

A Garden Inspired by Chinese Art

Dating from the 1780s, the garden of Eiunso is contemporary with the central, Edo-period part of the villa built by Mohri Shigetaka (1725–1789). The focal point is a pond designed to evoke China's Dongting Lake, a famous site for its beauty and a popular theme for Chinese painters. The rocks in the garden were collected from all over Yamaguchi. Of particular note are the tortoise stone (*kame-ishi*) just beside the stone lantern at one end of the island, and the stone water basin (*chozubachi*) incorporated into the far bank of the pond.

***Suikinkutsu*: Japanese Water Music**

One interesting feature just beside the veranda of the central part of the house is the *suikinkutsu* dating from the 1780s. When a ladleful of water from the stone basin is emptied onto the black stones at its base, the water filters through the stones and produces a musical tinkle as it drips down. This is because an earthenware pot with a hole in its base is buried upside-down beneath the stones. The sides of the pot form an echo chamber, which amplifies the sound of the drops landing on the pool of water below.

It is called a *suikinkutsu*, or “water koto cave,” because the sounds it produces supposedly resemble the notes of the *koto*, a stringed musical instrument often called the Japanese harp. Like a wind chime, the sound is supposed to be cooling and refreshing.

A Teahouse Within a Teahouse

In one corner of the garden sits the Kagetsuro Teahouse. Originally built in the precincts of Suo Kokubunji Temple in 1786, it was dismantled and rebuilt here in 1888. *Kagetsu* refers to an eighteenth-century style of tea ceremony conducted by five people in an eight-mat tatami room. The Kagetsuro Teahouse has a range of different room sizes, allowing it to accommodate up to thirty people and a variety of tea ceremony styles.