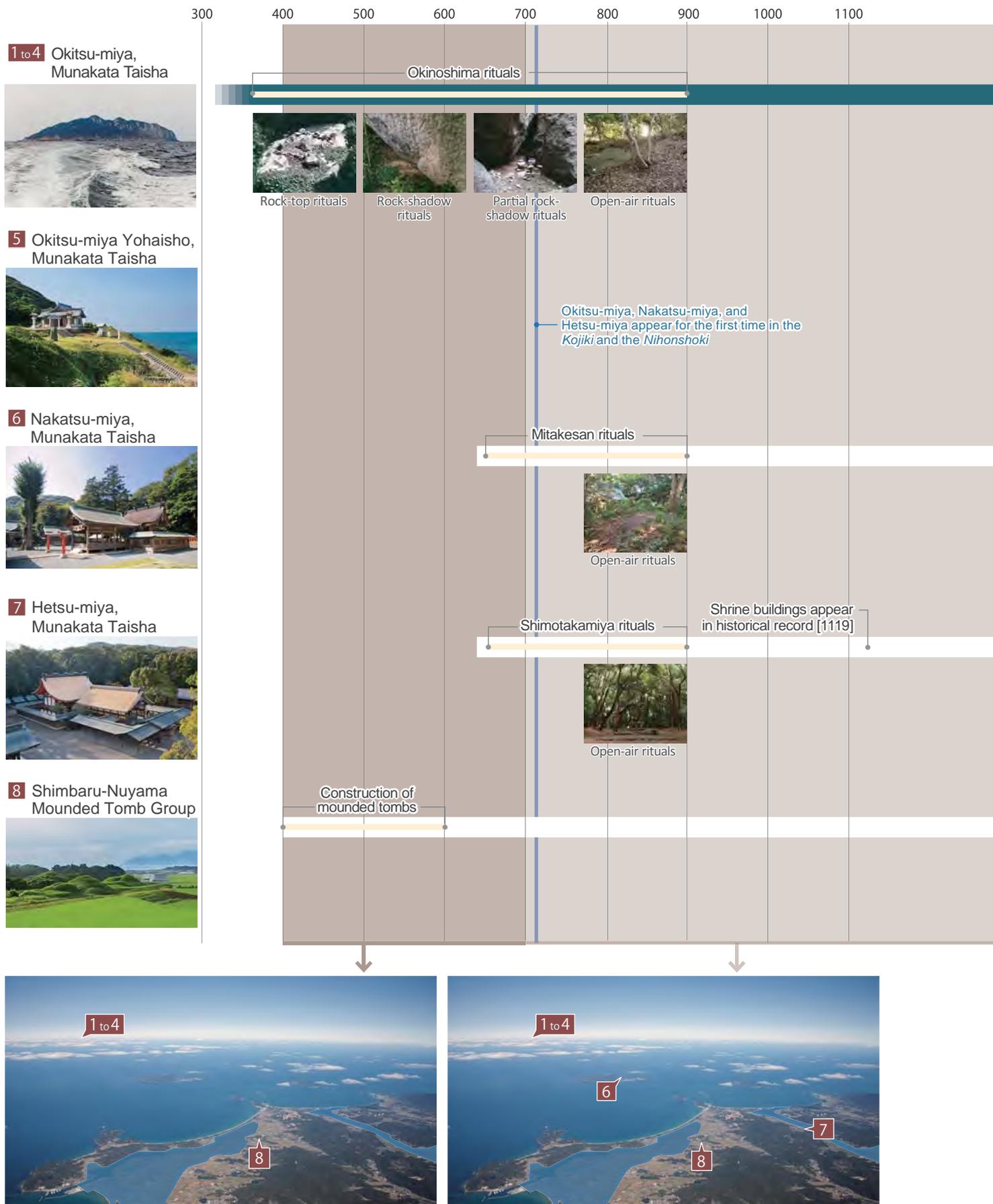
From the latter half of the seventh century onward, rituals similar to those performed at Okinoshima open-air ritual sites were also conducted at the highest point on the island of Oshima, and on a plateau facing a sea inlet on the main island of Kyushu. These ritual sites are known as Mitakesan at Nakatsu-miya and Shimotakamiya at Hetsu-miya. All three sites are mentioned in Japan's oldest historical records, which were compiled in the early eighth century, the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters) and the *Nihonshoki* (Chronicles of Japan). They are mentioned by the names of Okitsu-miya (lit. "offshore shrine"), Nakatsu-miya (lit. "midway shrine"), and Hetsu-miya (lit. "seaside shrine"), where the Munakata clan enshrined the Three Goddesses of Munakata (Tagorihime, Tagitsuhime, and Ichikishimahime) respectively. This is a case where the three existing ritual archaeological sites match their descriptions recorded in ancient times, suggesting that the prototypical worship styles of the three places that together compose Munakata Taisha⁴, linked by a vast stretch of sea, date back to ancient times and have been passed down through the generations.

4 The name of the shrine was changed from "Munakata-jinja" (Munakata Shrine) to "Munakata Taisha" (Munakata Grand Shrine) in 1977.



- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Okinoshima | } 1 to 4
Okitsu-miya,
Munakata
Taisha |
| 2 Koyajima | |
| 3 Mikadobashira | |
| 4 Tenguwa | |
| 5 Okitsu-miya Yohaisho,
Munakata Taisha | |
| 6 Nakatsu-miya, Munakata Taisha | |
| 7 Hetsu-miya, Munakata Taisha | |
| 8 Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded
Tomb Group | |

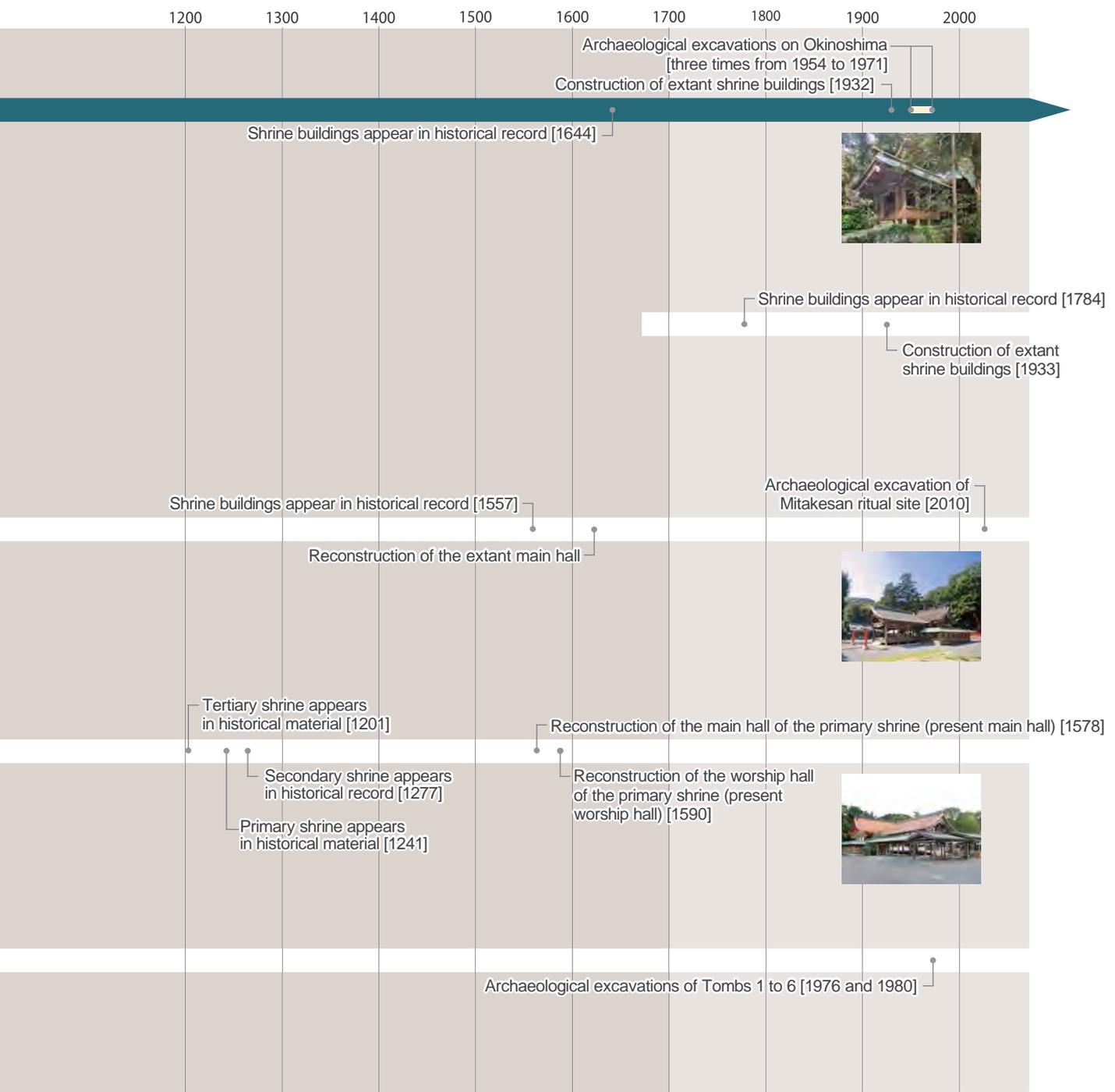
Figure 2-a-1 Location of the property



In the latter half of the fourth century, rituals were first performed on Okinoshima. In the fifth century, mounded tombs for the Munakata clan were built on a plateau commanding a view of the sea.

At the end of the seventh century, open-air rituals were first performed on Oshima and on the main island of Kyushu. The three places of worship appear in the oldest history books of Japan as "Okitsu-miya", "Nakatsu-miya", and "Hetsu-miya". These three shrines together constitute Munakata Shrine.

Figure 2-a-2 Development of this property as a spiritual space



Okitsu-miya Yohai-sho was established as a special place to offer prayers to Okinoshima, which people were not allowed to visit.

At Munakata Taisha, the Three Goddesses of Munakata continues to be enshrined and worshipped today through rituals and religious events such as the Miare Festival. Even after the early forms of ritual were no longer conducted, the Munakata Daiguji (high priest) family inherited responsibility for worship at Munakata Taisha including Okinoshima, and profited from its role in thriving overseas trade. After the family's lineage was interrupted in the late sixteenth century, local priests and other local people continued to fulfill the religious obligations connected with these sites. While the Three Goddesses of Munakata were initially worshipped by the people of the Munakata region, faith in these deities eventually spread throughout Japan, as they came to be associated with water and maritime safety in general within its indigenous belief system.

The ritual archaeological sites on Okinoshima have survived almost intact to the present day because of the island's isolated geographical location, and also because customs such as protective taboos limiting access to the island have taken root as local living traditions. Although fishing has long taken place around Okinoshima and guards were stationed on the island for the purposes of national border protection from the seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries, local taboos against visiting the island and removing objects from the island have been consistently respected. Okitsu-miya Yohaisho was built on the northern part of Oshima by the eighteenth century for the purpose of worshipping Okinoshima from afar, since taboos strictly prohibited landing on the sacred island. The existence of this shrine shows the continuity of Okinoshima worship.



Photo 2-a-1 Aerial view of the property

2.a.2 Description of Component Parts of the Property

Component parts 1 to 4: Okitsu-miya, Munakata Taisha



Photo 2-a-2 View of Okinoshima

Rituals were performed on Okinoshima during the period of frequent overseas exchange that lasted from the fourth to the ninth centuries, and the ritual sites there have been preserved to this day together with local taboos.

Okitsu-miya, Munakata Taisha is a place of worship located 60 km from the Munakata region of northern Kyushu, and is composed of 1) **Okinoshima** and its three attendant reefs, namely 2) **Koyajima**, 3) **Mikadobashira**, and 4) **Tenguiwa**. Okinoshima measures approximately 4 km in circumference, 68.38 ha in area, and 243 m in altitude at its highest point. The entire island is regarded as an object of worship. The three attendant reefs -Koyajima, 1.89 ha in area, Mikadobashira, 0.15 ha in area and Tenguiwa, 0.19 ha in area (Photo 2-a-3) - are located 1 km to the southeast and are protected as an integral part of the island. Although physically separate and therefore identified as separate component parts, Okinoshima and these attendant reefs are virtually inseparable in terms of value and constitute one shrine, Okitsu-miya (lit. “offshore shrine”). It is one of the three main shrines that together constitute Munakata Taisha. The goddess Tagorihime, one of the Three Goddesses of Munakata, is enshrined and worshipped there.



Photo 2-a-3 Okinoshima’s three attendant reefs (from right, Koyajima, Mikadobashira, and Tenguiwa)

Okinoshima is situated along the marine route stretching from northern Kyushu to the Korean peninsula, and since ancient times has served as a landmark for marine navigation; its awe-inspiring appearance attracted the worship of local people as a sacred island. In the late fourth century, as overseas exchanges between Japan and the ancient Chinese and Korean dynasties grew increasingly active, rituals to pray for safe ocean voyages and successful overseas exchange were first performed on Okinoshima. These are considered to have been “state rituals,” exceeding local rituals in scale and significance with the cooperation of the Munakata clan. It turns out that the ritual style on Okinoshima underwent four phases of transition; no other archaeological sites have been found that offer such a

clear chronological account of how ancient rituals evolved over time. Furthermore, archaeological surveys have led to the excavation of some 80,000 votive offerings on the island, an unprecedented number of objects of exquisite quality, some of which were originally brought from overseas. The unique archaeological sites on Okinoshima have been preserved in good condition, and show not only how the rituals changed over time but also the nature of overseas exchanges in ancient Japan.

Even when the ancient rituals had ceased to be performed on the island, Okinoshima continued to be regarded as a sacred island and remained largely uninhabited until the seventeenth century. By the middle of the seventeenth century shrine buildings had been constructed amidst the huge rocks where rituals had been initially conducted. The current Okitsu-miya shrine buildings were rebuilt in 1932 and enshrine the goddess Tagorihime (Photo 2-a-4).

The worship of the island led to a set of strict taboos that are still in effect today. All visitors to the island must purify themselves of all defilement by bathing naked in the sea (a practice called *misogi* in Japanese) (Photo 2-a-5) before landing there; women are not allowed to visit the island; all those who visit the island are prohibited to speak of anything they have seen or heard there; visitors are forbidden to remove any object from the island, even a stick, a blade of grass, or a stone; visitors are prohibited to eat any four-legged animal while on the island; and certain inauspicious “taboo words” (*imikotoba*) must be avoided and alternate words used instead. These taboos have allowed Okinoshima to be preserved down to the present day nearly as it was when ancient rituals were performed there. Today a priest of Munakata Taisha is stationed at all times on Okinoshima, one priest at a time in ten-day shifts, performing daily religious services at the shrine buildings. The fishermen of the Munakata region are devout worshippers of Okinoshima, and proud of having long served as guardians of the sacred island. They make offerings of fish they have caught to pray for good catches and safe fishing expeditions. The Okitsu-miya Grand Festival is also held on the island each year, providing a maximum of 200 ordinary men with a special opportunity to visit Okinoshima and offer prayers there.

The three attendant reefs function as a natural torii, or shrine gate, through which local people pass before landing on the island. Even today, every boat that heads toward Okinoshima passes through the space between the largest of these reefs to enter its harbor.

As described above, the ancient ritual sites and abundant natural resources on Okinoshima have been maintained intact and almost untouched, thanks to the strict taboos and other religious traditions that protect the island. The ancient practice of worshipping the sacred island of Okinoshima survives to this day.



Photo 2-a-4 Shrine buildings of Okitsu-miya



Photo 2-a-5 Ritual purification through bathing



Photo 2-a-6 Okinoshima Primeval Forest

The island has a warm climate due to the Tsushima Current, which flows from the East China Sea to the Sea of Japan. Sub-tropical plants such as *Livistona subglobosa* and *Asplenium antiquum* grow there and the island is covered with broad-leaved evergreen trees. Inhabited by many rare birds and plants, the entire island has been designated by the national government as the Natural Monument “Okinoshima Primeval Forest”.

Table 2-a-1 Chronology relevant to Okitsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

Year	Events
Late fourth to early fifth centuries	Rock-top rituals
Late fifth to seventh centuries	Rock-shadow rituals
Late seventh to early eighth centuries	Partial rock-shadow rituals
Eighth to ninth centuries	Open-air rituals
712	Compilation of the <i>Kojiki</i> , in which the name of “Okitsu-miya” and the myth of the Three Goddesses of Munakata appear.
720	Compilation of the <i>Nihonshoki</i> , in which the name of “Okitsu-miya” and the myth of the Three Goddesses of Munakata appear.
1639	The Fukuoka Domain stations an island guard at Okinoshima. Guards serve on the island in 50-day shifts.
1644	Earliest record of the existence of the shrine buildings of Okitsu-miya.
1682	<i>Okuni ezu</i> is drawn. The oldest drawing depicting Okinoshima. The “Koyajima” and “Mikadobashira” reefs are also depicted and named.
1703	The local geographical record <i>Chikuzen-no-kuni zoku fudoki</i> is compiled. It states that Okitsu-miya had both a main hall (measuring 2.7 sq m) and a worship hall.
1794	Aoyagi Tanenobu, writer of <i>Okitsushima sakimori nikki</i> (Journals of an Okinoshima Guard), is sent from Fukuoka to Okinoshima via Oshima by the order of the Domain.
1797	The local geographical record <i>Chikuzen-no-kuni zoku fudoki furoku</i> is compiled. It includes a drawing of Oshima with Okinoshima in the background.
1926	Okinoshima is designated as the Natural Monument “Okinoshima Primeval Forest”, under the Law for Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty and Natural Monuments (precursor to the present “Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties”)
1932	The extant main hall and worship hall of Okitsu-miya are rebuilt.
1954 to 1971	Surveys of Okinoshima ritual sites are conducted three times.
-1st Survey (1954 to 1955)	Baseline assessment of Sites 1 to 5 and 13; survey of Sites 7, 8, and 16 and discovery of Site 17.
-2nd Survey (1957 to 1958)	Survey of unexamined areas in Site 8; survey of Sites 16, 17 and 19. Confirmation of remaining relics at Site 8; baseline assessment of Site 18.
-3rd Survey (1969 to 1971)	Survey of Sites 1, 4, 5, 6, 21, and 22.
1962	Designation of unearthed artifacts as a National Treasure under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (additional items have been included on several occasions since the initial designation)
1971	Okinoshima is designated as a Historic Site as part of the “Munakata Shrine Compounds”, under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties.
2010	The natural forest of Okinoshima is listed in the Red Data Book of Fukuoka Prefecture (plant community, category IV)
2012	Environmental surveys following the formulation of the Preservation and Management Plan. First survey from 7 to 10 August. Second survey from 9 to 12 October.
2014	Formulation of “Preservation and Management Plan for Historic Site ‘Munakata Shrine Compounds’” and “Preservation and Management Plan for Natural Monument ‘Okinoshima Primeval Forest’”.
2015	Three attendant reefs, Koyajima, Mikadobashira and Tenguiwa, are added to the area designated as the Historic Site “Munakata Shrine Compounds”.

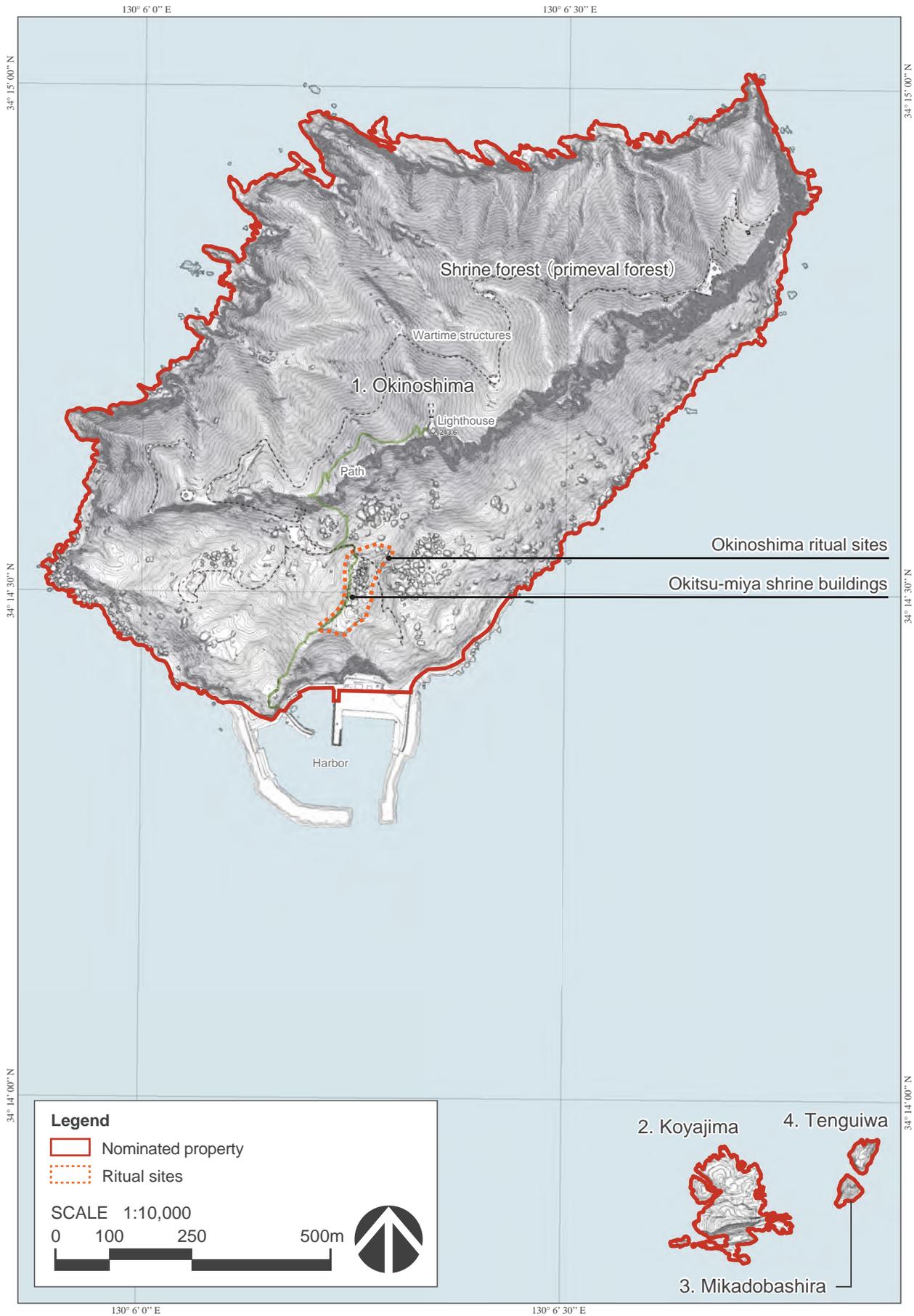


Figure 2-a-3 General layout of Okitsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

Okinoshima ritual sites

Twenty-two ritual sites⁵ are located on the southwestern side of Okinoshima at altitudes between 80 and 90 m, near a group of huge rocks where the shrine buildings of Okitsu-miya are located. From 1954 to 1971 three separate archaeological excavations were conducted on this part of the island, which led to the discovery that the ritual style on the island underwent four stages of transformation during a period of some 500 years, from the latter half of the fourth century to the end of the ninth century.

After the excavations were completed, the ritual sites were buried again in the condition in which they had been discovered, and today remain preserved underground.

Rock-top rituals

Late fourth to early fifth centuries

Ancient rituals on Okinoshima were first performed atop huge rocks on the island. Five excavated sites have been identified as rock-top ritual sites (Sites 16, 17, 18, and 19 at Rock I and Site 21 at Rock F). Prior to these excavations, the ritual sites had never been disturbed, and objects that had been left there as votive offerings were found in their original condition. These unearthed artifacts included mirrors, ornaments, weapons, and tools.

In particular, at Site 17 (Photo 2-a-7) twenty-one mirrors were discovered in a space among the rocks, in the same condition as when they had been originally placed there as votive offerings. No offering of such a large number of mirrors has been discovered before at any other ritual archaeological site in Japan. Furthermore, at Site 21 the remains of an altar were discovered, consisting of small stones laid out in a rectangular form, with the four corners of the rectangle pointing in the four cardinal directions.

Rock-shadow rituals

Late fifth to seventh centuries

From the latter half of the fifth century to the seventh century, rituals were performed in the shadows of these huge rocks, beneath rocky outcroppings that resemble eaves. Because these sites were almost untouched by rainwater or sunlight, votive offerings were discovered there in their original condition, just beneath a layer of fallen leaves, not covered by plants or soil. Twelve of these ritual sites have been identified, which represents the largest number of the four ritual styles identified as having been performed on the island. Archaeological investigations were conducted at Sites 4, 6, 7, 8, and 22 (Sites 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 23 have intentionally been left undisturbed).

At Site 7 (Photo 2-a-8), located southwest of Rock D, a gold ring of Korean origin was unearthed; and at Site 8, northwest of the same rock, a shard of a cut glass bowl from Sasanian Persia was discovered. Harnesses and other objects found at these sites serve as evidence for exchanges with the Korean peninsula and the continent.

In the seventh century, rituals were performed at Site 22, a short distance away from the other rocks, on the south side of Rock M. At Site 22, where the flat space within the shadow of the rock is narrow and drops off steeply, a stone altar fills the entire shadowed space, with votive offerings laid out on it.

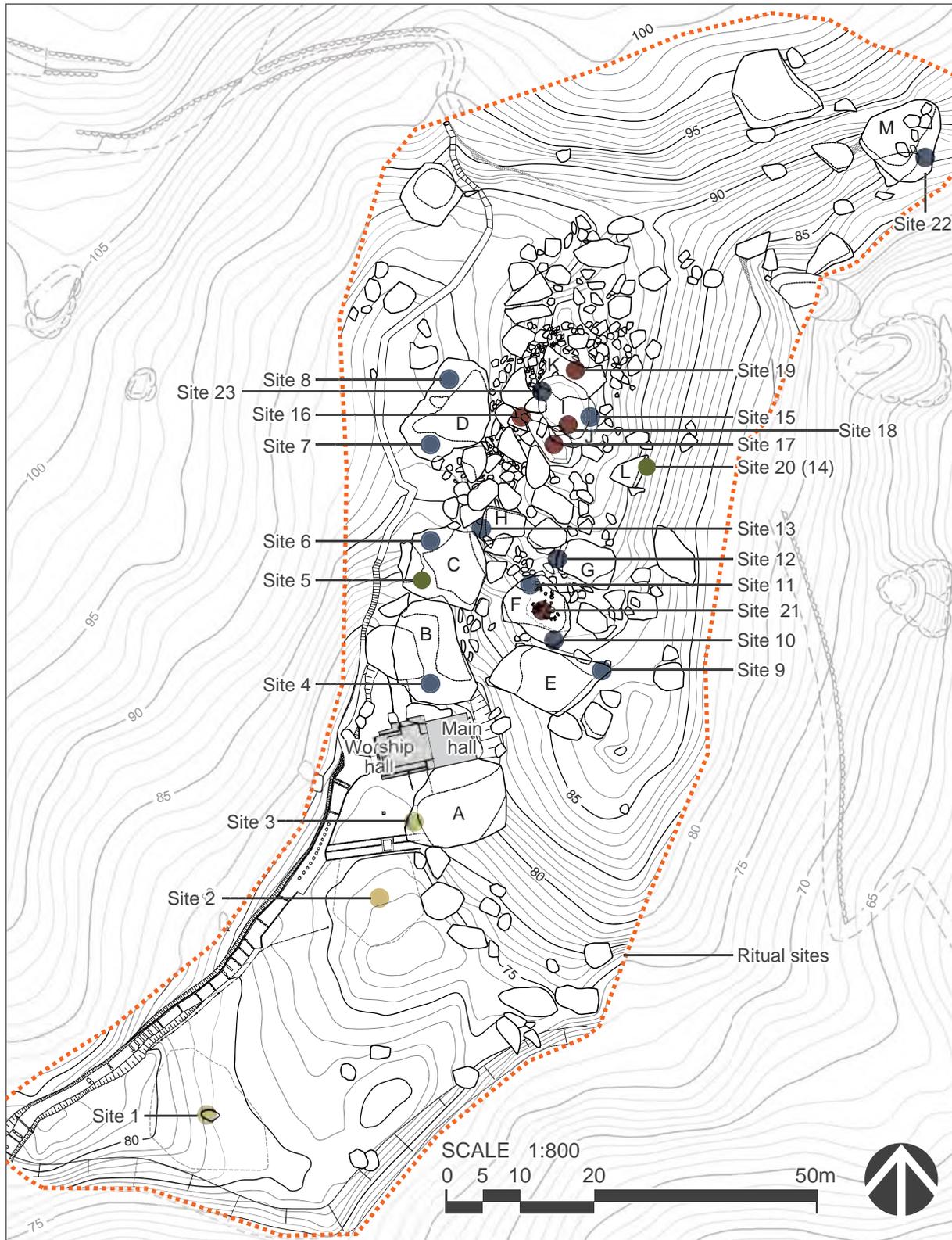
⁵ Although the investigation report lists 23 sites, the actual total number of sites is 22, since the site numbers 14 and 20 refer to a single site.



Photo 2-a-7 Site 17 (present state)



Photo 2-a-8 Site 7 (present state)



Legend

- Archaeological sites associated with rock-top rituals (late fourth to early fifth centuries)
 - Archaeological sites associated with rock-shadow rituals (late fifth to seventh centuries)
 - Archaeological sites associated with partial rock-shadow rituals (late seventh to early eighth centuries)
 - Archaeological sites associated with open-air rituals (eighth to late ninth centuries)
- A-M: Rocks accompanied by ritual archaeological sites.

Figure 2-a-4 General plan of the Okinoshima ritual sites

Table 2-a-2 State of conservation of Okinoshima Ritual Sites

Site No.	Ritual style	Year of survey	Surveyed area	Note
1	Open-air	Excavated in 1970 (3rd)	24 m ²	88% remaining
2	Open-air	Unexcavated (discovered in 1955)	–	
3	Open-air	Unexcavated (discovered in 1955)	–	
4	Rock-shadow	Excavated in 1954 (1st) Excavated in 1970 (3rd)	27 m ²	Reburied after survey
5	Partial rock-shadow	Excavated in 1969 (3rd)	13 m ²	Reburied after survey
6	Rock-shadow	Excavated in 1969 (3rd)	21 m ²	Reburied after survey
7	Rock-shadow	Excavated in 1954 (1st)	27 m ²	Reburied after survey
8	Rock-shadow	Excavated in 1954 (1st) Excavated in 1957 and 1958 (2nd)	43 m ²	Reburied after survey.
9	Rock-shadow	Unexcavated (discovered in 1955)	–	
10	Rock-shadow	Unexcavated (discovered in 1955)	–	
11	Rock-shadow	Unexcavated (discovered in 1955)	–	
12	Rock-shadow	Unexcavated (discovered in 1955)	–	
13	Rock-shadow	Unexcavated (discovered in 1955)	–	
14	Partial rock-shadow	Initially identified as an archaeological site in 1954. In 1970 (3rd survey), confirmed to be the same as Site 20.		
15	Rock-shadow	Unexcavated (discovered in 1955)	–	
16	Rock-top	Excavated in 1954 (1st) Excavated in 1957 (2nd)	4 m ²	Preserved in the present state after survey
17	Rock-top	Excavated in 1957 (2nd)	2 m ²	Preserved in the present state after survey
18	Rock-top	Excavated in 1958 (2nd)	46 m ²	Preserved in the present state after survey
19	Rock-top	Excavated in 1958 (2nd)	23 m ²	Preserved in the present state after survey
20	Partial rock-shadow	Excavated in 1970 (3rd)	58 m ²	Artifacts still scattered in the surrounding area
21	Rock-top	Excavated in 1970 (3rd)	32 m ²	Altar reconstructed and preserved after survey
22	Rock-shadow	Excavated in 1970 (3rd)	30 m ²	Reburied after survey
23	Rock-shadow	Unexcavated (discovered in 1970)	–	



Photo 2-a-9 Site 5 (present state)



Photo 2-a-10 Site 1 (present state)

Partial rock-shadow rituals

Late seventh to early eighth centuries

From the late seventh to early eighth centuries, rituals were performed partly in the shadows of rocks and partly out in the open. These sites represent a stage of transition to subsequent open-air rituals. Sites 5 and 20 (identical to Site 14) are associated with this type of ritual.

The major votive offerings that were unearthed from Site 5 (Photo 2-a-9) are as follows: Tang Dynasty three-colored bottle-shaped vases and gilt-bronze dragon heads, also likely from China. From the condition of the pottery when it was excavated, it is clear that it had been laid out systematically and used in rituals at the site. Other votive offerings unearthed here include early forms of those used in the institutionalized ritual system of the Ritsuryo state, such as a gilt-bronze miniature pentachord and gilt-bronze miniature spinning and weaving tools.

Open-air rituals

Eighth to late ninth centuries

In the eighth century, the ritual venue changed from the area surrounding this group of huge rocks to a flat, open area approximately 30 m to the southwest. These open-air rituals represent the last of the four stages of transformation in ritual style. Sites 1, 2, and 3 are associated with this ritual style; but only one part of Site 1 has been the subject of archaeological investigation.

Site 1 (Photo 2-a-10) is a ritual site where a large quantity of pottery is scattered over an area of 194 sq m. A large stone is situated at the southeast corner of the site. Two intersecting trenches were dug as part of the archaeological excavation of the site, with this stone located at the point where they intersect. As a result of this investigation, a rectangular altar formed of smaller stones was discovered there. Various other votive offerings were also unearthed, including several types of earthenware and pottery, Nara-style three-colored small jars with the lids that were made in Japan but modeled on the three-colored vases of Tang China, steatite objects, perforated earthenware, and coins that are known to have been first minted in 818 CE.

The area of Site 1 that was excavated is limited to about ten percent of the site's total area where votive offerings are distributed, with the majority of the site intentionally left undisturbed. Votive offerings such as earthenware, pottery, and steatite objects are preserved on the ground or remain buried underground at the site.

Distribution and conservation of Okinoshima ritual sites

Of the twenty-two ritual archaeological sites identified on Okinoshima, nine sites have been preserved undisturbed. Although some 80,000 artifacts that were deposited as votive offerings have been unearthed, ritual sites on Okinoshima still contain enormous quantities of unexcavated artifacts.

In 2012, a survey was conducted on Okinoshima to identify any other undiscovered ritual sites. High-resolution airborne laser scanning was carried out and a three-dimensional terrain model of the entire island of Okinoshima was created (Figure 2-a-5). The survey yielded detailed information on the topography of the island, and all man-made structures there were identified. In addition, all areas accessible by foot were verified on the ground. No new ritual sites were found, however. The distribution of ritual sites on the island has thus been thoroughly studied, so there is little chance of finding any new sites that have not yet been discovered.

Before The Second World War, a lighthouse and several military structures were built on the island for the purpose of national defense. Care was taken to avoid any negative impact on Okinoshima as a sacred island, and construction was kept to a minimum. The harbor on Okinoshima is still used by local fishermen, as it has been since ancient times, but its use is limited to only a few vessels per day. These modern structures on the island are therefore not thought to have had any negative impact on its archaeological sites or its identity as a sacred island.



Figure 2-a-5 3-D digital terrain model of Okinoshima

Component part 5: Okitsu-miya Yohaisho, Munakata Taisha



Photo 2-a-11 Okitsu-miya Yohaisho, from which the sacred island of Okinoshima is viewed

Okitsu-miya Yohaisho provides tangible evidence for the living tradition of worshipping Okinoshima from afar.

Okitsu-miya Yohaisho is a place of worship on the island of Oshima (which measures 16.5 km in circumference and 7.45 sq km in area), approximately 48 km from Okinoshima. It was established as a part of Munakata Taisha for the purpose of worshipping the sacred island from afar, since taboos strictly prohibited landing on the island.

A stone monument on which the name “Yohaisho” is engraved still remains at the site, with an inscription dating it to 1750, which shows that Okitsu-miya Yohaisho existed at least by the middle of the eighteenth century, on the northern shore of Oshima, in an orientation facing Okinoshima. The present Yohaisho shrine building dates to 1933.

Because Okinoshima is held to be sacred, ordinary people are prohibited from visiting it; but they can worship the island from afar at Okitsu-miya Yohaisho. On a clear day, Okinoshima is visible on the horizon (Photo 2-a-12).



Photo 2-a-12 View of Okinoshima from Okitsu-miya Yohaisho



Photo 2-a-13 Worship hall of Okitsu-miya Yohaisho (front view)



Photo 2-a-14 Worship hall of Okitsu-miya Yohaisho (interior view)

Table 2-a-3 Chronology relevant to Okitsu-miya Yohaisho, Munakata Taisha

Year	Events
1750	The year 1750 is inscribed on a stone monument at Okitsu-miya Yohaisho; it is certain that Okitsu-miya Yohaisho existed by this time.
1784	Earliest record of the existence of the shrine building of Okitsu-miya Yohaisho.
1797	The local geographical record <i>Chikuzen-no-kuni zoku fudoki furoku</i> is compiled, including a drawing of Oshima with Okitsu-miya Yohaisho, and Okinoshima in the background.
1933	The extant shrine building of Okitsu-miya Yohaisho is rebuilt.
1971	Okitsu-miya Yohaisho is designated as a Historic Site as part of the “Munakata Shrine Compounds”, under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties.
1974	Repair work is carried out on Okitsu-miya Yohaisho shrine building.
2014	Formulation of “Preservation and Management Plan for Historic Site ‘Munakata Shrine Compounds’”.
2015	Repair work is carried out on Okitsu-miya Yohaisho shrine building.

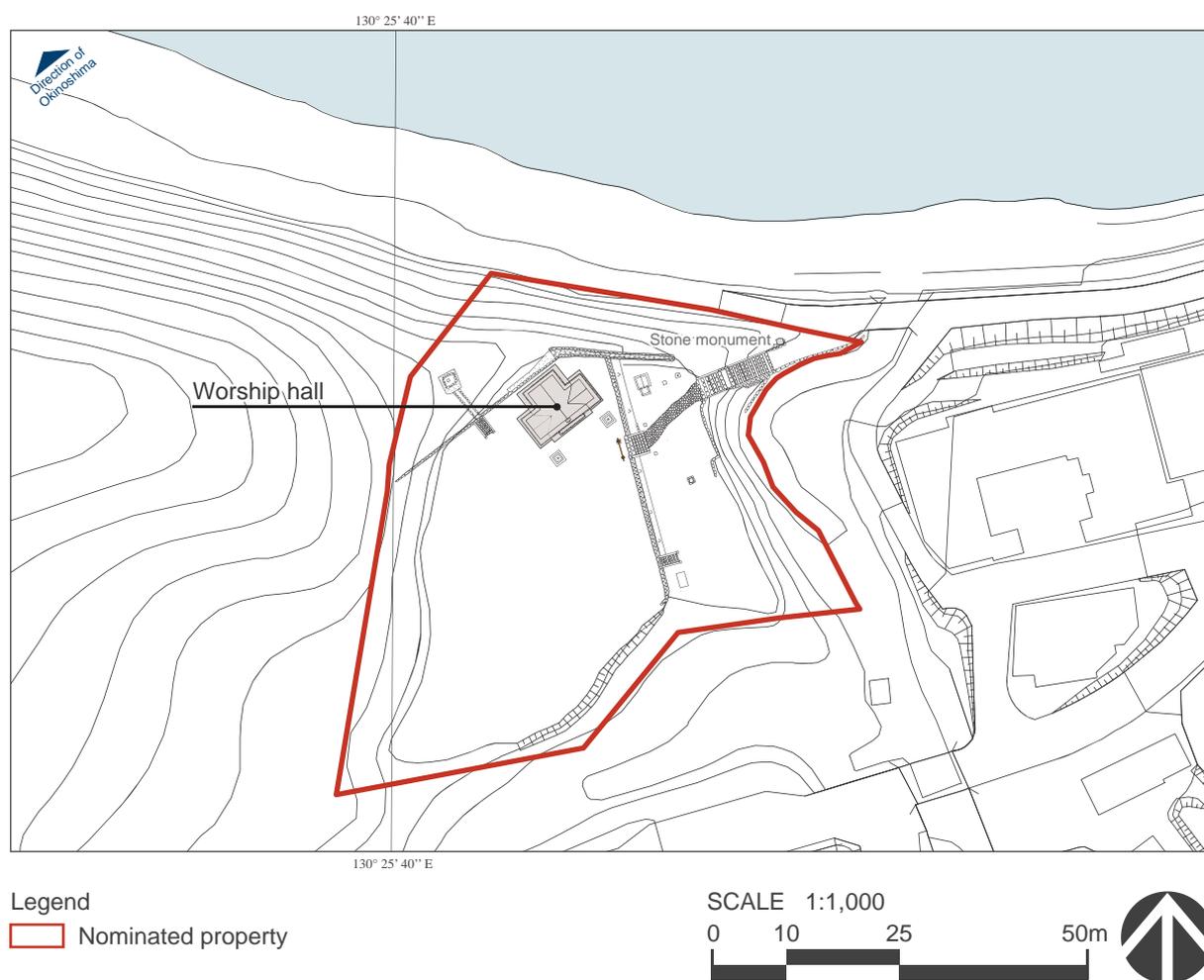


Figure 2-a-6 General plan of Okitsu-miya Yohaisho, Munakata Taisha

Component part 6: Nakatsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

Photo 2-a-15 Shrine buildings of Nakatsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

Open-air rituals were conducted at the summit of Mt. Mitakesan, the highest point on Oshima.



Nakatsu-miya, Munakata Taisha is a place of worship on the island of Oshima, linked to ancient ritual sites dating from the seventh to the ninth centuries that developed from Okinoshima rituals and still survive to this day.

Nakatsu-miya (lit. “midway shrine”) is located on the island of Oshima, approximately 48 km from Okinoshima. It is one of the three main shrines that together constitute Munakata Taisha. The goddess Tagitsuhime, one of the Three Goddesses of Munakata, is enshrined and worshipped there.

At the top of the highest peak on Oshima, Mt. Mitakesan (224 m in altitude) is an archaeological site, the Mitakesan ritual site⁶ (Photo 2-a-16); at the base of Mt. Mitakesan stand the shrine buildings of Nakatsu-miya (Photo 2-a-15). The shrine buildings of Nakatsu-miya and the Mitakesan ritual site are connected by a mountain path, and together they form an integral part of Nakatsu-miya (Photo 2-a-17). The name “Nakatsu-miya” refers not only to the shrine buildings but also to the entire spiritual space centered on the Mitakesan ritual site.

From the summit of Mt. Mitakesan, Okinoshima is visible to the northwest (Photo 2-a-18) and Hetsu-miya to the southeast (Photo 2-a-19), indicating that the Mitakesan ritual site is situated along a straight axis that runs between Okinoshima and Hetsu-miya. Open-air rituals were performed at the Mitakesan ritual site from the latter half of the seventh century to around the end of the ninth century, and artifacts similar to those from open-air ritual sites on Okinoshima have also been unearthed at Mitakesan.

The shrine buildings of Nakatsu-miya were later built at the foot of Mt. Mitakesan and Mitake Shrine was built as an auxiliary shrine at the summit of Mt. Mitakesan where the ancient ritual site is located, forming the shrine compound as it appears today, consisting of the shrine buildings of both Mitake Shrine and Nakatsu-miya. It is said that the present main hall of Nakatsu-miya was rebuilt in the first half of the seventeenth century.

⁶ The Mitakesan ritual site is also known as “Oshima Mitakesan Iseki”. However, it is referred to as the “Mitakesan ritual site” in this document.



Photo 2-a-16 Mitakesan ritual site (present state)

The location of the Mitakesan ritual site at the summit of Mt. Mitakesan is a spot commanding panoramic views of Okinoshima and the main island of Kyushu.

Nakatsu-miya still has deep ties with Okitsu-miya, particularly through religious events that are conducted today. On the occasion of the Okitsu-miya Grand Festival, people stay on Oshima on the eve of the festival and participate in a religious event held at Nakatsu-miya. Also, on the occasion of the Miare Festival, which is observed today as a revival of a medieval religious tradition, the goddess Tagorihime of Okitsu-miya, eldest of the three sister goddesses, is taken from Okinoshima to stop over at Nakatsu-miya, where she joins the goddess Tagitsuhime of Nakatsu-miya, and they are then carried together by ship to Hetsu-miya, where their youngest sister goddess Ichikishimahime awaits them.

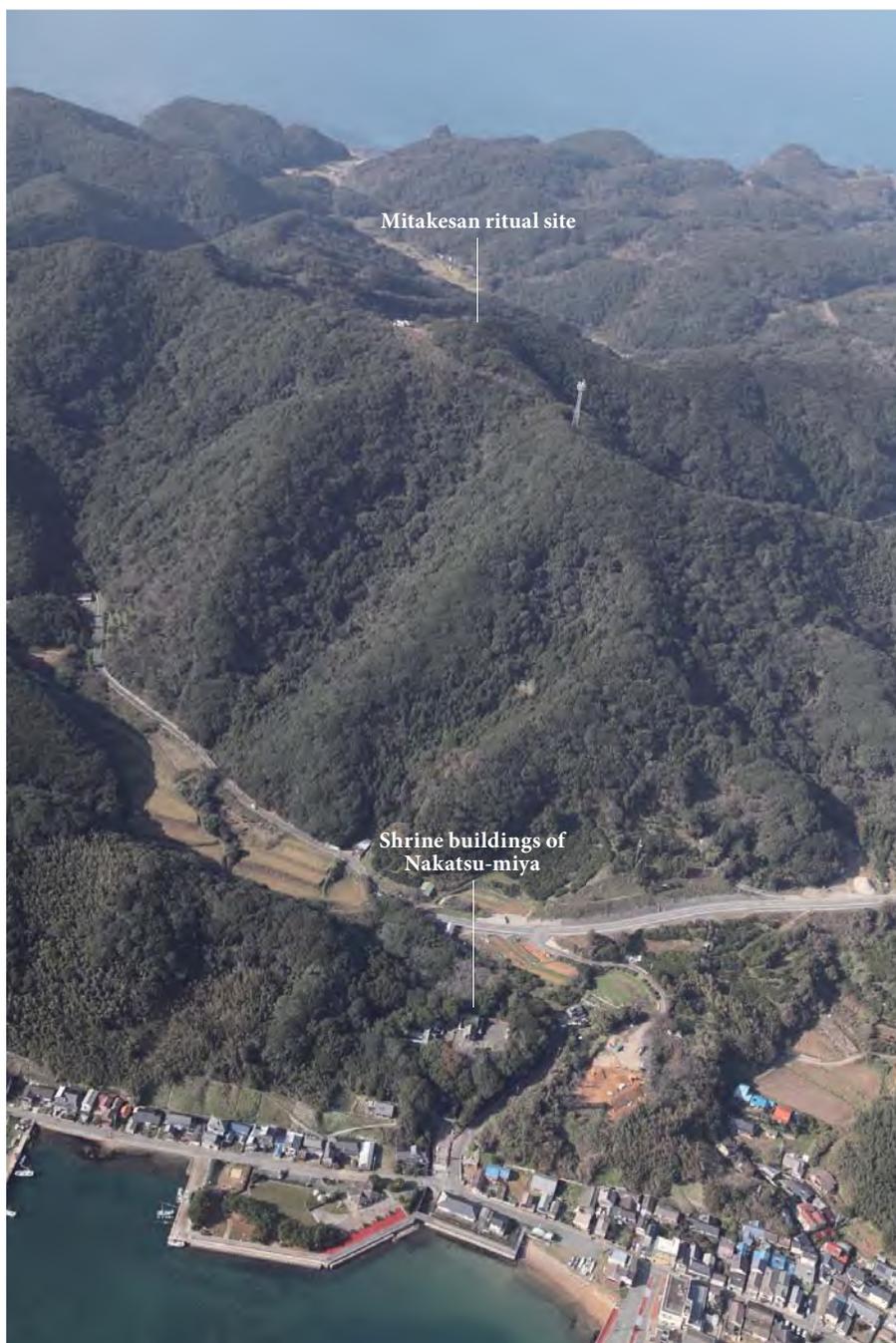


Photo 2-a-17 Aerial view of Nakatsu-miya

The shrine buildings of Nakatsu-miya are located at the foot of Mt. Mitakesan, facing the sea.

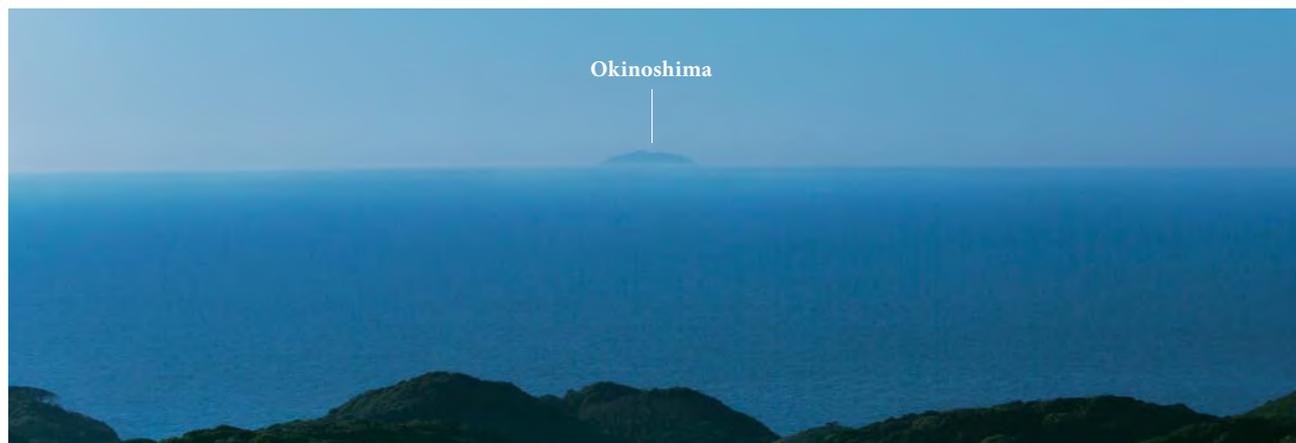


Photo 2-a-18 View of Okinoshima from the summit of Mt. Mitakesan



Photo 2-a-19 View of the main island of Kyushu, from the summit of Mt. Mitakesan

Table 2-a-4 Chronology relevant to Nakatsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

Year	Events
Late seventh to ninth centuries	Open-air rituals at the Mitakesan ritual site.
712	Compilation of the <i>Kojiki</i> , in which the name of “Nakatsu-miya” and the myth of the Three Goddesses of Munakata appear.
720	Compilation of the <i>Nihonshoki</i> , in which the name of “Nakatsu-miya” and the myth of the Three Goddesses of Munakata appear.
1556	Earliest record of the existence of Mitake Shrine and the shrine buildings of Nakatsu-miya.
Early 17th century	The extant main hall of Nakatsu-miya is rebuilt.
1797	The local geographical record <i>Chikuzen-no-kuni zoku fudoki furoku</i> is compiled, including a drawing of Oshima with the shrine buildings of Nakatsu-miya and Mitake Shrine with a mountain path.
1928	The extant worship hall of Nakatsu-miya is rebuilt.
1971	Nakatsu-miya is designated as a Historic Site as part of the “Munakata Shrine Compounds”, under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties.
1972	The main hall of Nakatsu-miya is designated by Fukuoka Prefecture as a Tangible Cultural Property.
1996-1998	The main hall of Nakatsu-miya is dismantled and repaired.
2010	Excavation of the Mitakesan ritual site confirms its existence as an open-air ritual site on Oshima.
2013	The Mitakesan ritual site is added to the Historic Site “Munakata Shrine Compounds”.
2014	Formulation of “Preservation and Management Plan for the Historic Site ‘Munakata Shrine Compounds’”.

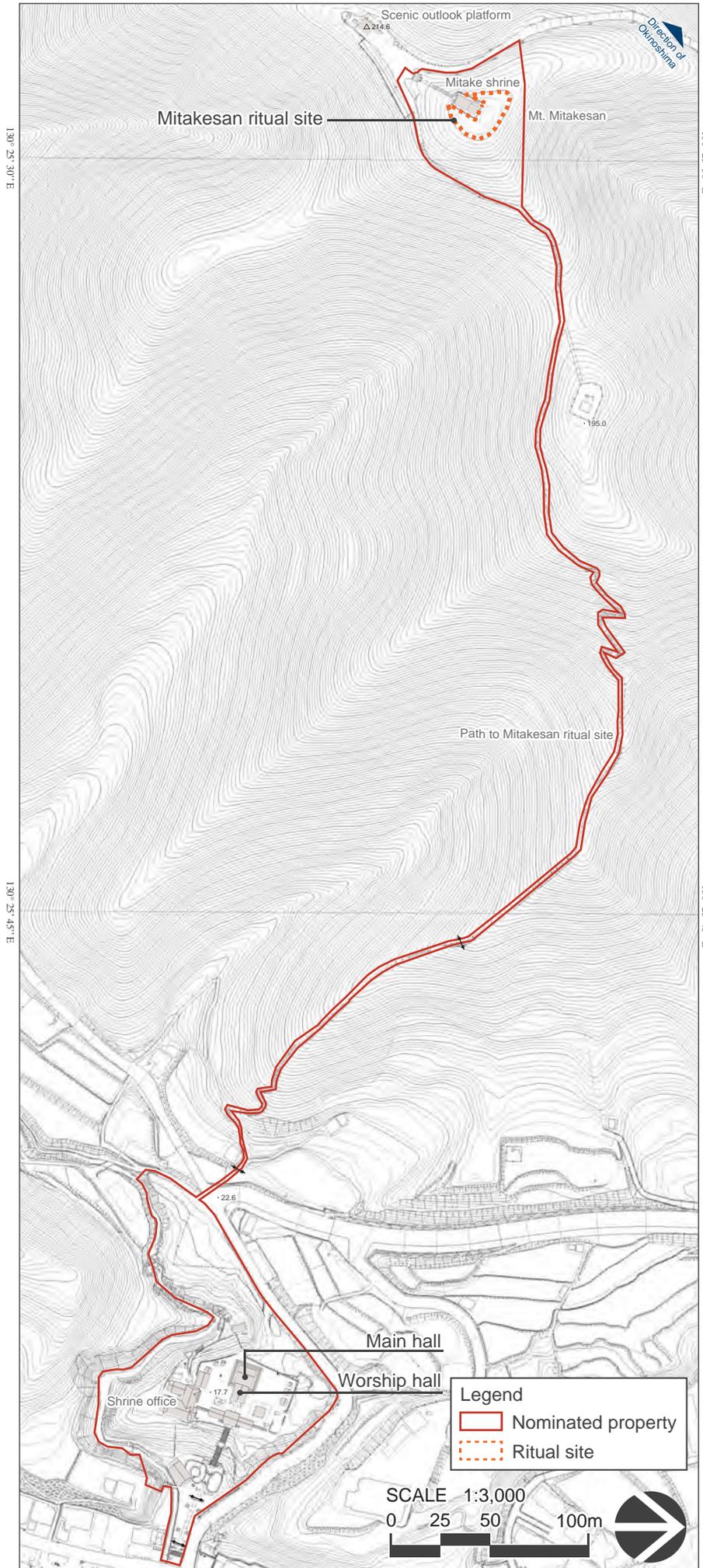


Figure 2-a-7 General plan of Nakatsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

Component part 7: Hetsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

Photo 2-a-20 Shrine buildings of Hetsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

On the main island of Kyushu, open-air rituals comparable with those performed on Okinoshima were conducted on a site facing what was then a sea inlet. Today, this shrine forms the central compound of Munakata Taisha, and attracts many visitors. (Photographed after repair work was completed in 2014.)



Hetsu-miya, Munakata Taisha is a place of worship on the main island of Kyushu, linked to ancient ritual sites dating from the seventh to the ninth centuries that developed from Okinoshima rituals and still survive to this day.

Hetsu-miya (lit. “seaside shrine”) is located near the Tsurikawa River, which was once a sea inlet (Photo 2-a-22). It is one of the three shrines that constitute Munakata Taisha. The goddess Ichikishimahime, the youngest sister of the Three Goddesses of Munakata, is enshrined and worshipped there. This shrine serves as the central locale for Munakata Taisha religious events today.

Halfway up Mt. Munakata, overlooking the Tsurikawa River, is an ancient ritual archaeological site called Shimotakamiya; its shrine buildings are located at the foot of the mountain (Photo 2-a-20). The name “Hetsu-miya” refers not only to the shrine buildings themselves but to the entire sacred precinct surrounding the Shimotakamiya ritual site.

Oshima and Okinoshima are both visible from the summit of Mt. Munakata, the highest point in the compound. This site is considered to be a sacred area within Munakata Taisha, and is closed to the public. The Shimotakamiya ritual site is located a short distance downhill, on the slope of Mt. Munakata. At this site many pieces of pottery and steatite objects have been discovered that are similar to votive offerings found at open-air ritual sites on Okinoshima and at the Mitakesan ritual site, indicating that this was the central place where rituals were performed before the Hetsu-miya shrine buildings were constructed. Religious events are still held today at a part of the Shimotakamiya ritual site called Takamiya Saijo (ritual site) (Photo 2-a-23).

Hetsu-miya witnessed a transition from open-air ritual sites to the construction of shrine buildings, as is the case with Okitsu-miya and Nakatsu-miya. Written records indicate that the Hetsu-miya shrine buildings had been constructed by the twelfth century at the latest. The present main hall of Hetsu-miya is a reconstruction dating back to 1578, sponsored by the last Daiguji (high priest)⁷,

7 The highest title of Shinto priests who served at Munakata Shrine, a hereditary post in medieval Japan given to the heir of the Munakata clan, who not only performed religious ceremonies at the shrine but also governed the political and military affairs of the Munakata region.

Munakata Ujisada, after the previous structure was destroyed in a fire in 1557. The worship hall is a reconstruction that dates to 1590.

The shrine buildings of Tei-ni-gu (secondary shrine) and Tei-san-gu (tertiary shrine) are located within the Hetsu-miya precinct, together with the main hall, which was once called Tei-ichi-gu (primary shrine); the goddess Tagorihime of Okitsu-miya and the goddess Tagitsuhome of Nakatsu-miya are enshrined at Hetsu-miya together with the goddess Ichikishimahime.



Photo 2-a-21 Present shrine compound of Hetsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

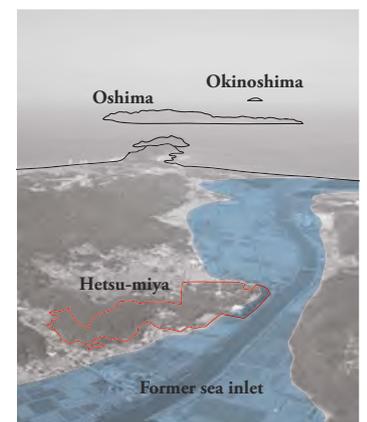


Photo 2-a-22 View of Hetsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

The area surrounding Hetsu-miya that was once a sea inlet.



Photo 2-a-23 Takamiya Saijo

Part of the Shimotakamiya ritual site is used as a ritual platform today.

Table 2-a-5 Chronology relevant to Hetsu-miya, Munakata Taisha

Year	Events
Late seventh to ninth centuries	Open-air rituals on the Shimotakamiya ritual site.
712	Compilation of the <i>Kojiki</i> , in which the name of “Hetsu-miya” and the myth of the Three Goddesses of Munakata appear.
720	Compilation of the <i>Nihonshoki</i> , in which the name of “Hetsu-miya” and the myth of the Three Goddesses of Munakata appear.
1119	Earliest record of the existence of the shrine buildings of Hetsu-miya.
1201	A pair of Song-style lion-dog statues is donated to the tertiary shrine of Hetsu-miya. It is the oldest record of the existence of the tertiary shrine of Hetsu-miya.
1241	A seated statue of the Buddhist monk Shikijo is completed. It is the oldest record of the existence of the primary shrine of Hetsu-miya.
1277	The <i>Munakata sansho daibosatsu gozashidai</i> is compiled. It is the oldest record of the existence of the secondary shrine of Hetsu-miya.
1557	The main hall of the primary shrine of Hetsu-miya is destroyed in a fire.
1578	The extant main hall of Hetsu-miya is rebuilt as a main hall of the primary shrine.
1590	The extant worship hall of Hetsu-miya is rebuilt as a worship hall of the primary shrine.
1624 to 1644	The <i>Tashima-no-miya shato koezu</i> is compiled, in which appears the oldest drawing depicting the shrine compound of Hetsu-miya in medieval times.
1675	The secondary and tertiary shrines are relocated, together with 75 auxiliary shrines, to an area near the main hall by Kuroda Mitsuyuki, the third lord of the Fukuoka Domain.
1797	The local geographical record <i>Chikuzen-no-kuni zoku fudoki furoku</i> is compiled; it contains a drawing of Munakata Shrine that is the oldest extant image of the compound of Hetsu-miya as it existed after 1675.
1907	The main hall and worship hall of Hetsu-miya are designated as Specially Protected Buildings under the Law for the Preservation of Ancient Shrines and Temples.
1929	The main hall and worship hall of Hetsu-miya are designated as National Treasures under the Law for the Preservation of National Treasures
1950	The main hall and worship hall of Hetsu-miya are designated as Important Cultural Properties under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties.
1969 to 1971	The main hall and worship hall of Hetsu-miya are dismantled and repaired.
1971	Hetsu-miya is designated as a Historic Site as part of the “Munakata Shrine Compounds” under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties.
1975	The secondary and tertiary shrines of Hetsu-miya are moved to their present locations.
2014	Formulation of “Preservation and Management Plan for Historic Site ‘Munakata Shrine Compounds’”. Repair work is carried out on the main hall and worship hall at Hetsu-miya.

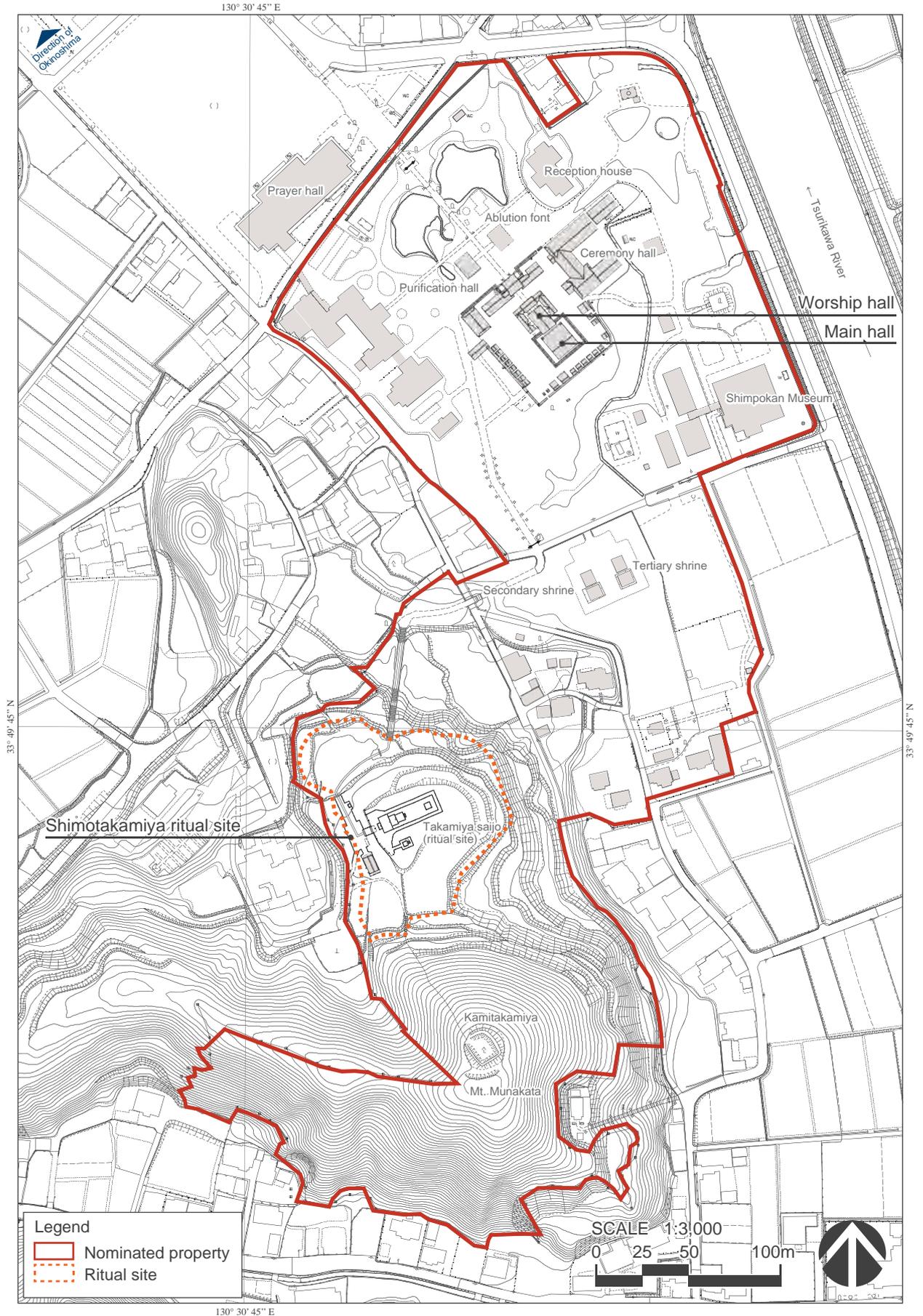
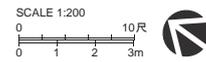
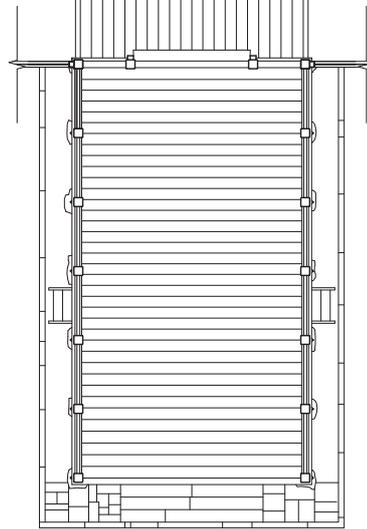
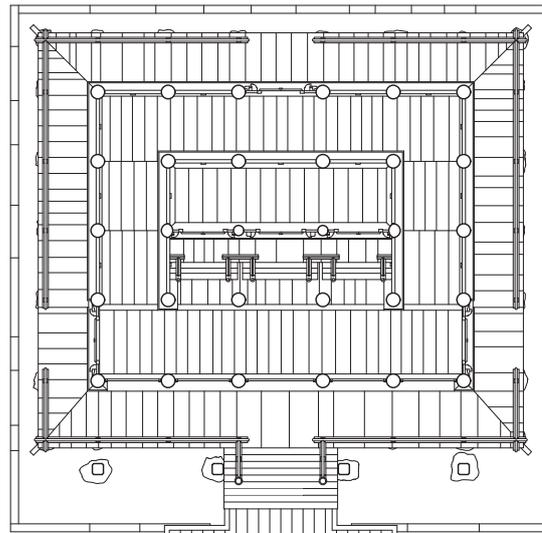
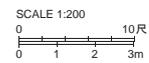
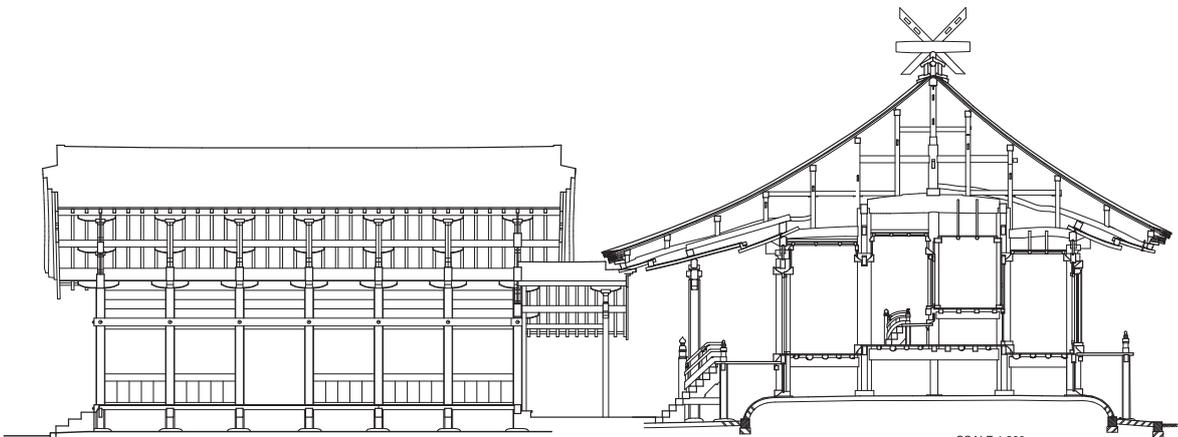


Figure 2-a-8 General plan of Hetsu-miya, Munakata Taisha



Plan of main hall and worship hall



Section of main hall and worship hall

Figure 2-a-9 Plan and section of the main hall and worship hall of Hetsu-miya

Component part 8: Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group



Photo 2-a-24 View from the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group toward Oshima and the sea

The Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group is a group of tombs built by the Munakata clan, who performed rituals on Okinoshima and passed down the tradition of worshipping the island.

This tomb group is situated on a plateau overlooking what was once a sea inlet linked to the sea stretching to Okinoshima. It consists of forty-one mounded tombs in total: five keyhole-shaped tombs, thirty-five round tombs, and one square tomb. A large keyhole-shaped tomb (Tomb 22; **Photo 2-a-25**), a medium-sized keyhole-shaped tomb (Tomb 1), and medium-sized round tombs (Tombs 20 and 25; **Photo 2-a-26**) were built in the latter half of the fifth century, when rituals were first performed in the shadows of rocks on Okinoshima. Medium-sized keyhole-shaped tombs (Tombs 12, 24, and 30; **Photo 2-a-27**) were built in the first half of the sixth century. Small round mounded tombs that were built along the periphery of the plateau date to the latter half of the sixth century.

Rituals on Okinoshima are regarded as “state rituals,” rather than merely as local rituals, because the nascent Japanese state was deeply involved in sponsoring them. They were founded, however, based on the devotional practices of the people of the Munakata region; it was impossible to perform these rituals without the support of the Munakata clan, which dominated this maritime region.

In the late fourth century, when the rituals of Okinoshima first took shape, a 64-meter-long keyhole-shaped tomb called the Togo Takatsuka Mounded Tomb was built within the basin of the Tsurikawa River, in sharp contrast to other mounded tombs. Grave sites were moved to the coastal region of northern Fukutsu City in the early fifth century; and mounded tombs, including 70 to 100 m long keyhole-shaped tombs, continued to be built along the plateau on the east side of the former sea inlet, overlooking the sea, until around the middle of the seventh century.

Among of these tombs, the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group consists of 41 large and small mounded tombs that were built over a relatively long period, from the fifth to the sixth centuries, concentrated on the plateau. There is no doubt



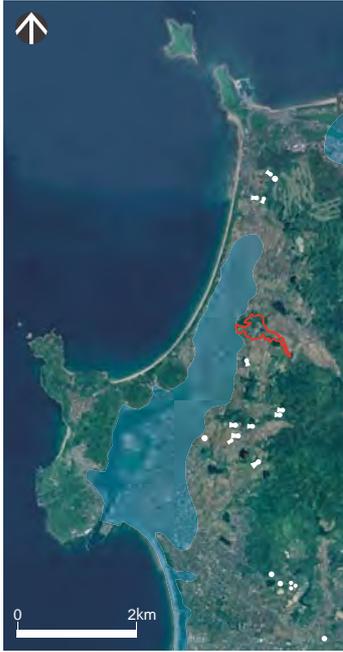
Photo 2-a-25 Tomb 22



Photo 2-a-26 Tomb 25



Photo 2-a-27 Tomb 12



Legend

- Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group
- Former sea inlet
- Other mounded tombs in Tsuyazaki

Figure 2-a-10 Postulated area of the sea inlet in ancient times around the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group

that these tombs are those of the chiefs and powerful members of the Munakata clan (see Table 2-a-6, “Comparison of Major Mounded Tombs in the Munakata region”).

From the seventeenth century onward, the sea inlet was drained and converted to farmland and salt fields. Also, the construction of a grain silo and a national road resulted in the inevitable loss or partial leveling of some burial mounds. However, at this key site overlooking the sea stretching to Okinoshima, local people have carefully preserved and maintained most of the tombs in good condition.

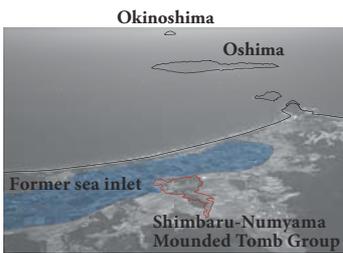


Photo 2-a-28 Aerial view of the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group

Table 2-a-6 Comparison of major mounded tombs in the Munakata region

Ritual styles on Okinoshima in corresponding periods	Rock-top		Rock-shadow		Partly rock-shadow	Size
Name	4 c	5 c	6 c	7 c		
Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group						80m (Tomb 22)
Togo-Takatsuka Mounded Tomb						64 m
Katsuura-Minenohata Mounded Tomb						100 m
Katsuura-Inoura Mounded Tomb						70 m
Yukue-Otsuka Mounded Tomb						73 m
Sudata-Amafari-Jinja Mounded Tomb						80 m
Sudata-Shimonokuchi Mounded Tomb						82 m
Araji-Tsurugizuka Mounded Tomb						102 m
Tebika-Namikirifudo Mounded Tomb						25 m
Miyajidake Mounded Tomb						35 m

Note: The size of a keyhole-shaped tomb is given as total length and that of a round tomb as diameter.

Table 2-a-7 Chronology relevant to Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group

Year	Events
1976	An archaeological excavation is conducted on Tombs 1 to 4 due to the construction of a prefectural road (present-day route 495).
1980	Tombs 5 and 6 are demolished after excavation and investigation, due to construction of the grain silo by the Munakata Agricultural Cooperative.
1985 to 1988	Basic data are created with a focus on the survey of burial mounds to verify important sites.
1989	Publication of report on the survey of the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group.
2005	The Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group is designated as a Historic Site as part of the “Tsuyazaki Mounded Tomb Group” under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. Additional areas have been officially incorporated into the Historic Site several times since the initial designation.
2008	“Basic Concept for the Historic Site “Tsuyazaki Mounded Tomb Group”” is formulated.
2011	“Basic Plan for the Historic Site “Tsuyazaki Mounded Tomb Group”” is formulated.
2014	“Preservation and Management Plan for Historic Site “Tsuyazaki Mounded Tomb Group”” is formulated.



Legend

- Nominated property
- Former sea inlet
- Constructed in 5th century
- Constructed in early 6th century
- Constructed in late 6th century

※ The numerals on the map indicate tomb numbers.
 ※ The dotted line shows the estimated extent mound.

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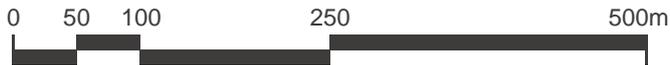


Figure 2-a-11 General plan of the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group

Table 2-a-8 List of mounded tombs included in the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group

Tomb No.	Shape	Size (m)	Tomb No.	Shape	Size (m)
1	keyhole-shaped	50 in length	27	round	15.5 in diameter
7	square	24 in width	28	round	15 in diameter
8	round	10 in diameter	29	round	12 in diameter
9	round	6 in diameter	30	keyhole-shaped	54 in length
10	round	12 in diameter	31	round	13 in diameter
11	round	14 in diameter	32	round	10 in diameter
12	keyhole-shaped	43 in length	33	round	8 in diameter
13	round	14 in diameter	34	round	24 in diameter
14	round	14 in diameter	35	round	13 in diameter
15	round	20 in diameter	36	round	17 in diameter
16	round	10 in diameter	37	round	14 in diameter
17	round	11 in diameter	38	round	9 in diameter
18	round	10 in diameter	39	stone chamber without burial mound	
19	round	11.5 in diameter	40	round	17 in diameter
20	round	30 in diameter	41	round	10 in diameter
21	round	17 in diameter	42	round	11.5 in diameter
22	keyhole-shaped	80 in length	43	round	9 in diameter
23	round	12 in diameter	46	round	7 in diameter
24	keyhole-shaped	53.5 in length	47	round	19 in diameter
25	round	36 in diameter	48	round	9.5 in diameter
26	round	17 in diameter			

2.b History and Development

Summary

Overseas Exchange and Okinoshima Faith (2.b.1)

During the period of state formation, the nascent Japanese state engaged in overseas exchanges with the support and assistance of the Munakata clan, which was known for its excellent navigational skills. The state began to sponsor rituals performed on Okinoshima, the island sacred to the Munakata clan, to pray for safe voyages and successful missions abroad. Many precious artifacts have been excavated from the ritual archaeological sites on Okinoshima that offer tangible evidence for overseas exchanges that were occurring during the period of some 500 years when rituals were being conducted on Okinoshima, from the late fourth to the end of the ninth centuries (see pp. 62 and 63 [Table 2-b-2](#)).

The Munakata clan that conducted these state-sponsored rituals on Okinoshima also built the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group on a plateau that overlooked the sea stretching to Okinoshima. This group of tombs today offers evidence about the lives of the people of the Munakata region who passed down the tradition of faith in Okinoshima.

Okinoshima Rituals (2.b.2)

Rituals were conducted on Okinoshima from the late fourth to the end of the ninth centuries, and during this period they went through four stages of transformation. These ritual archaeological sites are the only such sites that offer evidence for how ancient rituals changed over time, and they are an exceptional example of a property where the evolution of a particular ritual system can be traced over a period as long as 500 years. Some 80,000 ritual artifacts that have been excavated there have all been collectively designated as a National Treasure, including many that offer tangible evidence for overseas exchanges. Both the ritual sites and their votive offerings have been preserved in pristine condition since the time that these rituals were conducted, since Okinoshima has itself continued to be an object of worship and therefore protected by strict taboos.

Three Shrines and Three Goddesses (2.b.3)

The open-air rituals mentioned above were first performed in the latter half of the seventh century, not

only on Okinoshima but also on Oshima and the main island of Kyushu. The three religious sites where they were performed—Okinoshima, Mitakesan and Shimotakamiya—are mentioned in Japan's oldest surviving historical texts, the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters) and *Nihonshoki* (Chronicles of Japan), both compiled in the early eighth century, as Okitsu-miya, Nakatsu-miya, and Hetsu-miya, the three shrines dedicated to the Three Goddesses of Munakata. These three shrines together form the complex that is today called Munakata Taisha.

The three goddesses were recognized as guardian deities worthy of official veneration and they were worshipped by the state and by influential people. As custodians of the goddesses' worship, members of the Munakata clan also received special privileges, such as the marriage of the clan chief's daughter to the emperor and they dominated the region in both the political and religious realms.

Continuity of the Religious Tradition (2.b.4)

Even when open-air rituals were no longer performed on Okinoshima, worship continued at the three shrines. From the tenth to the sixteenth centuries the Munakata Daiguji (high priest) family, descended from the Munakata clan, preserved the worship of the Three Goddesses of Munakata as the head Shinto priests of Munakata Shrine. Theirs was a prominent family in the maritime region extending from Munakata to the Korean peninsula, and they prospered as overseas exchanges in the region flourished. They also performed many other rituals related to the sea and the Tsurikawa River.

In subsequent periods shrine buildings were constructed at all three sites, and a special place to worship the sacred island from afar was established, all of which together gradually came to form the shrine precinct of Munakata Taisha as it exists today. While the compounds of these individual shrines underwent many changes over time, Munakata Taisha as a whole has been preserved thanks to the efforts of the people of the Munakata region, through customs such as strict taboos and the Miare Festival, which is a revival of a medieval religious custom. In this way the sacred island has continued to be worshipped since ancient times.

Table 2-b-1 Chronology relevant to the nominated property

Year	Event
Late 4 c. to early 5 c.	Rock-top rituals on Okinoshima
Late 5 c. to 7 c.	Rock-shadow rituals on Okinoshima
5 c. to 6 c.	Construction of the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group
Late 7 c. to early 8 c.	Partial rock-shadow rituals on Okinoshima
Late 7 c. to 9 c.	Open-air rituals on the Mitakesan ritual site and the Shimotakamiya ritual site
8 c. to 9 c.	Open-air rituals on Okinoshima
712	Compilation of the <i>Kojiki</i> , in which appear the names “Okitsu-miya”, “Nakatsu-miya” and “Hetsu-miya”—where the Munakata clan enshrined the Three Goddesses of Munakata—and the myth of the goddesses.
720	Compilation of the <i>Nihonshoki</i> , in which appear the names “Okitsu-miya”, “Nakatsu-miya” and “Hetsu-miya”—where the Munakata clan enshrined the Three Goddesses of Munakata—and the myth of the goddesses.
723	Munakata Province is selected as one of the eight <i>shingun</i> (sacred provinces) of Japan by this year.
937	Munakata Shrine is recognized as an official shrine that enshrines the three goddesses.
979	The position of Daiguji (high priest) is established at Munakata Shrine.
1119	Earliest record of the existence of the shrine buildings of Hetsu-miya.
1368	Compilation of the <i>Shohei nijusan-nen Munakata-gu nenju gyoji</i> , which says that 5,921 religious events were conducted in one year at Munakata Shrine. The Minagate Festival was held on Okinoshima four times each year.
1412 to 1504	The Daiguji family sends trade envoys to the Korean peninsula 46 times in total during this period.
1429	The Korean historical document “Annals of King Sejong” relates that Oshima is controlled by the Munakata clan.
1556	Earliest record of the existence of the shrine buildings of Nakatsu-miya.
1578	The extant main hall of Hetsu-miya is rebuilt as a main hall of the primary shrine by Daiguji Munakata Ujisada
1586	Daiguji Munakata Ujisada dies, marking the end of the Munakata Daiguji family lineage.
1590	The extant worship hall of Hetsu-miya is rebuilt as a worship hall of the primary shrine.
1624 to 1644	The <i>Tashima-no-miya shato koezu</i> is compiled, in which appears the oldest drawing depicting the shrine compound of Hetsu-miya in medieval times.
1639	The Fukuoka Domain stations an island guard on Okinoshima. Guards serve on the island in 50-day shifts.
1644	Earliest record of the existence of the shrine buildings of Okitsu-miya.
1675	The secondary and tertiary shrines of Hetsu-miya are relocated, together with 75 auxiliary shrines, to an area near the main hall by Kuroda Mitsuyuki, the third lord of the Fukuoka Domain.
1682	<i>Okuniezu</i> is drawn, the oldest drawing depicting Okinoshima. The “Koyajima” and “Mikadobashira” reefs are also depicted and named.
1750	The year 1750 is inscribed on the back of a stone monument at Okitsu-miya Yohaisho; it is certain that Okitsu-miya Yohaisho existed by this time.
1794	Aoyagi Tanenobu, writer of <i>Okitsushima sakimori nikki</i> (Journals of an Okinoshima Guard), is sent from Fukuoka to Okinoshima via Oshima by the order of the Domain.
1797	The local geographical record <i>Chikuzen-no-kuni zoku fudoki furoku</i> is compiled. It includes a drawing of Munakata Shrine that is the oldest extant image of the compound of Hetsu-miya as it existed after 1675. Another drawing depicts Oshima with Nakatsu-miya and Okitsu-miya Yohaisho, and Okinoshima in the background.
1901	Munakata Shrine is ranked as a “Kampe Taisha” (imperial grand shrine).
1905	The Battle of Tsushima takes place. Munakata Shigemaru, stationed at Okitsu-miya at this time, records the details in his diary.
1942	The Munakata Shrine Revival Association is established.
1954 to 1971	Surveys of Okinoshima ritual sites are conducted three times.
1962	The Miare Festival is revived.
1977	The name of Munakata Shrine is changed from “Munakata-jinja” to “Munakata Taisha” (Munakata Grand Shrine).

> See pp. 62 and 63
 Table 2-b-2 “Okinoshima rituals and overseas exchanges”

2.b.1 Overseas Exchange and Okinoshima Faith

2.b.1.1 The birth of a Munakata ruling power

Around the third century BCE rice cultivation was introduced to Japan, which led to the shift from a hunter-gatherer society to an agricultural one. The practice of agriculture led to social stratification, and powerful regional groups emerged, eventually forming proto-states called *kuni*. From an early period in Japan's history, strong local groups formed in northern Kyushu, a locus of frequent overseas exchanges.

The Munakata region saw the development of agricultural settlements around the central basin of the Tsurikawa River, which was at that time an inlet of the sea. At the same time, a ruling class took shape, and its power expanded not only through rice cultivation on land, but also through fishing and overseas trade. This group gradually established itself as the Munakata clan, which worshipped the sacred island of Okinoshima.

Some surviving evidence suggests that people had stayed temporarily on Okinoshima even before the fourth century; but rituals like those conducted from the latter half of the fourth century onward were not yet occurring at that time.

2.b.1.2 The origins of Okinoshima rituals

The Munakata clan worshipped Okinoshima, a landmark for maritime navigation, as a sacred island.

Around the third century, the powerful political alliance known as the Yamato court appeared in central Japan. During the same period, the Goguryeo, Silla, and Baekje groups were competing for influence on the Korean peninsula. In the latter half of the fourth century, the Yamato court forged a partnership with Baekje as the court began to involve itself directly with affairs on the peninsula (Figure 2-b-1). The Gwanggaeto Stele of Goguryeo (erected in 414 in Ji'an, Jilin Province, China; see Photo 2-b-1), which has an inscription describing a battle between the Yamato court and Goguryeo, bears witness to the international situation in East Asia at that time. The Yamato court augmented its power by acquiring iron and advanced technologies, culture, and knowledge from ancient Chinese and Korean dynasties (Figure 2-b-2).

For the Yamato court to conduct overseas exchanges, it needed to obtain the cooperation of the Munakata clan, which possessed the navigation skills necessary to travel by sea from the Japanese archipelago to the Korean peninsula. With the assistance of the Munakata clan the Yamato court began to perform rituals on Okinoshima, which was situated along the marine route that these envoys traveled, and worshipped by the Munakata clan as a sacred island. Ritual practices began in this way on Okinoshima as "state rituals", and votive offerings unparalleled in both quantity and quality were made. The Munakata clan expanded its power by cooperating with the Yamato court to facilitate overseas missions.



Photo 2-b-1 Gwanggaeto stele
A stone monument commemorating King Gwanggaeto of Goguryeo (erected in 414).



Figure 2-b-1 Schematic figure of the exchanges that took place in the latter half of the fourth century
 The Yamato court engaged in exchanges with Baekje and began to perform rituals on Okinoshima.



Figure 2-b-2 Schematic figure of the exchanges that were taking place in the fifth century
 The Yamato court (Wa) sent envoys to the southern dynasties of China.

2.b.1.3 The establishment of a centralized state

As the Sui unified the Chinese continent in the end of the sixth century, Japan sent envoys to the Sui court. Later the Sui Dynasty was replaced by the Tang Dynasty, to which the first envoy was sent in 630.

In 660, however, the Tang, which had become a powerful unified dynasty, invaded and conquered Baekje. The Yamato court, which had strong ties with Baekje, sent troops to the Korean peninsula in order to support the restoration of Baekje. In 663, they were defeated by allied Tang and Silla forces at Baekgang-gu (Hakusukinoe). A sense of impending crisis accelerated the Yamato court's efforts to establish a centralized state. The systematic legal code known as the Taiho Code, modeled on that of Tang China, was compiled in 701 and marked the establishment of the centralized Ritsuryo state. The following year, in 702, Japan sent an envoy to Tang China after an interval of decades; this occasion is considered to have been the first case in which the name "Nihon" (the Japanese name for Japan) was used internationally.

After that, until the ninth century, Japan continued to send envoys to Tang China and the Silla court in Korea in order to obtain culture and legal structures (Photo 2-b-2). Many objects were deposited as votive offerings on Okinoshima, Oshima and the main island of Kyushu (Figure 2-b-3).



Photo 2-b-2 Ship of the Japanese envoy to Tang China
Depicted in the twelfth century.



Figure 2-b-3 Schematic figure of the exchanges that were taking place from the eighth to the ninth centuries
Japanese envoys to China introduced Chinese culture to Japan.

2.b.1.4 Okinoshima ritual sites and the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group

Objects found in the Munakata region reveal influences from the Korean peninsula such as ironware and stoneware that were considered to be advanced technologies at that time. The oldest historical chronicles of Japan, the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, offer evidence for the Munakata clan's support for the overseas missions sponsored by the Yamato court, through the rituals performed on Okinoshima (see also section 2.b.3.2).

In the late fourth century, when rituals were first performed atop huge rocks on Okinoshima, members of the Munakata clan also constructed a keyhole-shaped tomb in the Tsurikawa River basin. From the latter half of the fifth century onward, when the ritual style on Okinoshima changed and rituals came to be performed in the shadows of the rocks, they shifted the locus from the river basin to the sea coast, and constructed a group of mounded tombs there. In one of these tombs a mirror of the same type as that excavated from Site 21 on Okinoshima (used in rock-top rituals) was unearthed (Figure 2-b-4).

As one section of this site, which is called Tsuyazaki Mounded Tomb Group, the Shimbaru-Nuyama Mounded Tomb Group was built in a concentrated area along a plateau overlooking an inlet of the sea, facing out toward Okinoshima, in a region where the Munakata clan had already established a dominant presence. Tomb 7 (Photo 2-b-3) is a square mounded tomb, a style that is rarely found in the Munakata region, and an iron adze (Photo 2-b-4) similar to those discovered at ritual sites on Okinoshima was unearthed there.

The Shimbaru-Nuyama mounded tombs are of various sizes, constructed from the fifth to the sixth centuries along the sea coast facing Okinoshima, and they bear witness to the lives of those who participated in Japan's overseas exchanges and conducted the rituals on Okinoshima.



Figure 2-b-4 Shards of a mirror unearthed at Tsuyazaki Mounded Tomb Group

A deity-and-beast mirror with a band of images aligned in the same direction, the same type as that found at Site 21 on Okinoshima.



Photo 2-b-3 (left) Tomb 7

The top of the burial mound was paved with pebbles.

Photo 2-b-4 (right) Iron adze unearthed at Tomb 7

Similar artifacts have been found at ritual sites on Okinoshima.

Transition of assemblages of ritual artifacts on Okinoshima

Artifacts reflecting overseas exchange



Bronze mirrors
(Imported from ancient China)



Iron ingot



Gilt-bronze horse trappings



Shards of a cut glass bowl



Gold ring



Gilt-bronze dragon heads



Tang Dynasty three-colored bottle-shaped vase



Fujushimpo coin



Nara-style three-colored small jars
(Made by Chinese technique)

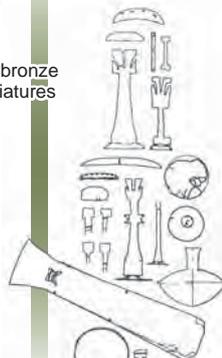
Comma-shaped beads



Gilt-bronze mirrors
(made in Japan)



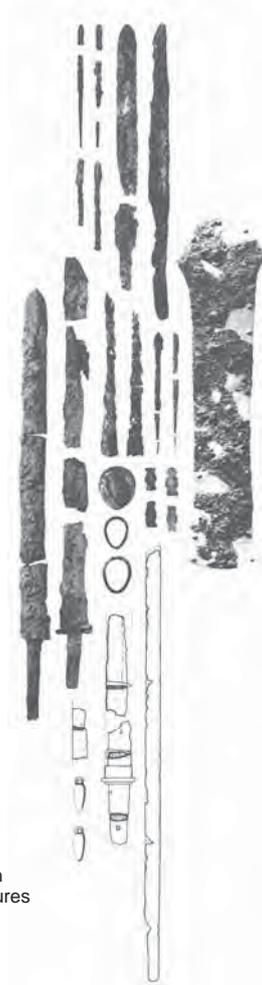
Gilt-bronze miniatures



Bronze miniatures



Iron swords and fragments

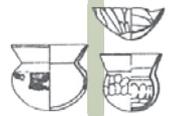


Iron miniatures

steatite figures



Steatite objects



Pottery



2.b.2 Okinoshima Rituals

2.b.2.1 Overview and significance of Okinoshima rituals

The ritual sites on Okinoshima offer a unique example of nature worship rituals that were gradually formalized over the course of 500 years, and eventually became the basis of the indigenous Japanese religious tradition of Shinto.

From the latter half of the fourth century to the end of the ninth century, rituals on Okinoshima evolved from being performed atop huge rocks to being performed in the shadows of rocks, to being performed partly in the shadow and partly out in the open, and finally to being performed entirely out in the open.

At sites where rituals performed partly in shadow were conducted, votive offerings were discovered that are of the same type as those used in the Jingi rituals institutionalized by the Ritsuryo state. The Okinoshima rituals are therefore considered to be highly valuable for understanding the prototype of the Jingi rituals that were directly linked to Shinto.

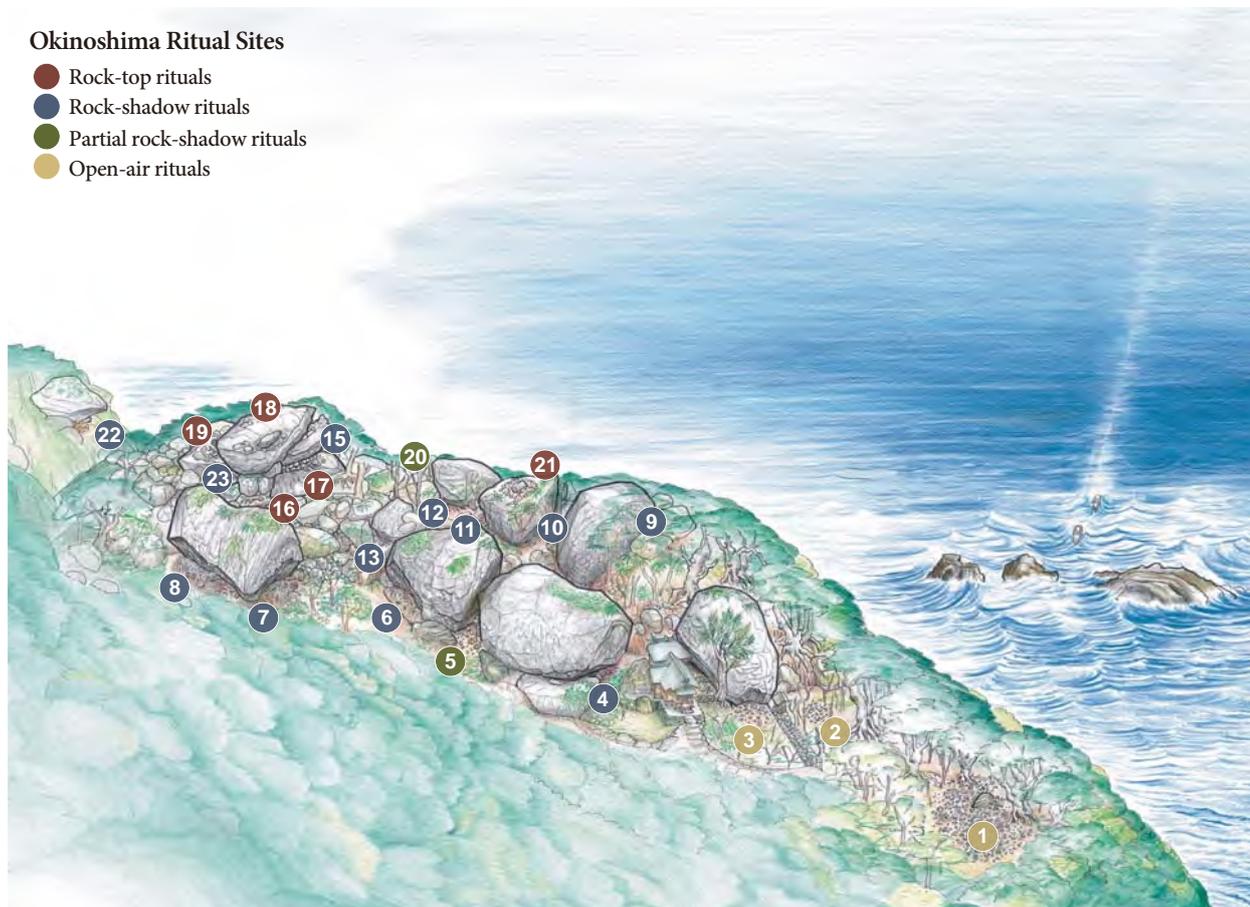
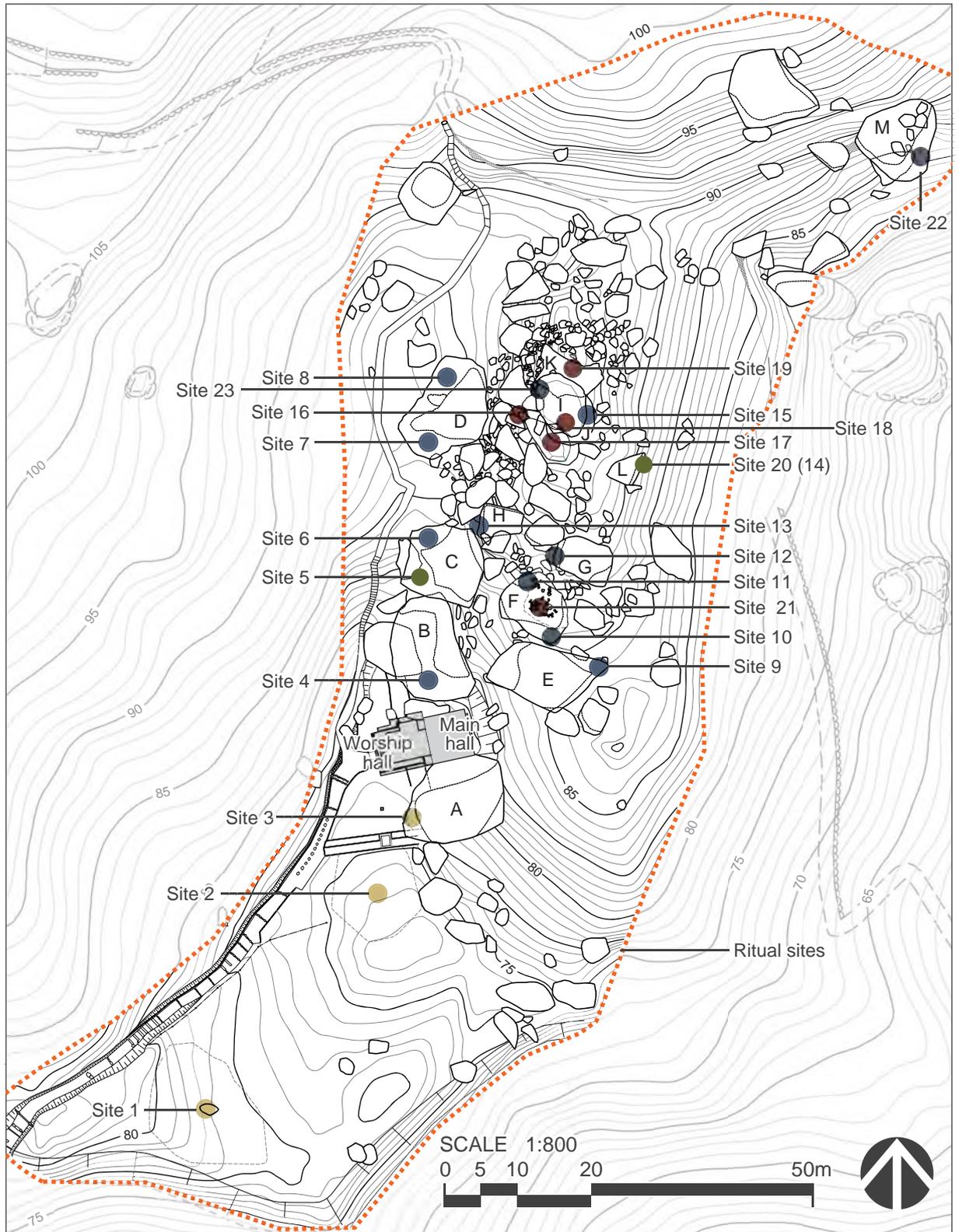


Figure 2-b-5 Illustration of the Okinoshima ritual sites and the shrine buildings of Okitsu-miya.

These sites are actually covered by thick forest.



Legend

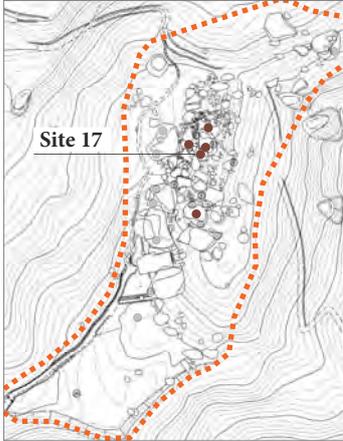
- Archaeological sites associated with rock-top rituals (late fourth to early fifth centuries)
 - Archaeological sites associated with rock-shadow rituals (late fifth to seventh centuries)
- Archaeological sites associated with partial rock-shadow rituals (late seventh to early eighth centuries)
 - Archaeological sites associated with open-air rituals (eighth to late ninth centuries)

A-M: Rocks accompanied by ritual archaeological sites.

Figure 2-b-6 General plan of Okinoshima ritual sites

2.b.2.2 Rock-top rituals (late fourth to early fifth centuries)

● Archaeological sites associated with rock-top rituals



In the late fourth century, the rituals that were performed on Okinoshima took place atop huge rocks on the island. At Rock I, the oldest ritual precinct on the island, four distinct ritual sites (Sites 16, 17, 18 and 19) have been identified.

Votive offerings found at these sites include mirrors, accessories, weapons, and tools, among which the artifacts found at Site 17 (Photo 2-b-5) deserve special mention; as many as twenty-one mirrors were discovered there (Photos 2-b-6, 7, and 8), in a gap among the rocks where they had been deposited as ritual offerings. At no other ancient ritual site in Japan have so many votive mirrors been discovered. The fact that a number of mirrors similar or identical to those unearthed at Site 17 have been found in mounded tombs in the Kinki region, where the Yamato court was based, clearly indicates that the Yamato court was involved in sponsoring the rock-top rituals performed on Okinoshima. Five mirrors of Chinese origin were included among these mirrors (Photos 2-b-9, 10, and 11).

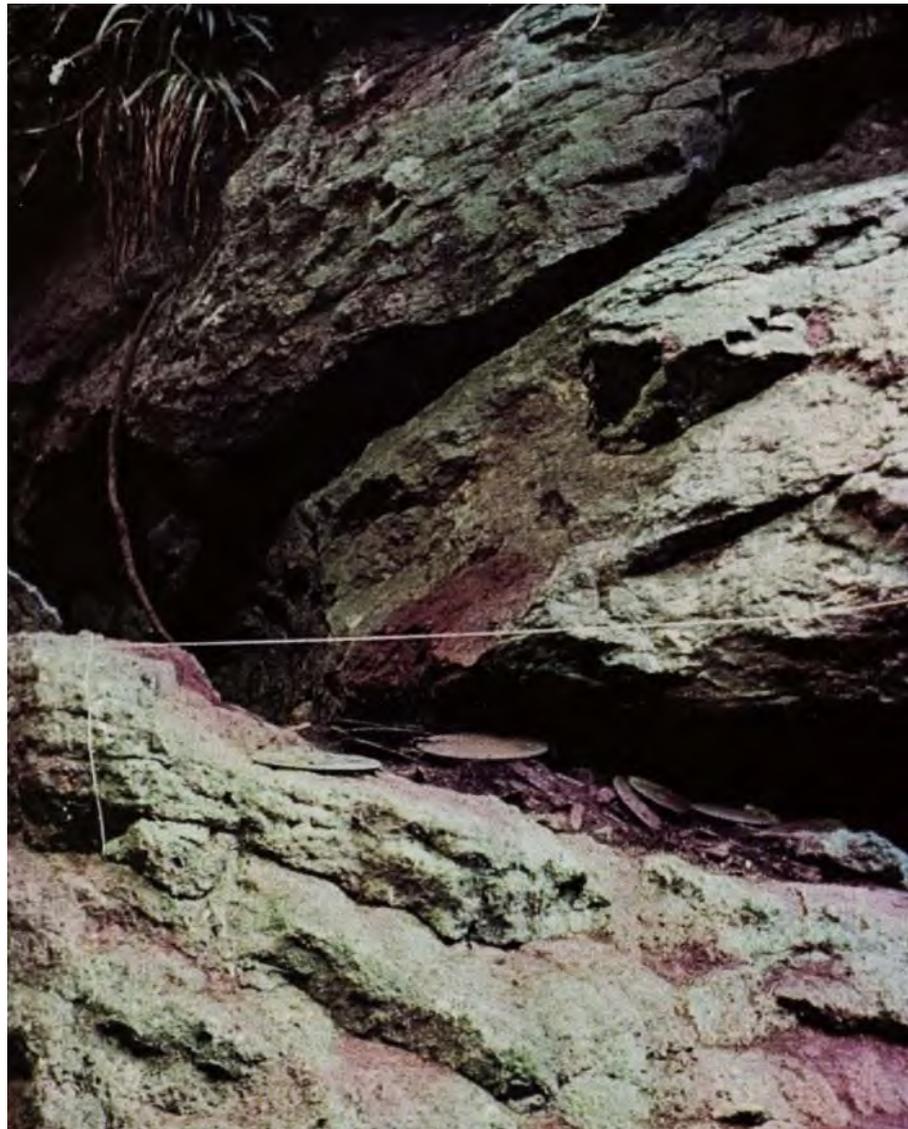


Photo 2-b-5 Site 17 (at the time of the archaeological survey conducted in 1957)



Photo 2-b-6 Ritual artifacts as excavated at Site 17 (seen from above)



Photo 2-b-7 Mirrors as excavated at Site 17 (seen from above)



Photo 2-b-8 Mirrors as excavated at Site 17 (seen from the same level)



Photo 2-b-9 Triangular-rimmed mirror with images of two deities and two beasts in a four-deities band (a type of triangular-rimmed deity-and-beast mirror)
22.2 cm in diameter
Unearthed at Site 18. Manufactured with extremely good cast technique and thought to have been imported from Wei Dynasty China.



Photo 2-b-10 Beast-band mirror with an inscription of "yi zi sun" characters
17.6 cm in diameter
Unearthed at Site 21. During the Six Dynasties period in China, Later-Han-style mirrors were likely revived and brought to Japan via Baekje.



Photo 2-b-11 Deity-and-beast mirror with a band of images aligned in the same direction
20.7 cm in diameter
Probably unearthed at Site 21. A large mirror probably obtained by envoys sent in the mid-fifth century or later by the five kings of Wa to the Southern Dynasties in China. A mirror of the same type was found to have been buried in a tomb of the Tsuyazaki Mounded Tomb Group.



Photo 2-b-12 Site 21 at the time of the archaeological survey in 1970

Based on detailed analysis, pebbles that had shifted from their positions were rearranged to represent the original composition of the altar as part of the archaeological survey.

In the middle of the fifth century, the ritual venue moved slightly southward, from Rock I to Site 21 (Photo 2-b-12), situated atop Rock F. Site 21 includes the archaeological remains of an altar. At the center of the top of Rock F, which measures approximately 20 sq m in area, is a flat surface where small stones are arranged in the form of a rectangle (measuring 2.8 × 2.5 m), with its four corners oriented to the four cardinal directions. A large stone measuring approximately 1 m wide stands in the center of the rectangle (Photo 2-b-14). These remains are believed to have been an altar where deities were summoned to descend to the large center stone.

In a small hollow in the upper part of this large stone, three small mortar-shaped steatite beads have been found. These beads were probably threaded with a cord and hung from a tree branch, and were placed against the large stone when deities were called down to descend. No other sites in Japan confirm this practice of rituals performed atop large rocks. This site offers rare evidence documenting fifth-century Japanese ritual styles.

Another distinctive votive offering unearthed at Site 21 is flat iron ingots (Photo 2-b-13). One of the reasons that the Yamato court sent envoys to the Korean peninsula was to procure iron; the iron ingots that were unearthed there show that important objects at the time were also used as votive offerings.

These votive offerings used in rock-top rituals also display certain commonalities with objects found buried in mounded tombs dating from the late fourth to the fifth centuries. This evidence suggests that rock-top rituals were at a stage in which they were not yet differentiated from funerary rituals. On the other hand, the combination of mirrors, beads, and swords found at these sites corresponds to the mythological three sacred objects of the Japanese imperial regalia, indicating that even this early stage of ritual practice contains distinct elements that were later passed down to subsequent generations.

● Archaeological sites associated with rock-top rituals

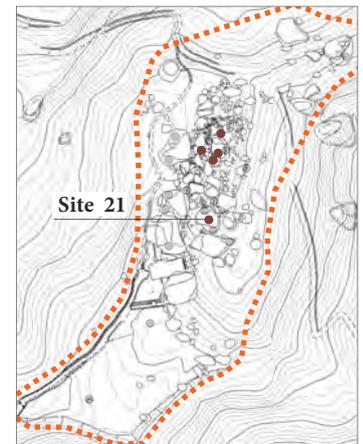


Photo 2-b-13 Iron ingots unearthed at Site 21



Photo 2-b-14 Archaeological remains identified at Site 21

2.b.2.3 Rock-shadow rituals (late fifth to seventh centuries)

From the latter half of the fifth century to the seventh century, rituals were performed on the island with votive offerings placed on flat ground in the shadows of the huge rocks there.

Just to the southwest of Rock D (Photo 2-b-15), a gold ring (Photo 2-b-18) with a four-leaf design in the center was excavated from Site 7. This ring is extremely similar to another that was unearthed from a royal Silla tomb in the southeastern region of the Korean peninsula. Other artifacts crafted using sophisticated techniques of that time from the Korean peninsula, such as ornamental harnesses (Photos 2-b-19, 20, and 21), have also been found. Shards of a cut-glass bowl (Photo 2-b-22) decorated with a circular relief design, unearthed from Site 8, located northwest of Rock D, were originally brought from Gilan, Iran and are thought to have been carried along the Silk Roads, through Silla, and finally to Japan.

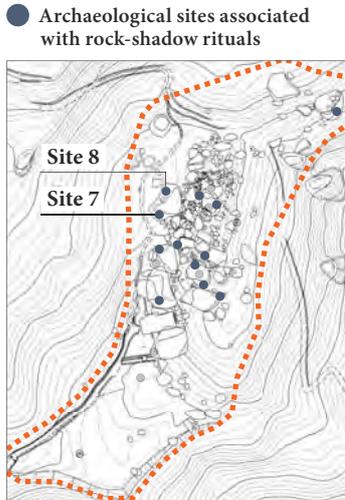


Photo 2-b-15 Site 7 (right) and Site 8 (left) (at the time of the archaeological survey in 1954)

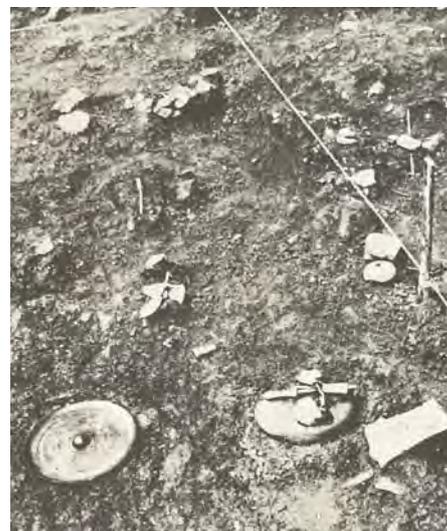


Photo 2-b-16 (left) Ritual artifacts as excavated at Site 8



Photo 2-b-17 (right) Ritual artifacts as excavated at Site 7



Photo 2-b-18 Gold ring

1.8 cm in diameter (Site 7)

An object from Silla Dynasty Korea, deposited as a votive offering. Rings of a similar style have been found in the royal tombs in Gyeongju, Korea.



Photo 2-b-19 Gilt-bronze crupper strap dividers with spangles

10.6 cm in height (Sites 7 and 8)

A type of metal ornament that was attached to the straps securing the saddle to the horse's buttocks, brought from Silla Dynasty Korea.



Photo 2-b-20 Flat gilt-bronze pendants in the shape of a thorned leaf

13.4 to 15.3 cm in length (Site 7)

A type of metal harness ornament that was hung from a strap that attached the saddle to the horse's chest and buttocks. Brought from Silla Dynasty Korea.



Photo 2-b-21 Gilt-bronze heart-shaped flat pendant

About 9.0 cm in length (Site 7)

Five pieces were unearthed at Site 7, all of which had been brought from Silla Dynasty Korea. Decorated with openwork of winged anthropomorphic figures and floral patterns, which are commonly seen in the mural drawings of the tombs of Goguryeo, Korea.



Photo 2-b-22 (top left) Shards of a cut-glass bowl



Photo 2-b-23 (bottom left) Cut-glass bowl (unearthed in Iran)

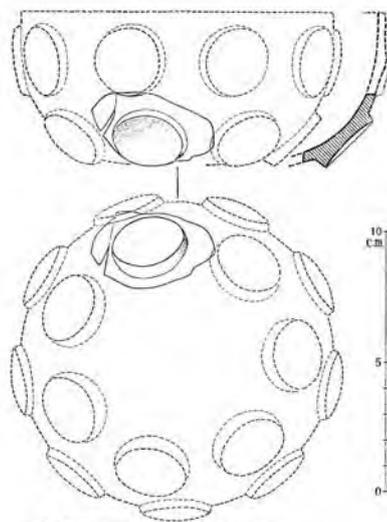


Figure 2-b-7 (right) Reconstructed image of a cut-glass bowl

Two shards of a cut-glass bowl with round relief ornaments were unearthed at Site 8. Bowls of a similar style are found in the Gilan region of Iran and at the tomb of Li-Xian at Guyuan, Ningxia in China. Probably brought from Sassanid Persia to Okinoshima via China and Korea.



Photo 2-b-24 Site 22 (at the time of the archaeological survey conducted in 1970)

Later in the seventh century, rituals were carried out at Site 6, northwest of Rock C, and slightly farther away at Site 22 (Photo 2-b-24), south of Rock M. At these sites, stones were found aligned in such a way as to delineate altars. At Site 22, where the space in the shadow of the rock has almost no flat area but slopes sharply downward, the entire shadowed area was made into an altar and votive offerings were laid out there side by side.

The use of harnesses as offerings for rock-shadow rituals was a new development. Also new was the increasing presence of artifacts from Korea, such as the gold ring mentioned above, gilt-bronze harnesses, and cast-iron adzes; these valuable objects brought to Japan were used in rituals on Okinoshima, but were also similar to burial goods found in mounded tombs.

On the other hand, at Sites 6 and 22, both of which date to the seventh century, gilt-bronze miniature spinning and weaving tools (Photo 2-b-25) were unearthed. Gilt-bronze miniature tools have also been excavated from archaeological sites at which rituals were conducted partly in shadow and partly out in the open. The end of the period of rock-shadow rituals witnessed an increase in the formalized ritual practices established by the ancient centralized state of Japan.

● Archaeological sites associated with rock-shadow rituals

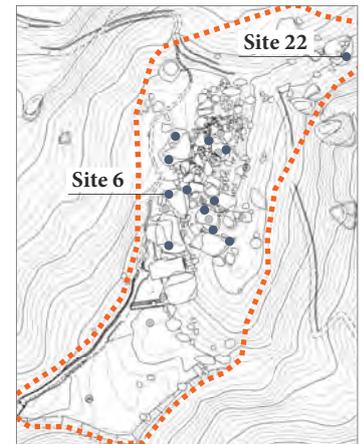


Photo 2-b-25 Gilt-bronze miniature spinning and weaving tools

Photo 2-b-26 Ritual artifacts as excavated at Site 22

2.b.2.4 Partial rock-shadow rituals (late seventh to early eighth centuries)

● Archaeological sites associated with partial rock-shadow rituals



In the next stage of ritual development, which spanned the late seventh to early eighth centuries, rituals were performed partly in the shadows of rocks, but mostly out in the open. Two archaeological sites of this type have been found, Site 5 and Site 20 (also identified as Site 14).

During this period, diplomatic envoys were sent to Tang China and the Silla court in Korea, and these envoys brought many valuable objects back to Japan. Site 5 (Photo 2-b-27) in particular contains many such objects. The gilt-bronze dragon heads (Photos 2-b-28 and 29), which were used, being attached on a rod on the neck side, with a canopy or standard hung from the cavity of the mouth, were found there. These are the only such dragon heads to have been discovered in Japan. They also represent a rare case in which the original use of a votive offering can be determined.

Three-colored glazed pottery was produced in Tang China from the late seventh to mid-eighth centuries, and fragments of a Tang-style three-colored bottle-shaped vase with a long neck (Photos 2-b-30 and 31) that have been unearthed from Site 5 also represent a very rare archaeological discovery, since this pottery is the first of its kind to be excavated outside of China.

At this stage of ritual development, votive offerings similar to burial artifacts found in mounded tombs were no longer used; instead, in this phase, earthenware objects made exclusively for ritual purposes became increasingly important (Photo 2-b-38, p. 77). This shift indicates that the artifacts and tools used for these rituals were established as a separate category from objects used in funerary rites. On the other hand, at Site 5, many votive offerings were found that shared similarities in common with those found at Sites 6 and 22, where rock-shadow rituals were performed, while other offerings there shared characteristics in common with those used in later open-air rituals. Rituals that were conducted partly in the shadows of rocks and partly out in the open therefore represent a transitional stage between rock-shadow rituals and open-air rituals.



Photo 2-b-27 Site 5 (at the time of the archaeological survey in 1969)

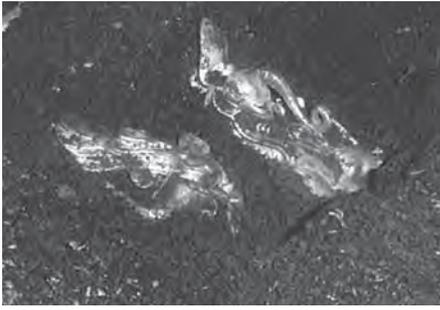


Photo 2-b-28 Gilt-bronze dragon heads as excavated



Photo 2-b-29 Gilt-bronze dragon heads

Pair, 19.5 cm and 20.0 cm in length (Site 5)

They resemble those depicted in murals in the Mogao Caves at Dunhuang, which were attached to a rod on the neck side with a canopy or standard hung from the cavity of the mouth.



Photo 2-b-30 Tang Dynasty three-colored bottle-shaped vase with long neck, as excavated



Photo 2-b-31 Tang Dynasty three-colored bottle-shaped vase with long neck

Rim, 8.6 cm in diameter (Site 5)

Dating back to Tang Dynasty China (second half of the seventh century), this vase is a globally rare archaeological find. It was probably brought to Japan by an envoy sent to China.

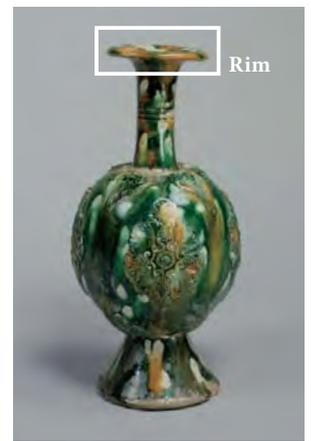


Photo 2-b-32 Complete form of Tang Dynasty three-colored bottle-shaped vase with long neck

The complete form of a three-colored Tang-style vase from the shards that were unearthed on Okinoshima.



Photo 2-b-33 Gilt-bronze miniature pentachord as excavated

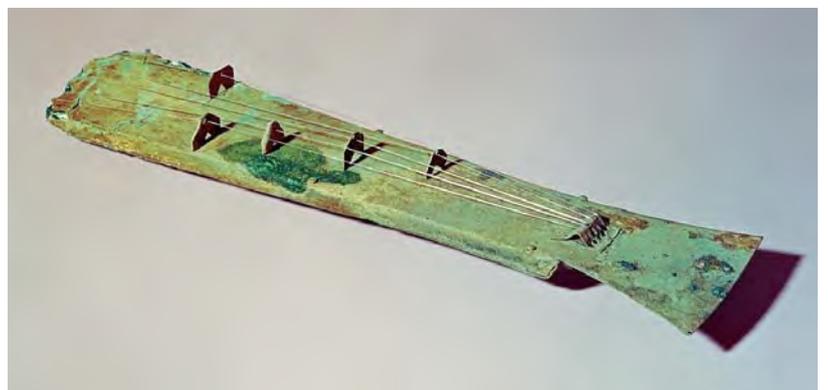


Photo 2-b-34 Gilt-bronze miniature pentachord

27.1 cm in length (Site 5)

- 8 Ise Jingu enshrines the goddess Amaterasu, the greatest deity in Japanese mythology, regarded as the progenitress of the imperial family. It is the central Shinto shrine among all shrines in Japan.
- 9 The *Engishiki* is a legal text compiled in the tenth century that describes the detailed procedures and customs for implementing Ritsuryo laws.



Photo 2-b-35 Gilt-bronze miniature spinning tools (Site 5)



Photo 2-b-36 Gilt-bronze miniature loom (said to have been excavated from Okinoshima)

Rituals were first performed on Okinoshima in the latter half of the fourth century, sponsored by the Yamato court. As the centralized Ritsuryo state became established in the early eighth century, its rituals were also systematized as the “Jingi rituals”. The sacred treasures of Ise Jingu⁸ that are described in the *Engishiki*⁹ (Procedures of the Engi Era), compiled in the tenth century, and the *Jingu shimpo zukan* (Illustrated Records of the Divine Treasures of Ise Jingu; see Photo 2-b-37), compiled in the fourteenth century, correspond to artifacts used in the Jingi rituals from the eighth century onward. The gilt-bronze miniature pentachord (Photos 2-b-33 and 34) unearthed from Site 5 is of the same type as the Tobinoo-no-koto (“kite-tailed pentachord”), a sacred treasure of Ise Jingu described in the *Engishiki*; it also resembles the pentachord described in the *Jingu shimpo zukan*.

The gilt-bronze miniature spinning tools (Photo 2-b-35) and a gilt-bronze loom (Photo 2-b-36), found at the same site, are also similar to sacred treasures and artifacts described in the two texts. The emergence of objects common to both the sacred treasures of Ise Jingu, which represent the Jingi rituals, and votive offerings from the seventh-century rituals conducted on Okinoshima (including rock-shadow rituals and those performed partly in the shadows of rocks) indicates that the Okinoshima rituals contained prototypical elements that would later be incorporated into the Jingi rituals.

Therefore the rituals performed partly in the shadows of rocks mark an important phase in which elements of the Jingi rituals of the Ritsuryo state became evident in the rituals performed on Okinoshima, which have their origins in nature worship.

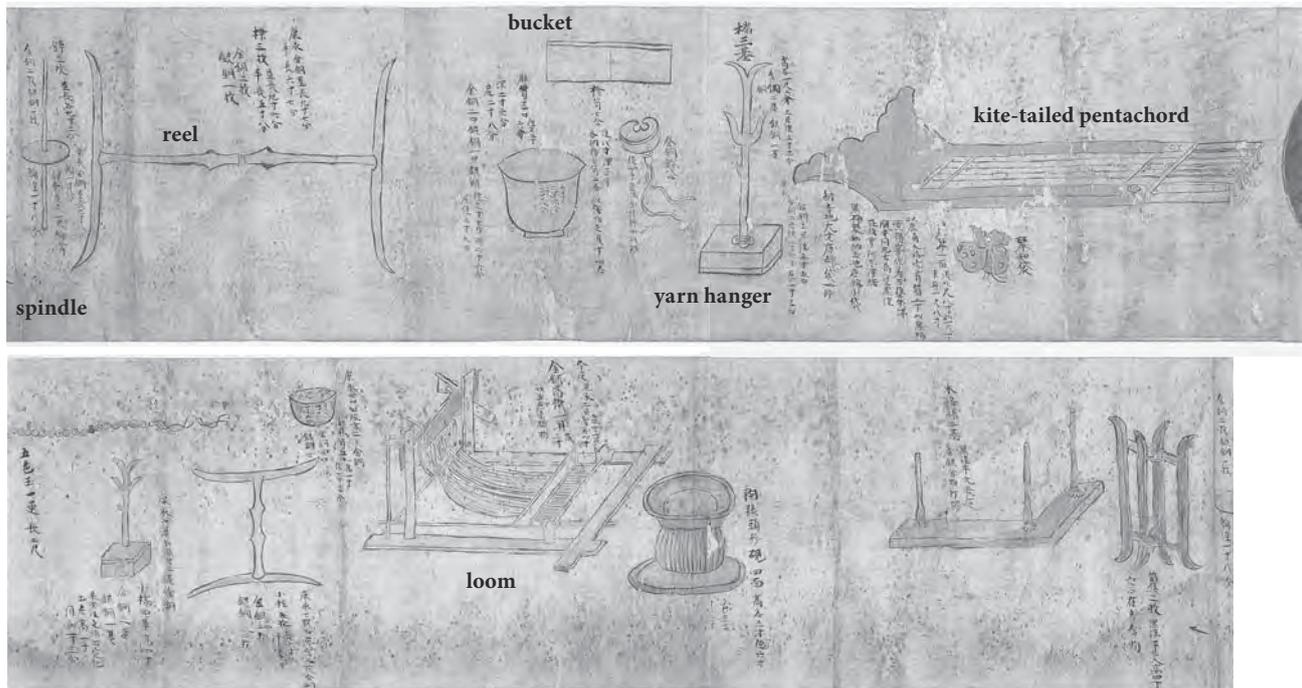


Photo 2-b-37 *Jingu shimpo zukan* (Illustrated Records of the Divine Treasures of Ise Jingu Shrine) (part)

One of two complete volumes of drawings copied in 1410, depicting 41 divine treasures of Ise Jingu during a period after Jingi ritual was established. The pentachord and weaving tools that were deposited on Okinoshima as votive offerings match the divine treasures depicted here, suggesting that partial rock-shadow rituals present a prototypical form of Jingi ritual.

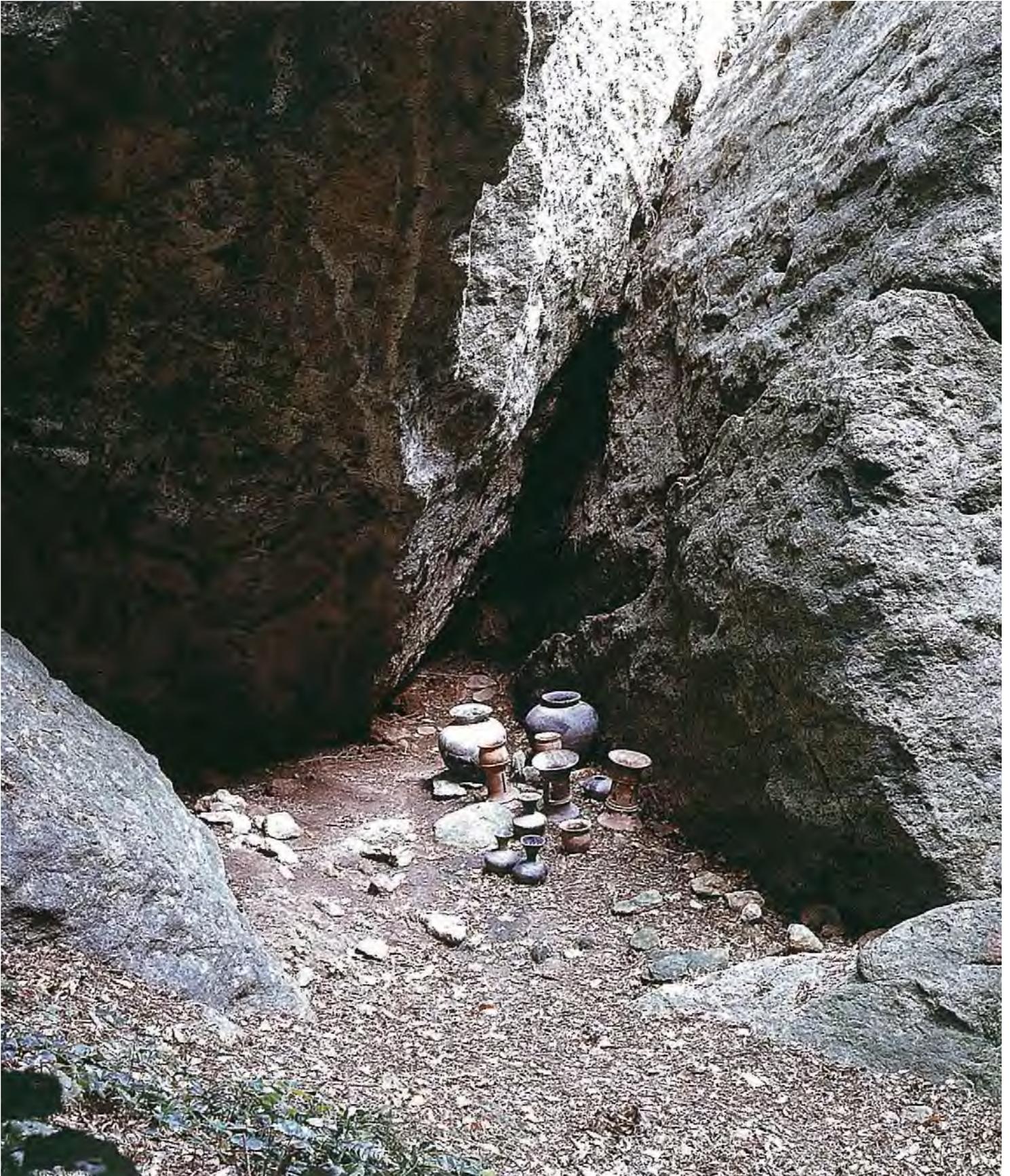


Photo 2-b-38 Site 5

Unearthed pottery pieces were glued and back in the original locations where they were discovered, for presentation purposes.

● Archaeological sites associated with open-air rituals



2.b.2.5 Open-air rituals (eighth to ninth centuries)

In the eighth century, rituals on the island were first performed in a flat, open area about 30 m southwest of the group of rocks where they had previously been conducted, and this development represents the last of the four stages of transformation in Okinoshima ritual style. There are three open-air ritual archaeological sites, Sites 1, 2, and 3. Only part of Site 1 (Photo 2-b-39) has been investigated through archaeological research.

At the southeast corner of Site 1 there is a large stone, 1.6 m long and 1.4 m wide. Two intersecting trenches were dug across the field, with this stone at their point of intersection. The archaeological remains of a stone altar made of smaller stones, approximately 20 cm wide, was discovered on this site.

The votive offerings unearthed here include various types of pottery, Nara-style three-colored small jars with lids (Photos 2-b-43 and 44), which were made in Japan but modeled on Tang-style three-colored glazed pottery; steatite figures representing people, horses, and boats (Photos 2-b-40, 41, and 42); steatite beads; perforated earthenware (Photo 2-b-45); miniature metal objects; and weaving tools. A greater quantity of such objects was found here than at other sites on the island, indicating that rituals were repeatedly performed at Site 1; and votive offerings accumulated through the performance of these rituals over time.



Photo 2-b-39 Site 1 (at the time of the archaeological survey conducted in 1970)

In particular, the Fujushimpo coin found at this site, which was first minted in 818 (Photos 2-b-46 and 47), and the Nara-style three-colored small jars with the lids that date to the eighth and ninth centuries, are believed to have been brought to the island from central Japan. These objects serve as evidence that the rituals held at Site 1 were also sponsored by the Ritsuryo government, and that these state-sponsored rituals continued to be performed on Okinoshima up to the end of the ninth century.

The large quantity of earthenware discovered at this site developed from the rituals performed partly in the shadows of rocks. A great variety of forms, including almost all types of earthenware known at that time, have been found there. Because these objects correspond to the various types of earthenware described in the *Engishiki*, they are identified with the earthenware artifacts that were used in Jingi rituals. On the other hand, the perforated earthenware used in rituals and the steatite figures representing people, horses, and boats that were found there are votive offerings seen nowhere except in the Munakata region, suggesting that the Munakata rituals served as the basis for the subsequent development of state rituals.

Near a cliff overlooking the sea to the south of Site 1, there are places where only small pottery plates have been found, dating from a period after the ancient rituals had ended. This evidence suggests that rituals continued to be performed on Okinoshima even after that time.



Photo 2-b-43 Nara-style three-colored small jar, as excavated



Photo 2-b-44 Nara-style three-colored small jar with the lids

4.7 cm in height

Manufactured in central Japan. A green glaze is applied on the bare jar surface in a plaid pattern.



Photo 2-b-40 Steatite human-shaped figure

Two indentations on either side of the steatite object separate it into the head, body, and base.



Photo 2-b-41 Steatite horse shaped figure

The profile of a horse, without legs, is represented.



Photo 2-b-42 Steatite boat shaped figure

Boat-shaped steatite objects are the most standard and diverse type of steatite figurine found at Site 1.



Photo 2-b-45 Perforated earthenwares

This perforated earthenware is unique to rituals on Okinoshima, and was crafted for ritual purposes.



Photo 2-b-46 Fujushimpo coin, as excavated



Photo 2-b-47 Fujushimpo coin

2.2 cm in diameter

One of the copper coins minted by the Ritsuryo state, modeled on the Chinese currency system. First minted in 818.

2.b.3 Three Shrines and Three Goddesses

2.b.3.1 Three ritual sites

In the first half of the eighth century, as the nascent Japanese state increasingly consolidated its power, Japan's oldest extant historical records were compiled, the *Kojiki* (dated 712; **Photo 2-b-51**) and *Nihonshoki* (dated 720; **Photo 2-b-52**). The names of the three open-air ritual sites in the Munakata region are mentioned in both texts.

Open-air rituals were performed on Okinoshima beginning in the eighth century. The name “Okitsu-miya” that appears in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* refers to the places of worship centering on the ritual sites on Okinoshima. Around the same time, similar open-air rituals were first performed on Oshima and the main island of Kyushu.

The Mitakesan ritual site (**Photo 2-b-48**) is located at the top of a mountain, the highest point on Oshima, which overlooks both Okinoshima and Hetsu-miya on the main island of Kyushu. Open-air rituals were conducted there from the latter half of the seventh century to the end of the ninth century; votive offerings common to those of the open-air ritual archaeological sites on Okinoshima have been unearthed, including various types of pottery; Nara-style three-colored jars with the lids; steatite figurines representing people, horses, and boats; and steatite beads (**Photo 2-b-49**). The name “Nakatsu-miya” in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* refers to the place of worship centering on the Mitakesan ritual site.

On the main island of Kyushu, the votive offerings used in open-air rituals (**Photo 2-b-50**), common to those found at open-air ritual archaeological sites on Okinoshima and at the Mitakesan ritual site, have also been discovered at the Shimotakamiya ritual site on the slopes of Mt. Munakata, overlooking the Tsurikawa River. “Hetsu-miya” in the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki* refers to the place of worship centering on the Shimotakamiya ritual site.

From the latter half of the seventh century onward, open-air rituals were conducted on Okinoshima as well as at the Mitakesan and Shimotakamiya ritual sites. These three sacred sites are mentioned in the mythology of the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* as Okitsu-miya, Nakatsu-miya, and Hetsu-miya, respectively (**Photos 2-b-51 and 52**). At this stage the convergence of archaeological and textual evidence confirms that the three shrines were well established by that time. Furthermore, in both texts personified deities appear who are enshrined and worshipped at the three sites; these are none other than the Three Goddesses of Munakata—namely Tagorihime, Tagitsuhime, and Ichikishimahime—thus marking the transition from nature worship to the worship of personified deities, as the ritual style was transformed over time from rock-top rituals to those performed out in the open.

Munakata Shrine, composed of the three shrines, is also mentioned in the *Engishiki* (see p. 76, note 9), and continues to serve as a place of worship today as an important Shinto shrine.



Photo 2-b-48 Mitakesan ritual site (as excavated)



Nara-style three-colored small jar fragments



Steatite boat-shaped figure



Steatite beads and other small objects
Photo 2-b-49 Ritual artifacts unearthed from the Mitakesan ritual site



Steatite boat shaped figure



Steatite beads

Photo 2-b-50 Ritual artifacts unearthed at around the Shimotakamiya ritual site

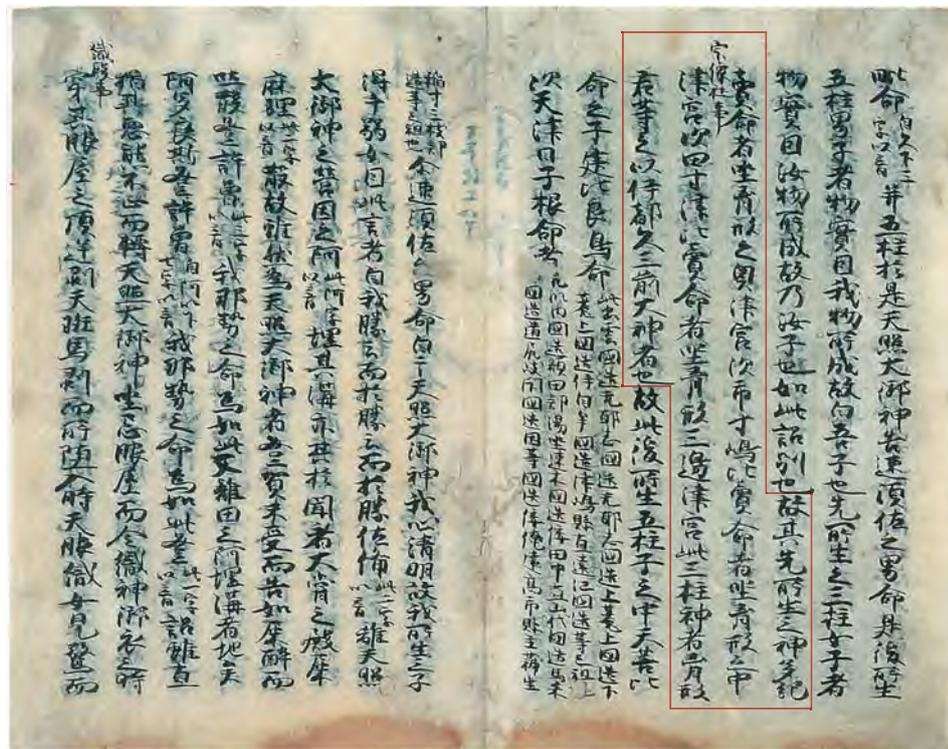


Photo 2-b-51 The Kojiki (Record of Ancient Matters)

The oldest extant historical chronicle of Japan, compiled in 712. The above photo is a handwritten copy dating from 1371 or 1372. The names of the three shrines of Munakata are recorded and the story of the birth of the Three Goddesses of Munakata is recounted: “The first-born goddess, Tagorihime, is seated at Okitsu-miya. The next goddess, Ichikishimahime is seated at Nakatsu-miya. The next goddess, Tagitsuhime is seated at Hetsu-miya. These three goddesses are the great deities worshipped by the Munakata clan and others” (red box in the photo above).



Photo 2-b-52 The Nihonshoki (Chronicles of Japan)

The oldest official historical chronicle of Japan, compiled in 720, open to the passage depicting the lie-detecting rite between the Goddess, Amaterasu, and her brother, Susanoo. The above photo is a copy printed in 1817 (in the custody of Munakata Taisha).

2.b.3.2 The three goddesses and the Munakata clan

The Three Goddesses of Munakata, worshipped at the three shrines, play an important role in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* mythology, since they presided over the maritime traffic between the Japanese archipelago and the Korean peninsula.

Both texts explain their origins as follows:

Susanowo, the younger brother of the sun goddess Amaterasu, was ordered to go to the land of the dead, so he traveled to Takamagahara where Amaterasu ruled to pay her a farewell visit. Susanowo was suspected of plotting to usurp the land, and he offered to prove his innocence by organizing a divination ritual (ukehi), in which his guilt or innocence would be revealed according to the sex of his newborn child. He would be guilty if the baby was a girl, and innocent if it was a boy.

Amaterasu accepted his offer and broke Susanowo's sword into three pieces, rinsed them with well water, chewed them and blew them out of her mouth. From her breath came the Three Goddesses of Munakata, namely Tagorihime, Tagitsuhime, and Ichikishimahime.



Photo 2-b-53 Divine rescript tablet in the worship halls of the three shrines

In Japanese mythology the three goddesses are also regarded as the Michinushi-no-Muchi (lit. “Their Majesties the Road Goddesses”) of the Kaihokudochu (lit. “Ocean Route to the North”). They are known as the deities that preside over the sea route leading from the Munakata region to the Korean peninsula. By the order of Amaterasu, the imperial progenitress, to “assist the descendants of Amaterasu and be worshipped by them” (divine rescript; see Photo 2-b-53), they were also revered as guardian deities who protected the state and therefore receive homage through state-sponsored rituals.

Many deities that appear in the narratives of Japanese mythology are considered to have originated as local gods and goddesses that were worshipped by local authorities, and then were later introduced and integrated into the mythology of the

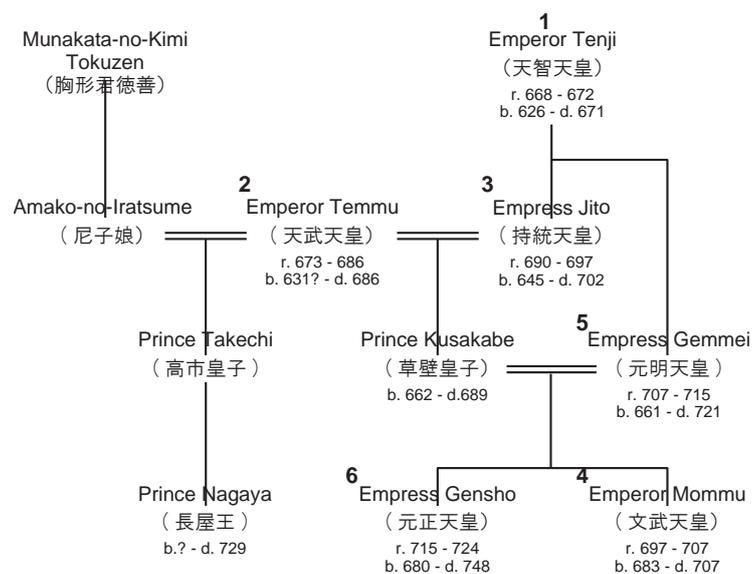


Figure 2-b-8 Genealogy of the Munakata clan and the Imperial Family of Japan

centralized state. The Three Goddesses of Munakata were originally worshipped by the people of the Munakata region, but the state attached great significance to the three goddesses and associated them with Amaterasu because they were said to control this important region for overseas exchange.

Furthermore, mythological narratives describe the Munakata clan as devoted worshippers of the three goddesses. The oldest name of an individual belonging to this clan, Munakata-no-Kimi Tokuzen, dates to the seventh century. Although Tokuzen was a local political leader, it should be noted that his daughter, Amakono-Iratsume, was married to Emperor Temmu (631-686 CE) and gave birth to the eldest prince, Takechi (who would go on to be the father of Prince Nagaya) (Figure 2-b-8). When the system of clans and hereditary titles was restructured during the reign of Emperor Temmu, the Munakata clan was awarded the title of *ason* (lit. “court minister”), one of the highest official court rankings. Under the administrative system of the Ritsuryo state, the locations of shrines that were of utmost importance to the state were designated as sacred provinces, and the Munakata region was identified as one of these eight sacred provinces, from among six hundred provinces all over Japan. Even within this group, in the eighth century the chiefs of the Munakata clan enjoyed a special status, as their hereditary privilege bestowed upon them the positions of administrative chief of the province and chief priest for the worship of the goddesses of Munakata.

The Munakata clan, which dominated the Munakata region and the marine area extending all the way to the Korean peninsula, worshipped the Three Goddesses of Munakata, and ruled the Munakata region both politically and spiritually. This role was possible because of the clan’s strong connection with the newly centralized state. Rituals performed on Okinoshima and other rituals dedicated to the Three Goddesses of Munakata possessed multiple layers of meaning, as they were held for the benefit and protection of both the Munakata region and the state as a whole.

2.b.3.3 Beyond ancient rituals

By the end of the ninth century, Japan stopped sending envoys to Tang China and Silla. The open-air rituals that had been performed on Okinoshima, at Mitakesan, and at Shimotakamiya also ceased, probably because the overseas missions were halted and state-sponsored rituals began to take new forms.

Economic and cultural overseas exchange continued to occur even after that time, however, and the Three Goddesses of Munakata and the Munakata clan continued to play an important role in the state system after the ancient rituals were no longer performed. It is significant that the Munakata goddesses also attracted the devotion of the Fujiwara clan, who seized control of the state from the ninth century onward. They enshrined the goddesses in the ancient capital of Kyoto (Photo 2-b-54). In 870 and 878, when pirates from Silla became a serious threat, emissaries from the imperial court were sent to pray to the Munakata goddesses for safe ocean voyages.



Photo 2-b-54 A shrine affiliated with Munakata Shrine at the Kyoto Imperial Palace

2.b.4 Continuity of the Religious Tradition

2.b.4.1 Munakata Daiguji and overseas exchange

From the tenth century onward, the Three Goddesses of Munakata continued to be worshipped by the family of the Munakata Daiguji (high priest), who were descendants of the Munakata clan. After Munakata Ujyoshi was appointed to the office of Daiguji in 979, the direct descendants of the Munakata clan held the hereditary office of Daiguji throughout the medieval period in Japan¹⁰, performing all religious duties at Munakata Shrine. During that time the Munakata Daiguji family, like the Munakata clan in ancient times, dominated the Munakata region and the sea route leading to the Korean peninsula, and prospered through Japan's active overseas trade in East Asia (Figure 2-b-9).

In the thirteenth century, the Munakata Daiguji family formed a link through marriage with merchants of the Southern Song Dynasty in China that lasted for two generations. One Munakata Daiguji was even born of a Song mother. Some artifacts passed down at Munakata Taisha attest to overseas exchanges with Song China at that time. A pair of Song-style guardian lion-dog statues (Photo 2-b-55), donated to the tertiary shrine of Hetsu-miya in 1201, was crafted in Song China and brought to Japan; a copy of the entire Buddhist canon (Photo 2-b-56), handwritten by a shrine monk named Shikijo, was an accomplishment carried out thanks to the patronage of a Chinese boat captain. In addition, Tobo (lit. "foreigners' residence") is a place in the Munakata region, located at Aza Tobo-chi, Arajii, Fukutsu City; archaeological excavations of the Arajii Nishinoato site (Photo 2-b-57) have revealed that this area was once inhabited by Chinese immigrants. Other artifacts reveal a strong connection with Song China, including a stone monument inscribed with the *Smaller Sukhavativyuha-sutra* (*Amida-kyo*) (Photo 2-b-58) that was brought from Song China, and a seated statue of Shikijo (Photo 2-b-59) in a style strongly influenced by Song sculptural techniques. These objects further suggest that the Daiguji family controlled the sea route from northwest Kyushu to the Korean peninsula, and played a central role in exchanges with Song China. For example, during this

10 In this document, the "medieval period" refers to the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries.



Photo 2-b-55 Song-style guardian lion-dog statues

Each statue has an inscription on the back to the effect that it was donated to the tertiary shrine ("Tei-san-gu") of Hetsu-miya in 1201, which constitutes the oldest and most certain written record of the tertiary shrine.

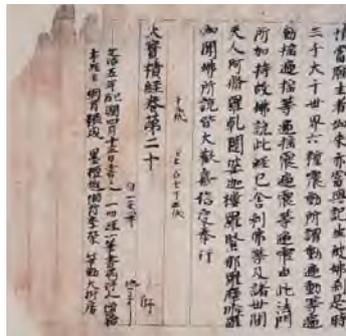


Photo 2-b-56 The *Ippitsu issaikyo* (copy of the entire Buddhist canon)

The Buddhist monk Shikijo copied the entire Buddhist canon, or Tripitaka, from 1187 to 1227, and its 4,342 scrolls are designated collectively as an Important Cultural Property.



Photo 2-b-57 Arajii Nishinoato site

Artifacts suggesting exchanges with China were found, such as white-glazed porcelain and celadon. This archaeological site shows traces of the settlements of Chinese merchants.



Photo 2-b-58 *Amidakyo* (Sukhavati Sutra) Stone

Imported from the Southern Song Dynasty of China by the high priest, Munakata Ujikuni, to pray for his deceased father. The front is carved with a seated image of Amida Buddha and the back is inscribed with the Sukhavati Sutra.



Photo 2-b-59 Seated statue of the Buddhist monk Shikijo

This statue dates to 1241. It was stored for generations at a Buddhist temple, Kosho-ji, southwest of Hetsu-miya. The inscription on the back says that Shikijo passed away at age 84 the year after this statue was completed.

period the Daiguji family exerted its power in the region by banning the collection of marine products from coasts and islands without its permission (Photo 2-b-60). The family enjoyed widespread influence in matters both worldly and spiritual.

From the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, the Daiguji family engaged in frequent trade missions to the Korean peninsula. A Korean historical document mentions the Munakata clan capturing pirates based on the island of Oshima, indicating that Munakata clan was known on the Korean peninsula as well. The Daiguji family sent trade envoys to the Korean peninsula a total of 46 times over a period of 92 years, from 1412 to 1504.

The Daiguji family ruled the Munakata region and sea route to the Korean peninsula until the sixteenth century. In 1586, however, the Daiguji family lineage was interrupted by the death of Munakata Ujisada without an heir. As a result, most of his followers were unable to continue in their roles as priests, and the shrine's territory and scale of its religious activities declined significantly. Nevertheless, the twelve priestly families called *sha-ke*¹¹ continued their religious duties at Hetsu-miya, which included preserving the Daiguji family's historical records, while the Ichi-no-Kai Kono and Ni-no-Kai Kono (Ochi) families of Oshima continued the religious traditions at Okitsu-miya and Nakatsu-miya. In this way the worship of Okinoshima and the Three Goddesses of Munakata has survived to this day.



Photo 2-b-60 Munakata Ujimori kotogakian

This document was written in 1313 by the retiring high priest Ujimori to explain family rules to his young successor. It contains fifteen family rules. The document indicates the strong rule of the high priest's family over the coasts, islands and mountains of Munakata province.

- 11 Families of the priests of Munakata Shrine, who were the subjects of the family of Daiguji. After the Daiguji family lineage was interrupted, they took over the religious duties at Munakata Shrine.



Figure 2-b-9 Schematic figure showing overseas exchanges in the medieval period

The Munakata high priest family dominated the marine route from the Munakata region to the Korean peninsula throughout the medieval period, engaging in overseas exchanges in East Asia.

2.b.4.2 Later traditions at Munakata Shrine



Photo 2-b-61 Shohei nijusan-nen Munakata-gu nenju gyoji

Historical document listing the names of annual religious events held at each facility of Munakata Shrine. Written in 1368. It states that 5,921 religious events were conducted in one year.



Figure 2-b-10 The area that was once a sea inlet near Hetsu-miya

Religious activities continued at Munakata Shrine, with Hetsu-miya playing a central role among the three shrines. Medieval Japan witnessed a golden age for Munakata Shrine: there were some 75 affiliated subordinate shrines within Munakata Province, and it was said that during a single year, 5,921 distinct religious rituals were conducted at the main shrine and its subordinate shrines (Photo 2-b-61). The Tsurikawa River, which flows to the east of Hetsu-miya, was a sea inlet in ancient times, and many of the rituals and other activities carried out at Munakata Shrine are linked to this river and the sea (Figure 2-b-10).

The Funakurabe (lit. “boat competition”) Festival, which was held on the occasion of the Hojo-e Festival (lit. “life-saving”; celebrated annually 13 to 15 August), is one of the shrine’s largest events, in which sacred boats carrying portable shrines race on the Tsurikawa River. The five sacred boats were traditionally provided by fishing villages in Munakata Province, highlighting the shrine’s characteristic relationship to the Tsurikawa River and the sea.

The worship of Okinoshima and the Three Goddesses of Munakata first arose in close connection to the sea, and continued into medieval and modern times in the form of water-related events and rituals. On 19 December each year, the Takesai Festival was conducted at Hetsu-miya to pray for maritime safety and express gratitude to the mountain deities. A similar religious tradition took place on Mt. Mitakesan on Oshima. Also, at the Yaotome ritual held at Kamitakamiya at Hetsu-miya each 25 December, food and drink were donated by the subordinate shrines of Nakatsu-miya; the priests of Okinoshima and Oshima, who usually resided on Oshima, also participated; and sacred music and dance were offered by the priests on Oshima. Another periodic religious event was the Minagate Festival held on Okinoshima, in which long bamboo poles with cloth strips attached to them, representing deities, were carried to Hetsu-miya. This festival was held four times each year, in spring, summer, fall, and winter; bamboo grown on Okinoshima was used for the poles. In spring, summer and fall, the Grand Festival was also held at Hetsu-miya, and in those three seasons the Minagate Festival on Okinoshima was conducted by the priest of Oshima, who traveled to Okinoshima after leading the Grand Festival at Hetsu-miya. As mentioned above, some religious events were conducted separately at each of the three shrines, while others involved all three, linking them together in a single vast maritime space.

2.b.4.3 The formation of the three shrine compounds

Rituals have been performed continuously at the three places of worship since ancient times, and shrine buildings were later constructed near each of these original sites.

Okinoshima continued to serve as an object of worship even after the ancient ritual tradition on the island ceased in the late ninth century. Although no major shrine buildings would be constructed there for centuries, there is a record of the Okitsu-miya shrine buildings having been rebuilt that dates to 1644, indicating that the shrine buildings had been constructed in the same location where they stand today, prior to the mid-seventeenth century. The extant Okitsu-miya shrine buildings were rebuilt in 1932 (Photo 2-b-65); Tagorihime, the eldest of the Three Goddesses of Munakata, is enshrined there.

After the Daiguji family lineage was interrupted, responsibility for carrying out religious duties at Okitsu-miya passed to the Ichi-no-Kai Kono family. They resided on Oshima, however, and because it was difficult for them to travel to Okinoshima, Okitsu-miya Yohaisho was established on the northern part of Oshima as a place from which they could worship Okinoshima from afar. A stone monument (Photo 2-b-62) inscribed with the name Yohaisho and the year 1750 indicates that this shrine existed by the mid-eighteenth century at the latest. The existing Yohaisho shrine buildings were constructed in 1933 (Photos 2-b-63 and 69).

The shrine buildings at Nakatsu-miya were probably built around the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century at the latest (Photo 2-b-64). Historical sources confirm that the shrine buildings of Nakatsu-miya and the Mitake shrine existed by 1556. In 1585, an official position for a person who would maintain the torches at the shrine buildings was established. Therefore, by the end of the sixteenth century, the compound of Nakatsu-miya with the shrine buildings probably existed in much the same form as today (Photo 2-b-71). The extant main hall is believed to have been built around the first half of the seventeenth century (Photo 2-b-66). Tagitsuhime, the second eldest of the Three Goddesses of Munakata, is enshrined there.

At Hetsu-miya, according to legend, shrine buildings already existed by the eighth century. The first verifiable historical record of their existence, however, speaks of their reconstruction after they were lost in a fire in the early twelfth century. Structures similar to those in the shrine's present-day compound, such as the primary shrine (the main hall), the secondary shrine, the tertiary shrine, Kamitakamiya and Shimotakamiya, can be confirmed to have existed by the thirteenth century. These were Hetsu-miya's main structures during the medieval



Photo 2-b-62 Stone monument of Okitsu-miya Yohaisho

One of the oldest pieces of historical evidence for the existence of Okitsu-miya Yohaisho.



Photo 2-b-63 Shrine building of Okitsu-miya Yohaisho

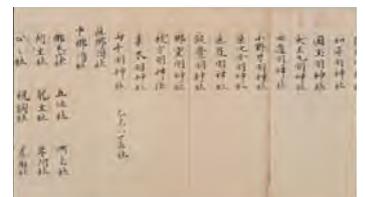


Photo 2-b-64 *Munakata daibosatsu goengi* (History of the Great Bodhisattva Munakata)

Document that explains the importance and efficacy of the Munakata goddesses based on the mythology of Japan. Compiled between the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. Since the subordinate shrines of Nakatsu-miya are mentioned, it is likely that the shrine buildings of Nakatsu-miya had already been built by the time this document was compiled.



Photo 2-b-65 Shrine buildings of Okitsu-miya



Photo 2-b-66 Shrine buildings of Nakatsu-miya



Photo 2-a-67 Shrine buildings of Hetsu-miya



Photo 2-b-68 Daiguji (high priest),
Munakata Ujisada (1545-1586)

He made a great contribution to Munakata Shrine and the Daiguji family lineage in reconstructing the main hall of Hetsu-miya, which had been destroyed in a fire. Because he had no successor, the lineage was interrupted with his death.

period, and through enshrining Tagorihime of Okitsu-miya and Tagitsuhome of Nakatsu-miya as well as Ichikishimahime, Hetsu-miya played a central role in the religious activities for the Three Goddesses of Munakata. The *Tashima-no-miya shato koezu* (Photo 2-b-70) contains the oldest extant drawing depicting the shrine compound of Hetsu-miya, and illustrates how it must have looked during the medieval period.

In 1557, the main hall burned down but was rebuilt in 1578 by the Daiguji Munakata Ujisada (Photo 2-b-68), and the worship hall was rebuilt in 1590 by feudal lord Kobayakawa Takakage. The extant main hall and worship hall of Hetsu-miya are those of the reconstructed primary shrine. Both buildings have been designated by the national government as Important Cultural Properties (Photo 2-b-67); Ichikishimahime, the youngest of the Three Goddesses of Munakata, is enshrined there.

In 1675, 75 subordinate shrines, including the secondary shrine, the tertiary shrine, Kamitakamiya and Shimotakamiya, were relocated to surround the main hall by Kuroda Mitsuyuki, the lord of Fukuoka Domain, and at that time the compound came to look very much the way it does today (Photo 2-b-72). Although several repairs have been conducted since then, some buildings of the subordinate shrines remain that probably date back to 1675.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century small changes were made within the compounds, such as the construction of a new horseback riding area and the relocation of subordinate shrines, but the shrine's overall condition remained unchanged from previous historical periods. Major changes to the property after that time include the elimination of a small pond in 1917; the expansion of shrine compounds during the Showa period (1925-1989), forming the present-day compound of Hetsu-miya; improvements made to the Shimotakamiya ritual site; repair work on the main hall and worship hall; relocation of the secondary and tertiary shrines; and the construction of various more recent structures.



Photo 2-b-69 Okitsu-miya Yohaisho
Photo taken circa 1960. Okinoshima is visible on the horizon, illustrating the function of Yohaisho as a hall from which to worship Okinoshima from afar.

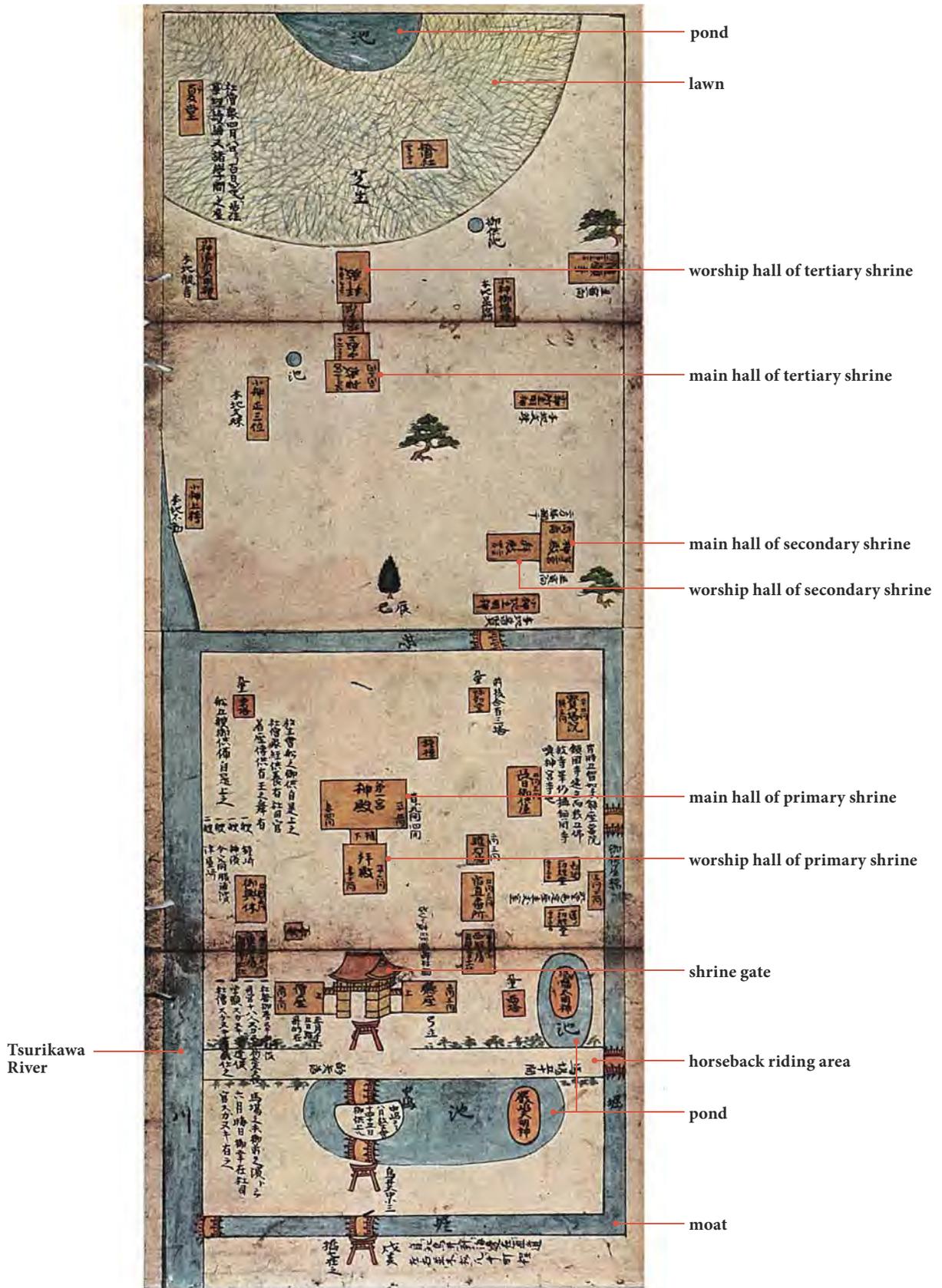


Photo 2-b-70 *Tashima-no-miya shato koezu* (old drawing of Hetsu-miya, Munakata Taisha)

Drawn ca. 1624 -1644. The oldest extant drawing depicting Hetsu-miya in the medieval period. The Tsurikawa River and moats surround the primary shrine compound, beyond which the secondary and tertiary shrines are located.



Photo 2-b-71 Drawing of Oshima included in the *Chikuzen-no-kuni zoku fudoki furoku*

A drawing dating to 1797, included in a geographical record of Chikuzen-no-kuni (now part of Fukuoka Prefecture) that was compiled by the Fukuoka Domain after the *Chikuzen-no-kuni zoku fudoki* was compiled. The drawing depicts Oshima in the foreground, with Okinoshima visible in the distance beyond it. As is the case today, Mitake Shrine situated at the Mitakesan ritual site coexists with the main hall and worship hall of Nakatsu-miya. Subordinate shrines are situated around the main hall and worship hall.



Photo 2-b-72 Drawing of Hetsu-miya included in the *Chikuzen-no-kuni zoku fudoki furoku*

A drawing dating to 1797, included in a geographical record of Chikuzen-no-kuni (now part of Fukuoka Prefecture). This drawing depicts the compound of Hetsu-miya after Kuroda Mitsuyuki refurbished it in 1675. Seventy-five subordinate shrines, including the secondary and tertiary shrines, surround the main hall and worship hall.

2.b.4.4 Munakata Taisha in the modern history

Though no one resided full-time on Okinoshima, an island guard was stationed there for defense purposes from 1639 onward, in 50-day shifts. Around that time, in the seventeenth century, the practice of *misogi* (purification), which still continues today, first appears in historical records. Those permitted to visit Okinoshima were required to purify their bodies and undergo a period of abstinence at Nakatsu-miya before landing on the island.

In one case, a guard named Aoyagi Tanenobu, who was deployed to Okinoshima in 1794, spent ten days on Oshima to prepare for his trip, purifying himself on the first day and the ascending to the peak of Mt. Mitakesan. When he arrived at Okinoshima, he first immersed himself in the sea and prayed at the Shosammi shrine, a subordinate shrine of Okitsu-miya, and then for seven days he immersed himself in the sea each day to purify himself until, on the eighth day, he finally visited the shrine buildings of Okitsu-miya. Today one Munakata Taisha priest always stays full-time on the island, with priests serving in ten-day shifts, carrying out their religious obligations each day at the shrine buildings.

After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Shinto shrines in general were placed under the management of the national government. In 1901 Munakata Shrine became one of the highest ranking Shinto shrines in Japan. In 1946 it became a religious corporation, and in 1977 its name was changed to “Munakata Taisha”, as it is still called today.

As Japan became increasingly modernized, Okinoshima served as a strategic point for border security, due to its geographical proximity to Korea, China, and Russia. In 1905 an observation tower and lighthouse were constructed at the top of Mt. Ichinotake on the island. In 1937, wartime facilities such as a canon battery and an ammunition storehouse were built on the island. After the Second World War, an embankment was constructed to create a harbor. Strict rules protected the rocks and shrine buildings, however, prohibiting changes to the island’s topography and the cutting of trees.

Munakata Shrine successfully recovered its former prosperity after the Second World War thanks in part to the support of several groups of worshippers. Among them was the Munakata Shrine Revival Association, established in 1942 by Idemitsu Sazo, the founder of the petroleum wholesale company Idemitsu Kosan Co., Ltd.; this group worked to renew the shrine compounds by repairing the buildings and purchasing the land upon which they were constructed. On three occasions, from 1954 to 1971, they also carried out full-scale investigations of ritual archaeological sites on Okinoshima for the first time in history (Photo 2-b-73), as a result of which three successive reports were published, entitled “Okinoshima”, “Zoku Okinoshima” and “Munakata Okinoshima”. These studies clarified various facts about ritual practices on the island, including the four stages of ritual styles and their importance as “state rituals”. These discoveries attracted much academic attention at the time and contributed substantially to the study of ancient rituals in Japan. In parallel, over a period of twenty years the official history of Munakata Shrine was compiled in three volumes, in which the history of the shrine is objectively explained based on a detailed analysis of historical materials.

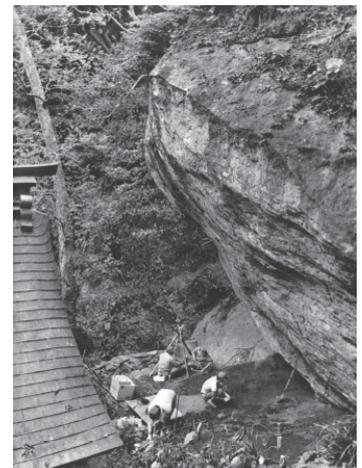


Photo 2-b-73 Scene from the third archaeological excavation



Photo 2-b-74 Miare Festival (sea procession)



Photo 2-b-75 Miare Festival (land procession)



Photo 2-b-76 Kannabi Festival at Takamiya Saijo

2.b.4.5 Faith and taboos today

Strict taboos concerning Okinoshima are still observed today. Historical documents from the seventeenth century mention the island and its taboos, such as the prohibition of women visiting the island, and the prohibition of visitors removing any object from the island, even a tree branch or a pebble. Certain inauspicious “taboo words” are also avoided on the island and alternate expressions are used. As an alternative to uttering the name “Okinoshima” directly, the epithet “Ongoshima” (lit. “island of Honored Name”) has been used instead. No ritual sites are mentioned in these historical documents, however, probably because the taboo forbidding people to speaking of what is seen or heard on the island has long been observed.

In modern times, a notable development has been the revival of various religious practices that had ceased to be practiced at Munakata Shrine. For example, the Hojo-e Festival, which had originally been held on 15 August, was revived as the Grand Autumn Festival, held 1 to 3 October; it remains the liveliest of the festivals today. This festival begins on 1 October with the Miare Festival, a revival of a medieval religious event called Minagate Festival, which the Munakata Shrine Revival Association launched in 1962. This event welcomes the eldest and middle of the three goddess sisters, Tagorihime of Okitsu-miya and Tagitsu-hime of Nakatsu-miya, to Hetsu-miya, where their younger sister Ichikishimahime awaits them. A fleet of hundreds of boats form a procession across sea from Oshima to Konominato Port on the main island of Kyushu, escorting the sacred boats carrying the two goddesses; it is one of the most impressive religious events to take place in the Munakata region (Photos 2-b-74 and 75).

On the final day of the Grand Autumn Festival the Kannabi Festival is held (Photo 2-b-76), a revival of the medieval-period Yaotome Ritual; it is performed at Takamiya Saijo to thank the Three Goddesses of Munakata for the successful completion of the Grand Festival.

Also, the Battle of Tsushima in the Russo-Japanese War took place at sea near Okinoshima, where a priest named Munakata Shigemaru, who was stationed on the island to serve Okitsu-miya, witnessed and recorded it in detail in a journal in 1905. After the war a compass (Photo 2-b-77) from the flagship Mikasa was donated to Munakata Shrine by its commander, Togo Heihachiro, as a token of gratitude for the victory.

On a related note, the Okistu-miya Grand Festival (Photo 2-b-78) is held each year on 27 May to commemorate the start of the battle. This day offers the only opportunity for ordinary people to visit Okinoshima, though the group of visitors is limited to about 200 men. Even on this occasion, people are required to adhere strictly to traditional rules, including immersion in the sea to purify themselves before landing on the island, and taboos forbidding removal of any object from the island, even a stick, blade of grass, or stone.

Originally people prayed to the Three Goddesses of Munakata for successful ocean voyages and overseas exchanges, but over time the goddesses began to attract other kinds of devotion associated with water, and came to be enshrined in other locations such as waterfronts, islands and ponds throughout Japan. Ichikishimahime, said to be the youngest of the three goddesses, came to be identified with the most popular water deity in Japan, Benzaiten (Sarasvati)¹², which led the Munakata goddesses to become more widely accepted throughout the

12 Originally a river deity in India, who was introduced into Buddhism. Later she came to be identified with the goddess Ichikishimahime, and is often worshipped as one of the seven deities of good fortune in Japan.

country. The goddesses were not merely guardian deities of the state, but today have come to be revered by people throughout Japan¹³. Munakata Taisha in Fukuoka Prefecture is the place where the faith in the Three Goddesses of Munakata originated, and the headquarters of the faith throughout Japan where the goddesses continue to be worshipped today.

Munakata fishermen in particular are ardent devotees of Okinoshima. They take great pride in guarding the island, and still engage in the traditional practice of donating fish from their catch as offerings to the deities, with prayers for good catches and safe voyages. The local people of the Munakata region, especially its fishermen, are the ones who keep the island's taboos and traditional worship practices alive today.

Munakata Taisha also first began issuing talismans for traffic safety in 1963; and today the shrine continues to attract devotion and prayers for traffic safety protection (Photo 2-b-79).

This property is therefore not only a locus of archaeological sites that offer rare evidence about religious practices in ancient Japan, but also continues to serve as a living place of worship today.

13 According to the statistics given in the “Research on Shinto Shrines Worshipping the Three Goddesses of Munakata” in 1944, there are approximately 6,000 shrines throughout Japan where the Three Goddesses of Munakata are worshipped.



Photo 2-b-77 Mariner's compass from the warship Mikasa



Photo 2-b-78 Okitsu-miya Grand Festival



Photo 2-b-79 Rite of car purification to pray for traffic safety (ca. 1966-1968)

Table 2-b-3 Main annual religious events of Munakata Taisha today

Date	Religious event	Content
1 to 3 January	New Year's Festival	Religious event offering prayers for New Year's Day.
13 January	Rice Harvest Festival	Religious event in which Shinto communities of Munakata City and Fukutsu City (former Munakata Province) make an offering of newly harvested crops to give thanks and to pray for good harvests and good health.
3 February	Setsubun festival	Religious event to pray for peaceful year, longevity, and good fortune, in which the rite of bean-throwing is practiced.
15 March (lunar calendar)	Okitsu-miya and Nakatsu-miya Spring Festival	Grand annual festival of Okitsu-miya and Nakatsu-miya.
1 and 2 April	Spring Grand Festival	Religious event to pray for a good harvest, originating from an event in which divine treasures are opened to the public when they are aired out for preservation purposes.
5 May	May Festival	Religious event observed at the mouth of the Tsurikawa River, at Hama-miya Shrine and Satsuki-miya Shrine, which are located on each side of the river. Religious event to pray for the growth of rice. Irises and <i>chimaki</i> (steamed rice cakes wrapped in bamboo leaves) are offered to the gods.
27 May	Okitsu-miya Grand Festival	Once each year, approximately 200 men are given special permission to visit Okinoshima of Okitsu-miya.
31 July	Summer Purification	One of the two annual religious events for the purification of sins and defilement. <i>Hitogata</i> (a piece of traditional Japanese paper cut in the shape of a person, on which one writes one's name and blows on it to transfer sins and defilement to the paper) sent from throughout Japan are exorcised and thrown into the sea.
7 August	Star Festival	Religious event at Nakatsu-miya. Bamboo poles decorated with paper strips of five colors are erected in front of the shrine to pray for improvement in various arts and skills.
15 September (lunar calendar)	Okitsu-miya and Nakatsu-miya Autumn Festival	Grand festival of Okitsu-miya and Nakatsu-miya.
1 to 3 October	Autumnal Grand Festival	Festival of prayer and giving thanks for peace, good harvests, and good catches. The most important religious event at Munakata Taisha, which opens with the Miare Festival, followed by the performance of traditional dance and horseback archery as votive offerings. On the last day, the Kannabi Festival is observed at Takamiya Saijo to give thanks to the Three Goddesses of Munakata, celebrating the successful completion of the Autumnal Grand Festival and offering prayers for eternal divine protection.
17 October	Tea Festival	Religious event in which tea is offered to the gods by the head of the Omote Senke school of the tea ceremony.
15 November	"Seven-Five-Three" Festival	Religious event to give thanks and pray for the health and growth of children.
23 November	New Harvest Festival	Religious event to give thanks for successful harvests.
15 December	Ancient Festival	Religious event to give thanks for good harvests and good health, in which a meal and sake made from the crops harvested in that year are offered to and consumed with the gods.
31 December	Year-End Purification	Religious event to purify sins and defilements that have been committed or suffered throughout the past year, and to prepare for the coming year.
1st and 15th of each month	Monthly Festival	Religious event performed on the first and fifteenth days of each month.

