

Matsuba Kannondō Hall Temple

Matsuba Kannondō Hall is a Buddhist temple founded by the descendants of Kasamatsu Satayū (1598–1673), the village headman who built the Aragijima Rice Terraces and founded Aridagawa's papermaking industry.

Satayū wanted to build a temple dedicated to Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion, in the Kotoge district of Aridagawa to replace a religious site that had been destroyed years before. However, because he had used all his personal wealth in development projects to enrich the community, he was not able to accomplish the goal in his lifetime. In 1777, Satayū's great-great-grandson fulfilled his wish, building Matsuba Kannondō to enshrine a statue of Kannon.

In early spring, the temple hosts the Hatsuuma Eshiki Festival. Hatsuuma takes place on the first day of the horse in the second month of the lunisolar calendar, which now generally falls in March. It is traditionally a

day to pray to the Shinto deity Inari for a bountiful harvest. Locally, it is also considered an auspicious day to pray to Kannon for protection against misfortune. Hatsuuma Eshiki festivities have been held at Matsuba Kannondō since 1778.

Preparations for the festival begin three days before, with the making of large, two-tiered rice cake called *kagami mochi* (“mirror mochi”). On the festival day, a procession slowly marches up the temple’s hilly approach from Kotoge, carrying the *kagami mochi* as well as a decorated pole and temple banner. After the mochi is offered to Kannon, participants jostle to catch smaller rice cakes for good luck in the region’s largest mochi-throwing event.