

As a result of Tajima Yahei's (1822–1898) innovations, the Shimamura region steadily grew into a flourishing center of silkworm egg and cocoon production. Tajima Buhei (1833–1910), a relative of Yahei, specialized in rearing and breeding the highest quality silkworm eggs. Buhei came up with a clever way to further increase cocoon production: rather than selling eggs to the local silkworm farmers, he lent the eggs to them on credit instead. Once the farmers produced cocoons, they could sell the raw silk and pay for the eggs. Lending eggs rather than selling them allowed even poor farmers without cash to begin raising silkworms, which led to a large increase in silk production. It also meant that there was a strong incentive for the Tajimas to continue breeding the best eggs. Tajima Buhei's home is still standing, and his descendants have turned the second floor, which was used for sericulture, into a museum. There, visitors can see stacks of old lending ledgers, learn about methods of silkworm egg cultivation, and see other artifacts collected from silkworm farming families of the area. The museum is located a few hundred meters from Tajima Yahei's residence in a neighborhood of other farm houses built in the late 1800s.