

THE NAKAMURA HOUSE

中村家

- A MAJOR CULTURAL ASSET DESIGNATED
BY THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

THE NAKAMURA FAMILY

The history of the Nakamura family dates back to the early part of the 15th century when Gashi, an ancestor of the family moved his residence to Nakagusuku from Zakimi in Yomitan. The reason for the move was because Lord Gosamaru of Zakimi had received an order from the king in Shuri to relocate his castle to Nakagusuku. Gashi served as Gosamaru's teacher until the latter's downfall at the hands of Lord Amawari of Katsuren Castle just across from Nakagusuku Bay.


With the Nakagusuku Castle in ruins, Gashi and his family also suffered from their lord's adversity. It was not until 1720 that fortune came back to the Nakamura family when one of the ancestors was called upon to serve as a Jitoshoku(village headman)by the royal government in Shuri. It was around this time when the first foundations of the Nakamura house was set in.

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The Nakamura house is a typical style of a rich farmer's residence of the time. The basic structural method dates back to the house found in mainland Japan between the Kamakura and Muromachi periods (1185-1572). The house was originally of thatched roof and it was not until the time of the 7th generation when it was reroofed using the Okinawa traditional red tiles. This reflects the rising social standard of the Nakamura family since rigid regulations at the time restricted commoners homes in size and appearance.

The premises of the residence measures 1557m and is of a rectangular shape. Entering the main stone gate the horizontally set huge stone slabs separating the house from the gate is the Hinpun which is believed to prevent evil spirits from entering the residence. From atop the roof as if glaring at the visitors, sits the Shi-sa, which is another type of talisman said to drive away unwelcome spirits from the residence.

The house is also protected from the seasonal typhoons by the surrounding Fukugi (type of tree). These strong sturdy trees are over 250 years old and act as windbreakers during a storm. Many of the houses in the olden days were protected by high stone walls and the Fuguki. Nowadays the trees are grown for their yellow dye which is one of the 3 basic colors essential in the traditional Bingata (hand-dyed fabric). Threads for weaving are also taken from the barks of this tree.



The Omoya — There are a total of 8 rooms in this main house. The 3 main rooms are designated as the Ichibanza (1st room-guestroom), Nibanza (2nd room-contains the Butsudan or altar), and Sanbanza (3rd room-living room). The room in front of the Sanbanza is the Nakame where family members would gather to sort farm products for sale or family consumption. The spacious room with wooden floors is used as the dining room or a friendly gathering place. The room next to it is the kitchen and upright stones placed near the

hearth have religious significance for this is where prayers to the fire god are said. The Uraza is located behind the main 3 rooms and were used as bedrooms. The room directly behind the Nibanza was also used as a delivery room.

The Ashagi — This is the annex built to house the 2nd and 3rd sons until they were ready to form branch families. In the olden days this Ashagi was also used to accommodate visiting dignitaries and officials from Shuri.

The Takakura — Means literally high storage and is used as a storehouse for harvested farm products. The storage section is lifted off the ground to prevent moisture from ruining the products and also to prevent rodents from getting to them. Takakura used by farmers on the island were usually thatched roof storages supported by cylinder shaped wooden pillars but the takakura seen here is quite unusual since the lower section has been boarded up on all four sides and roofed using the traditional red tiles.

The Kachiku — This structure is used as a barn. The domesticated animals such as the goats, cows and horses were kept on the 1st level and the second floor was used for storing wood. The wood was later utilized for firing the pots for making black sugar.

The Huru — This is the pig pen. Located behind the residence of most Okinawan homes in the past, hogs were very important for the livelihood of the farmers. Pork consumption on Okinawa has always been higher compared to the other Japanese prefectures and many families raised hogs for their tables or to sell at the local market.
