Kasari Area, Amami City Tale of Uttabaru 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

Amami City HP

Administration: Amami City

Legend

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

Uttabaru

Uttabaru Community, located between calm mountains and the ocean, consists of Kujirahama, Uttabaru, and Sakibaru sub-communities. The entire Sakibaru area is designated as a national park.
While being a small community, people in Uttabaru Community are actively engaged in various events and community operation. The community has a number of philosophers and educators, and it is known as a community of

1 Doll Rock (Saigo Rock)

Takamori Saigo, a historic figure who lived in Tatsugo town across the bay, often visited Uttabaru Community for fishing. At the tip of Sakibaru area, there stands a human-shaped rock facing the ocean. People call it Saigo Rock or Doll Rock. During WWII, it was often a target of US aircraft attack. Later on, lightning struck it on the head to form the shape we see today. Until recently, some dugongs were observed swimming in the ocean in this area.

2 Sauchi Ruins

This is a complex of archaeological ruins from the late *Jomon* to the Tumulus periods (approx. BC 4th to AD 4th century), and a valuable site in terms of architectural perspectives in Amami region. Uttabaru Community started from Sakibaru area. According to an old record in *Shoku Nihongi*, an imperially-commissioned Japanese history text from 797 AD, there is a theory speculating that there was a monument for trade ships to China between 600s - 900s in Hisono, at the tip of the land. In addition, a number of prehistoric sites were found across Sakibaru area, evoking peoples' archaeological interests.

3 Sakibaru Beach, Uttabaru Beach, Kujirahama Beach (The "three great beaches")

All three areas have wide beaches right in front of residential houses. Along with their beautiful sceneries, sounds of birds and various insects can be heard among the sound of waves and the breeze, forming rich seasonal sonic environments. In Uttabaru and Sakibaru areas, textile screw pine, or *Iauhala*, and beach hibiscus form natural revetments to protect the communities. These plants provide rich habitats for various creatures including concave land hermit crabs (*Coenobita cavipes*).

4 *Negan Ishiushiki*

When there were no accessible inter-community roads, people commuted along the coastline. There was a custom among the travelers to leave pieces of coral stones when they passed by the rocky stretch on the southern coastline in Sakibaru area. People today leave coral stones to make prayers and wishes to *Gungin̄sama* (Imai Gongen Shrine) at the tip of the cape across the bay. Another place with the same name, *Ishiushuki*, is found in Yoan Community as well. *Negan* (Neganhana) area also has pillow shaped lava.

5 *Kusazwee* (grass top)

Located on the north side of Uttabaru Beach, this is the largest rocky stretch in the community. On top of the Mt. Fuji-like rock, various native plants grow throughout the year, and people call it *Kusazwee* (grass top). The local residents have long gathered around this rock for traditional picnic events, as well as for playing around.

6 *Nagane* (Path of Worship)

Approx. 90m high mountains exist between Uttabaru and Sakibaru sub-communities. The peaks are called, from the north: *Nagane*, Tekkwa, *Maki*, Tenswi, and Kesanyama. *Nagane* is named for its extended peak. People say the view from *Nagane* is spectacular. There is a path of worship to these sacred mountains from the community. Tekkwa, one of these peaks, was a site where people offered dumplings, fermented *Miki* drink, and pampas grass (representative plant for moon watching events) on September 9th of the Lunar calendar.

7 Salt making cabin

In addition to its close relationship with the ocean, Uttabaru Community has rich water resources in the mountain area on the east side with a number of *ijyungo* wells, paddy fields, and cycad fields. People used to make salt under the shade of textile screw pine (*Iauhala*) trees. The salt was a valuable source for reciprocal exchange. Since 2008, Uttabaru Community, aiming for revitalization of the local economy, is actively engaged in commercialization of old fashioned products, including salt and starch made by traditional methods.

8 Whale rock

Even among the oldest locals, few can say why the beach is called *Kujirabama* (whale beach). Among other communities, their *kujirabama* were places where whole whales, including dugongs and dolphins, were cut up. In the case of Uttabaru, the name comes from – so it is said - the narrow extended rocky stretch called Whale rock (*kujira ishi*) on the south side which looks like a whale blowing when hit by waves.