

Historical Overview of Shiotatsu and Its Buildings

Shiotatsu is an old district of Ureshino City that contains many buildings dating back to the days of the Hasuike domain of Hizen Province, which included what is now Saga Prefecture. The domain was created during the Edo period (1603–1867) as a branch of the Saga domain whose daimyo lord was Nabeshima Naozumi (1616–1669), the fifth son of Nabeshima Katsushige (1580–1657), first lord of the Saga domain.

Shiotatsu flourished as a post town along the Nagasaki Highway, which ran from the port of Nagasaki to Kokura in northern Kyushu. The highway was nicknamed “Sugar Road” due to the shipments of sugar entering Japan through Nagasaki and transported to other parts of the country via this route.

Architecture

Traditional *igura*-style townhouses can still be seen in Shiotatsu today. The architecture is characterized by hipped, tiled roofs with triangular sections of wall visible between the roofs. Roofs in the area were originally thatched but were replaced with tile roofs to make them less vulnerable to fire and flood. Entrances are typically located both at the front and back of each building and connected by a corridor. Many of the houses were used as storehouses and also merchants’ residences.

The Clay Industry

The large tidal range of the nearby Ariake Sea made the Shiota River, which flows through Shiotatsu, suitable for transporting raw pottery stone by boat from Amakusa, which was known as a source of high-quality pottery stones in the early eighteenth century. Amakusa later developed into a center for converting pottery stone into clay to make porcelain.

Ceramics were also produced in Shiotatsu and quickly found their way along trade routes to markets in Japan and abroad. This helped boost trade in the region, creating an economic hub in what is now southwestern Saga Prefecture. A modern port was constructed in Shiotatsu in 1964, complete with large cranes to offload pottery stone from boats onto trucks for transport to workshops in the area.

Public Transportation

Public transportation in the area improved in the early twentieth century, beginning with the construction in 1905 of a horse-drawn tramway that connected the neighboring city of Takeo with Yutoku Inari Shrine. This was eventually expanded into an engine-powered railway system in 1915. Some of the buildings in Shiotatsu were moved back several meters to allow widening of the main road to make room for the railway.