



## Midori no Yakata Sefa Admission Information

TEL/FAX: 098-949-1899

### Opening hours:

NOV – FEB: 9:00 - 17:30

Final ticket sales: 16:45

Last admission: 17:00

MAR - OCT: 9:00 - 18:00

Final ticket sales: 17:15

Last admission: 17:30

Please check the official website for days the sacred site will be closed for holidays and maintenance.



World Heritage Site

# Sefa-utaki



### Commemorative Stamp

## Guidelines for Sacred Site Visitors

### Visit with a respectful mindset

Do not forget that this sacred site is a place of worship.

### Please bow once and greet

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

### Do not disturb other people in worship

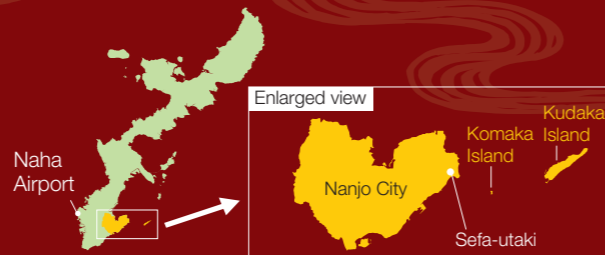
Do not talk to or take photos of people who are in the midst of worship.

### Do not take any items from the sacred site with you

Do not take items such as stones, animals, and plants as souvenirs.

### The incense burners are sacred

The square stones installed on this site of worship are incense burners. Incense is placed upon them to pray to the gods. Do not sit or place items onto the incense burners.



For parking, please use the lot in front of the Nanjo City Local Products Center (Tourism Association) or park at Cape Chinen Park

• Address: 539 Chinen-kudeken, Nanjo City, Okinawa

\*Tickets are only available at the Local Products Center.

The most sacred place in the Ryukyu Kingdom, appearing in legends about the creation of the Ryukyu Islands

Nanjo City, Okinawa Prefecture

## What is Sefa-utaki?

*Utaki* is the collective name for the sacred places widely distributed in the Nansei Islands (also known as the Ryukyu Islands). Sefa-utaki is the most sacred site in the Ryukyu Kingdom, and it appears in legends about the creation of the Ryukyu Islands. It also continues to be revered by many people as one of the locations for the ritual pilgrimage of the Ryukyu king and *kikoeokimi* (supreme priestess), a tradition known as *agariumai*.

There are six sanctuaries called *ibi* within Sefa-utaki. In the past, the rulers of the Ryukyu Kingdom visited each sanctuary to pray to the gods for national prosperity, abundant harvests, and safe voyages. During national rituals conducted in the now distant Ryukyu Dynasty era, special efforts were made to bring white sand from Kudaka Island, which was also called the "Island of the Gods," and spread upon Sefa-utaki's ground. The most important of these rituals was the *oaraori*, an inauguration ceremony for the *kikoeokimi*.

Nanjo City Tourism Association  
TEL: 098-948-4660



# The Six Worship Areas of Sefa-utaki



Cannonball Pond

The Sangui altar, like the Ufugui and Yuinchi altars, is a designated sanctuary. For environmental conservation as well as the appropriate maintenance and management of these sanctuaries, entry into these areas is forbidden.

## 2 Yuinchi

In the parlance of the royal court, *yuinchi* means "kitchen." Although no cooking took place here, it is understood to be a space that was filled with an abundance of harvested goods gathered from all over the world through the prosperous trading activities of the Ryukyu Kingdom in those days.



## 1 Ufugui

This is the first place of worship seen on the left upon entering from the *ujouguchi* (main gate). *Ufugui* means "hall" or "*ichibanza*" (a salon or parlor-like room found in some Okinawan houses), and in front, there is a stone-paved area for praying known as an *una*.



Midori no Yakata Sefa

Entrance



Park

Post Office

Cape Chinen Park

Sefa-utaki-mae Bus Stop



## P Local Products Center (Ticket Office/Free Parking Lot)

[Exhibit/Screening Room Information] (Free Admission)  
The Local Products Center has faithful video recreations of what it was like inside Sefa-utaki, along with a display of panels featuring a mix of photos and an exhibit of replica gold magatama (comma-shaped ornaments) unearthed from Sangui.



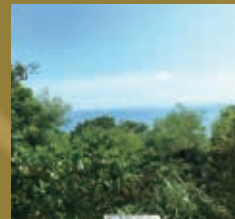
## 3 Amadayuru-ashikanubi Jug 4 Shikiyodayuru-amaganubi Jug

These two jugs have been placed here to collect the "holy water" that drips from two stalactites.

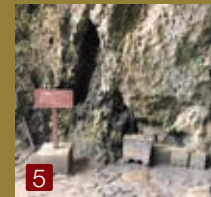


## Ujoguchi Kudaka Island Yohaisho

## Kudaka Island Yohaisho (Worship Area) Ujoguchi

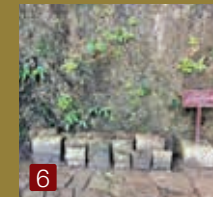


This is the entrance for the path leading to the *utaki*. The six incense burners placed on the right are representations of the places of worship within the sacred site.



## 5 Sangui

The enclosed triangular space is Sangui. On top of a rock to the right is Chounohana. Both are places of worship.



## 6 Chounohana

## Uroka

During the Ryukyu Kingdom era, people purified themselves here before entering Sefa-take.  
\*Please watch your step in this area.

To Azama Port (→ To Kudaka Island)

To Azama Sun Beach

## Drainage ditch in front of Sangui confirmed by excavations



A variety of remains were discovered from excavations of the Sefa-utaki site, such as a drainage ditch running under the stone-paved approach to the sacred site and layers of white sand used to purify places of worship. Furthermore, the multi-layered remains of the site also suggest that this area was maintained for important rituals.

## Sefa-utaki Excavated Items (National Important Cultural Properties)



Various items, mainly from the Middle Ages to early modern times, have been excavated from Sefa-utaki. Among them, gold magatama (comma-shaped ornaments), Chinese celadon porcelain, and ancient currency, in particular, drew much interest. Items excavated from Sangui, the most exalted area within this sacred *utaki*, serve as extremely valuable materials in the study of the Ryukyu religious faith of that period.

## Glossary

### Agariumai (eastern pilgrimage)

The pilgrimage to the sanctuaries of Chinen and Tamagusuku, where Amamikiyo, the creator deity of Ryukyu, is said to have first settled. The locations of Ozato, Sashiki, Chinen, and Tamagusuku, as seen from Shuri Castle, were known as the Agariyumajiri (Four Eastern Districts) or Agarikata (The East). As such, the pilgrimage to the places of worship in Chinen and Tamagusuku is referred to as the Agariumai (eastern pilgrimage).

### Oaraori (inauguration ceremony)

The inauguration ceremony for the *kikoeokimi* supreme priestess. Following ceremonies in Shuri, the priestess would proceed through a number of important places before entering Sefa-utaki in the Chinen district, where she would conduct several rituals. It is said that the *kikoeokimi* supreme priestess would become an equal among the gods after receiving the divine spirit through a ritual known as *Ubinadi*, where the priestess would stroke her own forehead with holy water.

### Kikoeokimi (supreme priestess)

*Kikoeokimi* means "the most revered supreme priestess" and is a title given to the highest-ranking priestess (*noro*) in the Ryukyu religious faith. The *kikoeokimi* was tasked with being the spiritual guardian of the kingdom and its highest authority, the king. Therefore, women of the royal family, such as one of the king's sisters, were mainly appointed to this position. The *kikoeokimi* priestesses were in charge of the holy rituals for the Ryukyu Kingdom over a period of 400 years, from the first priestess (1470) to the final, fifteenth-generation priestess (1875).

### Kudaka Island

This island is known as the "Island of the Gods," and numerous holy rituals have been performed here since the Ryukyu Kingdom era. It is said to be where Amamikiyo, the ancestral deity who fashioned the Ryukyu Islands, descended from the heavens and created its first island. This island is also known as the birthplace of the five essential grains (rice, wheat, foxtail millet, proso millet, and beans). Until the 17th century, every Ryukyuan king made pilgrimages to Kudaka Island once every two years. The island is also the site of the Izaiho ceremony, which takes place once every twelve years during the year of the horse and is representative of mysterious divine rituals, attracting attention to the island as a place of ethnological importance.