A scenic view of Amami City, Japan, featuring a large body of water, lush green hills, and a small town in the distance. The text is overlaid on the image.

**THE NATURE,
HISTORY
AND CULTURE
OF
AMAMI CITY**

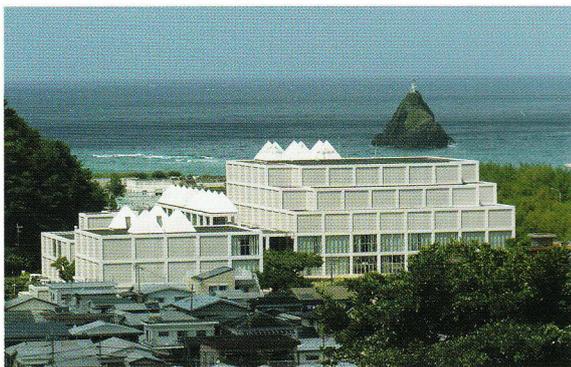
AMAMI CITY AMAMI MUSEUM

Japan is a country consisting of a long line of numerous large and small islands ranging over approx. 3,000 km from north to south. The country's climate is mostly temperate with some subarctic and subtropical zones.

The islands belonging to the subtropical zone are the Nansei Islands (Ryukyu Arc). Part of the Nansei Islands lie in Kagoshima Prefecture and part in Okinawa Prefecture. Amami City is located in Amami Oshima, one island in the Amami archipelago (Kagoshima Prefecture).

The Amami archipelago is home to a natural environment that is the focus of worldwide attention. While the archipelago's history is complex, this region is essential to any understanding of the history of Japan. It is also this complicated history that nurtured the unique culture of the Amami archipelago.

This pamphlet is a brief summary of Amami Oshima's nature, history, and cultural traits with special focus on Amami City.



Amami City Amami Museum



Amami City Museum of History and Folklore

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English language descriptions are provided for all exhibits in Amami City Amami Museum. If you are interested in the nature, history or culture of Amami City, please visit Amami City Amami Museum.

Ushuku Shell Mound Historical Site Park (5 minutes by car from Amami airport)

TEL 0997-63-0054

Amami City Museum of History and Folklore (10 minutes by car from Amami airport)

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Mongrove colony, Sumiyo District
(Amami City Hall)

Where is Amami City?

Do you know where Amami City is located within Japan?

Amami City is the largest municipality in the Amami archipelago. The city was formed by incorporating the three local governments of Kasari Town, Naze City and Sumiyo Village in 2006. The population as of March 2011 is 47,095.

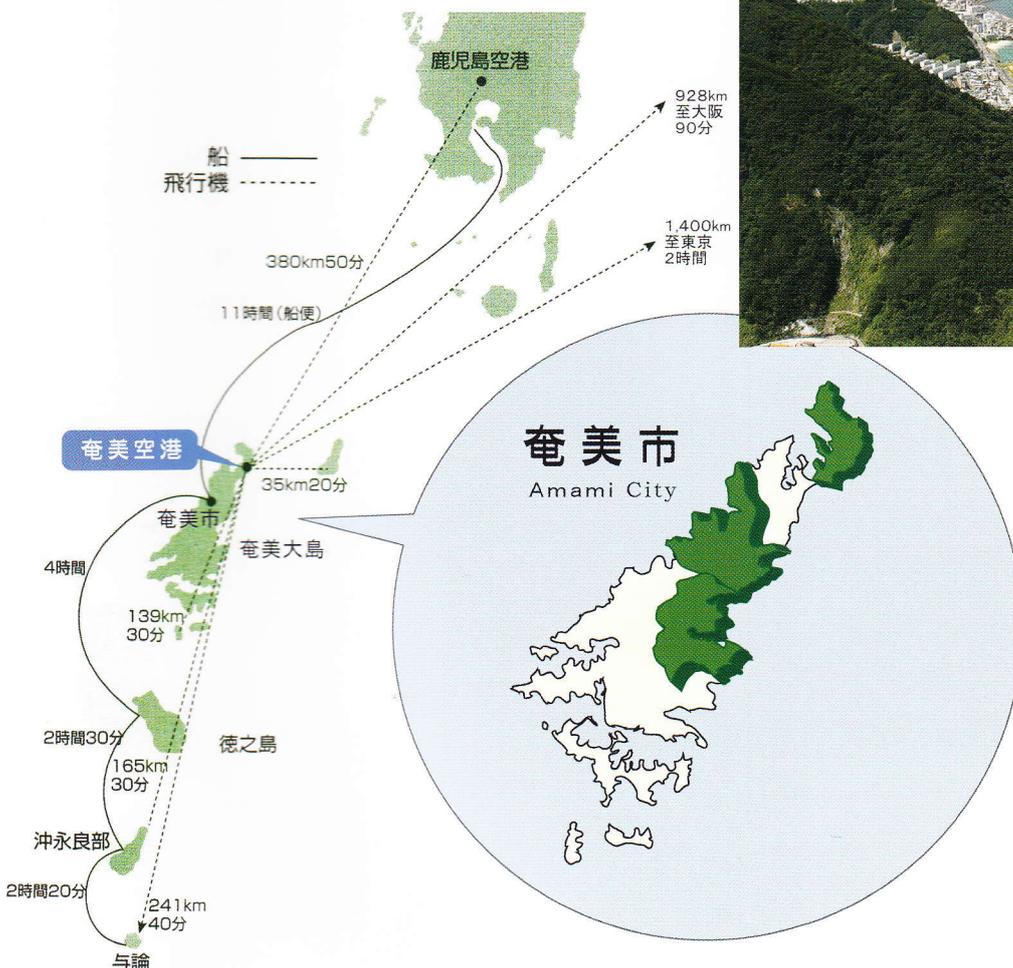
Kasari District, the largest farming district of Amami Oshima, is surrounded by a well-established coral reef in beautiful seas. Amami airport, the gate to access Amami by air, is also located in Kasari District.

Sixty percent of Amami Oshima's population is concentrated in Naze District, which functions as the central municipality of the Amami archipelago. Public institutions are concentrated here, as well as a historic commercial zone. Naze Port is located in Naze District, which is the sea entrance to Amami and the hub of Amami Oshima tourism.

Sumiyo District's area is comprised of 90% mountainous terrain. Blessed with deep forest and abundant water, Sumiyou is an important habitat of Amami Oshima's rare wildlife.



Cityscape of Naze
(photo: Amami City Hall)



The Nature of Amami City

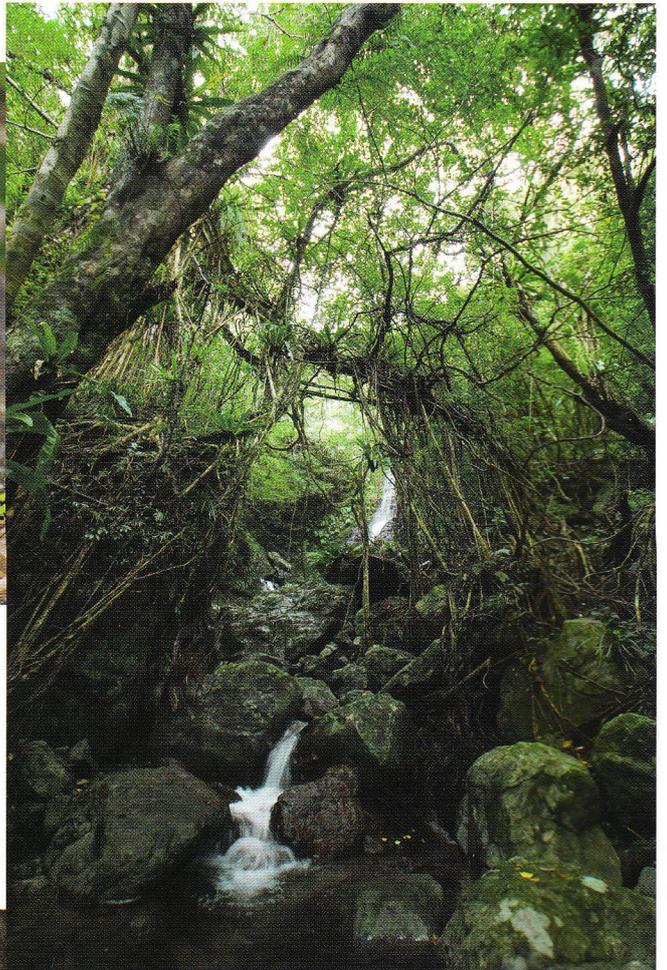
The Nansei Islands were originally parts of the Eurasian continent. As the continent began to repeatedly rise and settle 15 million years ago, this geographical zone was formed from the parts of the Eurasian continent which remained as islands.

The islands can be roughly divided into "high islands" and "low islands". Igneous rock formed the mountainous terrain of the high islands. Low islands featuring wide, flat plateaus were created from the limestone of raised coral reefs.

The Amami archipelago consists of high islands Amami Oshima, Kakeroma, Uke, Yoro and Tokuno, and low islands Kikai, Okinoerabu and Yoron.

Animals that inhabited certain areas on Eurasia were isolated as the continent rose and settled. The descendants of these isolated species are the characteristic fauna that inhabit each high island today.

Amami Black Rabbit



Sumiyo River, Amami City

(photos:
Mamoru Tsuneda)

Lidith's jay



Deep forest
freshwater
stream

The Nature of Amami City

(photos: Katsuki Oki)



Coral reef, Sumiyou District

Subtropical fish
(Steephead parrotfish)



Well-developed coastal coral reef



The Nature of Amami City

Mountains make up 80% of the total land area of Amami Oshima. With annual rainfall of approx. 3,000mm (compared to approx. 1,500mm in Tokyo), a globally unique subtropical rain forest has formed on Amami Oshima.

The deep forest covering the mountains constantly stores rainwater which is the source of rivers. Life in Amami Oshima is blessed with a rich water environment.

Thanks to Amami Oshima's deep forest and the rivers that flow from it, internationally rare and endemic animal species flourish in a multitude of habitats in one of Japan's best biologically diverse areas.

Also notable is the varied coral reef encircling the coast. Amami Oshima receives global attention as an important coral reef conservation area. Efforts are currently underway for Amami Oshima to be designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

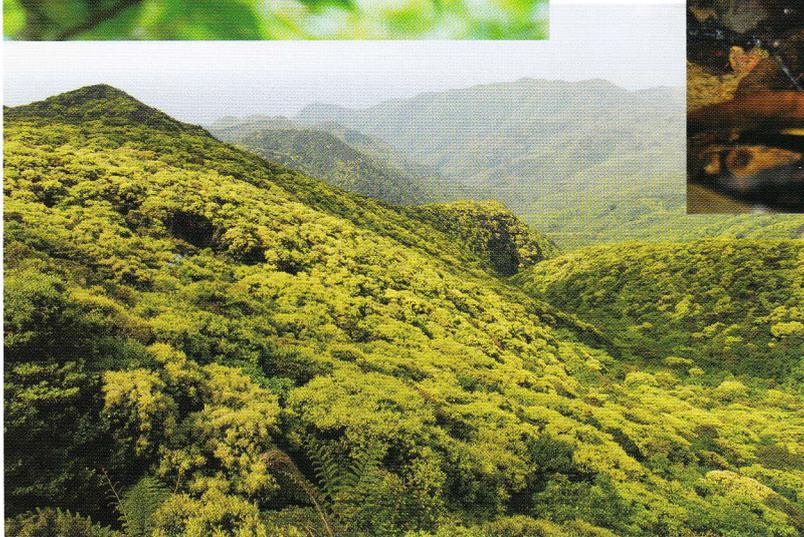
Ceylon Blue Glassy Tiger butterfly



Okinawa pit viper swallowing mouse



Amami Ishikawa's frog



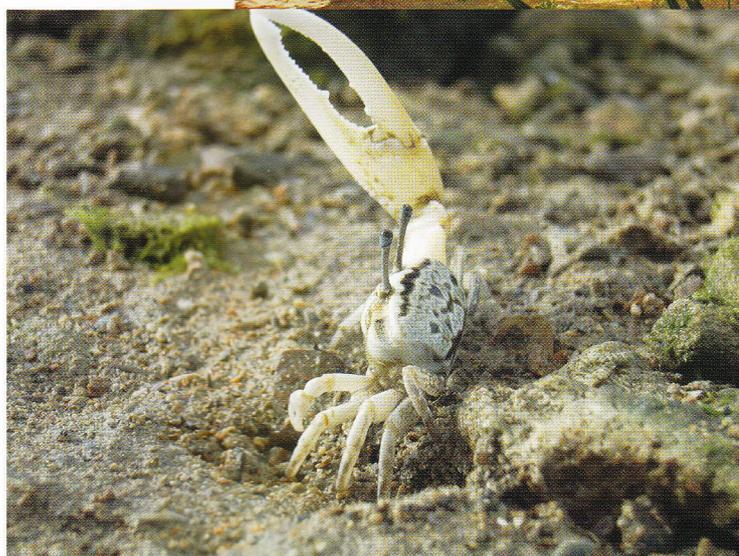
Mt. Yuwan's
new greenery

(photos: Mamoru Tsuneda)

The Nature of Amami City



Tomori Beach, Kasari District



Tideland crab
(Okinawa hakusen fiddler crab)



Sumiyo Modama
(St. Thomas bean)



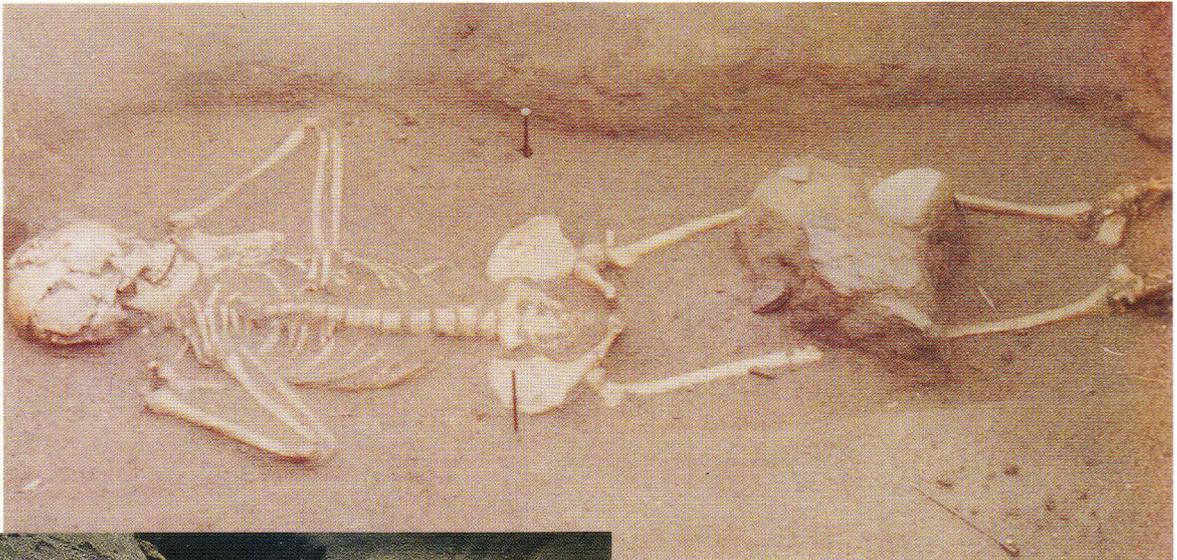
Coral reef of
Naze-Sakibaru, Amami City

The History of Amami City

The history of Amami City is very complicated. From about 1450, Amami was under the rule of the Ryukyu Kingdom (currently Okinawa Prefecture), and from 1609, was controlled by the Satsuma clan (currently Kagoshima prefecture). Amami was then incorporated into the new modern state system in 1871, but with Japan's loss in the Pacific War, Amami Oshima was controlled by the American Military Occupation Government in 1946 and experienced 8 years of administrative separation. The most unique feature of Amami archipelago history is such "complicated governmental administration".

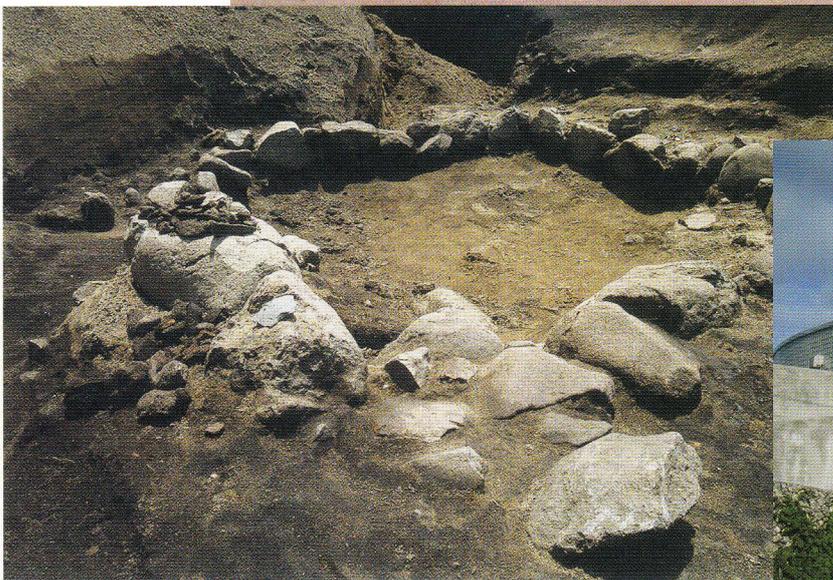
There are 3 Nationally Designated Historical sites in Amami City. The first is the extremely unique, prehistoric Ushuku Shell Mound Site. The second is the ancient Kominato Fuwaganeku Site, dating to the period that Amami's trade with Japan flourished. The last is Akakina Gusuku, which operated from the Middle Ages until modern times and was influenced by Amami's era of Satsuma clan administration that began in 1609.

Nationally Designated Historical Site – Ushuku Shell Mound



Mother and child gravesite

Ushuku Shell Mound Site Park



Stone dwelling site



The History of Amami City

Nationally Designated Historical Site – Kominato Fuwaganeku Site



Kominato
Fuwaganeku
Site

Great Green Turbo Shells excavated from Kominato Fuwaganeku Site



Nationally Designated Historical Site Akakina Gusuku



Akakina Gusuku and village



Akakina Village, Kasari Town

The Culture of Amami City

While the unique culture that developed in the Amami archipelago is at base Japanese culture, it was affected by Ryukyu culture during the Ryukyu Kingdom administration era, and even more strongly affected by the longer Satsuma clan administration period.

[Shelter]

Timber from the forests covering Amami Oshima was used to build boats and homes since ancient times. A unique building technique developed in which pegs (not nails) are used. The Izumi Family Home, the Sono Family Home, and the Former Yasuda Family Home are all protected by Japan and designated National Cultural Assets. An ancient home and several *Takakura* storehouses were also moved from their original locations to the grounds of the museum for preservation and exhibition.

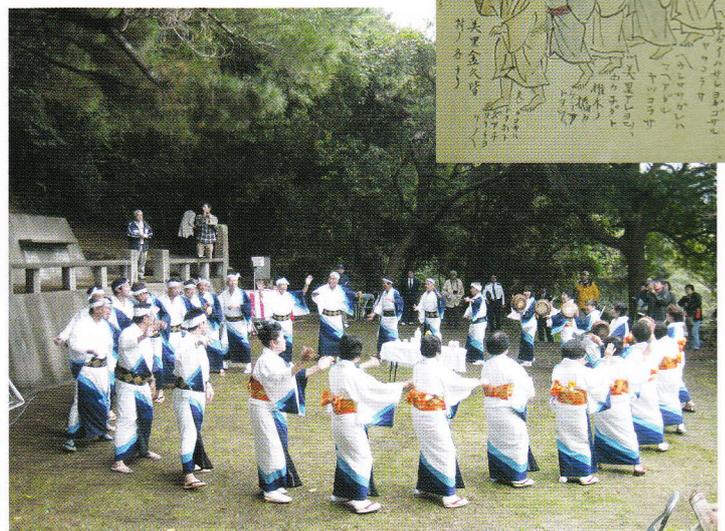


Takakura storehouse

Hachi-gatsu Odori Dancing
in the Satsuma
clan administration era



Izumi Family Home
(Nationally Designated Historic Building)



Hachi-gatsu Odori Dancing
(Akakina Kannon-do Dance)

The Culture of Amami City

[Clothing]

Dyed and woven textiles such as Basho-fu banana fiber cloth and Oshima Tsumugi silk pongee developed in response to Amami's subtropical natural environment. Oshima Tsumugi silk pongee is particularly well known in Japan and abroad as Amami Oshima's core industry.

[Food]

There is a culture of eating pork which does not exist in Japan, and lard is also extensively used in the Amami archipelago. During the era of Satsuma clan administration, Amami cuisine was also heavily influenced by Kagoshima food culture.



Salt pork and stewed vegetables



Salted Aburazomen



Preserved salted pork



Keihan – chicken, rice and soup

Sugarcane field



Oshima tsumugi silk pongee

(Food photos:
Kazuko Izumi)

