

A Sea Captain's Mansion

The Takara House is one of just a handful of old buildings that survived the World War II naval bombardments of the Keramas intact. It dates from the late nineteenth century, when it was built for Pechin Nakandakari (? — 1877), a sea captain who had made his fortune through the China trade. In the Keramas, the generic term for a grand house is *sendosuya* or “captain’s house,” pointing to the fact that seafaring was the acknowledged route to riches. There was even a special word, *toumoke*, for “striking it rich in the China trade.” The red tiles replaced the original thatched roof in the early twentieth century, when the local economy was experiencing a boom thanks to demand for skipjack tuna. Notice how snugly the carved lumps of coral in the thick perimeter wall fit together, and the flamboyant curve of the wall itself as it culminates in a sharp point. This is a level of craftsmanship that did not come cheap!

Wind-Proof and Devil-Proof

The single-story house sits low behind its massive walls, and the roof tiles are lathered with white plaster to keep them firmly in place. These are both precautionary measures to protect the house from fierce typhoon winds. The house has five rooms and a kitchen. Traces of vermilion paint on the beams and ceiling panels suggest that the interior was once quite gaudy, while the use of Buddhist pine, a strong, straight-growing wood, is evidence of the prosperity of the occupants. There is a well at the front of the house and storage areas and a pig sty at the back. There is also a *himpun*—a massive standalone wall at the entrance—to conceal the house and to ward off evil spirits.

The house sustained damage in World War II — notice the pockmarks from shrapnel in the coral wall and the chunks torn out of some of the wooden pillars in the house itself — but remained lived-in until the turn of the century. It was designated a National Important Cultural Property in 1988.

Open: 9:00am — 5:00pm every day except Mondays and New Year

Admission: Adults ¥300, Children ¥160