

Wall of Money

Located close to Tokashiki Harbor, this grand wall is all that survives of the Nemoto House, a so-called “captain’s house” dating from the Ryukyu Kingdom (1429–1879). In those days, many ships traveled from Okinawa to China and to the Satsuma Domain in southern Kyushu bearing tribute, envoys, and goods. Captaining those ships was a recognized way to make one’s fortune; there was even a term for it: *toumoke*, “striking it rich in the China trade.”

Note how the massive walls—and the *himpun* standing just within the entrance to conceal the house door and ward off evil spirits—are made from carefully carved irregular blocks of limestone that fit together perfectly. This contrasts with the walls of ordinary people’s houses, which were built more haphazardly, rather like dry-stone walls. Traces of shrapnel damage are visible on the walls. (Part of the eastern corner, destroyed in World War II, was restored in 1997.) The 2.73-meter-high walls of the Nemoto House are actually higher than those of other similar captain’s houses in the Keramas.