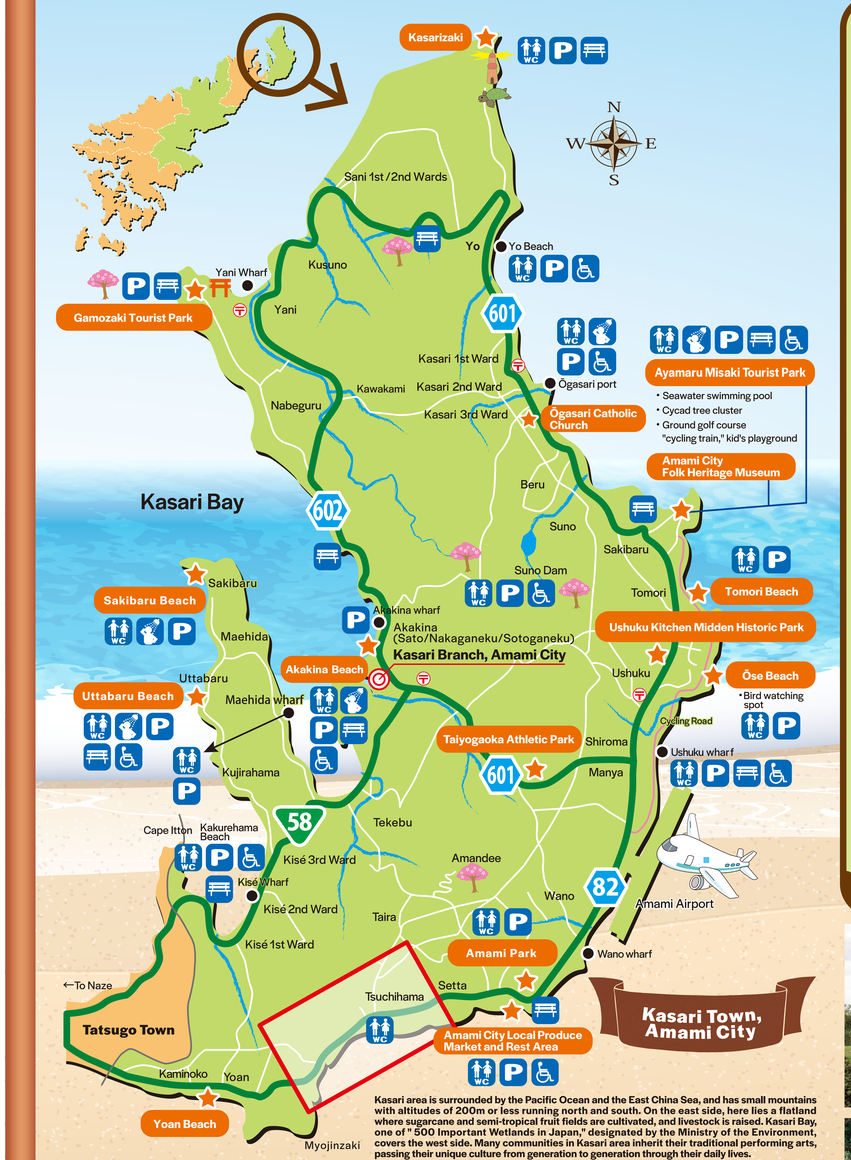
Kasari Area, Amami City Tale of Tsuchihama Community



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

Tsuchihama (*Chichihama* in local dialect)

Tsuchihama Community is situated along the coastline running from northern Naze area to Amami Airport. Tsuchihama is located far from its neighbor Taira Community. People have resided in this community since the ancient days, and the place was once called *Chichihama* (father beach)

1

Tsuchihama *Moori*

There is a shadowy forest facing the ocean on the east side of the community. While males go down to the beach during the community's *hamaore* summer event, females stay at this Tsuchihama *moori* (forest) looking down over the beach. Males were prohibited from entering this forest. This forest was one of the well-known places of scenic beauty, and a Shimauta island folk song lyric describes the beauty of cycad trees in this place.

2

Ijyungo

There runs a farm road on the north side of Tsuchihama Community leading to Taira Community. At its branch, lies an *Ijyungo* well in a pocket on the west side. The locals used to use this well for daily water for a long time. If the well water becomes muddy, it is said to be a sign of an approaching typhoon. The community people consider
it as a sacred place, and the water still rushes out today.

3

***Yeahyeah* Cave Ruins**

This limestone cave has a forest atop it, and the ceiling has collapsed. The cave was a sky burial site in the early modern ages, and the locals fear the human bones in *Yeahyeah* cave, calling them *Gushu gami* (people from another world). In 1963, Masafumi Nagai and Itaru Mishima held research and excavation at the ruins and discovered some potsherds with nail-shaped patterns from the *Jomon* and *Yayoi* periods (approx. 13,000 years ago - the 3rd century AD).

4

***Yeahyeah* Ruin (Tsuchihama *Yeahyeah* Ruins)**

There is a moderately short plateau on the north side of the community, stretching to the cave ruins and *Tamikitwosimui*. Research and excavation was held at the ruin as a part of Amami Airport road construction work in 1987, and artificial remains from the Paleolithic age and the *Jomon* period were unearthed. AT volcanic ash and Akahoya volcanic ash were also detected, indicating the same marker bed as Kyushu island (mainland). The radiocarbon dating method suggests they are approx. 20,000 years old.

5

Tamikitwosimui

Sabunji Tabata, an officer on the island during the Edo period who developed a tideland in Tatsugo Town, is said to have planned to develop paddy fields in Tsuchihama by building a tunnel from *Footamiki* and *Kwodamiki*. *Tamikitwosimui* was the tunnel built for this purpose. The senior locals say "We used to go and play there, but I don't prefer to go there now. There are venomous *habu* snakes, too."

6

Tirya Tachigami

A distinctive large rock in the reef on the southwest side of the community is called *Terya Tachigami*. *Terya* (Taira) and Tsuchihama communities have long communicated with each other, and the residents in inland *Terya* Community come to *Chichihama* (Tsuchihama) for fishing. *Terya* people make prayers to the *Tachigami* when they come to this beach, naming the rock *Terya Tachigami*. This is, therefore, *Terya* (Taira) Community's property in a sense.

7

Tsuchihama Beach (*Chichihama*)

Chichihama Beach, with a rich developed reef as well as Setta *Tachigami* on the east and *Terya Tachigami* on the southwest, is known for its rich fish and seashells. The beach is also a good egg laying spot for turtles.
People come down to this beach of prayer upon the 33rd death anniversary of their deceased to wash the bones. Although the community has no symbolic rock of its own, which might have been named *Chichihama Tachigami* if it existed, the locals fear *Setta* and *Terya tachigamis*.

8

Old Path through the Beach

Senior male locals say that they used to walk on the beach all the way down to *Yuwan* (Youan) and *Hougé* (Akaogi) communities in Tatsugo Town when no connecting roads were developed. Females used to carry heavy luggage to these communities while walking on the beach as well.
They could walk through the reef at low tide. At high tide, however, they often had to cling to the cracks on the rocks to go through some difficult spots.