

Glossary

● Agariumai (pilgrimage to sacred places)

The pilgrimage to the sanctuaries of Chinen and Tamagusuku, where the "Amamikiyo clan", the ancestors of the Ryukyu people, were said to have settled in when they first came to the land of Ryukyu. The east area of Shuri Castle were called the "Agariyumajiri" or "Agarikata" which consisted of the Ozato, Sashiki, Chinen and Tamagusuku districts. The pilgrimage to the sanctuaries in Chinen and Tamagusuku is referred to as the "Agariumai". Like the Nakijin Nubui, there was a custom of worship in each kin group of Okinawa. Kudaka island is the birthplace of wheat, while Ufakaru in Chinen and Ukinju-hainju(Mifuda) in Tamagusuku are the birthplaces of rice. So king and Kikoeokimi priestess made pilgrimages, and then each kin group in Okinawa also came to worship these sanctuaries.

● Oaraori (ritual)

The inauguration ceremony of Kikoeokimi priestess as the supreme priestess. After the ceremonies at Shuri, the priestess went through some important places in Ozato-majiri-yonabaru, and arrived at the Sefa-utaki in Chinen area. Many rituals would be performed there over a span of two days. The Kikoeokimi priestess would receive the immortal powers and become a peer of God, through performing the ritual of "Ubinadi" where she would stroke her forehead with the holy water. Preparations for this ceremony such as building Ukariya (temporary house of worship) and repairing roads would take many months for this biggest event of the Ryukyu Kingdom.

● Kikoeokimi (priestess)

The Kikoeokimi means "the most famous woman priest", which is a appellation of the supremacy at mediums "Noro" in the Ryukyu religious faith. The Kikoeokimi priestess is said to be a spiritual guardian of the kingdom and its king who is the supreme power. Therefore, women of the royal family such as a king's sister were mainly appointed to this position. She is the supreme figure amongst the Noro in the entire Ryukyu, and is also responsible for the Sefa-utaki, the most sacred place in Ryukyu. The Kikoeokimi priestesses were in charge of the holy rituals over a period of 400 years, from the first priestess in 1470 to the last 15th generation in 1875.

● Kudaka Island

Kudaka island is called "Island of the Gods", where holy rituals of the Ryukyu dynasty were being performed. It is a small island of 7.75km in circumference, located 5km to the east of the Chinen peninsula. It is said to be the place where the founder of Ryukyu, Amamikiyo, first landed from the heavens and it is also the birthplace of grains. Needless to say, every king made pilgrimages to the Kudaka island. In Kudaka island, there is the mysterious festival typified by the "Izaiho" which is held every 12 years during the year of the horse, and it also attracts attention as a important ethnic culture.

Midori no Yakata Sefa

TEL & FAX : 098-949-1899
539 Chinen-kudeken Nanjo City Okinawa

Opening hours

【March - October】 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Ticket sales end at 5:15 p.m. Admission until 5:30 p.m.
【November - February】 9 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Ticket sales end at 4:45 p.m. Admission until 5 p.m.

Closed on

June 21 - 23 and November 15 - 17, 2020
June 10 - 12 and November 5 - 7, 2021
May 30 - June 1 and October 25 - 27, 2022

Commemorative Stamp

Sefa-utaki

Spiritual place "Bridge to happiness"



Nanjo City Tourism Association
TEL : 098-948-4660
Nanjo City Culture Division
TEL : 098-917-5374
Nanjo City Tourism Commerce Division
TEL : 098-917-5387

Sefa-utaki THE WORLD HERITAGE

世界文化遺産

せーふあうたき
Sefa-utaki

The Most Sacred Site of Ryukyu Kingdom
"Sefa-utaki"
Appears in Legends
about The Beginning of Ryukyu



Nanjo City Okinawa

What is Sefa-utaki?

"Utaki" is the collective name for the sacred places widely distributed in the Nansei Islands. Sefa-utaki is the most sacred site of Ryukyu Kingdom, and it appears in legends about the beginning of Ryukyu. There are six sanctuaries called "Ibi" within Sefa-utaki. Among them, Uhugui, Yunchi and Sangui were named after the rooms in Shuri castle, which represent the deep relationship between erstwhile Shuri castle and Sefa-utaki. In the distant Ryukyu dynasty, sacred white sand was brought specially from Kudaka island called the "Island of the Gods", and was spread all over the ground of Sefa-utaki for national rituals. The most important ritual was the inauguration ceremony of the Kikoeokimi priestess called the "Oaraori". In this manner, kings and Kikoeokimi priestess made a pilgrimage to Sefa-utaki. The people also came to make a pilgrimage called "Agariumai", and continue to worship this place even today.

Guidelines for Worship

Recently, the state of the place of worship has been deteriorating. It is a very sacred place and a part of local people's life. Let's be considerate of the local residents and observe the manners of worship with respect.

Please bow once and greet

At the Ibi, first bow, then say your name and "I've come to visit".

Cleanse your body and worship with respect

Let's keep in mind that this is a place of worship and visit with respect. If possible, please cleanse the body by drinking some water before worship.

Please do not take away anything from the Utaki

Taking away stones, animals and plants etc. as souvenir is not allowed.

Do not disturb other people in worship

Do not talk to people who are in the midst of worship. Please refrain from taking pictures of them.

Do not step on the incense burner

The incense burner is sacred. Climbing and stepping on it are strictly prohibited.

Let's make efforts to keep it clean and beautiful

Thank you for keeping the Utaki clean and beautiful. Please bring your trash home with you.

Excavated Items and Remains

Sefa-utaki THE WORLD HERITAGE



Pond



4 Shikiyodayuru and Amadayuru Jugs

The two jugs are placed to collect the "holy water" dripping from the two stalactites above.



5 Sangui

The innermost part of two stalactites and the enclosed triangular space are each places of worship. Also, the Kudaka island can be seen beyond the sea to the east.

Sefa-utaki Excavated Items (National Important Cultural Properties)



Various items, mainly from the Middle Ages to Early modern times, have been excavated from the Sefa-utaki. Among them, jewelry items including gold, Chinese celadon porcelain and ancient currency in particular drew much interest. Items excavated from the extremely noble places within Sefa-utaki provide extremely valuable materials in the studies of the Ryukyu religious faith of that period.

Drainage ditch of Sangui confirmed by excavations



A variety of remains were discovered from the excavations, such as drainage ditch that is running under the stone pavements of the approach and deposition of white sand used to cleanse the places of worship. Also, it has been discovered how the preparations for important rituals were made.



3 Yuinchi

Located on the opposite side after rounding the rocks of Ufugui. While Yuinchi means "kitchen" in the palace terms, it is also interpreted as a "place fully filled with abundance of harvests" because trade goods were gathered from all over the world to the Ryukyu Kingdom in those days.



2 Ufugui

It is the first place of worship you see on your left as you go up from the Ujouguchi. Ufugui means the hall and the salon, there is the praying place called "Una" laid with bricks in front.



1 Ujouguchi

This is the entrance to the Utaki. Six incense burners placed on the right indicate the number of sanctuary.

6 Uroka
※ no admittance

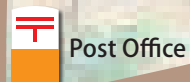


Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu



Entrance

Midori no Yakata Sefa



Post Office

Route 331



Parking Lot / Ticket Office



← To Yaese Town

To Yonabaru Town →

Chinen Misaki Park →