

## Tashibu no Sho

This thriving agricultural landscape in front of you has changed little over the last millennium. In fact, if you compare your view today with the old map shown on the signboard, you can see that even the shapes of the rice paddies are the same.

This district was once the feudal property of Usa Shrine, used for cultivating rice that would be offered to the gods after harvesting. Notice the *torii* gate standing at the edge of the forest on the far western side of the valley. This marks the location of Amabiki Shrine, which houses a spring from which water once irrigated the entire valley. See how the paddies make a slow descent from that spot? It is believed that the rice fields were first developed in the spring area at the end of the seventh century, and gradually spread to encompass the valley, creating the same landscape we can admire over a thousand years later.

This district has been named a World Agricultural Heritage site thanks to several unique characteristics, including a network of reservoirs to store water, and the use of oak forests as a natural filter and enriching agent. These methods are still being used today to maintain a sustainable system of farming.

For the best view, hike up the short but steep trail on the eastern side of the valley to the two outlooks named after the two Bodhisattvas that watch over the area: on the eastern side, Asahi (which means sunrise); on the western, Yuhi (which means sunset).