

Features

Zakimi Gusuku stands atop a Nago stratum, 120 meters above sea level. It has two Kakus: the Ichi-no-Kaku and the Ni-no-Kaku. Each has an arched gate which uses a central wedge stone to support both sides of the gate. This keystone masonry feature is unique and not found in other Gusuku.

The Gusuku premises, including the stone walls, cover 7,383 square meters. The highest point of the castle wall is 13 meters and even the lowest three meters height. The stone walls are of Ryukyuan limestone, most of them being stacked using Aikata-zumi technique (stacking approximately hexagonal stones aligned). Partially Nuno-zumi (stacking square stones aligned) and Nozura-zumi (stacking unprocessed stones aligned) are also visible. An aerial view of Zakimi Castle reveals stately construction replete with rich curves.

Overview

Zakimi Gusuku is said to have been built in the early 15th Century by Gosamaru, Lord of Yuntanza, renowned for his fortifications. At the time residing in Yamada Gusuku in the 4 kilometers northeast of Zakimi, Gosamaru built Zakimi Gusuku at this place of fortress after participating in Shō Hashi's capture of Hokuzan Gusuku (Nakijin Castle) in 1416 (1422 according to other records).

The Government of the Ryukyu Islands designated Zakimi Gusuku Ruins as an Important Cultural Asset in 1956, and with Okinawa's 1972 Reversion to Japan, the Ruins became Designated National Historic Site. Subsidies from the Agency for Cultural Affairs and from Okinawa Prefecture allowed excavations and wall repairs between 1973 and 1985. Today, the restored Gusuku offers an encounter with history.

On December 2, 2000, to the joy of local residents, Zakimi Gusuku became a World Heritage Site as one of the Gusuku Sites and the Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu.



Zakimi Gusuku in the early modern age

The "Ryukyukoku Yuraiiki", the records of authentic history compiled by Ryukyu Royal Court in 1713, notes that Zakimi sibyl prayed to the castle deity, "Kobazukasa no On-ibe, Manezukasa no On-ibe, Jyonai Hinukan..." Today, the sacred incense burner is moved near the arched gate of Ni-no-Kaku, where a religious rite of the Zakimi district is held.

Inside Ichi-no-Kaku is a stone lantern contributed by Zakimi Uekata in 1843. Zakimi Uekata, also called Mō Kōtoku Zakimi Uekata Seifu, was a descendant of Gosamaru. The stone lantern was a tribute to the god of the castle in gratitude for having accomplished the mission of a Keigashi, an envoy with the coronation delegation to Edo.



▲ Arch Keystone Wedge



▲ The outer wall of Ichi-no-kaku boasts a stately appearance.



▲ Panoramic view from the castle



▲ The wall features elegant curves (outer wall of Ichi-no-kaku)

Trace of building

The stones under the eaves placed rectangularly, 16 meters wide by 14 meters long, were found in the Ichi-no-Kaku forecourt. It is thought the area enclosed by stones was sheeted with Ryukyuan limestone gravel and inside the area the foundation stones were laid. No roof tiles have been found, indicating that the building had a thatched or shingle roof.

The deep pillar holes of a building that had stood prior to the construction of the stone walls were discovered in the lower layer of the southern walls of Ichi-no-kaku.



▲ Trace of a former building with foundation stones



▲ Stone lantern