

Spiritual Forces and Sacred Sites

The Ryukyu Kingdom began importing the ancient Chinese art of geomancy known as *feng shui* around the eighteenth century. Before long, the people of the islands had developed this art into a unique tradition of their own. On Taketomijima, villages that were organized on such principles during this period still stand today.

One idea of the tradition is that evil spirits have difficulty negotiating bends. Most roads on the island incorporate some kind of bend, however slight. Another traditional means of deflecting malevolent forces can be seen near this sign: the cairn-like mound of rocks planted with trees, known as a *summashaa*. There are three *summashaa* on the island, protecting *Ainota* (East), *Innota* (West) and *Naaji* (Nakasuji) villages.

As you walk around the island, you may spot other devices to ward off evil, including the distinctively shaped rocks known as *ishiganto* at T-intersections. These objects are all part of the balance between the spiritual and the practical that characterizes the island.

Taketomijima has 28 sacred sites known as *on* (*utaki*) that are deeply revered by the islanders. Most of these sites are signposted, and visitors are instructed never to enter them. Please observe the following rules:

1. Taketomijima has many visitors. Please take any rubbish home with you.
2. Do not enter the areas around houses bounded by rock walls. These are the residents' private spaces.
3. The villages are where residents live their daily lives. Do not walk through villages in revealing clothes or swimwear.
4. Spending the night anywhere except in accommodation facilities is forbidden. You may not camp or sleep outside.
5. Flowers, plants, shellfish, fish, and butterflies are to be observed only, not touched. Each one is a tiny life.
6. *On* are sacred sites. Do not enter. Please understand the meaning of "sacred".