

Multilingual Electronic Newsletter

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かごしま南の風便り



Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings

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Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Column

- Timelessly International: Sengan-en ●
 - By Joseph Snowden (CIR from the UK)

In the northwest of Kagoshima City lies Sengan-en, the traditional garden and stately home of the Shimadzu family. Established in the first year of the Manji Period (1658), Sengan-en has stood for over 350 years under the watchful gaze of Sakurajima volcano, and continues to be a source of pride for the people of Kagoshima today.



Sengan-en with Sakurajima across the bay

While its historical importance as a stately home of the Shimadzu family is widely known, some may be surprised to find that Sengan-en was deeply international throughout its history, representing not only Kagoshima (known at the time as the Satsuma Domain), but also Japan, on the world stage. To find out more, I spent a day exploring the villa and gardens.

My journey begins at the Kagoshima World Heritage Orientation Centre, one of the more recent additions to Sengan-en. Opened in 2019, the exhibition space pays tribute to the role of Sengan-en and the former “Shuseikan” factory complex in the modernisation of Japan.

I was particularly struck by the reverberatory furnace. The exhibition space houses a detailed scale model, but just outside lie the remains of the furnace itself, weathered by time. Technologically, this building was key to enabling the production of cannons that could defend Japan, but the construction of the furnace all those years ago in 1857 also constituted an alloying of cultures. Of Western technology with Japanese inventiveness. Of Dutch textbooks with Satsuma industry. These worn stones are fossils of an industrial dinosaur, born out of historical international exchange.



The Tin Gate

But of course, this area was not only a cradle of Japanese industrialisation. The serene gardens and villa have hosted foreign dignitaries from around the globe. As I make my way towards the vermilion-painted Tin Gate, resplendent in defiance of its age, my mind wanders to Sir Harry Smith Parkes, British Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Japan between 1865 and 1883.

Parkes visited Sengan-en in 1866, at which time the Tin Gate would have been used as the main entrance to the gardens. He was clearly impressed with the beauty of the place, claiming that “anyone who visits [Sengan-en] must be stricken by a desire to stay for three years at least.”

Very different in style to the gardens of his home country, Sengan-en was heavily influenced by Chinese design. This is even reflected in its name, which was taken from a similar feature on Mount Longhu in Jiangxi, China.

One of the Chinese design features that Parkes would have noticed is the colossal engraved rock, jutting out of one of the cliff faces behind the villa. Carving characters into boulders was extremely rare in Japan at the time, but was commonly seen in China. It took 3,900 men over three months to carry out the engraving. And what message was carved into the rock, you ask? “Senjingan (千尋巖)”, essentially, “very big rock”. They weren’t wrong.



The carved rock, Senjingan

In fact, Parkes would have been welcomed in the Bogakuro Pavilion, a small but intricately detailed wooden structure that still stands in front of the family villa. The pavilion was originally gifted to the Shimadzu family by the King of Ryukyu. The island kingdom maintained trading relations with China, so it is no surprise that this Ryukyuan pavilion also shows typically Chinese stylistic features.



The villa at Sengan-en

I take off my shoes to enter the Shimadzu villa, and as I move delicately from room to room, I try to imagine what Parkes would have thought when he was shown around the residence. No doubt, it would have left a deep impression on him.

Like the gardens, the villa shows Chinese influence, such as the set of sunken and raised octagons that reflect the concept of yin and yang. There is also evidence of interaction with other cultures. The chandelier in the reception room, powered by local hydroelectricity, was made in London during the Meiji Period. Elsewhere, visitors can see replicas of huge Satsuma-ware vases that were gifted to Nicholas II of Russia, who visited Sengan-en in 1891 as Tsesarevich.



Sunken octagon in the inner courtyard



Satsuma-ware vases for Nicholas II



*British-made
chandelier*

Indeed, Parkes was not the only British dignitary to be received at Sengan-en. Forty years after his visit, Prince Arthur of Connaught, grandson of Queen Victoria, was welcomed by Shimadzu Tadashige, the 30th head of the Shimadzu clan.

Then in 1922, Edward VIII (Prince of Wales at the time) enjoyed watching performances in the gardens when he visited Kagoshima as part of his tour of Japan. A photograph of his entourage being hosted at Sengan-en is on display inside the villa. Taken just over 100 years ago, I can't help but feel a sense of profoundness at the realisation that I am standing exactly where they had stood, separated only by time.

Back in the garden now, I am brought back to the present by the familiar click-clack of a passing train, on its way to Kirishima. Even putting aside the historical significance of this place, the garden is truly unlike anywhere else in Japan. And while some things have certainly changed since the time of Parkes (I doubt he was served shirokuma...), the global nature of Sengan-en has not. International tourists continue to delight in the lush green of the kyokusui garden, the gentle burble of the streams, the panoramic views of Sakurajima and Kinko Bay.



*Kagoshima's signature
dessert, shirokuma, served at
the Sengan-en Matcha Cafe*



The cat shrine

As I turn to make my way back towards the garden's entrance, I stumble upon a shrine dedicated to cats. Here, I notice hanging *ema* (wooden plaques) inscribed with the prayers and wishes of people that have come from all over the world to see Sengan-en. They are written in many different languages. While I can't read them all, they give me the impression that those who wrote them did so with a similar sense of awe as I feel here.

I smile at the smorgasbord of languages and cultures in front of me; a fitting testament to the continuing international appeal of Sengan-en.

Activities of the Governor

- 11 Nov: Attended the event 「Vietnam in Amami Fair」 ●

The event 「Vietnam in Amami Fair」 was organized by the Amami Naze Lions Club and was held at Amami Park in Amami City. I attended as a guest and gave a welcome greeting.

As a pre-event, on this day a forum was held after the opening ceremony where Vietnamese people in Amami were invited as panelists to exchange opinions regarding their experiences of living in Amami.

This year commemorates the 70th anniversary of the return of the Amami Islands to Japan alongside the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Vietnam. As such, I am delighted that an event was held where people of all ages including local high school students can participate and the exchanges between Amami and Vietnam can be deepened.

I heard that various events were held from 17 to 19 November, including Amami and Vietnamese song and dance performances, booths introducing each other's cultures, and sales of Vietnamese food and ingredients.

I hope that with this event, mutual understanding between the people of Amami and Vietnam can be deepened, and that exchanges between Amami and Vietnam will develop even further in the future.



Tourism Information in Kagoshima

- Tarumizu Thousand Ginkgo Biloba in Tarumizu City, Kagoshima Prefecture●



Tarumizu Thousand Ginkgo Biloba is the tourist spot symbolic of Tarumizu City, where over 1,200 ginkgo trees were planted and the entire area is dyed a golden hue when in season.

This is a 「Golden Paradise」 that the owner of the land single-handedly created with his wife over the span of 40 years and more. The best viewing period is usually from late November to early December.

There are also periods when it is illuminated at night. Why not consider a nice relaxing soak in a hot spring after viewing it? For more information, please visit the official website of Tarumizu City Hall below.

<http://www.city.tarumizu.lg.jp/kanko/koi/miryoku/event/senbonityou.html>

※As this is on private property, please observe proper etiquette when visiting.

○ Address ○

Shinmido Area, Tarumizu City, Kagoshima Prefecture

<https://www.google.com/maps/@31.488423,130.741765,19z?entry=ttu>

○ Access ○

- By car

From Tarumizu City Hall: 4.7km (～10min)

From Tarumizu Port (Tarumizu Ferry Terminal): 6.9km (～12min)

- By Bus

There is no public transport available.

- By Taxi

The fare for one way is approximately 2,000 yen.

○ Admission Fee ○

Free (Open to public)

Information on Kagoshima's Regional Specialties

- Announcement of the prize winners in the contest 「The New Speciality Item of Kagoshima 2023」 ●

The contest 「The New Speciality Item of Kagoshima 2023」 was held on 2 October 2023 and 11 prize winning products were selected in 2 categories: food and craft/household.

Here, we will introduce one item from each category.

【Food】 Kagoshima Dashi Chazuke (Assorted Gift Set)



This product received the Kagoshima Mayor's Award.

It is a fragrant *dashi chazuke* (a rice-and-broth-based dish) that utilizes Kagoshima ingredients such as black pork. Everything within has already been cooked, so the authentic taste can be enjoyed by simply heating it in the microwave.

■ Contents

Black pork loin <i>tonkatsu</i> (pork cutlet) <i>dashi chazuke</i>	Ingredients 300g	Broth 200g
Pickled <i>kanpachi</i> (greater amberjack fish) <i>dashi chazuke</i>	Ingredients 280g	Broth 200g
Hearty <i>keihan</i> (chicken with rice)	Ingredients 270g	Broth 200g

■ Storage Refrigeration (below -18°C)

■ Expiry 90 Days

■ Price

4 Pcs	3,402yen (tax inclusive)
6 Pcs	4,978yen (tax inclusive)

■ Contact

Union Sangyo Co., Ltd.

<https://www.roppakutei.jp/>

※The relevant product information can be found on this website.



【Craft • Household】 Lamp 「Kagerow」



This product received the Kagoshima Governor's Award.

The colours of this lamp series are inspired by the seascape and rows of ginkgo trees in Ichikikushikino City, Kagoshima Prefecture. Using regional traditional techniques, each piece is carefully finished by hand with a calming color palette. As shown in the photos, you can choose from 4 versions and 2 sizes.

■ Size

M : W220×D220×H280mm

L : W220×D220×H560mm

■ Price

M : 36,300yen (tax inclusive)

L : 39,600yen (tax inclusive)

■ Contact

Kamezaki Dye Works Co., Ltd. <https://www.kamesome.co.jp/>





Website of Kagoshima Prefectural Government: <http://www.pref.kagoshima.jp/>



Editor's Note (International Affairs Division, Kagoshima Prefectural Government)

How did you find this month's edition of Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings?

We as editors will continue to strive to have this prefectural multilingual newsletter be a bridge of information that connects Kagoshima with everyone.



「Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings's bulletin board」 is looking for the following content!

☆Kagoshima Photo Gallery

We would like to invite you to send us photos that remind you of Kagoshima, or photos of Kagoshima that you might have seen overseas. Please also attach a brief description along with the photo. (e.g. a mountain of volcanic-ash bags)

☆Knowledge about living in Kagoshima

Please share with us information related to life in Kagoshima. (e.g. delicious ways to enjoy fried fish cakes, or how to deal with volcanic ash.)

We also welcome any other information that you would like to share with our readers.

▲▽▲▽ Inquiries ▲▽▲▽

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