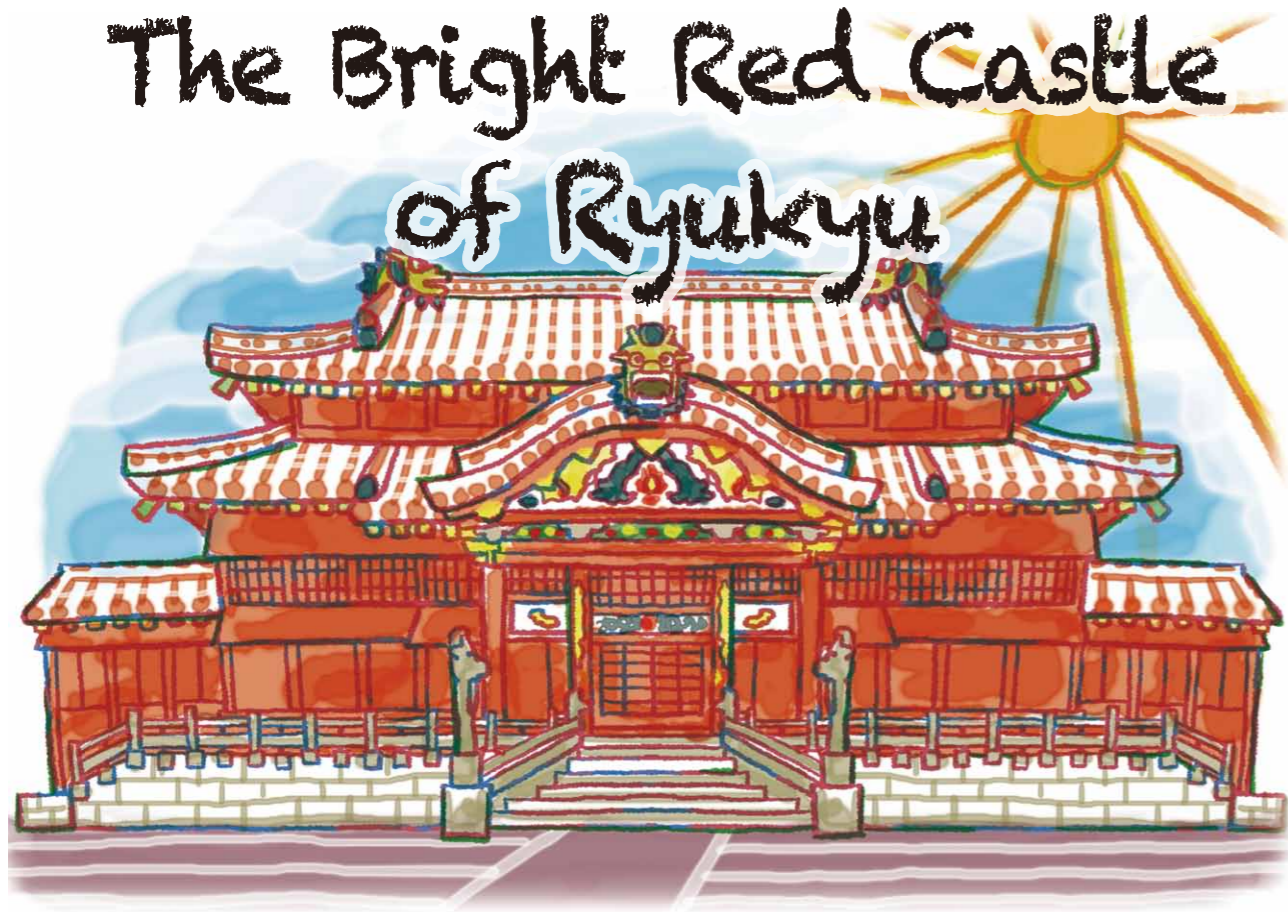


The Bright Red Castle of Ryukyu



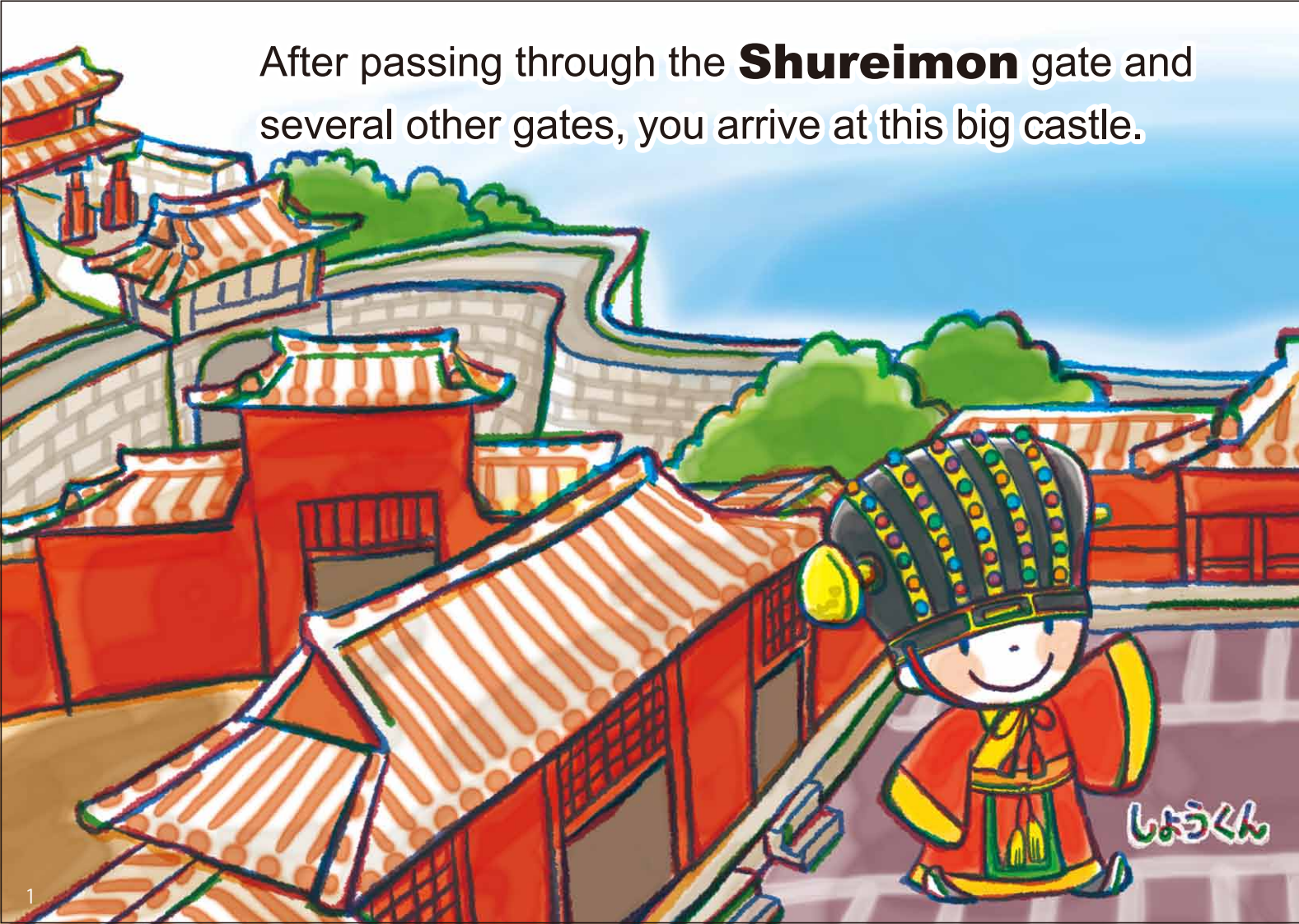
Kids' Guide to Shurijo Castle Park



首里城公園
SHURIJO CASTLE PARK
<http://oki-park.jp/shurijo/>

※万国津梁 (Bankoku Shinryo) = "bridge to the world".

After passing through the **Shureimon** gate and several other gates, you arrive at this big castle.

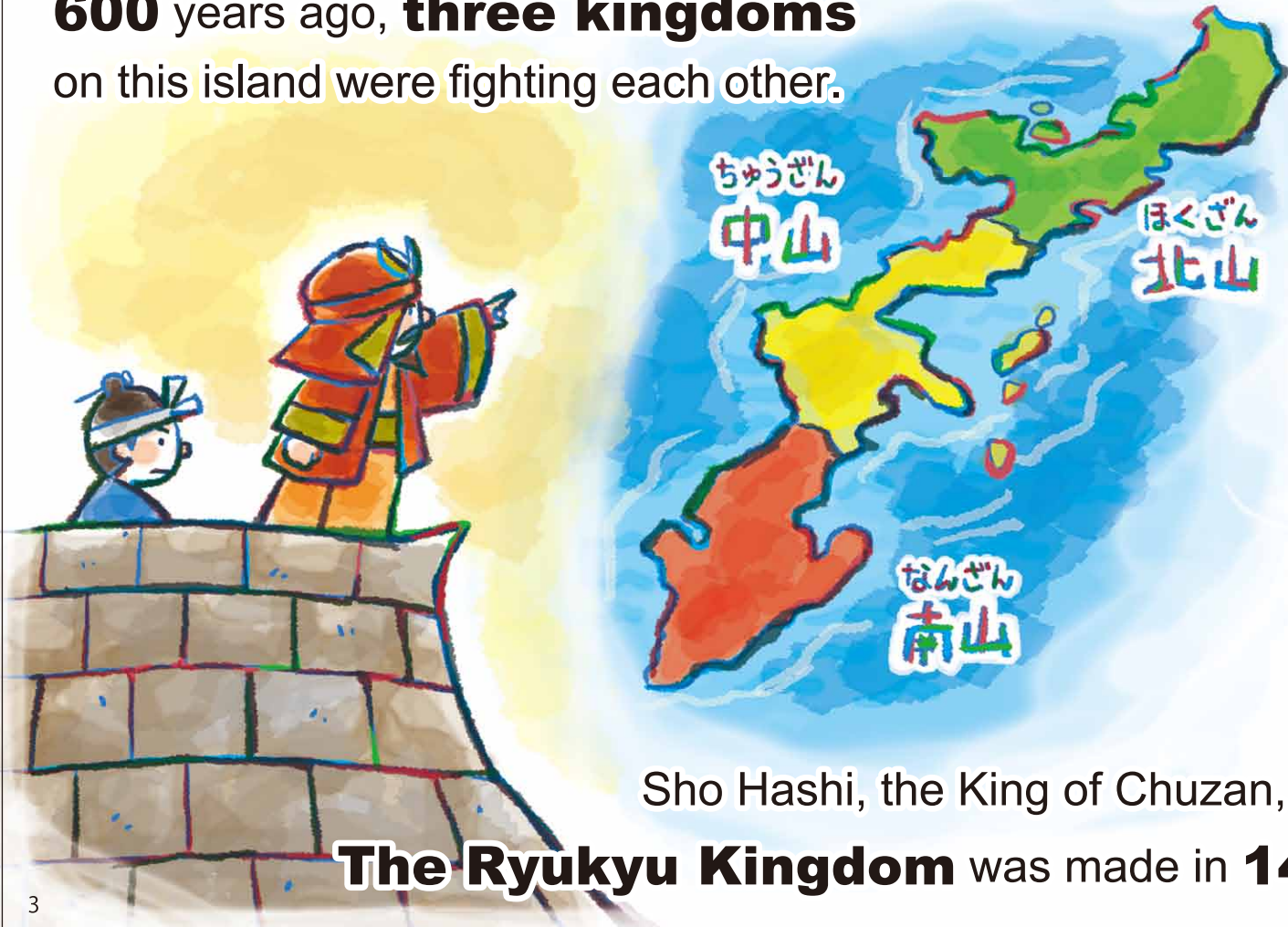


The roof tiles and walls are all **bright red**.
Who lived there?



This is **Shuri Castle**. The King of Ryukyu lived here.

600 years ago, **three kingdoms** on this island were fighting each other.



Sho Hashi, the King of Chuzan, won.

The Ryukyu Kingdom was made in **1429**.

The people of Ryukyu crossed the sea to **China, Japan, Korea** and **Southeast Asia**, trading with many countries. In this way, Ryukyu become a very rich kingdom.



However, in **1609**, the **Satsuma** clan from Japan invaded Ryukyu, and Ryukyu lost against Satsuma.

But although the Ryukyu lost to the Satsuma, they continued on their trade with other countries. When the King of Ryukyu changed, they told the Emperor of China. To congratulate the new King,

the Emperor of China sent his messenger, Sapposhi, with precious gifts. In order to welcome Sapposhi, the Ryukyu Kingdom created all kinds of **cultural entertainments.**



The interaction with China lasted nearly **300** years even though Satsuma was in charge.

In **1879**, when Meiji Era had come, the Ryukyu Kingdom became **Okinawa Prefecture**. The King could not live in Shuri Castle anymore.



But for the people of Okinawa, Shuri Castle will forever be there for them in their hearts.

In **1945**, Japan and U.S. fought a battle on Okinawa. During the battle, Shuri Castle was completely destroyed.



Grand gates and **beautiful stone walls** were destroyed as well.

Even though the castle and towns were destroyed, the people kept the spirit of the Ryukyu that was created at the castle.

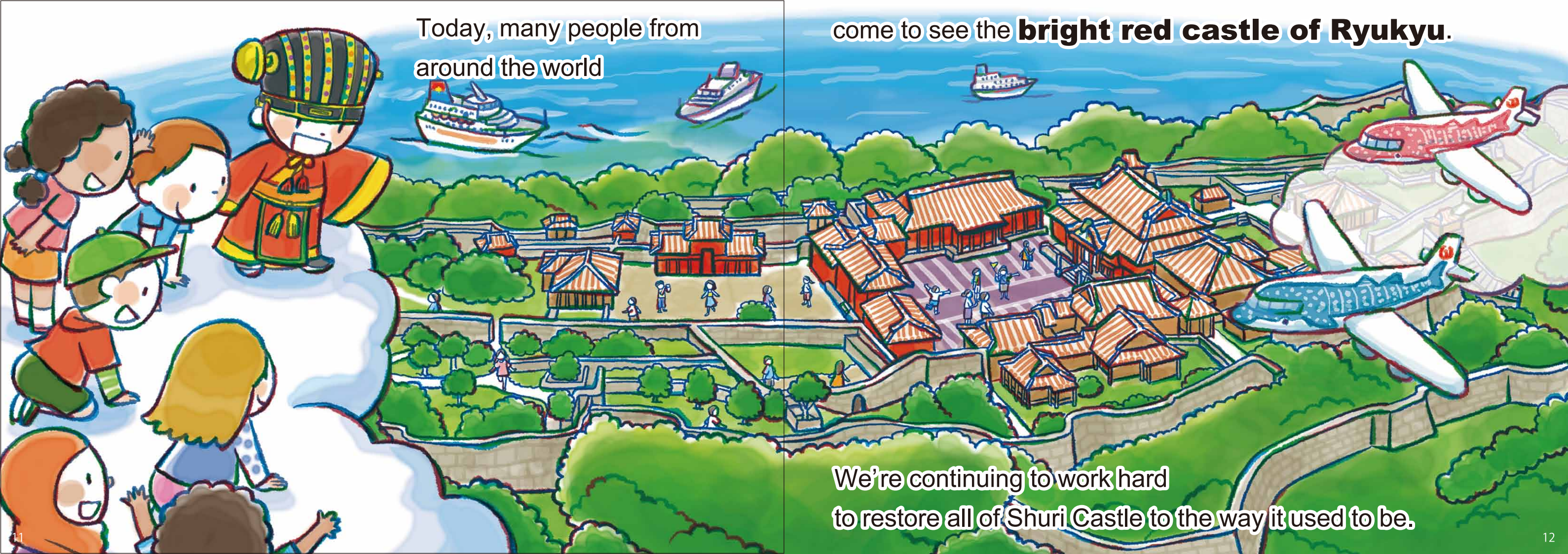


Then in **1992**, through efforts of many people Shuri Castle was restored in its original bright red splendor.

There are many places on this island that tell of the history of Ryukyu Kingdom.



In **2000**, ruins of Shuri Castle and the other historical sites became **World Heritage Sites**.



Today, many people from
around the world

come to see the **bright red castle of Ryukyu.**

We're continuing to work hard
to restore all of Shuri Castle to the way it used to be.

Q Why is Shuri Castle red?

A Why is Shuri Castle red? Nobody really knows for sure. Did they copy a castle in the Chinese capital? That's what some say, but it's not certain. Why is Shuri Castle red? Future studies may tell us the reason.



Q Why are there dragons at Shuri Castle?

A Dragons were the symbol of the King of the Ryukyu. That's why Shuri Castle is decorated with lots of dragons. If you look closely, you can see that they have four claws. The dragon was also the symbol of the Chinese emperor, but his dragons had five claws. Only the emperor of China could use a dragon with five claws, so the Ryukyu dragon could only have four. Why don't you try counting the number of dragons at the castle?



Q Why is the road in front of the main castle slanted?

A The road in front of the main castle is called the Ukimichi, and only the king and people of high rank could use it. There are various explanations on why the road is slanted. What can you see at the end of the Ukimichi? It's the most "sacred place" in Shuri Castle, the "Suimui Utaki". The Suimui Utaki was here long before the castle was built, and it's said that the castle was built around it. The important Utaki and main hall were linked, protecting the kingdom with sacred power, and so maybe that's why the road is slanted.



Notes

