Kasari Area, Amami City Tale of Kasari Community

Kasari area is surrounded by the Pacific Ocean and the East China Sea, and has small mountains with altitudes of 200m or less running north and south. On the east side, here lies a flatland where sugarcane and semi-tropical fruit fields are cultivated, and livestock is raised. Kasari Bay, one of " 500 Important Wetlands in Japan," designated by the Ministry of the Environment, covers the west side. Many communities in Kasari area inherit their traditional performing arts, passing their unique culture from generation to generation through their daily lives.

※ The scale below is presented as an approximate guideline.

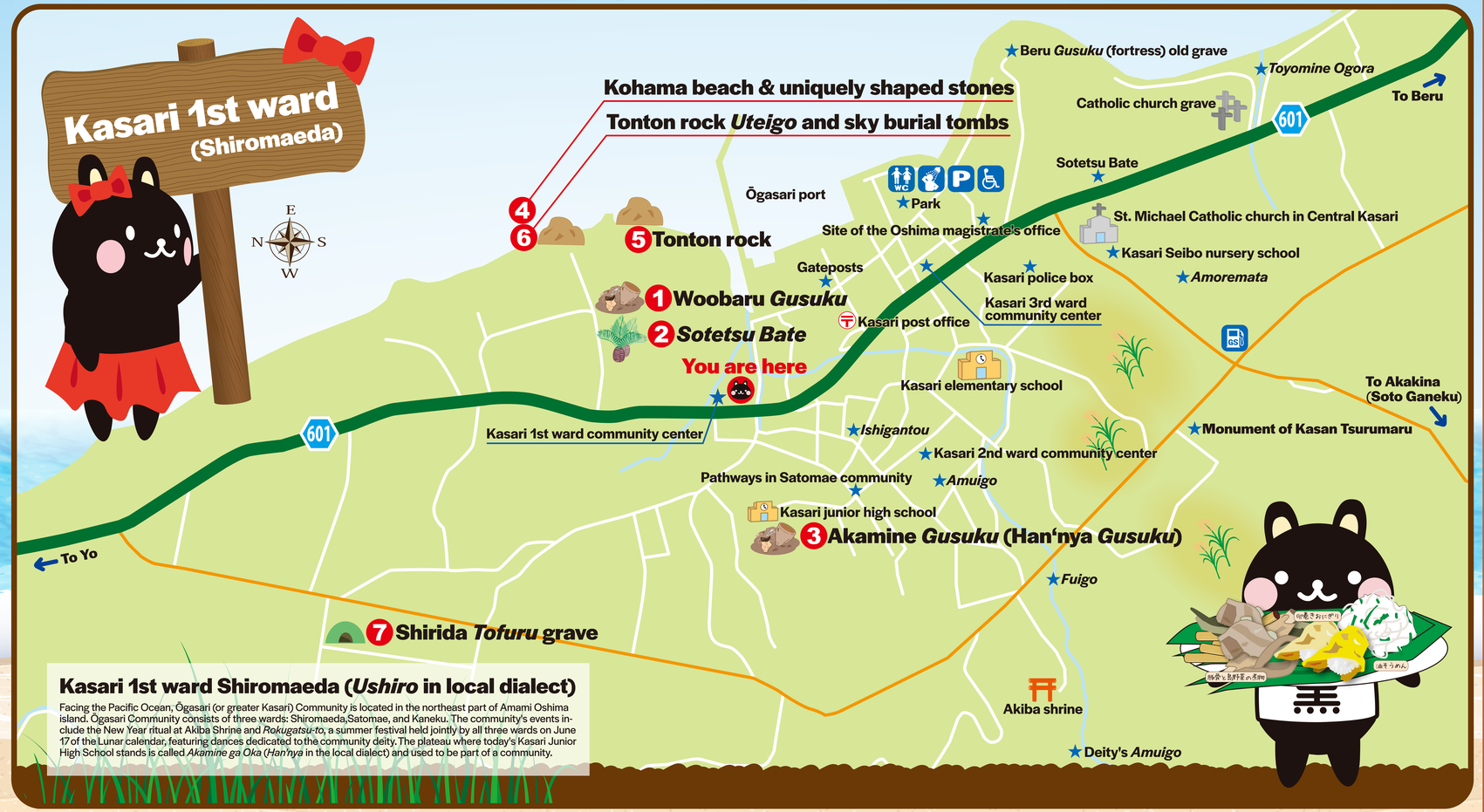
0Km 1Km 2Km 3Km 4Km 5Km

Legend

- Toilet
- Shower
- Parking area
- Rest area
- Barrier-free toilet
- Kasari Branch, Amami City
- Major Sightseeing Spots and Facilities

Amami City HP

Administration: Amami City



Kasari 1st ward Shiromaeda (*Ushiro* in local dialect)

Facing the Pacific Ocean, Ōgasari (or greater Kasari) Community is located in the northeast part of Amami Oshima island. Ōgasari Community consists of three wards: Shiromaeda,Satomae, and Kaneku. The community's events include the New Year ritual at Akiba Shrine and *Rokugatsu-to*, a summer festival held jointly by all three wards on June 17 of the Lunar calendar, featuring dances dedicated to the community deity. The plateau where today's Kasari Junior High School stands is called *Akamine ga Oka* (*Han'nya* in the local dialect) and used to be part of a community.

1 Woobaru *Gusuku*

The plateau area covered by cycad fields presents a great view. In 1997, an excavation and research conducted as a part of road widening work discovered celadon porcelain pieces originating in 14th century China: earthenware pieces exported from *Kamuiyaki* ruin in Tokunoshima island, between the early 11th and late 14th centuries; and bone dices made of dugong bone. Amami Oshima island was engaged in active interaction with Ryukyu (Okinawa), Korea, and mainland Kyushu at the time, and this ruin seems to represent some aspects of it.

2 *Sotetsu Bate* (Cycad Field)

Cycad is a representative plant that has helped the island residents survive through a tough period. Cycad provided a valuable protein source along with acorns and rice, while the leaves served as decoration and green manure in the rice fields, and the stem provided starch. Cycad is an essential plant for the islanders, serving as borders for farm fields, earth retainers in fields on the hill, windbreakers, and foliage plants.

3 Akamine *Gusuku* and old Akamine Community site

Located at a height of 20m, Akamine *Gusuku* (fortress) is referred to as *Han'nya Gusuku* in the local dialect. Along with a ruin of a mountain fortress, Akamine Community consisted of approx. 20 households, which relocated themselves to today's Shiromaeda and Satomae wards. After the community vanished, today's Kasari Junior High School was built on the site. The school zone of Kasari Junior High School extends from Yo Community to Suno Community. The plateau area still has old house sites, a *kamimichi* (deity path), and *ijyungo* well sites.

4 Kohama Beach and Uniquely Shaped Stones (Children's playing field)

The spot has a developed wide coral reef, a sand dune in a complex landform, and a beautiful coast line composed of a beach and marine terrace. The plateau area is formed by Ryukyu limestone, and the holes of various sizes on the coastline provide a perfect playing field for children. The coast line has a number of unique stones in various shapes. A scene viewed from the *hamajo guchi*, or "pathway to the beach," is found in an artwork of Isson Tanaka, a Japanese-style painter who spent his late years in Amami Oshima.

5 Tonton Rock

The rock is situated in the old playing fields where senior locals used to play. The rock is called Tonton because it makes "tong tong" sound when lightly hit with a stone. Although the children today hardly play with this rock, kids in the old days often enjoyed hitting this rock, and enjoying its loyal response.

6 *Uteigo* and Sky Burial Tombs

Under Ubaru plateau, there runs a stream and an empty basin still remains. The locals used to draw water from here. They came to this site below the cliff to draw water at low tide. *Gakensha*, or "under the cliff," was a sky burial grave where some human bones used to be exposed. It was a scary spot for the locals. It is said *Kenmun*, a mythical local monster in Amami, often shows up here. This is one of the sacred and scary spots known among *Shimanchu*, the native islanders.

7 Shirida *Tofuru* grave

Ubaru plateau is a plateau with a height of approx. 16m, located between Kasari Community and Yo Community. Shirida *Tofuru* graves is situated under the northern cliff of this plateau, consisting of more than six old tombs. Bodies were laid in state in the horizontal hollows in Ryukyu limestone. The bones were washed and placed in funerary urns. The site was used as a clan's graveyard until the 1950s.

8 *Shima Uta* Folk Songs, *Shima Guchi* Dialect, and Dance

Daily conversation among the island people is spoken in the *shima guchi* dialect, whose intonation often varies by community. Community dances are influenced by their agricultural practices from the medieval period, as well as the *Noro* priestess system which governed various community rituals. *Shima uta* folk songs, called *Kasan* (Kasarian) songs, are popular particularly among all three wards in Kasari Community (Shiromaeda, Satomae, and Kaneku).