



Japan Heritage

## Awa – The Home of “*Ai*”

Searching for the Supreme Blue of Japanese indigo

# A trip to Awa, the homeplace of *ai* , Japanese indigo

Searching for the "mysterious blue" loved by Japanese people



Tokushima Prefecture

Tokushima-shi  
Yoshinogawa-shi  
Awa-shi  
Mima-shi  
Ishii-chō  
Kitajima-chō  
Aizumi-chō  
Itano-chō  
Kamiita-chō



# Discovering the relationship between Awa and Japanese indigo



**The Yoshino River**  
The photo shows a landscape seen in Mima-shi. During floods caused by typhoons, etc., the submerged bridge is hidden in the muddy water, showing the power of the violent Yoshino River during a flood.



A shop curtain dyed with Awa-Ai. The various color tones and textures are attractive.

## Flooding of the Yoshino River gave birth to Awa (former name of Tokushima) ai (Japanese indigo).

In the plains of the Yoshino River basin, known as "Awa-no-Kitakata" (the northern part of Awa), indigo production has long been practiced. In the Edo period (1603-1867), Awa indigo was called *hon-ai* (authentic Japanese indigo) because of the beauty of its dyed products, and was popular throughout Japan.

The key to high-quality indigo production lies in the majestic Yoshino River. The Yoshino River, one of the three most violent rivers in Japan, frequently overflowed and caused extensive damage in its basin. On the other hand, floods brought fertile soil and abundant underground water, making the "Awa-no-Kitakata" suitable for indigo cultivation.

### Indigo Production Process

#### ① Japanese indigo leaves



The leaf part that produces a blue component is used.

#### ② Sukumo



The Japanese indigo dye called *Sukumo* is produced by fermenting Japanese indigo leaves.

#### ③ Indigo dyeing



Using *Sukumo*, a master called *Some-Shi* makes the dye solution.



## A story of the homeplace of ai, Japanese indigo

This area is the "homeplace of ai, Japanese indigo", where the indigo dye material called *Sukumo* is still produced, using traditional methods, and where the Awa culture that has developed along with indigo has been carefully passed down.

Here, the activities of masters who make *Sukumo* and the castle-like *Ai-Yashiki* (indigo mansions) are reminiscent of Tokushima, which once thrived on indigo.

Furthermore, the distribution of indigo led to the development of various cultures such as performing arts, which has continued to the present day. Indigo in Tokushima is loved by people as *Hon-Ai* (authentic Japanese indigo) in the past and *Awa-Ai* (Awa indigo) today. Let's go on a trip to the homeplace of ai and learn about it.

# The landscape and climate of the homeplace of *ai*, Japanese indigo, tell us the history

## Visiting the historic places of *sukumo* production



### ①② The Tanaka Family Residence (*Ai-Yashiki*)

[MAP-①] 705, Aihata-takabatake, Ishi-chō, Myozai-gun, Tokushima

The stone walls are piled high to prevent flooding. The highest stone wall is 2.7 m high. Inside the house, an escape boat is hung from the ceiling to rescue people from the surrounding area in the event of a flood.

※A tour is available (Sundays and holidays only)

### ③ Mainakashima District [MAP-⑩]

Mishima-mai-nakashima, Anabuki-chō, Mima-shi, Tokushima

In this area, which is particularly prone to flood damage, high stone-walled houses, temples, and *jizo* (guardian deity for children) statues enshrined at high places can be seen everywhere.

## Coexistence with harsh nature

In northern part of Awa, large mansions erected on high stone walls can be seen everywhere across the rural scenery that spreads out over the plains. These castle-like buildings are called *Ai-Yashiki* (indigo mansion), which is one of the unique landscapes of Awa. *Ai-Yashiki* were not only the residences of *Ai-Shi* (indigo masters) and *Ai-Shōnin* (indigo merchants) who were responsible for the production, processing, and distribution of *Sukumo*, but also the factories where *Sukumo* was produced and the places where business negotiations were held.

People who made their living by indigo production had to live in a situation where floods frequently occurred. For this reason, such mansions are equipped with various measures. The sceneries created by *Ai-Yashiki* tell us their passion for indigo production and the lifestyle of the time.

## The magnificent *Ai-Yashiki* tells us the prosperity of those days.

*Ai-Shōnin*, who had become wealthy with indigo, competingly set up grand mansions to gain the trust of merchants from all over Japan who came to buy *Sukumo*, and to have business negotiations in their mansions. There were tea ceremony rooms and tatami rooms for entertaining the visitors, and it seems that the *Ai-Shōnin* spared no expense in their entertainment. This is the background that *Ai-Yashiki* is found here and there all over the region.



### The Okumura Family Residence (*Ai-Yashiki*) [MAP-⑨]

172, Tokumei Maezunishi, Aizumi-chō, Itano-gun, Tokushima

(Upper photo) A view of the pond in the *Ai-Yashiki*. The splendid garden shows the prosperity of those days.

(Right photo) A typical *Ai-Yashiki* has a main building in the center of the premises and a large courtyard in front of the main building. Then, *Nedoko*, a place for the production of indigo dye materials, is built around the courtyard.



More  
Spots of  
Indigo Dyeing

### "*Ai-no-Yakata*" Aizumi Town History Museum [MAP-⑥]

The whole Okumura Family Residence is used as an exhibition and resource center where visitors can learn more about the history and culture of Awa-*Ai*. Visitors can also see the inside of the *Ai-Yashiki*, including the *Nedoko* and tatami rooms, and experience the lifestyle of the *Ai-Shōnin* of the time. Indigo dyeing experience is also available.



### Statue of Inubushi Kyūsuke [MAP-⑨]

1, Matudani Yamanouchi-oku, Itano-chō, Itano-gun, Tokushima

A wooden statue of Inubushi Kyūsuke, a leading figure in the development of Awa-*Ai*, is enshrined at *Aizen-An* in Itano-chō.

Kyūsuke, who worked on improving the process of manufacturing *Sukumo* made of fermented indigo leaves, is still known by the nickname *Aikyū-san*.



# Feeling the techniques of producing *Sukumo*, passed down by *Ai-Shi*



2



3



4



▲Finished *Sukumo* product



1

① *Ai-Shi* checking the state of fermentation. The temperature and smell are barometers for the completion timing of *Sukumo*.  
 ② In June, indigo fields are all over green.  
 ③ Fermentation of the indigo leaves are advanced.  
 ④ Indigo leaves are piled up on *Nedoko*. For about 100 days, the fermentation process is promoted by repeatedly sprinkling water and mixing well.

## Traditional Japanese indigo production continues to this day

In Tokushima, the practice of *Sukumo* production, which has not changed since the Edo period, continues to the present day. In *Nedoko*, where *Sukumo* is processed, there are *Ai-Shi* (indigo masters) who are engaged in production of *Sukumo* with all their might. *Ai-Shi* repeats the process of spraying water on the indigo leaves to promote fermentation over and over again. The temperature of the fermenting indigo leaves exceeds 60°C, and the area of *Nedoko* is filled with steam and a pungent fermentation smell. Under such circumstances, *Ai-Shi* concentrates on their work. The work requires the wisdom of their predecessors and their own experience and intuition.



### "WAZA NO YAKATA" [MAP-6]

32-4, Izumidani, Harahigashi, Kamiita-chō, Itano-gun, Tokushima



Kamiita-chō has the largest area of indigo cultivation and the largest amount of *Sukumo* production and shipment in Japan. In "WAZA NO YAKATA", visitors can easily experience indigo dyeing with careful guidance. Try to create your own unique indigo-dyed T-shirts or handkerchiefs.

\*Reservations are required for the indigo dyeing experience.

### Mima Tourism Center [MAP-16]

45-1, Ōaza-Wakimachi, Wakimachi, Mima-shi, Tokushima

A tourist base facility located in a section of "udatsu-no-machinami" (The Historic Udatsu Area) in Wakimachi, Mima-shi. Visitors can experience indigo dyeing and Japanese umbrella making. Please enjoy locally produced foods in the adjoining coffee shop.



\*Reservations are required for the experience.

### Started from Japanese indigo to various crops



◀ Spring Carrots

The landscape of northern land of Awa, once covered with indigo plants, is changing with the times. After the decline of Japanese indigo cultivation, sericulture flourished and many fields were converted to mulberry fields. Today, the area is one of the leading horticultural crop areas, growing spring carrots, pears, white melons, broccoli, and other crops that boast the highest shipment volume in Japan. In addition, the peat and sandy soil created by the many changes in the flow



path of the Yoshino River are used to grow lotus root and sweet potatoes, and even today, you can see that the northern part of Awa reaps the benefits of the Yoshino River.

(Upper photo) Lotus root field (Lower photo) Carrot field

# Distribution and Prosperity of Awa-Ai Enjoying the performing arts fostered by *Ai-Shōnin*

## Awa, a "place of performing arts" nurtured by *Ai-Shōnin*

Awa indigo expanded its sales channels throughout Japan, and *Ai-Shōnin* also became active on a national scale. *Ai-Shōnin* were the key players of cultural exchange with other parts of Japan and influenced various cultures in Tokushima. *Awa-Odori* dance, which is synonymous with Tokushima, also gives us a sense of the *Ai-Shōnin* of Awa who were actively traveling across the country.



Awa *Ai-Shōnin* loved performing arts and was generous with their money. In those days, they frequently invited puppet troupes from Awaji and enjoyed their puppet shows. From this point on, "deko" (wooden doll) culture, such as "*Awa-ningyo-joruri*" (puppet show with dramatic recitation to music), started flourishing.



① **Awa-Odori dance** The rhythm of *Awa-Odori* dance is said to have something in common with "*Rokucho*" of Amami Yaeyama, "*Kachaasi*" of Okinawa, "*Haiya-bushi*" of Kyushu, and "*Yassa-bushi*" of Hiroshima. ② "**Awa-ningyo-joruri**" A puppet play performed by three parties: *joruri* recitator, *shamisen* (Japanese banjo) player, and puppeteers. Since many of the performances were held outdoors, large, shiny puppets are used, and the play is performed with a dynamic gesture known as "*Awa-no-te*". Today, nearly 40 *ningyo-za* (puppet troupes) are still active. ③ "**Awa-Deko Sanbasō-Mawashi**" A blessing performing art in which two wooden boxes are filled with "*Sanbaso*" and "*Ebisu*" dolls to celebrate people's good health and business prosperity. Even today, the performers visit nearly 1,000 houses on New Year's Day.



### Awaodori Kaikan [MAP-①]

① 2-20, Shinnmachibashi, Tokushima-shi, Tokushima



A facility where you can enjoy *Awa-Odori* dance throughout the year. Performances are held daily, and visitors can dance together with the dancers. There is also a museum of *Awa-Odori* dance and a shop selling local products in the building.

### Tokushima Prefectural Awa Jūrōbē Yashiki [MAP-②]

② 184, Miyajima Motoura, Kawauchi-chō, Tokushima-shi, Tokushima



A facility where visitors can watch *Awa-ningyo-joruri*. In addition to regular daily performances, special performances of various programs are held. There is also an exhibition on the history of *Awa-ningyo-joruri*.

### The Yoshida Family Residence

[MAP-③]  
③ 53, Ōaza-Wakimachi, Wakimachi, Mima-shi, Tokushima

This is the residence of an *Ai-Shōnin* located in The Historic Udatsu Area. It is open to the public, and visitors can feel the splendid architectural style and the lifestyle of the *Ai-Shōnin* of the past. There is also a souvenir store and a coffee shop adjacent to the residence.



### The Historic Udatsu Area

[MAP-④]  
④ 2, Ōaza-Wakimachi, Wakimachi, Mima-shi, Tokushima



At the top of "*Udatsu*" are roof tiles with an ogre's mask glaring down. Since it cost a considerable amount of money to build "*Udatsu*", people who could not succeed in life came to be called "*udatsu-ga-agaranai*" (those who can't build *Udatsu*).



### The Historic Udatsu Area remaining in an indigo gathering place

In Minamimachi, Wakimachi, Mima-shi, which was responsible for the distribution of Japanese indigo, The Historic Udatsu Area built by *Ai-Shōnin* still remain. "*Udatsu*" were originally firewalls built to prevent the spread of fire from neighboring houses. However, it gradually took on a more decorative meaning to show off one's honor and wealth, and *Ai-Shōnin* began to compete with each other to build luxurious "*Udatsu*". The houses of wealthy merchants with "*Udatsu*" on their roofs reveal the prosperous lifestyles of the time.

## Mima-shi



Mima Tourism Center [MAP-16]

45-1, Ōaza-Wakimachi, Wakimachi, Mima-shi, Tokushima

☎ 080-2976-5532



### Gourmet Mimakara

The raw material is "Mimakara green chili pepper", which has long been cultivated in Mima region. Extremely spicy condiment flavored with soy sauce, dried bonito flakes, etc.



### Anabuki Sta [MAP-17]

5-1, Anabuki Iwade, Anabuki-chō, Mima-shi, Tokushima

There is an information desk about Awa-The Home of "Ai" on the premises.

## Awa-shi

### Awa City Donari Historical Museum [MAP-19]

46-1, Donari maruyama, Donari-chō, Awa-shi, Tokushima



Local historical documents, including the Tezuka Family documents, which are constituent cultural properties, are exhibited.

☎ 088-695-5038



### Gourmet

### Tarai Udon (noodles in a tub)

A local dish of Donari-chō, Awa-shi. Freshly boiled noodles in a tub.

# Japan Heritage Map of the Homeplace of *Ai*, Japanese indigo

## Yoshinogawa-shi



### Nishioe Hachiman Shrine [MAP-18]

155-1, Nishi-Oe Dannohara, Kamojima-chō, Yoshinogawa-shi, Tokushima

The guardian dogs, "Ryōbu-Torii" (two-part shrine gate), and arched bridge remind us of *Ai-Shōnin* who contributed to the development of the region.

### Gourmet Ume-shu (plum wine)

Misato District was the first district in Japan to be designated as a "special district for plum wine". The "ume-shu" (plum wine) is made from various local varieties of "ume" (plum) fruit.



### Souvenirs Misato Commercial Market



463-3, Misato Touge, Yoshinogawa-shi, Tokushima

Please enjoy the superb products of Misato produced in the wonderful nature where fireflies inhabit.

## Ishii-chō



### The Tanaka Family Residence [MAP-11]

705, Aihata Takabatake, Ishi-chō, Myozai-gun, Tokushima

### Gourmet Fuji-Yasai (wisteria colored vegetables)

Vegetables whose color is that of wisteria, the flower of Ishii Town.



### Gourmet

### German-style additive-free ham & sausage



The owner learned the production method in Germany, the homeplace of ham & sausage, to reproduce the authentic taste.

☎ 088-637-4567  
(Natural Ham Craftsman Shop, LiebeFrau)



Awa-shi  
Awa City Donari Historical Museum 19

The Historic Udatsu Area 11 12 The Yoshida Family Residence 16 Mima Tourism Center 10 17  
Mainakashima District Anabuki Sta. Anabuki Kawata Yamase Gaku Awa-Kawashima  
Oshima Awa-Yamakawa Nishi-Oe  
Mima-shi Yoshinogawa-shi  
4 The Wariishi Family Residence 6 The Ai-Yashiki of Suwa, Yamakawa-chō 18 Nishi-Oe

## Kamiita-chō



### WAZA NO YAKATA [MAP-⑩]

⑩ 32-4, Izumidanihara Higashi, Kamiita-chō, Itano-gun, Tokushima  
☎ 088-637-6555



#### Gourmet

### Dried Persimmon Chips

Dried persimmon chips made by low-temperature drying of persimmons produced in Kamiita-chō.

## Itano-chō



### "Bunka-no-Yakata" in Itano-chō [MAP-⑪]

⑪ 13-1 Inubushi Higashidani, Itano-chō, Itano-gun, Tokushima  
☎ 088-672-5888  
Japanese indigo in Itano-chō is exhibited at the entrance of the facility.

#### Gourmet

### Tsukemono-Zamurai Itanosuke

Itano-chō's specialty "pickles" produced by the local Young Entrepreneurs Group of Chamber of Commerce and Industry.



#### Souvenirs

### Michi-no-Eki Itano

Opened in April 2021. In addition to direct sales shops and restaurants, a dog run and bicycle rental facilities are available.



⑫ 39-5 Nakatesaki, Kawabata, Itano-chō Itano-gun, Tokushima

## Aizumi-chō



### "Ai-no-Yakata" Aizumi Town History Museum [MAP-⑬]

⑬ 172 Tokumei Maezunishi, Aizumi-chō, Itano-gun, Tokushima  
☎ 088-692-6317

### Exhibition Room, Historic Site of Shōzui Castle Ruins [MAP-⑭]

⑭ Aza-Higashikatuchi Shōzui, Aizumi-chō, Itano-gun, Tokushima

Shōzui is also known as the birthplace of Awa-Ai. You can learn about its history.

☎ 088-641-3466

#### Gourmet

### Aizumi Green Onion

An original product that Aizumi farmers are proud of. Whether baked or boiled, the taste is the best.



☎ 088-637-3120

(Industrial Support Office, Construction Industry Division)



## Tokushima-shi



### Tokushima Prefectural Awa Jūrōbē Yashiki [MAP-⑮]

☎ 088-665-2202

⑮ 184, Miyajima Motoura, Kawauchi-chō, Tokushima-shi, Tokushima

#### Gourmet

### Taki-no-Yakimochi (baked rice cake)

*Yakimochi* (baked rice cake) offered by tea shops at Ootaki-san Jimyō-in temple, which is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Tokushima, a castle town that thrived on indigo.



### Awaodori Kaikan [MAP-⑯]

⑯ 2-20, Shinnmachibashi, Tokushima-shi, Tokushima

☎ 088-611-1611

#### Souvenirs

### Tokushima City Industrial Support Exchange Center

⑰ 1F&9F Amico Building, 1-24, Motomachi, Tokushima-shi, Tokushima

Exhibits and Sells locally produced goods such as indigo-dyed products and woodworks.



## Kitajima-chō



### Kitajima-chō Town Library & Sosei Hall [MAP-⑱]

⑱ 91, Minamikoden, Shinkirai, Kitajima-chō, Itano-gun, Tokushima

Historical documents and folk tools are displayed in the Cultural Resource Center.

☎ 088-698-1100

#### Gourmet

### Sudachi monaka

*Monaka* (bean-jam-filled wafers) made with *sudachi* (a type of citrus fruit) produced in Tokushima Prefecture.

☎ shogetsudō honten Facebook



#### Gourmet

### kitajima'am

Chocolate-flavored sweets handmade from the local specialty, *Naruto-Kintoki* sweet potatoes.

☎ 088-698-5279 (nakano farm)

# Access to Tokushima

## By Highway Bus

|         |               |                               |
|---------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| Osaka   | About 2.5hrs. | In front of JR Tokushima Sta. |
| Kobe    | About 2hrs.   |                               |
| Okayama | About 2.5hrs. |                               |

## By Airplane

|         |                  |                   |
|---------|------------------|-------------------|
| Haneda  | About 1hr.20min. | Takamatsu Airport |
| Fukuoka | About 1hr.15min. | Tokushima Airport |
|         | About 1hr.       |                   |

## By Car

|                   |               |              |
|-------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Kurashiki JCT     | About 2hrs.   | Tokushima IC |
| Takamatsu-Chuo IC | About 1hr.    |              |
| Kochi IC          | About 2hrs.   |              |
| Matsuyama IC      | About 2.5hrs. |              |

## By Train

|            |                 |                      |         |                 |              |                   |
|------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Tokyo      | Shinkansen      | About 3hrs. 20min.   | Okayama | Limited express | About 2 hrs. | JR Tokushima Sta. |
| Nagoya     | Shinkansen      | About 1hr.40min.     |         |                 |              |                   |
| Shin-Osaka | Shinkansen      | About 45min.         |         |                 |              |                   |
| Hakata     | Shinkansen      | About 1hr.40min.     |         |                 |              |                   |
| Takamatsu  | Limited express | About 1hr.and 40min. |         |                 |              |                   |



### Inquiries about constituent cultural properties, etc.

- Social Education Division, Tokushima City Board of Education ----- ☎088-621-5418
- Lifelong Learning Division, Yoshinogawa Board of Education ----- ☎0883-22-2271
- Social Education Division, Awa City Board of Education ----- ☎0883-36-8743
- Community Learning Promotion Division, Mima City Board of Education ----- ☎0883-52-8011
- Social Education Section, Ishii Town Board of Education ----- ☎088-674-7505
- Kitajima Town Board of Education ----- ☎088-698-9812
- Social Education Division, Aizumi Town Board of Education ----- ☎088-637-3128
- Itano Town Board of Education ----- ☎088-672-5888
- Kamita Town Board of Education ----- ☎088-694-6814

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## Smart Guide

Audio guides for Japanese Heritage Constituent Cultural Properties and contents such as VRCGs are available.

Please use your smartphone or tablet to access.



Smart Guide TOP



Voice Guide TOP

#### <Cautions and Disclaimers>

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- ・ Smart Guide can be connected via the Internet. Since the packet communication charges required for the Internet connection are on the user, a packet flat-rate service is recommended.
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- ・ The Service may not be available depending on the specifications of the user's smartphone or tablet.
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## A trip to Awa, the Homeplace of ai, Japanese indigo

■ For inquiries about this pamphlet, please contact Promotion Council for “Ai no Furusato Awa(Awa-the home of Ai)”

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