

## **Hetsu-miya**

Hetsu-miya, also commonly referred to as Munakata Taisha, is on the main island of Kyushu, about an hour by public transportation from the city of Fukuoka. It is the largest and most accessible of the three shrines that make up Munakata Taisha and has an on-site museum with artifacts that date from as early as the fourth century.

The current shrine was built by the Munakata family, who once ruled part of the north coast of Kyushu. The main shrine buildings were constructed sometime before the twelfth century, but the history of worship here dates back much further. Early worship can be traced to an ancient ritual site, Takamiya Saijo, in the forest behind the main sanctuary. The main sanctuary enshrines Ichikishimahime no Kami, one of the Three Female Deities of Munakata. The other two deities can be worshipped behind the main sanctuary, in two smaller subsidiary shrines.

The Shimpokan Museum is located on the shrine grounds, to the left of the main sanctuary. The museum holds more than 80,000 artifacts that were excavated on Okinoshima. Displays include gold jewelry, ceramics, glasswork, and other precious items that were used as ritual offerings.