

Sachibaru no Niwa Co., Ltd.

Pursuing business and mecenat activities through the new Sachibaru Ya-dui installation artwork produced by creating nature



Nobuyoshi Inafuku, President of Sachibaru no Niwa Co., Ltd.

Many visitors to Okinawa will no doubt be familiar with a café called Hamabe no Chaya (literally, “Beachside Café”). Run by [Sachibaru no Niwa Co., Ltd.](#) (hereinafter referred to as Sachibaru no Niwa), this café has become a landmark among cafés with ocean views and spectacular scenery in Okinawa. Celebrating its 28th anniversary in December 2022, Hamabe no Chaya has enjoyed such long-lasting popularity that even today it is always part of the conversation when speaking of cafés in Okinawa.



Hamabe no Chaya is located just in front of the beach, where sea water comes close to a stone-lined wall

I live just a 5-minute drive away from this café, which I used to visit only on occasions when it is not crowded with tourists. It was during the COVID-19 pandemic that I became more deeply au fait with this place. I happened to have an opportunity to write about the café's neighborhood and I made some unexpected discoveries during my research...

After sending my report, which I attached when applying for a job as a mecenat writer, I was given the opportunity to publish it as a case study. I would like to introduce this report as an example of the new possibilities of mecenat activity performed in a local region.



## Business activities and mecenat



Stone steps forming a gusuku (Okinawan castle or fortress) at the entrance of the Sachibaru no Niwa garden

Although Hamabe no Chaya is famous, the Sachibaru no Niwa garden, located behind it, is not well known. On the expansive Sachibaru Ya-dui site, which covers a total area of about 21,500 square meters, the following five facilities including Hamabe no Chaya are dotted about:

- [Café: Hamabe no Chaya](#)

(The following facilities are within Sachibaru no Niwa)

- [Vegetarian restaurant: Yama no Chaya Rakusui](#)
- [Accommodation: Villa Sachibaru](#) (four buildings)
- [Relaxation salon: AMAMIKIYO](#)
- Event site: Sachibaru Square

(A Beach Market event is held every two months with local companies.)

Actually, most of the profits from the restaurant, café, hotel and service business are spent on the maintenance and improvement of the Sachibaru Ya-dui site.

When I asked Mr. Nobuyoshi Inafuku, who serves as the representative of Sachibaru no Niwa, for an interview to write this article, he asked what I meant by the term mecenat.



Generally, mecenat refers to activity that gives back some portion of the profits from business to society, including activities such as natural conservation and regional development through supporting cultural activities. In Sachibaru no Niwa, however, the business itself includes cultural activities and nature conservation, which results in contribution to regional development.

Mr. Inafuku is not aware of this, but I think it can be said that Sachibaru no Niwa is running a business to cover the expenses of its mecenat activity. This article discusses mecenat in Sachibaru no Niwa and its function as spatial art.

### **Sachibaru no Niwa, where business and mecenat link seamlessly**



Stone-lined wall built in the 17th century and banyan trees surrounded by newly planted vegetation

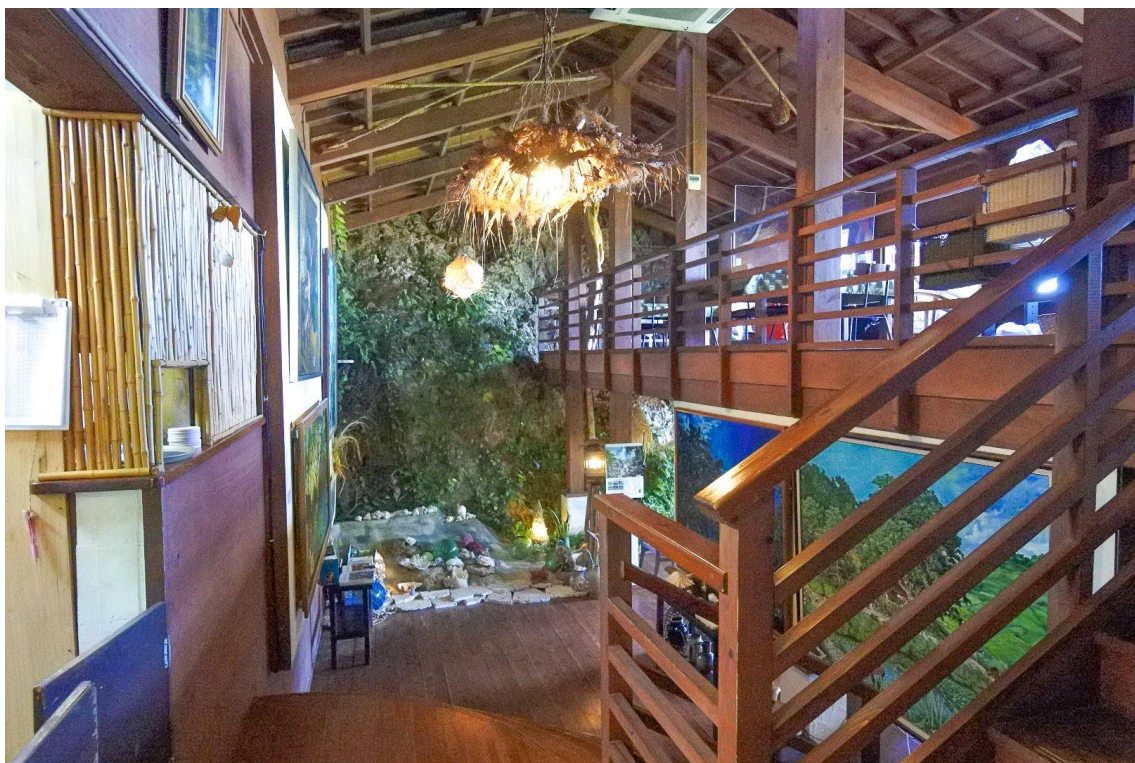
Let me delve a little further into Sachibaru no Niwa to clarify what makes their business a type of mecenat.

The name “Sachibaru Ya-dui” is a combination of Sachibaru, the former name of this land, and Ya-dui, which is a term meaning lands cultivated and occupied by people of the samurai class who escaped from the clutch of the Satsuma domain and moved to local areas in Okinawa in the 17th century. Mr. Inafuku, one of their descendants, when



discovering stone-lined walls on the site that were built by people of the samurai class in those days, determined to preserve this slice of history. Even today, the stone-lined walls remain as they originally were, with only broken parts repaired in such a way as to make it difficult to differentiate new stones from the original stones.

The entrance to the garden is designed with three stonework methods used in the construction of the gusuku, a castle in Okinawa, namely the nozura-zumi (rubble masonry), the nuno-zumi (ashlar masonry) and the aikata-zumi (cut-stone masonry); the 100 stone steps made of Ryukyu limestone were built manually. In this place which was severely damaged in the Battle of Okinawa during World War II, there are still many traces of the war, including the ruins of bomb shelters. Walking around the garden reminds us of the history of Okinawa.



The rock at the back of Yama no Chaya Rakusui made of limestone is one part of a wall

What Mr. Inafuku was insistent on in the creation of the garden was to keep things unchanged as much as possible. This includes the huge Ryukyu limestone rock generated from corals that existed here when this place was at the bottom of the ocean tens of thousands of years ago, giant banyan trees that survived the war, and bishop wood trees that will grow elegant branches. Considering the preservation of the Ryukyu limestone that had been existing there, Yama no Chaya Rakusui, the restaurant in the garden, is built as if leaning against the rock, with a part of its wall housing a unique interior space.

Plants were newly planted in such a way as to live in harmony with the plants that were already growing there, some of which seem to be rarities in Okinawa today. Sachibaru no Niwa is also serving as a botanical garden preserving native species.

Nanjo City, where Sachibaru Ya-dui is located, is a popular destination thanks to its many facilities (including cafés) where people can enjoy a natural environment with beaches, and its rich nature preserved just a 40-minute drive away from Naha. I believe it was Hamabe no Chaya that pioneered this new field. Mr. Inafuku discovered the attraction of a landscape preserved in an area that used to be thought of as having nothing, and decided to use it as a tourism resource to attract people’s attention, which was a great achievement.



Beach Market in December 2020

In Sachibaru no Niwa, a Beach Market is held every two months at the Sachibaru Square that was newly built in 2020. This square, which covers an area of about 3,300 square meters, is used for local companies to open stall stores. The market gives them opportunities to enhance the visibility of their businesses and generate profits to cover business losses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, Mr. Inafuku provides individuals and groups who enjoy dancing and music the opportunity to present their performances on the stone-laid stage against an ocean backdrop. These hand-made events have become so popular that the Beach Market held in August 2022 attracted more than 1,000 people. Mr. Inafuku commented: “I hope this place will be like a magnet to attract people to Sachibaru.”



## Installation artworks inviting us to appreciate the space itself



View from the relaxation salon, AMAMIKIYO, an extraordinary space without roads or power cables

People may visit Sachibaru Ya-dui to relax at the café or to stay at the villa at first, but when they actually step foot in this place, they inevitably discover its other unique charms. This is because Mr. Inafuku has improved not only the facilities but also the spaces where there are no facilities, to express how he views the world in a unified manner.

Mr. Inafuku says: “Sachibaru Ya-dui is my work.” His goal is to create an impression on people who taste this space. The café and the hotels generating profits are no more than tools contributing to the production of this space. At first glance, the garden seems to be taken care of by nature, but it is actually an installation artwork incorporating a natural garden carefully created by human hands.

Sachibaru Ya-dui is not exactly art created by nature, but rather a space where art came into existence by creating nature.





Villa Sachibaru "Yama no Koya," the most popular inn among the villas

Sachibaru Ya-dui is an ever-expanding work of art. Its natural space, which appears to be taken care of by no one, is carefully designed with consideration for how the plants will grow. It shows a variety of appearances depending on the season and the weather at each and every moment, never boring its visitors.

Walking around the garden, visitors can see many butterflies such as paper kite butterflies, which did not originally inhabit this site. Mr. Inafuku arranged plants that attract larvae according to the type in each area so that visitors can enjoy watching a cluster of different types of butterflies depending on the location.





The terrace in the garden commanding a view of the ocean

Mr. Inafuku has spent most of the profits from business on maintaining and expanding Sachibaru no Niwa. He has organized a working team consisting of professionals to take care of the garden. Led by Mr. Inafuku, the team plants trees and flowers, builds pathways, clears the underbrush, prunes branches, and improves the soil in order for everything in the garden to look natural.

Mr. Inafuku describe these processes as “refining the land,” which is the activity of creating artwork that makes the most of the attractive features of the land. If Sachibaru no Niwa continues to be fine-tuned, it will create a virtuous cycle in which the garden attracts more people, and its business prospers, as a result of which the garden will be further improved.



Pizzas made with wheat flour from the site baked in a stone kiln are one of the popular menu items at Yama no Chaya Rakusui

Speaking of cycles, I would like to talk about the sustainability of the garden, where cut branches and plants and food waste from the café and the restaurant are fermented to produce compost. This is used as fertilizer for plants, vegetables and herbs grown within the premises, as well as soil to grow wheat in the kitchen garden. In this cycle, the organically cultivated herbs and wheat are used respectively as toppings for dishes and dough for bread and pizzas. By-products from business activities are returned to the earth to cultivate crops, which is one of the functions that this huge garden performs.

In the past, Mr. Inafuku left his hometown and decided to play a role in the development of Okinawa. However, he came to have doubts about his work of developing the natural environment, and began to work on this business at the age of 40. This artwork that has been created based on the new concept of “nature compatible with us” has attracted many people. He also said that it is because he was born here and knows the nature of the land so well that he is able to persist in this work. I hope this article will serve as a useful reference, giving ideas to people who conduct business activities about how to draw out the appeal of land that has not been involved in city planning projects and develop this land while living in harmony with the things existing there.

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### **After the interview**

When I asked Mr. Inafuku for the interview, he replied: “What is mecenat?” I wrote this article as my answer to his question. I believe I will never get tired of visiting this place. While writing this article to contribute to the Association for Corporate Support of the



Arts, I came to realize that Mr. Inafuku has been devoting his life to the creation of this installation artwork for people visiting the garden to taste the space itself.

The notion of installation art might bring to mind artworks or artificial objects with a powerful presence placed in a natural environment, but I think Sachibaru no Niwa is taking a new approach in the quest to create a work that looks natural despite the human touch added to it. I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity I had to introduce the life work of Mr. Inafuku, who has created this space as a work of art.

Mécénat writer: Mana Misato

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