

**“Okinoshima Island and Related Sites in the Munakata Region”**

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# **Okinoshima in World Perspective: Weaving Narratives of Ritual, Politics and Exchange**

Simon KANER

Assistant Director, the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures

## **Introduction**

This paper explores the value of the archaeological remains of the island of Okinoshima and sites associated with the Munakata clan in terms of a comparative study of other ritual and religious sites around the world. The paper follows on from an earlier study by the same author (Kaner 2011), which discussed contemporary thinking about the archaeology of religion and how Okinoshima can contribute to such a field of study, and is informed by a series of studies about Okinoshima commissioned as part of the process of preparing the case for the nomination of Okinoshima and associated sites in the Munakata region for UNESCO World Heritage Status.

My previous paper argued for a contextualised set of narratives about Okinoshima, that would allow visitors to understand both the nature of the ritual practices that took place there, and also the motivations behind those practices. In addition, I argued that some of Okinoshima's importance lies in how it can contribute to understanding change within traditions of ritual and religious practice. I provided a brief contextualised account of the development of ritual observances on Okinoshima: in this paper I attempt to broaden this out, to set what was happening at Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region in an East Asian context, before comparing them to sacred islands and sacred mountains in other parts of the world. I also proposed a series of research questions that derived from the research already undertaken. In this paper I expand on the comparative sites, and include what have become known as 'natural places', and consider the relationship between these and monumental places of worship. I also develop a series of research themes that I think are of great significance for Okinoshima, and through which Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region can contribute to the broader history of humanity. I concluded my previous study by suggesting three forms of agency (body-agency, object agency and space-agency) that may be helpful in considering Okinoshima, and also discussed the notion of performativity, central to many contemporary studies of ritual practice. This study concludes with some suggestions about how an archaeology of religious experience can be enhanced by a visit to the sites associated with Okinoshima, a journey that has already been begun with the excellent displays at the 'Uminomichi Munakatakan' Museum'

## **1. A framework for comparison**

As demonstrated by the comparative research commissioned as part of the process of nomination for inscription as a World Heritage Site (Fukuoka 2011), Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munkata region are of tremendous value in understanding the relationships between (1) changing traditions of ritual practice, (2) changing political circumstances and strategies, and (3) interactions between different parts of East Asia (including diplomacy, trade and warfare). The sites that currently comprise the property being nominated include significant natural places (islands, mountain tops, clusters of large rocks, and coastal locations with specific sightlines); monuments (burial mounds and shrine buildings); and the material remains of votive deposits (with research still ongoing into whether these are all the actual remains of ritual acts intended to propitiate deities, or whether some at least represent acts of deposition before or after such propitiatory rituals). While each of these components is undoubtedly of great value in their own right, I consider that it is in their association with each other that they take on Outstanding Universal Value.

It is these associations that truly set Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region apart from other sites in the history of humanity that are considered to have outstanding Universal Value in terms of religion, trade and state formation. In order to compare Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region with other sites around the world we therefore first need to establish a framework for

comparison. This framework needs to be based on the recognition of the importance of these associations, on a set of interwoven narratives about history, ritual and religion, politics, and the exchange of commodities, each of which draws on distinct bodies of scholarship.

In the course of this paper, we will consider a number of potential comparators and types of comparators for Okinoshima, and the associated sites, each of which contribute to setting Okinoshima in the context of the global history of humanity. But at the same time, we will examine differences as well as similarities, in order to appreciate the specificity of the significance of Okinoshima. This is not necessarily to argue that Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region are unique in terms of any of their individual components (any more than any other archaeological site is unique), but rather that the specific sets of associations and relationships identifiable at Okinoshima and the associated sites have the potential to enable us to understand in a unique way the complexities of the development of East Asian world when the nations that comprise East Asia today were being created.

This emphasis on specificity within a global context complements the microhistorical approach adopted by much of the comparative research commissioned as part of the nomination process (e.g. Shiraishi 2011). Japanese archaeology now offers a very high resolution dataset based on over a century of detailed research which provides excellent chronological control, the essential basis for weaving together the various mythological hints, historical snippets and archaeological fragments with which we can create compelling narratives about what happened in and around the Genkai Sea at this critical time in East Asia's past. And we must be aware that the creation of these narratives is open to political manipulation just as were the stories in the ancient histories, which so often served to legitimate the interests of those who commissioned the accounts. While our accounts cannot, and indeed should not, be removed from the contexts within which they are written, our narratives must be self-reflexive and need to be sensitive to the diversity of voices involved. The places, sites and objects under study meant different things to different people at different times. While we can track continuities within traditions of ritual practice, we need to celebrate the dynamic history of these traditions, rather than restrict our endeavours to searching for origins of later religious combinations such as Shinto.

Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region offer an exceptional opportunity to address the complicated archaeology and history of East Asia from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries in a way that takes advantage of new developments in the archaeology of religion, but that avoids the problems associated with many earlier cross-cultural generalisations. Richard Bradley, in his *Archaeology of Natural Places*, re-examines Marcia Eliade's concept of 'hierophanies', 'literally, places where the sacred world shows itself' (Bradley 1999: 28-32; Eliade 1954, 1964). Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region are an excellent example of a hierophany.

According to Eliade, all religions are based on two competing principles:

'cosmos and chaos. Cosmos is the domain of human order and, by extension, that of sacred power, whilst chaos is its opposite and stands for the profane. The two elements exist in tension, and the principle of order must be reasserted constantly. Religious practices provide one way of mediating between those two extremes. Communication is all important here: it must happen in special locations where the sacred world is revealed' (Bradley 1999: 29).

These special locations are what Eliade terms hierophanies. Eliade uses the example of the rock, which is appropriate to our study of the rocks on Okinoshima:

'The object appears as a receptacle of an exterior force that differentiates it from its milieu and gives it meaning and value. This force may reside in the substance of the object or in its form: a rock reveals itself to be sacred because its very existence is an hierophany: incompressible, invulnerable, it is that which man is not. It resists time' (Eliade 1954: 4).

Inspired by scholars such as Bradley and Eliade, and the many others referred to in my previous paper, our comparative framework will emphasise the following: interwoven relationships between different elements; microhistories; the recognition of specificity within a global context, highlighting both similarities and differences; diversity of perceptions; and both continuity and change in traditions of ritual practice, and

how these are reproduced and transformed through time. Our comparisons will emphasise structural themes (deposition, pilgrimage and isolation) rather than simple formal analogies (sacred mountains and islands). In this way we can begin to construct an archaeology of religious experience for Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region, both based on and contributing to an appreciation of the Outstanding Universal Value of the component sites and their relationships, that will enhance our understanding of the archaeology and history of the Genkai Sea and its place in the fabric of the East Asian past.

The current paper proposes that the outstanding universal value of Okinoshima and the associated sites lies in their potential to contribute to understanding of a series of themes of significance for the history of humanity in broad. These complement the criteria being used for the nomination and include:

- The relationship between religion and state formation
- The relationship between religion and international interaction (including trade and war)
- The ways that ritual practice change through time, and the relationship between such changes and the interaction between different traditions of religious and cult belief
- The development of monumental places of ritual observance and their relationship to worship at natural places

Making this case requires a detailed consideration of changing perceptions of Okinoshima as a basis for beginning to understand how different people would have experienced and thought about the various practices whose material traces are exceptionally well-preserved on the island.

## 2. A new archaeology of religion and the archaeology of religious experience

As set out in my previous paper, many archaeologists in the past felt that archaeology, the study of the material traces of the past, could not contribute to our understanding of religion. Moreover, many felt that religion was not an important part of understanding the development of society and human behaviour. In terms of understanding the causes of human development, religion was considered secondary to, for example, technology, economy and politics. Ideology was important, religion less so. And yet, at the same time, many people professed a religious belief, and went to church.

In Japan after 1945, archaeologists were very cautious about using the historical records of the *Nihon Shoki* and the *Kojiki* to interpret the past. Following the difficult association between Shinto and militarism before and during the Second World War, these historical accounts were no longer taught in school. Archaeologists focused on interpreting just material remains instead (see Fawcett and Habu 1989; Mizoguchi 2007).

Over the past 25 years there has been a very major change. There is now a new field of the ‘Archaeology of Religion’, and many books and publications on this topic. Religion is no longer seen as epiphenomenal. In a world in which we have rising levels of fundamentalist religious belief, religion is now recognised as a major motivating factor in the past, as well as in the present. And yet in my own cultural context, less people profess a belief than ever before. In my city, Norwich, home to the highest density of Medieval churches north of the Alps, and with two magnificent cathedrals, the most recent census, in which people are asked about their religious beliefs, suggested that Norwich is the most ‘godless city in England’, with the smallest proportion of the population in England attending church on a Sunday. Yet in Japan, there has been a renaissance of interest in visiting religious sites, with the identification of ‘power spots’, and we can anticipate that very high numbers of visitors will visit the Munakata region if the nomination is successful.

Two years ago I had the tremendous privilege to visit the sacred island of Okinoshima. I received some very important advice and instruction before we went. This is an island of taboos: I was not to speak to anyone of what I saw (although I understood that I could show them pictures). I was not allowed to take anything away (a very important principle of visiting any archaeological site). I would have to purify myself through *misogi*, or bathing in the sea. Going to Okinoshima was an act of pilgrimage: we were going to a remote place, and the crossing was likely to be very rough: I needed strong sea-sickness medicine. We were very lucky; the Munakata deities smiled on us that day and we had a beautiful smooth

crossing. But there is no question that just going to Okinoshima was a clear rite of passage, a ritual that forms an important part of most religious beliefs. As somebody who does not practice any particular religion at home, I was moved by a sense of awe, by the special nature of the island, and by the sense of privileged access to what is clearly a very special part of the Japanese archipelago: removed from the everyday, with some very special environmental conditions.

I was very aware that the vast majority of people, including all women, would never be allowed to visit this island. While visiting, and since, I have been thinking about how can a flavor of the importance of religious experience be passed on to ordinary people, to the people who cannot visit Okinoshima. In this, I was guided by many of the archaeologists who are now working on the archaeology of religion. They are developing ideas about how we can engage with material culture that is created and used as a result of religious motivation.

### **3. Multiple stories from Okinoshima: An interwoven narrative of East Asian religion, trade, politics and diplomacy**

Over 80,000 artefacts have been excavated from the ritual sites on Okinoshima, including objects that we think we know the function of (mirrors, weapons, horse trappings), and some for which the word 'function' is more difficult to apply, such as the evocative stone miniatures. More are being uncovered by the ongoing investigations into the associated sites of the Munakata region. We can create stories around each of these objects, and the places they were found.

One of the challenges of assessing the outstanding universal value of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region is to appreciate its significance in the history of the development of religious belief and practice in East Asia. We also need to understand how the changing traditions of ritual practice in the region exhibited by the archaeological remains of offerings on the island and the associated sites relates to political and economic developments in East Asia (including the Japanese archipelago) more broadly.

Very few visitors will have a detailed understanding of what is a very complex period in East Asian history, and one in which the sources available to us need to be subject to particularly rigorous critical assessment, as they have been used in the past to legitimate political ideologies that lead to crisis and disaster. For this reason, in addition to the thematic approach adopted in the first part of this paper, it seems helpful to develop an outline narrative that weaves together some of these strands in a way which will encourage the average visitor to take away from their encounter with Okinoshima an enhanced understanding of the kinds of questions that Okinoshima is uniquely positioned to address.

In this narrative, I have attempted to extract a number of questions about each phase of the use of Okinoshima that can be linked to broader themes in world history, and which form a baseline for a placing Okinoshima in a comparative perspective.

The main narratives that have been created around Okinoshima relate to the development of religious beliefs and practices in a regional context. And the archaeology of Okinoshima encourages us to think about the importance of interactions between the various countries and empires that rose and fell during the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. It is during this time that for the first time an East Asian consciousness developed, with shared beliefs in particular the worship of Buddha in conjunction with earlier beliefs and practices, many based on the propitiation of spirits and deities that dwelt in specific natural places.

And this East Asian consciousness is very important today. East Asia has the highest population densities, the largest economies, and arguably the greatest cultural impact in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: popular culture, fashion, cuisine. And if Okinoshima can help us understand and appreciate that consciousness, then it truly has Outstanding Universal Value.

#### **Before ritual offerings were made at Okinoshima:**

The thousand years before the first votive deposits were placed on the top of large rocks on Okinoshima, marking the start of the main tradition of ritual practice on the island, were of great importance for East

Asian history. The founding figures of three great religious traditions that had a great impact on later Japanese history, Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism, all lived between 500 – 200 BC, during what the great historian of religion, Robert Bellah, refers to as the Axial Age (Bellah 2011). China was unified for the first time under the First Emperor, and massively expanded its power and influence during the Han Empire. Religious specialists were travelling widely through continental Asia, spreading the word of Buddha, although it took a long time for Buddhism to actually take hold in China. The first Buddhist temples were built in China (AD 193) and the power of religious texts was recognised for the first time, and challenged, for instance in one of the earliest recorded episodes of book burning (213 BC, by the First Emperor of China, Qin Shih Huang Di). Regional powers in the Japanese archipelago (such as Himiko's Yamataikoku) and on the Korean peninsula send envoys to the new Chinese colonies and to the central court (from 238 onwards), so that by the time the first offerings are being made at Okinoshima, the tradition of envoys sent from court to court was already well established. The authority of rulers such as Himiko was based on her personal shamanic powers, but such rulers already appreciated the importance of prestigious material symbols of power and allegiance, such as mirrors. Although there are artefacts from Okinoshima that date to this period, there is no evidence for them having an overtly 'ritual' character, although it is quite probable that the fishing expeditions that left them inhabited animistic universes where many seemingly mundane activities (going fishing) required the propitiation of spirits.

### **Phase 1: Late 4<sup>th</sup> – Early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (see Kaner 2011 337-339)**

During this time of weakened centralised power in China, Buddhism becomes well established with major centres of Buddhist learning appearing, and there is competition between Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism for support from the ruling authorities. By 400 Buddhism is ascendant by the time writing is introduced to Japan by Chinese scribes. Buddhism is introduced to the kingdoms on the Korean peninsula. There is heightened interaction between regional powers in Japan and the Korean peninsula, with possible military engagements from the 390s (see 414 AD). Diplomatic envoys continue to be sent between Korea and Japan, and Japan and China. The reign of Great King Yuryaku (456-479), known as Wakatakeru in his own lifetime, marks an important development in the nature of politics and ritual practice in the archipelago. Yuryaku extends Yamato control over much of western Japan by gift-giving and advantageous marriages, establishing his patronage over various regional cults (such as that of the Munakata region), and creates a role as the pre-eminent ritual coordinator of the archipelago, appropriating and safeguarding sacred regalia from regional cult centres in shrines such as Isonokami in the Yamato heartland. To facilitate this, he engages professional ritual practitioners, so that ritual powers are no longer just the prerogative of the ruler, as was the case with Himiko. He also sends offerings to the shrines of these major local deities, including Okinoshima. At the same time Yuryaku continues the tradition of sending envoys to the Chinese court. But when Yuryaku dies there is a fierce dispute over succession, demonstrating that the power of the Yamato court was not yet consolidated sufficiently to secure a smooth transition from one generation to the next.

### **Phase 2: Late 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (See Kaner 2011: 339-341)**

In China work commences on a series of major Buddhist monuments, including great cave temple complexes with many Buddha sculptures (e.g. Yungang) and fabulous monasteries (e.g. Yongning with its nine-storeyed pagoda reputedly 1000 feet high), and the new capital at Loyang becomes the most important Buddhist city in Asia. On the Korean peninsula Buddhism is adopted by Silla, the last of the kingdoms to do so, and all of the Korean kingdoms begin the construction of elaborate Buddhist monuments. In the Japanese archipelago Great King Keitai (507-531) consolidates Yamato power over the many of the regions, employing a strategy of royally sanctioned ritualization to take control of agriculture (and irrigation) and production (notably of iron). Rites that were previously the preserve of regional chiefs were taken over and made part of the royal preserve by palace ritualists. Diplomacy and the succession were ritualised as part of this extension of royal control. This enhanced centralisation was continued through the reign of Kimmei (535-539) who consolidates the royal dynasty, on the eve of the arrival of the worship of Buddha into the Japanese archipelago. In the later 6<sup>th</sup> century Empress Suiko and her regent, Shotoku Taishi promote Buddhism at the expense of local cults. A programme of the construction of Buddhist temples is inaugurated (see Kidder 1999 and McCallum 2009). Under Suiko, power was further consolidated in the hands of the Yamato clan: Suiko claimed to be the Heavenly Heir (tenshi or tenno), essential to the maintenance of the cosmic order, which she reproduced and guaranteed through ritual propitiation. The construction of large mounded tombs is forbidden, and the urge to construct monuments instead becomes

focused on Buddhist temples. This phase comes to an end with the confrontation between Tang and Yamato expeditionary forces at the Hakusonko River which sees Japan withdraw from the continent.

**Phase 3: Late 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (See Kaner 2011: 341-343)**

The rulers of Tang China make use of both Buddhism and Daoism to keep their newly reunified Empire in a state of contented subordination. In 666 AD, for the first time in six centuries, recalling the glories of the Han Empire, Empress Wu performs the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices on the sacred Mount Tai. At the same time as the Empress is embodying the harmony of the universe, she is also promoting Buddhism. She is acclaimed as a reincarnation of the Maitreya Buddha. In 695, five years after taking the throne for herself following the death of Emperor Gaozong, she is on hand to welcome back the Buddhist pilgrim Yi Jing (I-ching) after his 24 year travels which capture the cosmopolitan flavour of East Asia during the rule of the Tang dynasty: he sets out on a Persian ship and travels to Sumatra and Bengal. Empress Wu commissions the great Mingtang (Hall of Light) audience hall, behind which stood a great pagoda housing an immense Buddha. The monument is destroyed in a fire, probably set by the Empress's rejected favourite Xue Huaiye. Following this episode Empress Wu turns to Confucianism, but also offers support to new, incoming beliefs including Manicheism from Iran.

None of this is lost on the new Yamato ruler, Tenmu (r. 672-686) who further enhances the use of ritual authority, and established an administrative bureaucratic state with the tenno at the top, the rule of whose line is legitimated by newly commissioned histories (the first of which appears in 712), which demonstrate the unbroken link between the current ruler and the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, now enshrined in Ise, which is elevated to the main national shrine. With Tenmu, the process of state formation in Japan is completed, in readiness for the establishment of the first Chinese style capital at Nara in 710 AD and the construction of a series of monumental Buddhist temples, epitomised by the Todaiji, founded in 745.

**Phase 4: Late 8<sup>th</sup> – end of 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD (See Kaner 2011: 343-345)**

The last major stage of ritual observances at Okinoshima coincides with the later part of the Tang Empire, and further new religious influences entering China. A stele in the Nestorian church in the Tang capital, Chang'an, describes Christian activity in China in 781. In 798 a mission from caliph Harun al-Rashid arrives in Chang'an. The great Buddhist monk Kukai, who was to found the Shingon sect of Buddhism upon his return to Japan, and who was largely responsible for bringing Buddhism to ordinary people rather than it remaining the preserve of the elite, would have experienced this cosmopolitan atmosphere himself while travelling in China from 804-806. Other Japanese monks travelling in China around this time included Ennin, Jogyo and Engyo (see Miller 1978 and Pollack 2010 for Japanese perceptions of China at this time). But in China the golden age of the promotion of Buddhism was drawing to a close, and the reign of the Emperor Wu-Tsung (r. 841-846) witnessed the suppression of monasteries on a massive scale: between 843-845, 4600 monastic establishments were demolished or turned into public buildings; 260,000 Buddhist monks and nuns were secularised and registered for tax. 40,000 other places of worship were destroyed or given over to other uses. Along with Buddhism, the Iranian religions were outlawed, as was Christianity. Against this backdrop of suppression, in 851 the first description of Canton by a foreigner, an Arabian trader named Suleyman, who knew the great port city as Khanfu, paints a portrait of a bustling multicultural entrepot of some 200,000 souls, where Chinese and Arabs rubbed shoulders with Iranians, Malays, Brahmins, Chams, Khmers and Sumatrans (Gernet 1996: 294-296).

Over 70 years before Suleyman was describing Canton and Wu-tsung was cracking down on the Buddhist temples, the Yamato government had found a different way to address the power of the Buddhist establishments: they moved the capital from Nara to Heian (modern-day Kyoto) following a brief sojourn at Nagaoka-kyo.

#### **4. Okinoshima in early Japanese history**

Between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, the small island of Okinoshima was the focus of a tradition of ritual practice involving apparently votive offerings in a number of different contexts on the island. The offerings ranged from relatively everyday utilitarian objects such as locally-produced pottery, to exotic

imported items (including mirrors, glass, gilt-bronze lion heads and an exquisite miniature loom) that are thought to have been highly valued by the people who were making the offerings, and those on whose behalf they were being made. Some of the objects were apparently made specifically to be deposited on the island of Okinoshima, while others already had interesting biographies.

The Munakata region in which Okinoshima and its associated sites are located has long been associated with the Munakata clan, referred to in the ancient chronicles of Japan. Those chronicles and other sources suggest that the Munakata clan were a significant regional power during much of the first millennium AD and that their relationship with the emerging and centralising power of Yamato, whose centre was located several hundred kilometres to the northeast in the Kinai region, was of importance for the development of early state-level societies in Japan. Significant archaeological remains associated with the Munakata clan include burial mounds and settlement in the region.

The development of the tradition of votive offerings at Okinoshima took place against the backdrop of major political, economic, religious and other cultural changes in Japan, and it is quite likely that the specific meanings of the offerings varied over time. The archaeological evidence for offerings made at Okinoshima between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries are mostly interpreted as offerings made to the local deities in order to ensure safe crossings over the Genkai Sea and Tsushima Straits to Korea and on to China. It is further assumed that these offerings were made by and on behalf of seafarers beginning their journeys in Japan. Such voyages constituted an important aspect of relations between Japan, the Korean peninsula and China. The voyages were made by official envoys, ambassadors and their entourages, by traders and merchants as well as by fisherfolk, and involved religious figures, students, privateers and poets: sometimes a combination of many of these. The voyages themselves and the records we have of them are a measure of the interaction between Japan and the continent during much of the first millennium.

During the period the offerings were being made, new religious configurations developed in Japan. The earliest offerings were made when religious activity in Japan was based on local cultic beliefs with no written codes: by the 9<sup>th</sup> century great Buddhist temples had been constructed in Japan, and sutras and other texts were in regular circulation. The *engishiki*, the codification of the Way of the Kami, had been written down. By the 8<sup>th</sup> century the first chronicles of Japan were published, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*. In the course of this period, courtly and royal rituals become increasingly defined, intertwined with the development of popular cults that drew on Chinese and Korean practices.

## 5. Okinoshima and the East Asian world: 300-900 AD

The middle centuries of the first millennium AD witnessed the development of a new East Asian consciousness. While there had been many contacts and influences throughout prehistory from the first peopling of the region over a million years ago, it was only with the spread of a literate sinophone culture that we have evidence for a self-aware engagement between the various polities that occupy the region now comprising China, Korea and Japan. While older narratives talk of the rise of East Asian civilisation and focus on cores and peripheries (usually with China at the core and other polities on the peripheries), more recent scholarship emphasises the multiplicity of contingent relationships that existed between the empires, states and kingdoms that flourished and disappeared between the fall of the Han and the fall of the Tang, in the early third and early tenth centuries respectively. Wang Zhenping, in his survey of recorded Chinese relations with Japan, *Ambassadors from the Islands of Immortals* (2005) talks in terms of the 'multipolar nature of the international system in Asia' during this period, evoking a multiplicity of centres each with their respective hinterlands and each lasting for varying amounts of time.

Within Japan, this period saw a series of shifts, from a series of autonomous but competing regional powers, to a bureaucratic central state authority, with those in power self-consciously manipulating both the creation of history and structures of belief (including the worship of Buddha and the propagation of Shinto kami deities), shifts embodied in the commissioning of the first indigenous histories of the Yamato state (the *Kojiki*, *Nihon Shoki*, *Shoku Nihongi*), the written codification of ritual (the *Engi Shiki*), and the construction of monumental buildings for the purpose of worship (exemplified by the Ise Grand Shrine and the Todaiji Temple). All of this was undertaken in the context of the maintenance and regular redefinition of relationships with powers on the East Asian mainland, relationships that did so much to help define how

Japanese rulers saw themselves. And the nature of these relationships were symbolically expressed and protected by the observances regularly undertaken at Okinoshima.

All through this period, ritual observances were carried out on the island of Okinoshima. The Munakata clan that controlled both the island and the coastal hinterland of the seascape of which Okinoshima was such an important part was a major regional power playing a significant role in the development of the Yamato state, the first centralised authority in the Japanese archipelago. Okinoshima, with its remarkable preservation of the material traces of ritual activities, and the associated sites of the Munakata region, provides an unparalleled example of the interplay between traditions of ritual observances, the shifting relationships between local authorities and the waxing and waning of centralised authority in the process of state formation, and the exchange of official ambassadors, religious ideas and commodities such as silk, all in the context of the emergence of the new East Asian identity.

Silk, both as metaphor and commodity, provides an appropriate framework for the complex interweaving of finely spun narrative threads that surround what happened at Okinoshima from the third to the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Silk also encapsulates wider themes exemplified by the ritualised observances at Okinoshima, which are of global significance, and which give Okinoshima its outstanding universal value, we see at Okinoshima are interwoven into East Asian history during these centuries. These themes are set out above. The interactions that structured the relationships between Japan, Korea and China at this time were shaped by perceptions (how leaders saw themselves in relation to each other) and experiences (including encounters with foreigners and activities undertaken to attempt to influence the supernatural forces that controlled the outcome of events). Even today, international diplomacy is all about perception. Many of the difficulties faced around the world are the result of misunderstood intentions and disagreements over belief. Can Okinoshima help us understand how to avoid such misunderstood intentions in the future?

Here is a passage about ‘fusang’, a mythical ‘other world’ as perceived by China through much of its early history. Fusang was probably not Japan, but it is a perception of lands to the east of China, separated by sea. And central to Fusang is the notion of the mulberry tree, the source of silk, a metaphor for Japan. In Europe, we are used to thinking of Japan as the Isles of Gold: it was gold that encouraged Marco Polo to head east. But in fact silk was one of the main units of value for much of the period we are thinking about. And weaving narratives makes a good metaphor for how we can present an archaeology of religion about Okinoshima. And this is additionally appropriate as the Munakata deities are goddesses of weaving.

Wang provides a vivid introduction as to how Japan was seen by China during much of this period:

‘Ancient Japan is an island of magic plants, animals, and immortals in Chinese legends. Jade greens, golden vegetables, and peaches grow on the ground, and mulberry trees of more than one thousand meters rise from the blue seas. These trees bear one-inch fruits, which are part of the diet of the immortals, who have shining golden bodies and fly like birds. As if they were two lovers embracing each other, these mulberry trees usually share the same roots, and their branches often intertwine. This vivid imagery prompts the Chinese to use the terminology “intertwining mulberry tree” (fusang) as a metaphor for ancient Japan’ (Wang 2005: 7).

The Munakata deities who inhabit (and indeed are embodied by Okinoshima) are deities of weaving. Michael Como, in *Weaving and Binding: immigrant gods and female immortals in ancient Japan* (2009) has recently argued for a major role for cults inspired by the Chinese festival calendar in the religious and political structures of the early Japanese state. One of the best-documented such cults is that associated with the Weaver Maiden and the Cowherd:

‘the Weaver Maiden, daughter of the Celestial Emperor, was said to have fallen in love with a cowherd and consequently neglected her weaving duties. As a result, the two lovers were condemned to spend the entire year on different sides of the Heavenly River (the Milky Way) until the seventh day of the seventh month, when the Cowherd was allowed to cross the Milky Way and be united with his lover for a single night’ (Como 2009: 38).

This legend and the associated cult has a range of meanings relating to rites of sacrifice and purification: the Cowherd carries associations of the sacrifice of cows; the Weaver Maiden has associations with brides

sacrificed to the water deity – sacrificial victims who are later transformed into objects of worship. In modern Japan, these beliefs are enacted through the Tanabata Festival of July 7<sup>th</sup>, which played an important role in cultural consciousness at least from the reign of the Emperor Tenmu, who did so much to reconfigure Japanese divine power (Como 2009:39).

Silk itself was of great importance throughout the period in question: it was perhaps the single most valued commodity exchanged through the diplomatic missions and then trade. And the process of silk production was also of great symbolic significance: weaving implements and elements of the weaving process figure in ritual centres and shrines ‘both at court and across the Japanese islands’ including Ise, where they comprise ‘according to the *Engishiki*, four of the twenty-one sacred regalia’ (Como 2009: 39). The Munakata region is particularly important in this regard: ‘Probably the largest caches of weaving tools unearthed to date ... have been at the Munakata shrine in Kyushu and the Okinoshima shrine, an important cultic centre for the worship of the Munakata deities. This was an important stopover point for vessels travelling between Kyushu and the Korean peninsula’. The 8<sup>th</sup> century *Hizen fudoki*, a gazetteer from north Kyushu, gives an account of the ‘propitiation of the vengeful Akaru Hime, a female deity whose cultic identity appears to have been close to weaving’, and which ‘clearly illustrates how weaving implements could and were used for the pacification or propitiation of vengeful spirits’ (Como 2009: 40).

The silk thread linked Japan into the emerging East Asian world of tribute systems, exchange and eventually commerce that connected the central Japanese court in the Yamato with Kyushu and on to the Korean peninsula, the developing trading ports on the Chinese coast, the capitals of successive Chinese dynasties and out into the world beyond, through southeast Asian maritime routes to India and the Mediterranean, and across the caravan routes of central Asia to Iran and beyond. Although we do not have extensive archaeological evidence for the vehicles used, maritime archaeology provides a few clues as to the form of vessels used by embassies and traders at this time: double-hulled or lashed-lug log boats from Shanghai and Mindanao, some with bulkheads as in the Rugao ship from Jiangsu province, and some flat bottomed craft with chine strakes, as found in the Anapuchi Pond in Korea (Sasaki 2011, Tono 1995). It was to secure the safe passage of such vessels that ritual observances were undertaken at Okinoshima, vessels that were to return laden with the kinds of treasures eventually deposited in the Shosoin Imperial Treasury at the great Todaiji Temple in Nara (Hayashi 1975).

## 6. Comparable sites

Now that we have established the context and woven together some of the strands into a fabric of narrative, we can turn to identifying suitable comparators from other parts of Japan and around the world for Okinoshima and the associated sites in the Munakata region. I approach this by exploring a number of categories of site, some of which have been inscribed as World Heritage Sites in their own right, and others which have not. The categories include: sites of structured deposition; urban religious centres; pilgrimage centres and sites of isolation (in which I also revisit sacred islands and sacred mountains); natural places of worship, including Saami sacred sites, sanctuaries from the world of classical Greece, and sacred groves; burial mound cemeteries; and shrines, including a discussion of Ise and Izumo, two of the most famous ancient shrines from Japan. Then, by way of comparison with the exchange and interaction networks that criss-crossed the Genkai Sea, and that are in many ways the *raison d’être* of Okinoshima, I will also consider the Silk Road and Viking trade networks.

### Sites of structured deposition

Placing offerings on or in the ground as offerings to spirits and deities as a ritual practice is a well-known phenomenon. In many cases, such objects (that can include material culture, either high value (gold) or everyday (pottery), specially made, or objects which are akin to those used in mundane activities, and animals, their parts, and human beings) are sacrificed to the deities. Insoll provides a useful discussion of sacrifice which focuses on the notion of ‘killing’: objects, animals or people who are sacrificed are killed or broken, and this act of killing or breakage forms a key part of the ritual practice. Other acts of deposition can include placing items in tombs to accompany the deceased. At Okinoshima we do not have evidence for actual breakage of objects during rituals, although further investigation of the objects placed at the ritual sites may cast new light on this question.

Many of the most remarkable archaeological remains from Okinoshima and Oshima appear to represent deliberate acts of deposition, interpreted as votive offerings to the Munakata deities to secure safe passage for seafarers traversing the Genkai Sea. The reconstructions of these votive rituals suggest that the objects would have been carefully arranged, perhaps with attention being paid to their spatial relationships on the ground, both to each other and to the people participating in the rituals, actually undertaking the ritual acts, or as worshipers or other observers. For a number of years now, archaeologists have been undertaking studies of what have become known as ‘structured deposits’, sets of material culture that are placed in or on the ground in deliberate association with each other. The ongoing research into the 80,000 objects recovered from Okinoshima during the excavation campaigns of the 1950s to the 1970s suggests that this material may also lend itself to this kind of analysis. Important examples from elsewhere which may provide useful comparators include J D Hill’s analysis of artefacts and animal bones from the thousands of pits from Iron Age Britain, notably the important hilltop centre at Danebury, and the great sacrificial pits of early China, one of the most spectacular recent example being from Sanxingdui near Lake Dai in Yunnan Province, southwestern China (Bagley 2001).

An important distinction made in this recent re-analysis of the archaeological artefacts from Okinoshima, is between the placement of objects as part of a ritual, and the placing of objects either stored in readiness before a ritual or put away or discarded after the ritual (Oda 2011). A further question must concern whether any of the objects might have been used more than once: for example were some of what we might regard as higher value objects, such as the gilt dragon heads, used in repeated acts of veneration and propitiation. It may be of interest in future research to examine the way in which comparable objects feature in later Shinto rituals for which we have better historical records.

### **Urban religious centres**

Many UNESCO World Heritage Sites cite religion in their justification for inscription. These range from the great cathedrals of Europe, such as Durham, Canterbury and Cologne, to the ceremonial urban centres of south and central America, including Caral-Supe in Peru, the sacred city of the Norte Chico culture and considered the most ancient city in the Americas; Copan and Tikal, centres of the Maya; Monte Alban (Oaxaca); Chan Chan, capital of the Chinu culture, and Inca Cuzco; Teotihuacan and Chichen Itza; El Tajin in Mexico, and Mexico city where the largest cathedral in the Americas sits atop the ancient centre of Tenochtitlan. Other major ceremonial centres in the Americas include Cahokia and Chavin, and Fuerte de Samapaipata, a town shaped from sculpted rocks dating to the 14<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the ceremonial centre of a pre-hispanic culture. A further ceremonial monument is the Temple of Heaven and the Imperial Sacrificial Altar in Beijing, China. But these monumental ceremonial centres and great cathedrals do not compare well with Okinoshima and its associated sites.

### **Pilgrimage centres and sites of isolation**

Centres of pilgrimage are also well represented in World Heritage Sites: Baalbek (Lebanon) was a major site of pilgrimage in the Roman period; Sulayman Mountain (Kyrgyzstan) near the city of Osh is a major Muslim pilgrimage centre and ‘the most complete example of a sacred mountain in Central Asia’; the Christian centres at Santiago de Compostela in Spain, and Kalwaria in Poland; and closer to Okinoshima we find sites comprising the pilgrimage routes of the Kii mountain range, including the Kumano shrine and of course the Buddhist centre of Mount Koya. A special issue of the journal *World Archaeology* (1994) presented a series of case studies about the Archaeology of Pilgrimage from early Christian Ireland, Mesoamerica, Peru, Buddhist India and the Hajj.

The pilgrimages to Okinoshima are relatively small scale, and it may make more sense to compare Okinoshima with a further category of religious sites are those which are deliberately set apart, isolated from the world of everyday, profane, experience. In my previous paper I reviewed the evidence for sacred islands (Kaner 2011: 345-352), including Itsukushima in Japan, elsewhere in the Pacific Papahānaumokuākea and Pohnpei, islands in the Aegean such as Malta, Gozo and Milos, and islands around the British Isles, including Lindisfarne and Lundy. In what follows I introduce a few further examples including Skellig Michael and Iona, and some coastal sites such as Mount Athos, and St Michael’s Mount, as well as the islands in Vanuatu in the Pacific relating to Roi Mata’s Domain, and Rapa Nui (Easter Island). I also discussed Okinoshima among the world’s sacred mountains (Kaner 2011: 352-3),

and here, as an addendum, make some comments about Chinese sacred mountains and Mount Fuji.

While many of these sites, islands, coastal sites and mountains, can be seen as isolated and remote, they are often in fact well connected through established communications networks. Christopher Young (personal communication) notes that ‘assessment of remoteness is very subjective ... For example, monastic sites settled for their remoteness in the West often develop strong external contacts because of their holiness. They also have strong economic links to their surroundings and in many cases (e.g. the string of Anglo-Saxon monasteries down the east coast of England [including Lindisfarne]) appear to have been sited deliberately so that they can have external contacts.... It is worth noting that all the western monastic sites would also have had wide estates which provided their economic basis, though it is generally difficult to identify tangible evidence of this for the early sites.’ For Young, ‘the key factor is not whether or not they are islands but whether or not they are next to the sea and so have a degree of remoteness and isolation’. Young has further provided a helpful comparative chart of such sites (Table 1). This notion of interconnectedness in the context of apparent isolation is addressed in my discussion of island archaeology and seascapes (Kaner 2011: 345-346).

### **Sacred islands and coastal monasteries**

Such sites include a series of monastic sites on islands and isolated coastal stretches, such as Skellig Michael (Ireland) and Iona (Scotland), and of course Mount Athos in Greece (which shares issues of accessibility with Okinoshima).

Mount Athos lies on the northern coast of Greece overlooking the Aegean Sea. For over 1000 years it has been an important centre of the Orthodox branch of the Christian Church. The rugged terrain is now the location of 20 monasteries housing 1400 monks. The mountain was granted autonomous status in 972 and historical records describe its development as a spiritual centre from 1054. Women and children are not allowed access to Mount Athos, a restriction shared with Okinoshima.

St Michael’s Mount is a tidal island on the southwest coast the county of Cornwall, England. It is possible that it is the location of a place called Ictis by the classical author Posidonius, and there was a port for the trade in tin for which Cornwall was known through later prehistory and into the historical periods. It is thought that a monastery was founded there in the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, which was then dedicated to St Michael sometime between 950 and 1050. In 1099 historical records describe how the mount, until then part of the mainland, was cut off by a huge sea flood. The monastic foundation became Ballinskelligs Abbey, which was closed down by Queen Elizabeth I. St Michael’s Mount is often compared to another, similar coastal mount on the other side of the English Channel, at Mont St Michel, on the north coast of Brittany, and a World Heritage Site in its own right.

Off the north coast of England there are two further sacred islands. Off the east coast, jutting out into the North Sea, is the island of Lindisfarne, or Holy Island. This small island is joined to the mainland by a causeway which is flooded at high tide. Lindisfarne was an important centre of Celtic Christianity from the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, and is associated with a number of important saints associated with the spread of Christianity in the northeast of England, including St Aidan and St Cuthbert. The monastic complex at Lindisfarne was subjected to Viking raids in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, as described by the historian monk Bede. In the 1550s a castle was built on the island.

Off the northwestern coast of Scotland lies the island of Iona, a further important centre of Celtic Christianity. The Irish monk Columba is thought to have arrived on Iona in 563 AD, fleeing from problems in his home country. The monastery established by Columba and the 12 monks who accompanied him became the centre of one of the most important monastic networks in Britain, and played an important role in the spread of Christianity to the Picts of Scotland in the later 6<sup>th</sup> century, and of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Like Lindisfarne, however, Iona was repeatedly attacked by Vikings from 794 onwards, and in 849 the monastery was closed. It is possible that the renowned illuminated manuscript known as the Book of Kells (as it was completed at the Abbey of Kells) was started on Iona.

Sacred islands are not restricted to northern Christianity. Two important examples can be cited from the Pacific. One of the most remote islands in the world, over 1000 miles from the closest inhabited island, is

Rapa Nui, also known as Easter Island, inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1995. Now belonging to Chile, Rapa Nui was originally settled by Polynesian seafarers in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD, who built the *moai* massive stone sculptures for which the island is most famous. 887 still stand in clusters and rows around the island. Population declined from a high of over 15,000 in the 1700s, to just 111 in 1877, although it has since recovered to an extent.

Further southeast in the Pacific lie the three islands of Efate, Lepela and Artok, now part of Vanuatu. First occupied some 3300 years ago, they are now inscribed as the World Heritage Site of Chief Roi Mata's domain. Although assumed to have been home to chiefly societies for many centuries, the eruption of Mount Kuwae in 1452 AD had a massive impact on the societies that inhabited the islands, and there was a long period of conflict between the various chiefs. In 1600 AD Chief Roi Mata introduced a series of social reforms that finally saw an end to this feuding, with the result that Roi Mata's residence and the associated burials are regarded as an outstanding example of spiritual and moral heritage. Roi Mata's Domain is an important example of the long term development of spiritual and political systems in chiefly societies prior to European contact, which happened for the first time in 1840, and so can be compared to the situation at Okinoshima.

### **Sacred mountains**

Sacred mountains are also an obvious category for comparison with Okinoshima, as discussed in my previous paper (Kaner 2011: 352-3). In China, there are a series of sacred mountains (Mt Emei, Mt Huang, Mt Tai, Mt Wutai and Mt Wuyi). Gina Barnes has reviewed the place that mountains played in Buddhist sacred landscapes (Barnes 1999).

25 sites comprise the sacred landscape of Mount Fuji, the highest mountain in the Japanese archipelago. Home to the Shinto deity Asama no Okami, Mount Fuji's outstanding universal value was considered to lie in the inspiration it has provided for artists for many centuries, and its significance as an object of pilgrimage. Narratives around Mount Fuji include the story of the interrelationship between Shinto and Buddhism, the relationship between people and nature, the symbolism of death and rebirth, and the practices involved in ascent and descent for the purpose of worship.

Several mountains in China have already been inscribed as World Heritage Sites, including Mount Tai, inscribed in 1987, and the focus of traditions of worship for over 3000 years, and the place where the Emperor on occasion performed some of the most important state rituals, the Feng and Shan sacrifices.

### **Natural places of worship**

Richard Bradley in *An Archaeology of Natural Places* has made a compelling case for the need to understand the importance and significance attached to particular places in the landscape. In my previous paper I discussed the special significance often attached to caves, mountains and other particular landscape forms.

During the course of the sequence of ritual observances at Okinoshima, monuments (notably monumental buildings) became the focus of rituals in Japan, as against the placing of deposits in natural places. Okinoshima and the associated sites of Munakata offer the possibility of understanding the transformation of ritual practices that occurred at locations such as this.

The Laponian area in northern Sweden, designated a World Heritage Site in 1996, forms part of the lands traditionally used by the Saami peoples. These peoples occupied territories across northern Scandinavia and into Russia. Of particular interest in comparison with Okinoshima is their use of particular rock formations and islands as sacred places, and the fact that women were not allowed to take part in rites at these locations (unless they were dressed as men). Traditional Saami religion was a form of polytheistic paganism, with particular places being associated with certain spirits. Sacred sites included mountains, springs and certain land forms. Shamans, or *noaidi*, played an important role in Saami ritual practice, and shamans drums have a special place in Saami material culture. The Christianisation of the Saami from the 18<sup>th</sup> century led to the destruction of many sacred sites, or *siejdde*, and less than 100 shaman drums are known to survive, despite many thousands being made. Some elements of Saami religion are close to what

is known of Viking beliefs.

One of the most famous Saami *siejdde* is the island of Ukonsaari in a lake in northern Finland. Items deposited in a cave there in the course of sacrificial offerings include metal items (including a silver ring and bronze work), now thought to date to between 1000 and 1350 AD. (Bradley 1999: 5). Ukonsaari is one of some 500 known Saami sacred sites across northern Scandinavia, and are usually related to places with very distinctive topography, ‘often rock formations that bear a certain resemblance to humans, animals or birds’ (Bradley 1999:6). Unlike Okinoshima, the sacrifices at Saami sacred sites were ‘closely bound up with the everyday lives of the Saami ... to ensure a dependable food supply’, as well as ensuring the health of the reindeer herds on which the Saami depended (Bradley 1999: 9).

Another set of important sacred natural places are the sanctuaries of ancient Greece (see Kaner 2011: 349-350). These sanctuaries are often in very striking locations, and places which can be considered liminal in some way: mountaintops, springs and caves being very popular. Earlier sanctuaries were often the focus of the votive offering of everyday items and figurines. And unlike Okinoshima, animal sacrifice was often an important component of the associated rituals. Delphi on the slopes of Mount Parnassus in central Greece, now a World Heritage Site, as well as being considered the centre of the world (the navel, or *omphalos* of the Goddess Gaia or Earth) as identified by Zeus, was home to the most important oracle of ancient Greece. Apollo was worshipped at Delphi, as he was at a series of other sanctuaries on the Greek mainland, the Peloponnese and the islands of the Aegean. Caves include the Vari Cave and Phyle Cave in Attica, associated with Apollo, Pan and Hermes. Some of these caves contain marble votive tablets. At the Phyle Cave one such votive tablet sees Hermes, messenger of the gods, leading three females, who along with the associations with water, are perhaps reminiscent of the Munakata deities. One of the most important islands in the Cyclades is Delos, a tiny island just 5 kilometres in length, now only home to archaeological remains. The location of an important sanctuary to the god Apollo, Delos was inscribed as a World Heritage site in 1990, and has remains dating from the Neolithic, Mycenaean and palaeochristian periods, spanning some three millennia.

### **Sacred groves**

A further group of sacred World Heritage sites of interest in relation to Okinoshima are sacred groves. Some of the components of the property being nominated share characteristics of sacred groves, and indeed many later Shinto shrines have sacred groves within their compounds. The Kamitakayama and Shimotakayama ritual sites on Mount Munakata, within the precincts of Munakata Taisha and an integral part of the Hetsumiya, along with the outdoor ritual sites on Okinoshima and on the summit of Mount Mitake, were all sacred groves.

‘Sacred groves are clusters of trees considered of sacred significance. In many parts of the world they are associated with specific deities and sacrifice. Elsewhere, in particular in more recent times, they have are related to movements for the preservation of natural resources, plants and animals, especially in the face of aggressive urbanisation. Sacred groves were important features of the mythological landscape and cult practice of Celtic, Baltic, Germanic, ancient Greek, Near Eastern, Roman, and Slavic polytheism, and were also used in India, Japan, and West Africa. Examples of sacred groves include the Greco-Roman *temenos*, the Norse *hörgr*, and the Celtic *nemeton*, which was largely but not exclusively associated with Druidic practice. During the Northern Crusades, there was a common practice of building churches on the sites of sacred groves’.

Famous examples include (the possibly fictional) pagan centre of Romowe or Romuva in the Prussian Baltic, which inspired later romantic Lithuanian nationalist movements. Described by Peter von Dusberg in 1326, the groves and shrines were home to a ‘Pagan Pope’ who had spiritual rule over the Balts. At Sventybrastis in Lithuania, four sacred oak trees still stand at this long-used site of pagan ritual. In Scandinavia, as described by Adam of Bremen, every tree at the Temple at Old Uppsala, a major centre of Norse paganism, was considered sacred. In the Celtic polytheistic tradition especially connected to Druidism, the sacred grove or *nemeton* was associated with the Celtic goddess Nemetone. A famous example is the Nevet Forest in Brittany, northwestern France.

In the world of the classical Mediterranean, early geographers and historians such as Strabo and Herodotus

describe important sacred groves. Strabo discusses the site of Drunemeton in Galatia in Turkey, whose name seems to relate again to the Celtic Goddess Nemetone. Many groves in classical Greece and Italy were dedicated to specific deities, and many are thought to have been the place of human sacrifice to propitiate those gods. Herodotus considered that the sacred grove at Dodona in Epirus in northwestern Greece was perhaps the oldest Hellenistic oracle, with its origins going back earlier than 1000 BC. Dodona, eventually associated with Zeus and Dione, went on to become second only to Delphi in terms of importance: priestesses interpreted the rushing of the wind through the oak and beech leaves as the words of the deity.

Sacred groves are found in many other parts of the world, including the Americas, Africa, South and Southeast Asia. In India, while some 14,000 sacred groves are known, it is thought that there may have been as many as 100,000. The Kodava people of Karnataka in the south of India maintained over 1000 themselves. Each sacred grove is associated with a particular deity, mainly Hindu, but some Islamic and Buddhist examples are also known. In Africa the capital of the historic Ghana (Wagadu) Empire (9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries), which became wealthy on the profits of trans-Saharan trade, had sacred groves, *al-gaba*, and some still exist, such as the Buoyem Sacred Grove.

The sacred groves of Osun-Osogbo in Nigeria were inscribed as World Heritage in 2005. 75 hectares along the River Oshun on the outskirts of the city of Osogbo, an important city of the Yoruba people established about 400 years ago, comprise the only surviving sacred grove associated with the Yoruba civilisation. The grove is associated with the Yoruba goddess of fertility, Osun and is the focus of many ritual activities and festivals throughout the year which continue to today. It comprises some 40 shrines, two palaces, 5 sacred places and 9 worship points, many of which are marked by sculptures and worship points. The sacred Mijikenda Kaya forests in Kenya was home to the Mbuti 'pygmies' and focus of Victor Turner's famous book '*Forest of Symbols*'. Neither of these sites has been the focus of much archaeological investigation, although Tim Insoll's research on African sacred groves does indicate the potential significance of the types of deposit than can be expected beneath the Shimotakamiya open air ritual area at the Munakata Grand Shrine.

Closer to Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region, many Shinto shrines in Japan are surrounded by stands of native woodland, sacred groves in their own right. In Okinawa the Seifa-Utaki sacred grove, with stands of native *kubanoki* (a kind of palm) and *yabunikkei* (a kind of wild cinnamon) and the associated rock formation were inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2003.

### **Burial mound cemeteries**

The Shimbaru-Nuyama mounded tomb group comprises a cluster of 41 mounded tombs of varying sizes from the 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries which overlook the Genkai Sea, facing the islands of Oshima and Okinoshima. The tomb group is considered to visually control the *kaihokudo*, the maritime route that linked the Munakata region with Okinoshima and the Korean peninsula. The tomb cluster is thought to be the final resting places of the rulers of the Munakata clan.

Burial within or beneath a mounded tomb is a very widespread form of funerary practice around the world, and a number of mounded tombs and mounded tomb complexes are already inscribed as world heritage sites.

In East Asia, the tradition of burial beneath great tomb mounds begins with the burial of the First Emperor of China, Qin Shi Huang Di in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, inscribed as a World Heritage site in 1987. The construction of mounded tombs for powerful individuals spread through China, into the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago, where some 100,000 mounded tombs are estimated to have been built in the period which takes its name from these 'old mounds', the Kofun period. The Shimbaru-Nuyama mounded tomb group is by no means the most important of the tomb clusters from Kofun period Japan, or even in Kyushu. Much more impressive are the massive tombs of the Kinai region, including the Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group which contains the largest kofun of all, the Daisen Kofun considered to be the tomb of the 5<sup>th</sup> century Emperor Nintoku: at 486 metres in length the largest single burial monument of the ancient world. The Mozu-Furuichi Kofun group is currently on Japan's Tentative List for World Heritage nomination. Elsewhere in Japan there are also a series of tombs whose burial chambers were exquisitely decorated, including the Takehara tomb in Fukuoka Prefecture, and the renowned Takamatsuzuka tomb in Nara prefecture, possible final resting place of Emperor Mommu (Kidder 1999: 191). Some of these decorated tombs, notably those

around Kumamoto Prefecture, exhibit an indigenous style of decoration, while others, such as Takamatsuzuka are clearly influenced by continental models, from Koguryo and Tang China.

Some of the earliest mounded tombs are the long barrows and passage graves of the European Neolithic. These Neolithic tombs are different to the monumental burial mounds of East Asia in that they were burial places for multiple members of the community. Spectacular examples, already inscribed as World Heritage Sites include the monuments of the Bru na Boinne (the bend of the River Boyne) in Ireland, including the megalithic tombs of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. The passage grave at Newgrange, which also exhibits outstanding megalithic art carved on to the stones that make up the burial facilities, also had a calendrical function, the passage being aligned with the mid-winter sunrise. This calendrical function is also important at Stonehenge in England. Recent archaeological investigation has demonstrated that the henge and stone circles at Stonehenge were also associated with the world of the dead, and indeed the landscape around Stonehenge, also inscribed as World Heritage, contains 10 Neolithic long barrows and 348 Bronze Age round barrows, demonstrating that area was used for burial for over 1000 years. Other significant buried tombs in Europe include those in Brittany, northwestern France, such as Gavrinis at Carnac, where decorated megaliths from other sites were re-used in the construction of these great tombs. One of the most famous, Saint-Michel, was appropriated by early Christians who constructed a chapel on the top of this mound.

Mounded tombs are found across Eurasia, in Africa and the Americas. Many contain evidence for long distance trade from remarkably early periods. For example, tomb mounds from Jarigole in the Turkana region of Kenya contain coastal commodities that attest to extensive trade networks among the established pastoralist societies in East Africa. Pastoralist societies were also responsible for the kurgans of central Asia, with renowned examples from Kazakhstan and Mongolia (See Stark et al. 2012). In the Americas, mound building, both for burial and other ceremonial purposes, was a defining characteristic of the Hopewell cultures, which represent an extensive trading network that developed across much of the eastern and central United States, with traded items included in the repertoire of grave goods. Cahokia, one of the central places of the Hopewell tradition, was inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage in 1982. The 1600 hectare site, close to the city of St Louis includes 120 mounds, including the largest mound in north America, the Monk's Mound, 30m high. The site, which is thought to have had a population of 10-20,000 people was occupied from 1050-1150 AD. A smaller but no less interesting example is The Devil's Lake – Sourisford complex of mounded tombs in Manitoba which was constructed in the late 8<sup>th</sup> and early 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD include copper objects and marine shells in the burial assemblages, evidence for far-flung exchange networks.

Several manifestations of mounded tomb are associated with state formation and trade. Over 1000 mounded tombs associated with Dilmun and Tylos in Bahrain are now inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage. The contents of these tombs, which include ceramics from Mesopotamia, are evidence for the so-called 'Magan' trade which linked one of the earliest state level societies in the world in Mesopotamia, with southern Arabia and the Indian subcontinent between 2250 and 1750 BC. Another example would be the Roman burial mounds at Bartlow Hills in Cambridgeshire, eastern England. These are the highest confirmed burial mounds in northwestern Europe and date from the late 1<sup>st</sup> to the early 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD. Located near an important centre of Roman rule in Britain, they contain objects imported from the Rhineland in Germany.

A further group of mounded tombs of interest here are those from northwestern Europe and Scandinavia dating to the later part of the first millennium AD. Burial in mounds is a funerary practice that extends back into prehistory in Europe, with famous examples being the Hochdorf chiefly burial in southern Germany dating to the Iron Age. Tombs with particular significance for early state formation and trade include those at the Viking trading centre of Birka and the royal cemetery of Jelling, and the Anglo-Saxon ship burials at Sutton Hoo in eastern England.

At Sutton Hoo, overlooking the River Deben in Suffolk, eastern England, are a number of burial facilities including a complex of 20 burial mounds dating to the late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. The most famous mound, Mound 1, was built over a 27 metre-long ship which is thought to have contained the burial of King Raedwald, ruler of the East Angles, an Anglo-Saxon kingdom which had a royal centre, perhaps at nearby Rendlesham, as well as an important centre of overseas trade which developed at Gipeswic (modern-day Ipswich) from the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. The ship burial at Sutton Hoo is compared to accounts in the famous epic Viking saga of Beowulf, set in southern Sweden. Many of the rich artefacts, which are considered some of the best art of its time from Britain or Europe, include silver plate from the Eastern Roman Empire and a wealth

of ceremonial items, including a very famous helmet and shield. Mound 2, now reconstructed to its full height, also contained comparable treasures, including fragments of a blue glass cup. Sutton Hoo therefore makes a good comparator for the Shimbaru-Nuyama tomb complex due to its associations with nearby ruling, administrative and trading centres, overseas trade, and protohistoric written sources.

In Denmark, the site of Jelling was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1994. Jelling is a royal centre associated with the 10<sup>th</sup> century rulers Harald Bluetooth and King Gorm. Two large burial mounds, some 70 metres in diameter and up to 11 metres high were built over a large stone ship. The mounds were built partly over pre-existing Bronze Age burial mound, suggesting a desire to be linked to earlier monuments. The northern mound was built around 958-959 AD and is thought to be the tomb of King Gorm. Two rune stones at the site refer explicitly to King Harald and King Gorm, along with the earliest representation of Jesus Christ in Scandinavia. A small white church stands on the site of at least three earlier phases of church building, the earliest of which was built in 965 AD by King Harald, and was the first Christian church in Scandinavia. Although not many burial goods remained, the site is of great significance for understanding both the Nordic pagan tradition and the beginnings of Christianity in Scandinavia. The site makes a good comparison with the Shimbaru-Nuyama tomb group as it is associated with local rulers, early historical written sources, and a major transition in religious belief.

A final burial complex of interest here is the site of Sammallahdenmaki overlooking the Gulf of Bothnia in Finland. Inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1999, the site comprises over 30 granite burial cairns dating to 1500-500 BC. Over 3000 Bronze Age burial cairns are known from the coast of Finland altogether, but Sammallahdenmaki is the best example. Burial goods included items of bronze, despite a complete absence of copper or tin, the ingredients needed for bronze, in the area, demonstrating that these commodities must have been traded in. The cairns, and two associated structures assumed to have had a ritual purpose, were also related to the worship of the Sun, at the centre of a belief system that spread throughout much of Scandinavia from this time. Of significance for the Shimbaru-Nuyama tomb group, in addition to the suggestion that those interred at Sammallahdenmaki were in control of extensive trade networks, is the degree of intervisibility of many of these tombs, and their positioning overlooking the coast.

### Shrines

Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region include in the nomination a series of shrines. For the purposes of this paper, a shrine needs to include a built component, and can be differentiated from a 'natural place' of worship, for example a rock formation, river, or mountain top. Very often, of course, such natural places are often subsequently the locations of built places of worship.

‘A **shrine** (Latin: *scrinium* "case or chest for books or papers"; Old French: *escriin* "box or case") is a holy or sacred place, which is dedicated to a specific deity, ancestor, hero, martyr, saint, daemon or similar figure of awe and respect, at which they are venerated or worshipped. Shrines often contain idols, relics, or other such objects associated with the figure being venerated. A shrine at which votive offerings are made is called an altar. Shrines are found in many of the world's religions, including Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese folk religion, Shinto, and Asatru as well as in secular and non-religious settings such as a war memorial. Shrines can be found in various settings, such as churches, temples, cemeteries, or in the home, although portable shrines are also found in some cultures. A shrine may become a focus of a cult image.’

On Okinoshima itself, shrine buildings were constructed at Okitsu-miya sometime between the 9<sup>th</sup> century and the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and now enshrine one of the three Munakata deities, Tagorihime-no-kami. Associated with this, on the northern side of the island of Oshima, is the Okitsu-miya Yohaijo, which was built by the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century to allow people to worship the deity at Okitsu-miya without having to travel to Okinoshima. A third shrine complex (Nakatsu-miya) was established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century on the southern side of Oshima island, at the foot of Mount Mitake, once rituals in the open air on the summit of Mount Mitake had stopped. Shrine buildings were also constructed in the vicinity of the earlier open-air ritual site on the summit of Mount Mitake.

Today, the main shrine complex is the Munakata Grand Shrine (Munakata Taisha) on the Tsuru River, whose grounds today include not only the Hetsu-miya (where shrine buildings are recorded from the 12<sup>th</sup> century,

the current versions of which enshrine the Munakata deity Ichikishimahime-no-kami) but also two earlier ritual sites: the Kamitakamiya ritual site on the summit of Mount Munakata, from which both Oshima and Okinoshima are visible on a clear day, where shrine buildings were established in the 13<sup>th</sup> century; and the Shimotakamiya ritual site, halfway up Mount Munakata, where a large amount of items thought to have been used in votive offerings similar to those undertaken on Okinoshima have been discovered (including sue and haji ware pottery, boat-shaped figures and objects made of talc).

While comparison with shrines from around the world is beyond the scope of this paper, two recent publications from English Heritage provide some useful comparators for Shinto shrine buildings and compounds.

‘Information about pre-Roman religious beliefs in Britain and Europe is abundant but mostly indirect, with brief references in classical authors such as Caesar and a wide variety of much later (early medieval) written sources. Iconography and art history may also provide valuable insights but usually lack detailed context or chronology. For Barry Cunliffe, the complex patterns of Iron Age religious beliefs are now ‘entirely beyond reconstruction’, though from the written sources it seems that the natural world was suffused by a pantheon of gods and spirits whose influence was mediated by ritual behaviour in everyday life as well as in specific seasonal religious activities overseen by specialists, or Druids. There were celestial gods, mother goddesses, cults of fertility, healing, and war, and everywhere a vigorous belief in the spirits of nature and place. Sometimes these beliefs were manifested in propitiatory acts that have left an archaeological signature, in the form of votive deposits of metalwork, human or animal remains. These often occur in or at natural features like rivers, springs, bogs, caves, rocks and clumps of trees (the sacred groves referred to by classical writers), but are sometimes associated with built structures and enclosures.’ (English Heritage 2011a).

English Heritage identify two main forms of prehistoric shrine in England: timber causeways and platforms associated with votive deposits in rivers and wetlands, especially from the Later Bronze Age and Earlier Iron Age (1500-300 BC), and small shrine buildings and associated enclosures from the Later Iron Age (400BC – 43 AD). Important examples of the former type include Flag Fen in eastern England, where a one kilometre long wooden causeway across an embayment connected the mainland to a two-hectare wooden platform. Ritual votive deposits included broken bronze swords and other objects. Significant examples of shrine buildings and associated enclosures include Caesar’s Camp at present-day Heathrow Airport, west of London, and Hayling Island in Hampshire, southern England. Most of these structures were relatively small, circular or rectangular, with the main shrine building being less than 10 metres in diameter. In some cases, for example at Fisons Way, Thetford, also in the east of England, small shrine structures were located in a larger enclosure (222 metres by 165 metres at Thetford). At some of these shrine structures, large quantities of artefacts were placed in the ground, apparently used as votive offerings. At Hayling Island, for example, these included pottery, metal brooches and other accessories, coins, fragments of a mirror, and warrior gear. Shrines continued to be constructed in Britain after the during and after the Roman period, and include altars, statuettes of particular deities, and objects of votive or talismanic significance, including for example phallic symbols. A good example of a later shrine complex from the Anglo-Saxon period was discovered at Yeavering in Yorkshire, in the north of England.

### **Comparison with Ise and Izumo**

Architectural studies dominate our understanding and appreciation of Ise and Izumo, the two great centres of Shinto. This is also true of the Itsukushima Shrine on the island of Miyajima in Hiroshima. By way of comparison with Okinoshima and the Munakata Grand Shrine, I will review the recent study of Ise Shrine and the development of its relationship with Izumo. The intention is to demonstrate the potential complexity of factors involved in the development of the facilities which are known today, and is equally applicable to Okinoshima and the associated sites. These authors effectively show how architectural elements are deliberately manipulated in these shrines, from the numbers of battens on the roofs of the shrine buildings, to subtle differences in the height of platforms on which buildings were constructed, to differences in the numbers of fences that surrounded the complexes at different times and sequences of rebuilding, to express differences in authority and to create a hierarchy of access, both visual and physical (see especially Coaldrake 1996: 22 and 27). Comparable strategies were employed at Okinoshima.

What is now known as Ise Shrine (Ise Jingu) in fact comprises an Inner Shrine (*Naiku*) and Outer Shrine (*Geku*) and over 80 auxiliary shrines (*betsugu*, *sessha* and *massha*) in the lower valley of the Miya River at the foot of the northern slopes of Mount Takakura, overlooked by a number of smaller hills (Wada 1995: 63). Coaldrake suggests that there are in fact over 120 different shrines making up the Ise complex. The Inner and Outer Shrines are known to have been located here since at least the late 7<sup>th</sup> century. Ise Shrine is well known for the practice of rebuilding in an alternative location, every 20 years. This was first recorded in 804, although the practice may precede that date. The Shrine authorities themselves suggest a date of 690, in the reign of Empress Jito, while a special form of ‘jewel-encrusted sword’ (*tamamaki no tachi*) which is included as one of the shrine treasures, and also renewed every 20 years, are similar to example found from the late 6<sup>th</sup> century Fujinoki tomb in Nara, which has been interpreted as suggesting an even earlier date (Wada 1995: 64), although it is quite possible that such swords could have survived as heirlooms from earlier times and been subsequently included in the Ise repertoire. The most recent cycle of rebuilding (*shikinen sengu*) was completed in October 2013.

The Kojiki suggests that ritual observances were performed at Ise during the reign of the Emperor Suinin, calculated by some to be around 3 BC, i.e. in the middle of the Yayoi period, when the site of Yoshinogari in Saga Prefecture was at its height (Wada 1995: 75). Wada Atsumu reviews the various debates and concludes that Ise Shrine as we know it was founded in 537, the second year of the reign of the Emperor Seika, although prior to this the accepted date was 477 (Wada 1995: 77-78). This is important in regard to the Munakata Grand Shrine, as Ise was to become the main shrine for the imperial family, differentiated from ‘other shrines throughout the country, where local inhabitants would communally worship various deities and clans would worship their ancestors and tutelary gods’ (Wada 1995: 70). Munakata shrine was one of these ‘other shrines’.

Wada suggests that the origins of Ise Shrine may be found in the context of certain locations in the landscape being perceived as particularly suitable for particular types of deity, in particular those relating to water and to cereals. This is a point also made in regard to deities in prehistoric and classical Europe (Bradley 1999: 25-28), and is relevant to Okinoshima through the association of the Munakata deities with the sea. In regard to cases of worshipping water divinities, notably springs and along the upper reaches of river, Wada cites the Jonokoshi and Rokudai sites in Mie, Sakahara and Furu in Nara, where concentrations of artefacts and features (including pillared buildings, wells, water races, ceramics, perforated discs and sword-shaped stone objects) thought to have been used in ritual contexts were found (Wada 1995: 78). The other major class of deities, those with power over cereals (especially rice) were ‘often worshipped at downstream confluences and on river sandbars’. Other examples include the three Kumano shrines in Wakayama Prefecture and the Hirose shrine in Nara. Wada suggests that the Outer Shrine at Ise is associated with the worship of water spirits, being located on an old sandbar in the river, while the Inner Shrine is related to other deities:

‘Ise shrine initially evolved along the following lines. First, in the early half of the sixth century, in the year *hinoto mi* (537), Ise Shrine, (that is the Inner Shrine) was established in the lower valley of the Kushidawagawa and the *itsuki no himemoko* was sent to attend to the worship of the sun goddess. It may be assumed that at this stage there was still no permanent shrine building, and only a temporary structure was erected whenever a religious ceremony was to be performed. After the Jinshin disturbance the site of the inner shrine was moved to the upper valley of the Isuzugawa, and one reason for this move was probably a desire to identify the chief deity Amaterasu Okami as divine progenitrix of the imperial family. At the same time, the gods worshipped by clans inhabiting the middle and lower reaches of the Kushidagawa were also enshrined in the Inner Shrine as attendant deities, while the god of cereals and food worshipped along the middle and lower reaches of the Miyagawa was made responsible for food offerings to Amaterasu, resulting in the establishment of the Outer Shrine. The, during the reign of the Empress Jito, the first periodic reconstruction of both shrines was carried out’ (Wada 1995: 83).

The Ise Shrine took on particular significance for the ruling dynasty with the victory of Prince Oama, who subsequently became Emperor Tenmu, over his nephew, Prince Otomo, at the end of the Jinshin civil war (*Jinshin no ran*), a war of succession that broke out in 672 following the death of Emperor Tenji, father of Otomo and older brother of Oama. Legends held that a ‘divine wind’ blew from Ise Shrine where the Sun

Goddess Amaterasu, regarded since the time of Jito as the ancestral deity of the imperial family, was enshrined. This divine wind helped Oama win the battle.

Ise has a long and complex history, including: neglect during the Middle Ages when imperial power waned leading to a break in the practice of rebuilding between the 1460s and 1580s; unprecedented attention towards the end of the Edo period, with massive pilgrimages (over 4.5 million visitors recorded in just one year in the 1830s); being the most important shrine within the prewar State Shinto; transformation and rehabilitation first as an exemplar of Japanese aesthetics.

This long and complex history is sometimes masked by attempts to represent Ise as embodying ‘some of the most treasured aesthetic values associated with Japan’ (Reynolds 2001: 316), a timeless manifestation of the unbroken continuity of the imperial line, providing a prototype for Japanese architecture. Most recently, as argued by Jonathan Reynolds, a new postwar vision of Ise has been established ‘compatible with the rhetoric of democracy that dominated postwar Japanese political discourse and was consonant with modernist aesthetic values’ (Reynolds 2001: 316). To adapt a saying often applied to another World Heritage monument with a complex history, Stonehenge, ‘Every age gets the Ise it deserves’. This line of thinking is further developed by Tze M. Loo in his paper ‘Escaping its past: recasting the Grand Shrine of Ise’, which brings the narrative up to date, and provides a critical appraisal of Ise Shrine’s engagement with the World Heritage movement. Archaeological excavation at Ise, as at other important shrines, has been limited, although recent studies are casting light on the early development of the buildings present at Ise and at other shrines. Nonetheless, no other shrine complex has received the intense archaeological investigation afforded to Okinoshima, and herein lies part of Okinoshima’s exceptional importance. There is further potential to compare with Mount Miwa and the associated settlement at Makimuku and burial complex in Nara (Barnes 2007).

William Coaldrake’s comparative study of the Grand Shrines of Ise and Izumo (Coaldrake 1996: 16-50) is instructive for our consideration of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region, as it shows how the struggle between Ise and Izumo for hegemony in the middle centuries of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC was played out in architectural terms. Coaldrake argues that the buildings at these shrines ‘do more than act as mere symbols of how they become part of the very fabric of authority and its institutional processes, in turn exerting their own powerful influence on the way that authority is defined, enacted and enforced’ (Coaldrake 1996: 17). In addition, foreshadowing the comparative study required for World Heritage status, Coaldrake also makes the following point about different forms of monumentality in Europe and Japan:

‘Monumentality, or the power of buildings “to impress and endure”, is customarily expressed in large and visually imposing structures of solid and seemingly immutable character. Such is the timeless quality of the great cathedrals of Europe, their massive masonry forms an affirmation of belief in the immortality of God. Ise and Izumo ... shed light on the meaning of monumentality to Japanese authority and its relationship to the pervasive counter-concept of the impermanence of all things’ (Coaldrake 1996: 17).

He further argues for different conceptualisations of monumentality at Ise and Izumo:

‘At Izumo the quest for monumentality was pursued in terms of the monolithic, that is, imposing size and permanence, a quest which reached its most ambitious expression in the Heian period. The massive pillars, bound together in clusters to create a structure as large as any built in the course of Japanese civilization, tell of an ageless ambition to reach for the heavens and defy the forces of gravity, even time itself. Although at Izumo the roofing materials required periodic maintenance, given the remarkable durability of Japanese cypress, the structural timbers could certainly have lasted a millennium had other structural problems been resolved. At Izumo, therefore, the role of renewal was subordinated to an inordinate ambition to create an architectural testimonial to eternity, which inevitably brought about its own destruction. This search for monumentality through physical size and permanence parallels the ambitions of the cathedral builders of medieval Europe, who pursued a similar quest for architectural form transcending temporal constraints and whose buildings on occasion met a similar fate.’ (Coaldrake 1996: 50-51)

‘Ise represents a very different approach to monumentality from that of Izumo. Its buildings were

ultimately to prove more enduring by virtue of a fundamental paradox: despite the rustic, self-effacing nature of the buildings, Ise has achieved permanence as an abiding presence in the national ethos of Japan. This has been accomplished by virtue of the continuing patronage of the imperial institution and by the hereditary infrastructure of craft and belief associated with the shrine. Buildings which have self-consciously glorified in the transience of the material have found in this sublimation of physical frailty a tradition which has both impressed and endured. Izumo, by virtue of its faltering political sponsorship and its structurally unsustainable architectural ambitions, concedes greater power to the monumentality of Ise, and the ultimate efficacy of the principle of dynamic renewal over the monolithic.’ (Coaldrake 1996: 51).

What does this contribute to our understanding of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region. We do not know so much about the role that Izumo and Ise played in international relations, but there are increasing studies (see Piggott 1989) on the archaeology of these areas that will doubtless cast further light on these questions in the future.

## **7. Encounters with the ‘foreign’: an archaeology of international networks**

The votive offerings on Okinoshima represent the international networks that linked the Japanese archipelago to ancient East Asia, and on to the rest of the world. A recent travelling exhibition in Japan was entitled ‘Okinoshima: the Shosoin of the Sea’ (Munakata Taisha 2004). The Shosoin is the 8<sup>th</sup> century imperial treasure house built at the Todaiji Temple in Nara. It houses over 8000 objects that were acquired by the Imperial Family through exchange with Tang China, objects that give some idea of the range of objects that were exchanged along the Silk Road. These include fabulous musical instruments, garments of silk, paper, maps, mother-of-pearl inlaid furniture and items, including representation of foreigners, and seeds, bark and plants that must have been for medicinal purposes. These objects, which have survived as a result of their careful preservation at the Shosoin, give us a good idea of the range of perishable items that came into Japan at this time. Had any such items been deposited at Okinoshima, they would have long since disappeared.

Trade and international relations are cited in the justifications for a number of UNESCO World Heritage sites. These include ports such as Kilwa, Kisiwani and Loropeni, centres associated with the trans-Saharan gold trade, including Askia (Mali) and other trading centres in north Africa such as Sabrath (Libya), Ancient Ksour of Oudane, Chinguette, Tichitt and Oualata (Mauritania); Saharan trading and religious centres from the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, and Medina of Essaouira (Mogador) in Morocco; the Medieval trading centres of Novgorod (Russia), Provins (France) and Torun (Poland), and post-Medieval ports such as Coro (Venezuela), Valparaiso (Chile), the wine port of Bordeaux in France and the industrial port of Liverpool in the UK. Through central Asia, a series of trading cities along the ancient Silk Routes have also been designated as World Heritage sites. These include Bukhara, Itchan Kala (Khiva) in Uzbekistan, Sarazm in Tajikistan, and Urgenc (now Konye Urgench), considered one of the greatest cities of the Silk Road in Turkmenistan. Also in Turkmenistan is Merv, which flourished during the period when offerings were being made at Okinoshima. Some trading centres are also distinguished by their exceptional religious monuments, as at Palmyra in Syria. Trade in other commodities is also marked, as in the Land of Frankincense inscription in Oman.

Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region, however, do not compare well with these mainly urbanised trading centres and entrepôts. And yet it is the exotic nature of many of the deposits, and the changing composition of the assemblages of offerings, from more local to those from distant parts, that demonstrates the significance of Okinoshima to the development of encounters with the ‘foreign’ at this crucial time in the history of East Asian interactions.

International relations in the period during which offerings were made at Okinoshima were structured around a number of different forms of encounter with ‘foreigners’: these encounters include immigration, diplomacy, tribute missions, trade and war. Okinoshima does not offer any direct evidence for any of these encounters. There are no records of Chinese or Korean ships stopping at Okinoshima unlike at Dazaifu further to the west, or of migrants setting up home on the island. There is no evidence for fighting or defence, such as suggested by the Kwangaetto stele or the defences constructed around the Tsukushi plain. Although many of the objects offered at Okinoshima may have started out their lives as diplomatic

gifts, they were probably only offered to the deities of Okinoshima once they had been received at court many hundreds of kilometres to the east. Rather than direct evidence of these encounters, the record at Okinoshima allows us a glimpse of the perception of, and attempts to control, these encounters: or rather attempts to propitiate the forces (which we would regard as supernatural but which were probably seen by those involved as being an ordinary part of the world they inhabited) that were perceived as having an impact on such encounters and their outcomes.

The role of migrants in Japanese history at this time is a recurring theme. There is continuing debate within Japanese archaeology about the nature and scale of migration during the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC accompanying the appearance of wet rice agriculture and metallurgy into northern Kyushu at the start of the Yayoi period. Thereafter there are many accounts of groups of migrants from Korea and China settling in Japan, often in relation to new technological introductions, such as stone ware pottery. Several deities who appear in the early chronicles, notably Susano'o, geographically associated with Izumo on the Sea of Japan coast, may have been introduced from Korea (see Grayson 2002). Groups of Chinese and Korean migrants take on important roles within the emerging court structures. As Michael Como makes clear in his analysis of the role of Chinese cults in the formation of Japanese belief systems from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards: 'to a very large degree immigrant and service lineages closely associated with continental technologies and cults shaped both the fabric and parameters [of the Nara and Heian texts] in terms of which courtiers and rulers conceived and expressed their visions of all under heaven' (Como 2009: xvi).

Just as debate continues around the nature and scale of migrant groups, the archaeological evidence for international warfare is limited. While the early chronicles make claim for a series of military engagements by Japanese forces on the Korean peninsula, material evidence remains elusive. What the chronicles make clear, however, is the perceived threat posed by potential military engagement of this kind.

The early chronicles describe groups of foreigners arriving and settling in Japan (Verscheur 2006: 7):

660: Some 100 Chinese prisoners sent from Paekche and later settled in Mino Province

665: 400 Paekche refugees authorised to settle in Omi Province

666: 2000 Paekche immigrants permitted to reside in 'a northern region'

815: an official register describes '1182 families living in the capital or five adjacent provinces, of whom 324 were considered to be of Korean or Chinese descent' (Verscheur 2006: 7).

For much of the first millennium AD, while offerings were being made at Okinoshima, the polities of the Japanese archipelago proactively engaged in networking with both the Korean peninsula and the Chinese continent. Much of this networking appears to have been surrounded by ritualised behaviours informed by beliefs in spirits, and indeed the rationale behind the offerings made at Okinoshima is usually regarded as being to safeguard the maritime expeditions upon which the development and maintenance of these international networks developed.

Charlotte von Versheur has documented the shift in the nature of this networking from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Verschuer 2006). Japan was one of some 70 countries that formed part of a network of tributaries of China from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, Japan sent 10 missions to China, but was something of a 'resistant vassal':

'The Japanese court complied with certain rules of tributary etiquette but refused to follow others. It presented its native products as tribute and in exchange accepted gifts from the Chinese court. During audiences before the Son of Heaven, Japanese delegates took their places among the representatives of other tributary countries, but Japanese monarchs no longer were invested with titles by the Chinese court (they had been given them until the late fifth century) and their missions most likely were no longer supplied with tallies, which normally were obligatory. In their letters accompanying tribute shipments, Japanese sovereigns, at least Suiko, omitted any statement of allegiance to the Chinese Son of Heaven' (ibid 3-4).

The early Japanese chronicles provide some helpful information about these embassies. 'The Nihon Shoki

records about thirty Japanese missions sent to China and approximately one hundred delegations, principally Korean, that came to visit the Japanese court. The Japanese annals depict the Korean delegations as tribute-bearing embassies. It is difficult to verify their status and number because they are hardly mentioned in the official Korean histories, which nevertheless, frequently mention the submission of tribute to China. In turn, the sovereign country also sent representatives supplied with gifts for their foreign vassals. In this way, for example, some Chinese ambassadors accompanied Japanese envoys on their return to Japan' (ibid: 5).

The countries that Japan was engaging in exchange and trade with during the period of offerings at Okinoshima were China, Korea and Parhae. Each of these countries underwent considerable changes of their own from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries: dynastic changes in China; the development of a series of competing kingdoms on the Korean peninsula, all eventually subsumed within United Silla in 668; and the development of the kingdom of Parhae to the north, eventually conquered by the Liao Dynasty.

The exchange relationships took two major forms, often inter-related: official diplomatic embassies bringing gifts for rulers; and trade. The economic contexts within which these exchanges took place also dramatically changed, as parts of East Asia adopted a monetary economy, with the minting of coins. This affected the value of commodities, and therefore the understanding of the value of items deposited at Okinoshima. For much of the period under consideration, silk and cloth were the standards of value.

### **Silk Roads**

During the Han dynasty in China (206 BC- 220 AD) exchanges across Eurasia, which has been going on maybe for millennia before this, as witnessed by the presence of highly valued stones such as jade, nephrite and lapis lazuli from central Asia in ancient China, Caucasian mummies from the Tarim Basin in China, and the presence of Chinese silk in ancient Egypt by the 11<sup>th</sup> century BC, was greatly facilitated following Chinese expeditions and the establishment of more formalised routes and exchanges. This network is now known as the Silk Road, and comprised a network extending over 4000 miles, linking China (and Japan) across central Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Arabia, Persia and to the Mediterranean and Europe (see Liu 1996, 2010). Silk was highly prized in ancient Rome. The Chinese were very interested in central Asia, extending their borders westwards in particular during the Han and Tang periods. They greatly valued the horses from Dayuan, essential in their long-lasting competition with the Xiongnu mounted nomads on their northern borders. Artistic influences and religion, notably Buddhism, travelled along with commodities such as silk and gold, and other, less welcome travelling companions, including Bubonic Plague. Several of the trading cities along the Silk Road are now World Heritage Sites. While the land routes flourished, from the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD so did the maritime trade routes, which linked Chinese ports to southeast Asia, via Vietnam and Sri Lanka, up the west coast of India and so to the Roman entrepots of the Red Sea and by water to the Mediterranean. Through these extensive networks, Okinoshima, and the lands ruled by both the Munakata Clan and the emerging Yamato centre in Kinai, became drawn into networks of exchange and tribute that criss-crossed Eurasia by camel train and ship.

### **Viking trade networks**

In the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Viking peoples of Scandinavia developed a very extensive trading and raiding network that stretched from the great centres of Hedeby (Denmark), Kaupang (Sweden) and Birka (Finland) across the Atlantic to Iceland and Greenland (or Vinland), south to through the Mediterranean to North Africa and Byzantium, and east through Russian trading centres at Staraya Ladoga and Novgorod to the Caspian Sea, Baghdad and beyond (see [www.vikingheritage.org](http://www.vikingheritage.org)). Despite the far-flung reach of these centres, however, towns remained of limited size: the population of Hedeby is estimated at no more than 1000 souls. Although most trade was relatively short distance, Viking ships also carried cargoes of silk and spices from the Far East, and a few merchants from Asia mingled with those from Europe and the Arab world. Exchange took the form of barter, with silver as the main medium of exchange, obtained from the Near East and later from the Danegeld tribute from England and elsewhere. Viking traders were not professionals, but were mainly farmers who would take part in seasonal overseas expeditions, striking fear into the hearts of those who suffered from the Viking raids such as those that pillaged the great isolated monastic complexes around the coasts of the British Isles. Evidence for the richness of the exchange networks is seen at burial sites like Jelling in Denmark and Sutton Hoo in England, as indicated above. The range of commodities

exchanged include:

*Vinland*: timber

*Greenland*: walrus ivory, furs, skins, wool

*Iceland*: fish, animal fat, wool cloth and clothing, sulfur, falcons

*England*: tin, wheat, honey, woolens, silver, barley, linen

*Russia*: slaves, furs, wax, honey

*Byzantium*: silks, fruits, spices, wines, gems, silver, jewelry, brocade

*Frankish kingdoms*: weapons, jewelry, wine, glass, salt, woolen cloth

*Shetland Islands*: soapstone

*Norway*: timber, iron, soapstone, whetstones, barley, tar

*Sweden*: iron, furs

*East Baltic regions*: amber, slaves, furs

## 8. Discussion and future research

I would suggest that future research on Okinoshima could usefully be structured around a series of themes, many of which overlap with the future research questions I proposed in my previous paper, and to the criteria being used for the nomination for World Heritage Status. These themes could help structure the visitor experience to a future World Heritage Site of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region. These are: the significance of Okinoshima in the history of religion; how religion was used to create and maintain power within the context of the establishment of state level societies in Japan; how would different individuals at various times through Japanese (and East Asian) history have experienced and perceived Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region; how did traditions of religious and ritual practice change over time; and what is the significance of the transition from worship at natural places to worship at monumental sites (including the use of buildings such as shrines).

### **Theme 1: Religion and history: the significance of Okinoshima in the history of religion**

Okinoshima is considered significant partly because of its religious importance. And yet the concept of religion is problematic in Japanese history. I have reviewed such ideas in my previous paper (see also Kaner 2011), and I conclude that as long as the discussion about Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region is set in the context of a generic ‘archaeology of religion and ritual’, rather than as something specific about the origins of Shinto (although there is a field of study known as ‘Shinto archaeology’, as described in Kaner 2011: 335-336), then it can be argued that Okinoshima and the associated sites are significant for understanding the history of religion. Steinhaus’ (2012) discussion of the distinction between ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ religions is of use here.

Much of the research commissioned about Okinoshima and associated sites in the Munakata region has emphasised the historically contingent nature of the tradition of religious observation on the island. This is in marked contrast to other forms of narrative which attempt to address the past in terms of broad processes and evolutionary schema, which are often teleological in nature (the spread of Buddhism, the rise of states and civilisation, the emergence of Shinto). These broad-brush histories often seem to suggest a degree of inevitability to the historical developments witnessed by the historical and archaeological record. Such inevitability would be much to the liking of those who commissioned many of the early historical works upon which we are dependent for written accounts of what happened in Japan and its relationships with East Asia through the middle of the first millennium.

Moving away from such broad-brush narratives requires a re-focusing of what we expect to be able to say about the significance of sites like Okinoshima. This re-focusing needs an attention to detail, the Geertzian thick description argued for by Steinhaus; nothing can be taken for granted; we should, where possible, be looking for micro-histories in order to understand change in religious practice (see Cornell and Fahlander 2007). In a previous paper I argued for an archaeology of religious experience: it is putting across this diversity of religious experience that will be the challenge for those charged with making the most of any World Heritage status for Okinoshima and the Munakata sites. Part of the Outstanding Universal Value of Okinoshima is, in this authors view, the potential it contains for such a microhistorical

approach.

A major change occurs in religious practice at Okinoshima and its associated sites. This is a shift from ritual observances being undertaken in the open air or in the shadow of rocks, i.e. in natural places (see Bradley 1999), to ritual observances being undertaken in and around buildings: in the case of Okinoshima, buildings known as shrines.

All of this requires a new kind of narrative for Okinoshima. Here we are aided by the Munakata deities themselves. They are deities associated with weaving, and weaving is a practice that provides a rich supply of metaphor from which we can draw in order to tell the most compelling stories about this remarkable site and its significance for the history of humanity.

### **Theme 2: Religion and politics: creating and maintaining a state of power**

During the period when votive offerings were being made at Okinoshima, the political systems of the Japanese archipelago were transformed from a series of autonomous, sometimes competing, regional entities networked by shifting alliances based on kinship, to a centralised bureaucratic and institutionalised polity supported by the exercise of force, with appointment to positions of authority at least in part determined by merit and non-kin-based relations with the ruling elite. The process whereby this transformation, or series of transformations, came about is known as state formation. Ritualised practices and religious belief were an important element of this process, and the remains at Okinoshima and the associated sites provide a very rare, if not unique, survival of a regional cultic centre with significant associations for understanding secondary state formation.

William Coaldrake gives an effective summary of the nature of power in early Japan and its relationship to religion as part of his discussion of the relationship between the Ise and Izumo shrines:

‘Authority stemmed from ritual, in which the ruler served as intermediary between the world of gods and the world of human beings. Effective power derived from association with the supernatural, control over craft industries and the organisation of wet rice agriculture, and from some military force. The contemporary term used for ‘government’, *matsurigoto*, meant performing rites in honour of the gods, but was used interchangeably to describe procedural matters of religion and everyday administration. The elite of each clan built a hierarchy of status and title, and wove from fact and fiction elaborate mythologies establishing their own divine ancestries. They also used shrines as a setting for demonstrating their power prerogatives. It was the direct patronage of an elite preoccupied by such ambitions which elevated the vernacular forms of the secular storehouse and raised-floor residence to the level of sacred architecture, creating buildings which became the most pervasive icons of Shinto and the most compelling demonstration of their right to rule. For them, as for the kings of ancient Mesopotamia, to rule was to build and to build was to rule’ (Coaldrake 1996: 18).

Werner Steinhaus’ account of state formation in Europe and Japan has provided a comparative context with European studies of state formation, and the diverse nature of control at this time is further highlighted by Michael Como’s characterisation of the early Yamato court:

‘the court was not a discrete, unified identity, but rather a site of contestation among several lineages with discrete interests, cultic traditions and ties to disparate regions, cultic centres and deities’ (Como 2009: xvi-xvii).

### **Theme 3: Religion and the individual: for whom did Okinoshima have significance?**

Visitors to Okinoshima and the associated sites will all take their own experiences and memories with them when they leave. They will hopefully have their understanding of the relationship between religious practice and belief, traditions of offerings as seen at Okinoshima, and the complex interactions between trade, diplomacy, politics and belief, enhanced if not transformed. Such an understanding is offered through experiencing and appreciating the significance of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region, in comparison with other sites of religious significance around the world.

Cultivating visitors' sense of engagement with the site not only enhances their own experiences, but is also a good way to help conserve this valuable resource for the future. These experiences can be mediated by knowing what other kinds of people might have made of Okinoshima. We are aware of a range of types of people who would have known about Okinoshima and would have had their own views on its significance. How would such people have made sense of what was happening there in their own terms?

One of the major challenges faced by those charged with fostering an understanding of the significance of Okinoshima is the issue of access. A large component of the narratives that surround Okinoshima are concerned with inaccessibility, secrecy and isolation. Future work on the presentation of Okinoshima and Munakata would benefit from a consideration of how the island was perceived by different rulers through the ages, including, for example, Himiko, Iwai, Shotoku Taishi and the Emperor Tenmu.

**Theme 4: Religion and place: sacred geographies (centres, peripheries, underworlds and otherworlds)**

One of the main sensations brought out by Okinoshima is isolation. Through much of human history, many religious practitioners have sought to develop a sense of isolation as a way of getting in touch with their own spirituality.

Okinoshima and the surrounding region with containing sites associated with the Munakata clan is regarded as being a special place, or a series of interrelated special places. I have elsewhere argued that Okinoshima is part of a special seascape, both bridging and separating the lands of western Japan and the Korean peninsula. It is a seascape full of dangers. For the Chinese, these seaways lead to the haunted islands of the immortals, which they called Fusang. For the Japanese they lead away from home and all its comforts.

This special nature is something to which future managers of the World Heritage site will need to pay particular attention, for it is the special, secret, nature of Okinoshima in particular that is what contributes so greatly to its Outstanding Universal Value. This would not be the only site to which the public will not be admitted. Uluru (Ayers Rock) in Australia, Mount Athos and the Seifa-Utaki sacred grove in Okinawa all have very restricted access, along with many of the sites inscribed using the natural criteria. In addition, however, Okinoshima and the Munakata region need to be explained in terms of their place in the often shifting sacred geographies of Japan and East Asia.

**Theme 5: The ways that ritual practice change through time, and the relationship between such changes and the interaction between different traditions of religious and cult belief**

A theme of exceptional interest in the study of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region is that of the relationship between changes in ritual practice (as for example documented at Okinoshima) and the interaction between different traditions of religious and cult belief (in the case of Okinoshima the relationship between incoming beliefs around the worship of Buddha and the development of what was to become Shinto – usefully identified by Steinhaus 2012 as an encounter between primary and secondary religions).

**Theme 6: The development of monumental places of ritual observance and their relationship to natural places**

In his book, *An Archaeology of Natural Places*, Richard Bradley provided a very thought-provoking survey of why unaltered natural places, including mountains, caves, springs and rivers, came to assume a sacred character in much of European prehistory. This study followed on from two previous works which studied the appearance and development of monuments (for example large funerary monuments, stone circles, henges and ditch-enclosed settlements), *The Significance of Monuments* and *Altering the Earth*. Bradley has also written extensively on the ritual, or votive, deposits, often of weaponry, but sometimes including human sacrifice found through much of the European Bronze Age. Bradley restricts his survey to Europe, while noting that what he says may be of interest to other parts of the world (Bradley 2000: xii). His examples of natural places that take on sacred significance range from the Saami *siejdde*, or sacrificial sites, of Ukonsaari in Finland and Alta in Norway to sites from classical Greek antiquity such as Delphi and the Psychro Cave, the peak sanctuary at Juktas to the famous rock art sites of prehistoric Scandinavia including

Bohuslan in Sweden. Bradley says of these unaltered Saami sites:

‘it is possible to specify some of the physical characteristics of the locations that were chosen and also to identify a number of the processes that took place there. These were unusual features of the natural topography – features that stood out from the surrounding country, some of which recalled petrified [i.e. turned to stone] people and animals – but they are even more important because we know a certain amount about their significance in Saami cosmology. The stones and other features that were selected from the wider terrain were credited with special powers and allowed contact with the supernatural. Those contacts were made through sacrifices that were entirely integrated into the daily lives of the Saami. At the same time those places were only the visible signs of a complex cosmological scheme that involved three different worlds. These came into contact at natural locations such as caves and mountains’ (Bradley 2000: 13).

Comparison with Okinoshima is relevant because the rituals at Okinoshima begin in the open air, with no buildings or monuments, even though shrines are built later in the sequence. And because a lot is known about ritual practices in the periods during which the offerings at Okinoshima were made, we can begin to make statements about the place Okinoshima and the associated burial mounds and other sites held in the contemporary cosmology. The combination of archaeological evidence with what can be inferred through judicious and critical readings of later written records means that Okinoshima joins a short list of sites around the world where we can create narratives for the development of religious centres through from the veneration of ‘unaltered places’ to worship in monumental structures.

Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region offer a rare opportunity to study the development of monumental places of ritual observance and their relationship to natural places. Many of the major Japanese ritual centres are set in distinctive landscapes, even though most of the attention of studies to date has been on the forms of architecture eventually constructed there. As Coaldrake notes, however, we can already trace the development from sacred precincts to worship in buildings at Ise and Izumo (Coaldrake 1996: 19). This is a shift that happens in parallel with a move away from the construction of monumental tombs as the focus of community ritualised activity, to the construction of temple and shrine buildings.

## 9. Conclusion

This paper has suggested that the outstanding value of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region lies in the interwoven relationships between the development of religion, politics and international relations in East Asia from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries AD, the time which saw the emergence for the first time of a self-aware East Asian consciousness.

I have suggested a series of sites and networks with which Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region can be compared, ranging from the sacred natural places of the Saami peoples to the sanctuaries of Greek antiquity, sacred groves and shrines, to a series of sacred islands and sacred mountains, and mounded tomb cemeteries. I have suggested that each of these can be used to help foster an appreciation and understanding of the kinds of religious experience that played such an important role in the lives of the people who made votive offerings at Okinoshima and Oshima, and who were buried (some of them at least) in the burial mound complexes at Munakata.

Understanding these religious experiences through the microhistorical analysis of the archaeological remains of these traditions of ritual practice at Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region provides essential context for understanding the contemporary ritual practices still undertaken at the Munakata Taisha Shrine and the associated shrines on Okinoshima and Oshima. The long tradition of ritual at Okinoshima and Munakata doubtless includes some significant diversity in practice and significance: I have argued that the rituals that took place meant different things to different people at different times over the centuries: votive offerings made on behalf of the early Yamato rulers such as Yuryaku probably meant something rather different to those made on behalf of the rulers by the time of Tenmu or Shomu.

While I appreciate the pragmatic reasons behind the selection of the nominated properties for inclusion in

the nomination, the importance of understanding the East Asian context in appreciating the Outstanding Universal Significance of Okinoshima and the associated sites of the Munakata region, requires that the sites need to be presented to the visiting public in the context of nearby sites such as Dazaifu and the Korokan in Fukuoka, and indeed similar sites such as Chongmakdong (Woo 2011) and other ritual sites on the Korean peninsula (Ko 2011).

Lastly, with the historical records at our disposal, it should also be possible to give an impression of the atmosphere during at least some of the missions sent from the Japanese archipelago to the continent, and maybe vice-versa, which were the reason so many votive offerings were made at Okinoshima. J. Edward Kidder provides a lively summary of the nature of the exchanges both with Korea and China (Kidder 1999: 82 and 110-111), and indicates how little people from the centre in Yamato would have wanted to be dispatched either to Tsukushi or overseas. Poems surviving in the *Man'yōshū*, the 8<sup>th</sup> century anthology of 'a thousand leaves', include a partial account of a diplomatic mission sent from Yamato during the reign of the Emperor Shōmu in 736. There is no doubt about the emotional wrench such a journey entailed for those involved, separated from the comforts and certainties of life in Nara (Horton 2012). These accounts, along with the details we have of the boats involved (Borgen 1982) add greatly to our appreciation of the experiences of those involved, which they would have sought to have made sense of through what we recognize as religious belief, and which they would have attempted to control through ritual practice.

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Site Name	Remoteness	Ritual and religious use	Communications and trade	Place of confinement	Comment
<b>A. ISLANDS</b>					
<b>A I. World Heritage Properties</b>					
		isolated	Outward looking		
Churches of Chiloe			X		Jesuit missions
Cinque Terra offshore islands (Portovenere)		X			
Elephanta		X			
Ellis Island (Statue of Liberty)				X X	Immigration
Goree Island				X X	Slave Trade
Gusuku, Okinawa			X		Shrines, sacred forest
Itsukushima			X		Possibly closest parallel but is there any pre-shrine evidence?
Mont St Michel		X		X	Benedictine monastery
Okinoshima	X		X	X	
Robben Island				X	
SGang Gwaay (Anthony Island)			X		Native domestic and ritual
Skellig Michael		X			Celtic monasticism
Solovetsky Islands		X		X	Orthodox monasticism and Tsarist/ Soviet prison; Sacred sites from 3 <sup>rd</sup> millennium BC
<b>A II Coastal</b>					
Mount Athos		X			Orthodox monasticism
<b>B Non World Heritage</b>					
<b>BI Islands</b>					
Anglesey			X		Druids but no tangible evidence
Farne Islands		X			Celtic hermitage
Gros Ile, Quebec				X X	Immigration station
Iona		X	X	X	Celtic monastery + missionary centre
Lerins		X			Monastic centre from C6
Lindisfarne		X	X		Celtic monastery + missionary centre
Majuli Island			X		Shrines on island in River Brahmaputra
Noirmoutier		X			Monastic centre from early
<b>B2 Coastal</b>					
Wearmouth/ Jarrow; Hartlepool; Whitby; Burgh Castle; Bradwell; Reculver		X	X		Anglo-Saxon monasteries in coastal settings

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World Heritage Registration Promotion Division,  
Fukuoka Prefectural Government  
7-7 Higashikōen, Hakata-ku, Fukuoka City, Fukuoka Prefecture,  
812-8577 Japan

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3-7-6 Kōjimachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tōkyō, 102-0083 Japan