

## **Katsuren Castle Eras**

Historians divide the story of Katsuren Castle into five periods based on the remains of buildings, pottery, and other items uncovered by archaeological excavations. Together, these remnants provide evidence of the culture of those who once lived here, and their contacts with trading partners overseas.

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### **Phase I: First Settlement**

#### **Prior to the Twelfth Century**

Prehistoric pottery excavated here suggests that the Katsuren site was occupied prior to the twelfth century CE. This period is known as the late shell mound (*kaizuka*) period, during which Ryukyu society gradually coalesced into large groups. No other artifacts from this period have been found to make more accurate dating possible.

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### **Phase II: First Fortifications**

#### **Twelfth to Fourteenth Century**

The first fortifications at Katsuren were constructed in the twelfth to fourteenth century. Soil and limestone gravel were carried up to the hilltop and used to make level earthen platforms. Remains of a wooden palisade were uncovered at this stratum, as well as small wooden buildings, but no stone walls had been constructed yet. Locally made pottery and Song-period Chinese ceramics, which can be dated to the thirteenth century, were also found, indicating that overseas trade was already significant. Dice made of dugong bones, *go* game pieces, and various iron implements suggest the occupants had time to enjoy leisure pursuits.

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### **Phase III: The Golden Age**

#### **Early to Mid-Fourteenth Century**

Ground leveling and the construction of stone walls expanded during this period. The castle was nearing its final form. Several successive rulers continued to increase overseas trade, and a large quantity of Chinese ceramics, as well as coins, beads, and other imported items from this period, have been found during excavations.

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#### **Phase IV: Stability**

##### **Late Fourteenth to Fifteenth Century**

Katsuren Castle achieved its final form during this time. Lord Amawari took control of the castle and ushered in an era of stability and prosperity. A large, tile-roofed ceremonial hall (*shaden*) of sophisticated construction was erected on a stone-and-earth platform inside the Second Ward. Trade between Katsuren and China, Japan, Korea, and other overseas regions reached its peak, and included an increasing number of luxury items. Quantities of Chinese celadon and other ceramics from the end of the fourteenth to the beginning of the fifteenth century have been found. Valuable jars, vases, bottles, and other rare items have also been discovered. Swords, arrowheads, and fragments of armor attest to military preparedness. This period of Katsuren ended with Amawari's defeat and the burning of the castle in 1458.

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#### **Phase V: Decline**

##### **Late Fifteenth Century and Afterward**

Though Katsuren ceased to be a military bastion after Amawari's death in 1458, the castle grounds continued to be used for some time thereafter, though it is not known exactly by whom or how. Excavations have uncovered typical Ming-period Chinese ceramics of the fifteenth century and later. These include celadon as well as blue-and-white porcelain. Ceremonies at Katsuren's many spiritual sites continue to this day.