

Fire Hits Okinawa's 500-year-old Shuri Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site

Japanese woke up Thursday morning, October 31, to the sad news news that Shuri Castle — a UNESCO World Heritage Site — in Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture, was burning.

Even around noon, the fire brigades were still working to abate the flames.

Fire brigades received a phone call just after 2:40 A.M. that smoke was coming out of the building.

More than 10 fire brigade trucks were dispatched to the location, but as of posting, the main hall and the south and north halls have all burned down and the authorities have evacuated residents in the surrounding area.

There are no reports of injuries so far.

People who talked with NHK, the national broadcaster, used strong words to describe their feelings at seeing the castle burn down: "It's like the spirit of Okinawa was lost in the fire." "Just looking at the images, it's incredibly painful."

The venue had been hosting the Shuri Festival since October 27.

The cause of the fire is still being investigated.

The castle has more than 500 years of history as it was the center of power of the Ryukyu Kingdom between 1429 and 1879.

In 1922 the building was restored and in 1925 it was designated as a national treasure. It was completely destroyed in the Pacific War in the 1940s.

The castle was subsequently rebuilt in 2000, becoming the location for a dinner in honor of the Kyushu and Okinawa Summit. The same year, the building, together with the ruins of Ryukyu Kingdom, was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Source: **PHOTOS | Fire Hits Okinawa's 500-year-old Shuri Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site**
<http://japan-forward.com/photos-fire-hits-okinawas-500-year-old-shuri-castle-a-unesco-world-heritage-site/>



首里城で火災 正殿と北殿ほぼ全焼、南殿も炎上 消防車出動

31日午前2時40分ごろ、那覇市の首里城で「煙が上がっている」と警備会社から119番通報があった。正殿などが激しい炎を上げて燃え、消防車両が10台以上出動して消火に当たったが、首里城の正殿と北殿、南殿がいずれもほぼ全焼した。沖縄県警那覇署などは周辺住民を避難誘導した。けが人の情報は無い。

正殿と北殿、南殿はいずれも木造。今月27日からは琉球王国の儀式を再現した「首里城祭」が開かれていた。那覇署などが出火の原因や経緯を調べている。

首里城は、1429～1879年に続いた琉球王国で中心的役割を果たした城。国王の執務室や行政施設からなり、正殿は2層3階建ての造りや竜の彫刻が施された柱といった独自の形式を持っている。

大正14（1925）年に正殿が国宝に指定されたが、太平洋戦争で建物は全て焼失した。平成4（1992）年に主要施設が復元され、12（2000）年の九州・沖縄サミットでは北殿が首脳夕食会場となった。同年、首里城跡を含む「琉球王国のグスクおよび関連遺産群」が世界遺産に登録された。

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