Kasari Area, Amami City Tale of Kawakami 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
- Rest area
- Shower
- Barrier-free toilet
- Parking area
- Kasari Branch, Amami City
- Major Sightseeing Spots and Facilities

Kawakami (*Kocchi* in local dialect)

Surrounded by mountains, the Kawakami Community consists of six major regions: Akakina Mata, Nabeguru, Ageta, Utsu, Komori, and *Hiijya*. Today, Kawakami's main produce is sugar cane. Rice farming used to be its major activity, evidence of which can still be seen through the remaining old *Takakura* storages. Kawakami's *Takakura* storage is one of the designated unique community brands of Amami City.

Kawakami Community consists of 12 small *buraku* (sub communities): *Hiija*, Iyonma, Komori, Utsu, Yubino Mata, Ageta, Yamadegama, *Naa Mata*, Yanbate, Hashikyan Mata, Nabeguru, *Hakina Mata*. The local residents say "We refer to this place as *buraku* (ghetto) rather than *shuraku* (community), and prefer *buraku*. " From this point on, this section uses *buraku* to refer to Kawakami Community.
Kawakami, an inland community, is formed by several ghettos, each consisting of a few households, along four valley channels. The community represents an almost self-sufficient way of life based on crop plant grown in its rich terraced paddy fields and cycad fields with natural springs and streams. Kawakami has a number of valley-shaped places and rice fields. People often reside in these fields. As for residential roads, the old mountain road to the Yani and Kasari communities as well as the one running to the Akina community still remain.
Kawakami Community has developed "a hometown community tour course," in which people from Kawakami guide the visitors through the community sites and springs. This course, supported by the Kawakami *Goyukai* association, the social organization for people originating from Kawakami, is a representative model of "Island Eco Tour."

●Hometown Community Tour Courses

#1. Kawakami Community Hall - *Hakina Mata*
①War memorial ②*Ijyungo* (natural spring)

#2. *Taachiji* - *Naguberu* / Mashicha/*Hakina Mata* Cemetery Course
③Prayer stone at *Taachiji*

#3. Hashikyan Mata - Yanbate/*Naa Mata* Course
④Water resource (dam)

#4. Yamadegama - Ageta Course
⑥*Takakura* storage

#5. Komori - Ustu/Iyonshima/Hasama/*Hiija*/Kawakami Community Hall
⑤*Satayadori* (brown sugar factory) site

War memorial (Kawakami Community Hall) (Course #1)

A memorial monument is located in a park on a hill next to Kawakami Community Hall. The monument has names of fallen war soldiers on it, including those from the Satsuma Rebellion (1877), in which many youths from the Amami islands joined Takamori Saigo in Kagoshima, as well as the Japanese-Russo War, the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Greater East Asia War (World War II).

***Ijyungo* (#1)**

Along the prefectural road running from Yani to *Hakina Mata*, *Ijyungo*, is a natural spring situated under a big tree, which people from *Hakina Mata* used to use for drinking water.
Locals say the travelers to Akina Community make a short stop at *Ijyungo* before going over the mountain.

Prayer stone at *Taachiji* (#2)

A prayer stone is located at the top of *Taachiji*. It is said that *Yuta* priestesses made prayers here in the old days.
This road used to serve as a residential road going to Mijyora in Akina Community. A part of this road is now blocked today, but it still provides visitors with a panoramic view. This place has a number of old roads leading to the Kasari and Akina communities, and visitors can enjoy beautiful seasonal flowers, including rose bay (*Rhododendron scabrum*) and Confederate rose (*Hibiscus mutabilis*).

Water resource (dam) (#3)

Located in the course from Hashikyan Mata to Nanbate/*Naa Mata*.
The upstream dam provides drinking water to Kawakami Community as well as the Akina, Tekebu, Yani, and Sani communities.

***Satayadori* (brown sugar factory) site (#5)**

Located in the course from Yamadegama to Ageta.
The site is now a farm field.

***Takakura* storage (#4)**

Located in the course from Komori to Utsu/Iyonshima/Hasama/*Hiijya* and Kawakami community hall.
It is one of the designated unique community brands of Amami City.