

Some time in the late 1980s or 1990



WELCOME TO  
**RYUKYU MURA**  
TAKOYAMA HABU CENTER



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## WELCOME TO RYUKYU MURA

Okinawa is currently a prefecture of Japan, but 100 years ago Okinawa was known as the independent kingdom of Ryuku. About 500 years ago, the Ryukyuan kingdom was called Requiio, and its people Requiios, as recorded in the annals of Southeast Asia by the colonial Portuguese.

How did it come about that such a small island became known to the world?

The main reason is that Ryukyu carried on trade with the Japanese, Chinese, and Southeast Asian countries. And the consequence of trade, the spreading and influence of social culture, gave birth to the singular, traditional Ryukyuan arts and crafts such as pottery making, dyeing, weaving, martial arts, liquor production (Awamori), and the production of handicrafts for daily living. These goods, being of high quality, reflected the character of the Ryukyuan people and helped spread Ryukyuan influence abroad.

We, the Okinawan people, feel proud of the efforts and passionate dedication shown by our forefathers. For this reason, Ryukyu Mura was established. Please come see and enjoy the proud past of Okinawa, Ryukyu Mura.

### Sheesah

It is a talisman to protect the house against evil. You can see them sitting on the red roofs of many houses of Okinawa.

### OKINAWAN PRIVATE HOME

It is said that the structure of the houses of Okinawan people is similar to that of Japanese Samurai houses of the Kamakura era (about a thousand years ago). An Okinawan private home had no front door, being open to outsiders. While Samurai homes were the same, they were fortified against the enemies attack, Okinawan private homes had a structure of good ventilation and were cool, which was welcomed by their dwellers.

### OKINAWAN/TEXTILES

Okinawan textiles are different from those of any other part of Japan in that their kinds and skills are rich. This is due to the fact that in 14th and 15th centuries Okinawa traded with China, Japan and ASEAN countries from whom it learned technical knowledge. Imported skills were further developed and have taken root as part of the unique culture in Okinawa.

### HOLY PLACE

What Okinawans thought much of in building a village was whether it had spring water. If a village was built with a spring as a center, it prospered. The spring became a holy place after a long time. Even today many people visit and worship it.

### INDIGO DYEING

In Japan there are two ways of making raw materials for indigo dyeing. One is the skill developed in Shikoku, the other is Ryukyu indigo. These days chemical indigo is widely used. But in Ryukyu village the age-old, natural method is employed to make indigo with which to dye Kimonos and table cloths.

#### **BINGATA DRESS**

Bingata is a unique and splendid dyeing skill unique to Okinawa. The dresses dyed with this skill are often called Bingata. Bright coloring and bold design are characteristic of Bingata. Its origin dates back to the 14th or 15th century. It is a skill learned much from various countries. Many works of art produced by Bingata craftsmen have received international recognition.

#### **EARTHENWARE(Pottery)**

Red soil provides materials for earthenware. In the 17th century the king of the Ryukyus ordered the potteries to center in Tsuboya in Naha city. This earthenware has been known as Tsuboyayaki since then. Earthenware, however, is produced in various places in Okinawa. Yamadayaki, a traditional earthenware, is transmitted to Yamada in Onnason near Ryukyu village.

#### **SUGAR CANE OUGAN INDUSTRY**

Sugar cane is Okinawa's chief industry. It is said to have been brought from China in the 14th or the 15th century. Ryukyu village has a machine which makes Kurozato (raw sugar) by squeezing juice from sugar cane. In this method, a buffalo turns the machine used for squeezing sugar cane. It is the same method employed nearly a hundred years ago.

#### **HABU vs MONGOOSE**

Habu has been existing in Okinawa from time immemorial. Its poison is the same kind as that of a rattle snake. When a Habu bites a man, it sometimes proves to be fatal. Thanks to a good serum treatment developed recently, very few people have died. Habu, dried and made into powder, turns into a tonic medicine. Habu powder is sold in the Ryukyu village. In the village you can watch the fight between the Habu and a Mongoose as well.

#### **OKINAWAN CUISINE**

If one were to ask what type of food most represents Okinawan cuisine, it would be pork. All parts of the pig are used, from the head to the ends of the feet. Okinawan food has been influenced by China. Okinawans are known for having the longest life span in all Japan, and it is said that the secret lies in their diet. High in nutrients, many medicinal herbs are used for seasonings.

#### **OLDEN DAYS**

In olden days, there were certain social gathering places for young men and women called "Mōashibi" where the "Shamisen" was played; this was before the era of discos and movie theaters. "Mōashibi" provided a circumstance for people of marriageable age to meet and eventually marry.

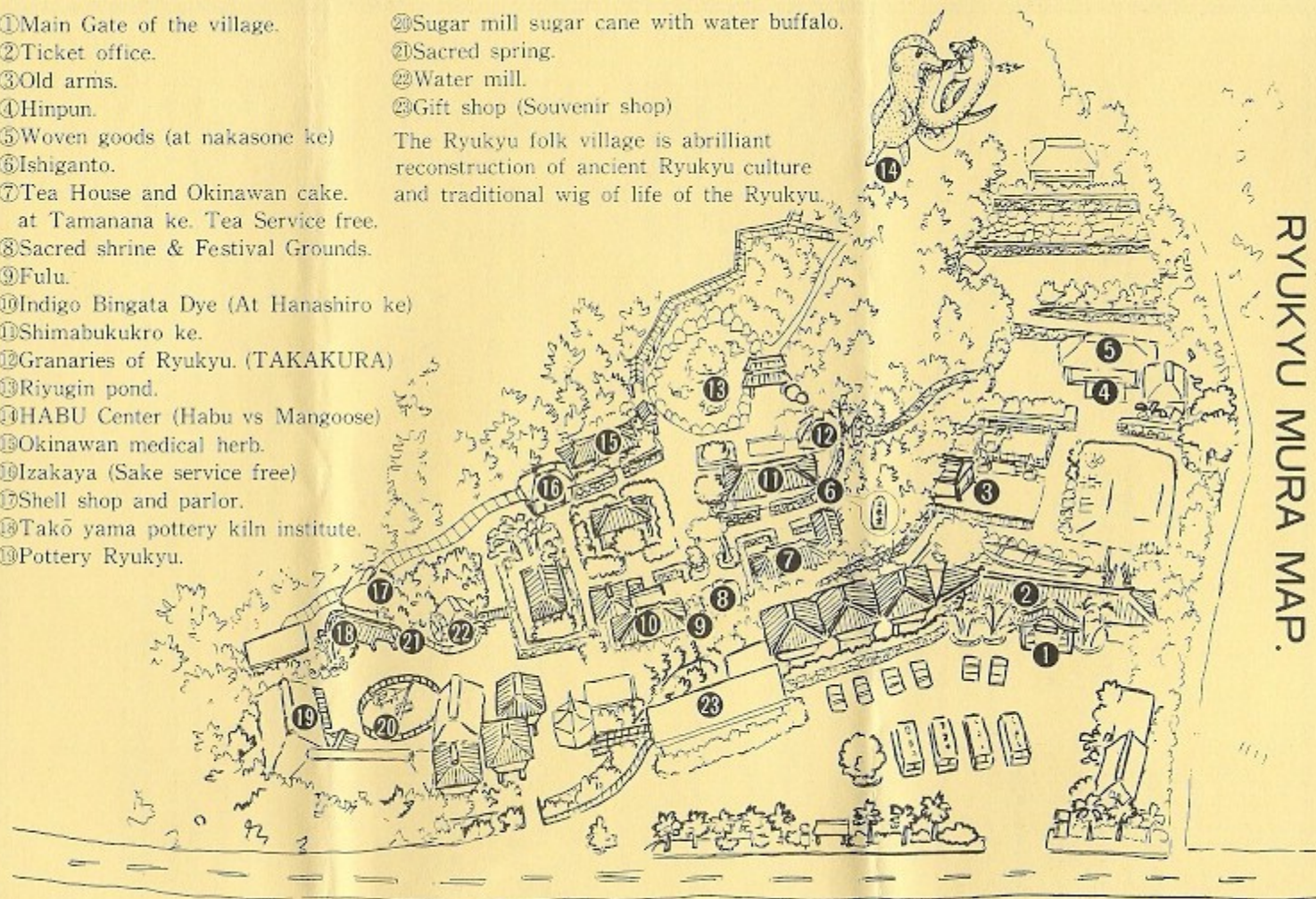
Special village-wide ceremonies were held when older citizens turned ninety-seven. Okinawan life was peaceful and quiet.

Takoyama has been expressed in Okinawan poems and dramas. Long ago it had steep mountain paths which were the most dangerous spots for travelers. It is said that these spots were some times haunted by bandits. Recently the Ryukyu village was built in Takoyama. The old Okinawan private houses were gathered together in it, and were restored to their original state. These houses are equipped with traditional workshops of textiles, Bingata dyeing and pottery. These workshops are actually making products, and the craftsmen are living there. Thus, the old tradition disappearing in Okinawa has been revived.

- ① Main Gate of the village.
- ② Ticket office.
- ③ Old arms.
- ④ Hinpun.
- ⑤ Woven goods (at nakasone ke)
- ⑥ Ishiganto.
- ⑦ Tea House and Okinawan cake.  
at Tamanana ke. Tea Service free.
- ⑧ Sacred shrine & Festival Grounds.
- ⑨ Fulu.
- ⑩ Indigo Bingata Dye (At Hanashiro ke)
- ⑪ Shimabukukro ke.
- ⑫ Granaries of Ryukyu. (TAKAKURA)
- ⑬ Riyugin pond.
- ⑭ HABU Center (Habu vs Mongoose)
- ⑮ Okinawan medical herb.
- ⑯ Izakaya (Sake service free)
- ⑰ Shell shop and parlor.
- ⑱ Takō yama pottery kiln institute.
- ⑲ Pottery Ryukyu.

- ⑳ Sugar mill sugar cane with water buffalo.
- ㉑ Sacred spring.
- ㉒ Water mill.
- ㉓ Gift shop (Souvenir shop)

The Ryukyu folk village is a brilliant reconstruction of ancient Ryukyu culture and traditional way of life of the Ryukyu.



RYUKYU MURA MAP.