

Tumulus Tombs

The construction of tumuli, large tombs under mounds of soil or rock (*kofun*) was common across prehistoric Europe and Asia but began around the mid-third century in Japan. The tradition of constructing burial mounds for emperors and important figures originated in ancient China, and spread to Japan via the Korean Peninsula. It is thought some 160,000 of them were built across the archipelago. During the Yamato period (300–710), these burial mounds were built for emperors but also for the leaders of powerful local families. They were buried with precious objects, similar to those found on Okinoshima. This was a well-established practice by the time the Shimbaru tumuli were built for the Munakata family, who had control over local shipping routes and close ties to the Yamato court.

For a better understanding of these tombs, download the dedicated AR (augmented reality) app, Okinoshima Finder, available on iTunes and Google Play.