

Asa Village / Agonoura Bay

Rustic Village Evocative of the Past

Asa is a hamlet a little way east of Zamami Village. In the center of the village is a *bokora* miniature shrine and a stand of garcinia (*Garcinia subelliptica*) trees more than 100 years old that survived the naval bombardments of World War II. Wandering around the village's back lanes, you will come across a number of old houses made of Chinese black pine with sweeping red-tiled roofs with *shisa* lions standing guard on top of them.

At one end of the lane, there is an empty plot of land surrounded by a massive wall of coral known as *sendoron no isbigaki* or “the captain's wall.” In the days of the Ryukyu Kingdom (1429—1879), Zamami was a staging post for ships carrying tribute and envoys between Okinawa and China. These ships would often anchor in Agonoura to wait for favorable winds. Getting involved in the China trade was one surefire route to riches, hence the use of “captain's house” as a generic term for a grand walled residence. Two meters high and eight meters wide, the *himpun*—the standalone wall that conceals the house's entrance while keeping evil spirits out—is unusually massive.