

## **Nakijin Castle Ruins**

### **Model:**

This 1/100 scale model shows the Nakijin Castle walls as they existed during its most prosperous period, from the mid-fourteenth through the fifteenth centuries. This coincided with the Ryukyu Three Kingdoms period (1314–1429), when the country was divided into the Hokuzan (Northern Mountain), Chuzan (Central Mountain), and Nanzan (Southern Mountain) kingdoms.

### **The Site:**

Nakijin Castle occupies an important strategic location at the entrance to the Yambaru region. The rocky, mountainside site dominates the Motobu Peninsula and overlooks the East China Sea, while a steep gorge to the east drops down to the Shigema River, the castle's main source of water.

### **History:**

The first stronghold on this site was a wooden palisade built in the thirteenth century. The prominent walls of irregularly stacked ancient limestone were begun in the fourteenth century and progressively enlarged and expanded. Nakijin was continuously occupied until 1609, initially as the seat of the Hokuzan (Northern Mountain) kingdom. After military defeat and the unification of the Three Kingdoms in the early fifteenth century, governors were appointed by the Ryukyu central government. In 1609 the castle was burned and rendered uninhabitable during the successful invasion by the Satsuma feudal domain, which ruled the southern part of the Japanese island of Kyushu.

### **Wards:**

Nakijin is divided into nine wards (*kuruwa* or *kaku*). Each is believed to have had a specific function:

#### **Outer Ward (*gaikaku*)**

The use of this ward is still not known.

#### **Ushimi Ward**

This area is believed to have been used by the military for training horses.

#### **Umiya and Uchibaru**

Umiya is thought to have been the ceremonial center of the castle, containing two important buildings, and the Uchibaru residential area for court ladies.

**Main Ward (*shukaku*)**

Situated at the highest point of the castle, this ward contained the most important ceremonial halls.

**Shigemajo Ward**

This is believed to have been a residential area for high-ranking soldiers.

**Main Gate (*heiromon*)**

The main gate of the castle

**Kazafu Ward**

This is a steep rocky ravine with a natural spring at the bottom, now dry.