

Rice Terraces of Tanono

The Tanono terrace fields are the largest terraced fields in Kamikatsu, situated at a relatively low elevation (300 to 400 m). The terraces are also used to grow tea for making Awa Bancha, and the sights and smells of the tea fields and rice paddies weave together into a rich sensory experience.

Landscape

The terrace field area is surrounded by mountains and the Asahi River. There are 1,092 paddies each with an area of around 300 square meters, covering a total of 32.84 hectares. One of the best views of the fields is from the top of *Moku Moku Moku*, an art installation designed by Sogabe Masashi (b. 1962). The top of the large wooden structure can be reached by climbing a staircase for a view of the whole area, including the river, mountains, terraces, tea fields, and a nearby mushroom-growing plant.

Fragrant Tradition

Awa Bancha tea is still made the same way today as it was at least 400 years ago. The scents released while steaming, rolling, and sun-drying the tea leaves can spread as far as 30 kilometers away from the farms, and in summer the drying leaves fill the air over the rice terraces with their fragrance. This area was selected in 2001 as one of the 100 Most Fragrant Landscapes in Japan by the Ministry of the Environment.

Agricultural Guardian Deities

The area has numerous small, Shinto shrines, many not far from *Moku Moku Moku*, and all dedicated to a variety of agricultural deities. One of these is Chajin Hachiman Jinja Shrine, which consists of a rock supported by wooden pillars. It is dedicated to Yoko-o Gon no Kami, a fleeing Heike warrior who local legend says brought the process of making Awa Bancha to the area. Another is Kitamuki no Kannon, which literally means “North-facing Kannon.” The shrine housing this Kannon (a deity of compassion), is facing north, in the direction of Chajin Hachiman Jinja. This is rare, since most shrines in Japan face south. However, the precise reason for this difference is unknown.