

The Hachisuka Family and Awa Odori

Tokushima Prefecture was once known as Awa Province. In 1585, the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi awarded the province to Hachisuka Iemasa (1558–1638), making him the first lord of Tokushima. After Hideyoshi's death, the Hachisuka family fought on the winning side in the Battle of Sekigahara (1600), supporting another powerful warlord, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), who would go on to become shogun. The family's status increased even further after Ieyasu's victory in the Battle of Osaka in 1615, when they were awarded Awaji Province (present-day Awaji Island). As a result, the family ruled over the largest domain of any of the Shikoku lords.

The custom of Awa Odori, or "Awa Dance," is thought to have roots in the tradition of Bon Odori—folk dancing performed during the summer Bon Festival. Tokushima originated as a castle town, and people were taking part in Bon Odori by the beginning of the Edo period (1603–1868).

One theory about the origin of Awa Odori connects it to celebrations around Tokushima Castle's completion in 1586. Although no historical documents remain to support this theory, Iemasa is said to have allowed commoners to attend the party and dance. According to official family records, Hachisuka Tadateru (1611–1652), Iemasa's grandson and the second lord of Tokushima, invited people of the town to dance on stage in Tokushima Castle's Omotegoten Garden. Such evidence suggests that the ruling family enjoyed watching these performances.