

Offerings and Votive Objects on Okinoshima

The sheer volume of objects found on Okinoshima was staggering—over 80,000 were excavated from ritual sites across the island. Many are now on display at the Shimpokan Museum at Munakata Taisha.

Ancient Treasures

Among the items found on Okinoshima are comma-shaped beads (*magatama*), carved from precious stone. According to the creation myths recorded in Japan's oldest written chronicles, the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami gave *magatama* (often described as “jewels”), along with a mirror and a sword, to her grandson, Ninigi no Mikoto, when she sent him to rule over Japan. He became the founding ancestor of Japan's line of emperors, and the Three Sacred Treasures (the mirror, the jewel, and the sword) are revered as symbols of the emperors' divinity. Although the Three Sacred Treasures are never put on public view, we can assume they look similar to the ones found on Okinoshima.

Changing Rituals

Some of the earliest and most intricate objects found on Okinoshima were brought from China and the Korean Peninsula, indicating early trade ties with the rest of Asia. Many of the pieces that date to a later period (eighth to ninth centuries) are simpler and were crafted in Japan. The large number of talc carvings fashioned into human, boat, and horse shapes, in contrast to the imported objects that had been offered to the deities in earlier times, suggest that the nature of the rituals had changed.