

Remote Worship in Fukutsu

Okinoshima is a sacred island off the coast of Munakata and Fukutsu. Access is restricted to a handful of Shinto priests who serve there. Worshippers of the island and the deity enshrined there at Okitsu-miya Shrine must engage in a practice of remote worship (*yohai*).

The practice of remote worship is widespread across the Munakata region, including in Fukutsu, where the Three Female Deities of Munakata (enshrined at Hetsu-miya, Nakatsu-miya, and Okitsu-miya Shrines) have been revered for thousands of years. While some worship locations are structures, many *yohai* spots around Fukutsu are simple vantage points on mountainsides or beaches. There are several *yohai* spots around Fukutsu, including the village of Tebika and Shiraishi Beach.

Until the mid-twentieth century, ceremonies were commonly held at the end of rice planting, to honor the deities of Okinoshima. People would make offerings of food and sake at a *yohai* spot, to give thanks for a successful planting and pray for a good harvest or good catch, and good health. Although these formal ceremonies are no longer common, they are still held at Suga-jinja Shrine, and people from the area still visit these spots to offer prayers.