

Laundry Spot

The island of Kamishima has limited natural sources of fresh water and, until recently, villagers had to make do with a handful of wells supplemented by rainwater. This central washing spot helped to conserve water and served as a social gathering place for neighborhood women as they did their laundry. They devised a system in which the most soiled articles of clothing, such as diapers, were washed furthest downstream, and less dirty articles higher up. The highest, cleanest stretch of water was reserved for final rinsing. In 1979, a pipe connected the village to the water supply of the neighboring island of Toshijima. Although no longer used today, the laundry spot remains as an echo of a communal part of island history.