

Exhibition Room 1

(Signboard: Phase I, Phase II, Phase III, Phase IV)

PHASE I:

End of the Thirteenth Century to the Early Fourteenth Century

Early structures were discovered in excavations of the lowest stratum. They were constructed with posts embedded directly in holes that had been dug in the earth, and likely roofed with thatch. The ground was leveled and had simple retaining walls of earth and stones, but there were no defensive stone walls. A palisade of vertical wooden poles that surrounded the site guarded against enemy intrusions. The building post holes, and the smaller palisade post holes are easy to distinguish because the building columns are much larger. Shards of locally made pottery were found at this level, as well as Chinese ceramics dating from the late thirteenth to the early fourteenth centuries, so the construction found at this stratum was almost certainly done during that period. This places it within what is known as the Gusuku period, which lasted from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries. Most Ryukyu castles (*gusuku*) were constructed during this period, which saw increasing political organization, prosperity, and trade with China, as ceramics found onsite attest.

Photo captions:

Embedded posts and wooden palisade

Hole for embedded post

Hole for palisade post

Construction method

Retaining wall of earth and stones

Earthen structures

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PHASE II:

Early to Mid Fourteenth Century

The massive defensive stone walls (*ishigaki*) of dark Ryukyu limestone that are one of the defining characteristics of Nakijin Castle began to be built during this period. A large stone and earth platform was built at the northern side of the Main Ward, the castle's uppermost level. On top of this, a large south-facing wooden hall, the Seiden, was constructed. A roofed corridor surrounding the entire building platform was also built, along with similar corridors extending east and west from the Seiden. The result was a formal compound ultimately derived from Chinese prototypes. At this time in China, Korea, and Japan, buildings of this

type and status would normally have been roofed with ceramic tiles, yet no tile remains were found onsite at this or any other stratum. This suggests that even important buildings like the Nakijin Seiden were always roofed with more perishable thatch, bamboo, or wooden boards.

photo captions:

Remains of corridor-connected building on a raised platform
Excavation view (porcelain bowls)

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PHASE III:

Late Fourteenth to Early Fifteenth Century

This was the most prosperous period for Nakijin Castle. Ming-era Chinese records cite numerous trade missions sent by the lords who ruled the Hokuzan domain from Nakijin. The raised platform built during the previous phase was buried, and the flat area of the Main Ward (*shukaku*) was expanded. Unlike the earlier buildings, the columns of the new Seiden were placed on individual foundation stones like those found in China, Korea, and Japan, suggesting that new architectural techniques had been introduced. An additional building was built alongside the defensive stone wall. This period ended with the defeat of the Hokuzan lord at the hands of his southern rivals, who united the Ryukyus into one kingdom. The wooden buildings of the castle were destroyed during the battle that ended Nakijin's independence.

photo captions:

Foundation stones
Foundation stones and natural stone outcroppings that have been carved away
Stone stairway

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PHASE IV:

Early Fifteenth to Early Seventeenth Century

During this period, Nakijin was governed by an administrator called a *kanshu*, appointed by the king of the united Ryukyus, which had taken control of the castle and the surrounding domain in 1416. Excavation of the stratum from this period revealed that a new Seiden hall had been built at the center of the Main Ward level of the castle to replace the buildings that had been destroyed. The excavated foundation stones of this building show it to have been fairly large compared to the previous ones, about 9 meters by 14.5 meters. Like the earlier

buildings, it was probably roofed with thatch, bamboo, or wooden boards, of which no trace has survived.

Trade between Ryukyu and other Asian countries expanded greatly during this period, both geographically and in overall quantity and value. This is reflected in the pottery found onsite, which includes fine Chinese porcelains as well as items from Annam (Vietnam), Thailand, Korea, and other countries. Although the ports near Nakijin were still active in overseas trade, most of these items are believed to have been brought through the port at Naha. This period ended with the defeat of the Ryukyu Kingdom by an invading force from the Satsuma domain of Kyushu, Japan, in 1609.

photo captions:

The foundation stones of the Seiden hall.

Pottery shards of Thai origin (in the ground)