

Terraced Fields

The Nanyo area in southern Ehime Prefecture is famous for its terraced fields, the first of which were built in the Edo period (1603–1868) to relieve the scarcity of arable land in this mountainous region. The fields were initially used to grow sweet potatoes, but a decline in the price of the crop meant that many fields were converted into pasture or left to be reclaimed by nature. In some regions, however, the sweet potatoes were replaced first with mulberry plants to accommodate silkworm raising, and then in the late 1950s with citrus trees. The remaining terraced fields of Nanyo are now best known for organic mikan (tangerine) production.

[Captions]

Terraced fields at Yusumizugaura (Uwajima), initially built to grow sweet potatoes but later used for silk farming and white-potato farming.

Terraced fields at Karihama (Seiyo), built to grow sweet potatoes but later used for mulberry trees (for silkworm raising) and citrus orchards.

Citrus trees growing at Hoketsu Pass (Seiyo and Uwajima). The Hoketsu Pass Observatory offers views over the terraced fields and the sea in the distance.

Stone walls

The lack of flat land meant the building of sturdy stone walls was in high demand. These walls were used to prop up both terraced fields and settlements built on the mountainside.

[Captions]

- The “drying terraces” of Okinoshima (Sukumo)

These deck-like terraces are built above roads and reinforced with stone walls. They are used to dry everything from fish and vegetables to laundry.

- Stone walls in Sotodomari (Ainan)

Walls are built high around the houses of this village to protect them from typhoons and other extreme weather.