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.

Kasari 3rd ward Kaneku

Facing the Pacific Ocean, Ōgasari (or greater Kasari) Community is located at the northeast part of Amami Oshima island, Ōgasari Community consists of three wards: Shiromaeda, Satomae, and Kaneku. The community 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, The plateau where today's Kasari Junior High School stands, called *Akamine ga Oka* (*Han'nya* in the local dialect), used to have a community.

Site of the Oshima magistrate's office

Amami Oshima island was occupied by Satsuma (mainland Kagoshima) in 1609, and the magistrate's office was set in Kasari. In 1613, Hogen Nizaemon was appointed as the first magistrate in Amami. Surrounded by coral stone walls, the site of the magistrate's office is large. It was the regional headquarters from which the magistrates from Satsuma ruled the Amami region for 22 years. These coral stone walls inherit the history today.

Beru *Gusuku* (fortress) old grave

Excavational research at Beru *Gusuku* site was held between 2004 and 2007 as a part of road widening work. The site is situated at a tongue-shaped 8,400㎡ (approx. 10,000 square yard) plateau sticking out eastward. At the tip of the plateau, lay four "box stone stone coffin tombs" of the Satsuma officials in the Edo period.

St. Michael Catholic church in Central Kasari (Angelus bell)

Father Chohachi Nakamura started his missionary activity in 1903, and St. Michael Catholic Church in Central Kasari was established 1915. In 1951, the church was relocated to its current address, and the main building was built in 1972. Its "Angelus Bell," lost during WWII, was found and returned to the church on December 10, 1984.

Catholic church grave

In Amami, each community, regardless of the size, has a church at its central location. Near the beach at Kasari Community, Catholic graveyard is located. The graveyard, with well-organized white crosses and tombs, delivers an air of somehow foreign scenery under the blue sky with a blue ocean background.

***Sotetsu Bate* (Cycad Field)**

Most of the plateau at approx. 14m high where Beru *Gusuku* is located is covered by farmland of various sizes, divided by Cycad trees that function as borders and windshields. The cycad is a valuable source of protein. Like the sweet potatoes in the field, the cycad trees along the farmland borders provide nuts full of protein. The *sotetsu bate* on the site of the plateau is a scene representative of this southern Japanese island.

Toyomine Ogora

Toyomine Ogora is a stream built by an old man named Toyomine for drainage of the area. The locals have considered the shadowy stream a scary spot where, they say, the mythical monsters, such as *Garappa* (aka *Kappa* in the mainland) and *Kenmun*, have been seen.

Amoremata

Amami Oshima island inherits a myth of Amare Onagu (woman from heaven). The myth says that this sexually attractive heavenly woman tries to seduce males with her sex appeal. She then drains the souls of these seduced men. There is a spot where they say she used for bathing. Now a farmland, the spot was a shadowy and scary spot for the locals.

Monument of Kasan Tsurumatsu

Tsurumatsu was a improvisational singer in Kasari from the late Edo period to the early Meiji period. Most of the *Shimauta* island folk songs are playful songs sung by multiple singers. Some are of the rich nature, while many others sing for love and romance. Kanematsu's legend says that a group of officials came to Tsurumatsu's community to inspect allegedly concealed sugar. Tsurumatsu, a well-known *Kasan* (Kasarian) singer, sang a song of wit and was successful in sending these officials away with her song.