

Tomori Petroglyphs

These petroglyphs, known as Tomori no senkokuga, are the most detailed of similar images discovered at five locations around the island. They are unique to Tokunoshima, as no similar works have been found elsewhere on the Amami Islands.

The precise age of the petroglyphs, as well as their purpose and meaning, is unclear. They are believed to date from the early Edo period (1603–1867) and were noted in an 1895 book about Tokunoshima. The images, which appear on three rocks, consist of recurring images of sailing ships and arrows. The complexity of the images and the width of the lines steadily decreases from the first to the last.

Two of the rocks were discovered by local people in 1923. The first is etched quite deeply and depicts nine ships and 48 arrows. The style of the sails depicted on the ships were used in the Edo period. One theory is that they were carved by a local person to record significant events, such as vessels arriving from an unusual destination.

The second rock depicts 10 ships and nine arrows, including what appear to be *yakata-bune*, the pleasure boats of shoguns.

The third rock was uncovered during a survey of the site in 2012. It features six ships and eight arrows, which may have been created at different times. The meaning of the grid patterns that appear only on this rock has also yet to be deciphered.

These petroglyphs were designated a Cultural Property of Kagoshima Prefecture in 2017.