

The sato-numa of Tatebayashi City, Gunma Prefecture

Sato-numa (cultivated marshes) - Tatebayashi's marshland culture, refined and perfected by its "prayerful", "fruitful", and "guardian" marshes

In Tatebayashi, which offers a panorama of the mountains of Kanto, you can encounter many marshes even today. The marshes of Tatebayashi are located close to villages, and they have a profound connection to the daily lives of the local inhabitants, in the same way that the cultivated mountain slopes near human settlements do. People have made use of the land surrounding these "sato-numa," or cultivated marshes, enabling the conservation of favorable environments and the development of culture. Each one of Tatebayashi's sato-numa has its own unique characteristics. If we explore their history, we can say that Morinji Marsh, where pristine sato-numa scenery and faith coexist, is **"the prayerful marsh"**; Tatara Marsh, the riches of which sustained the lives of local residents, is **"the fruitful marsh"**; and Jo Marsh, which long guarded Tatebayashi Castle and a scenic area famous for azaleas, is **"the guardian marsh."** If you make your way to Tatebayashi's sato-

numa, you can savor and experience Tatebayashi's marshland culture, refined and perfected by each of the marshes.

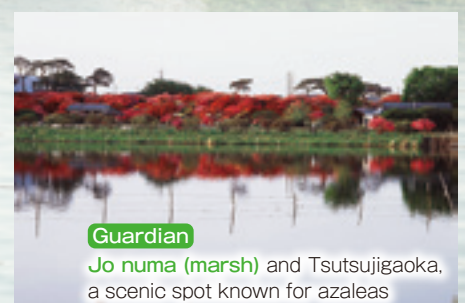
Sato-numa ("cultivated marshes")

In ancient times, in the poetry of the Man'yoshu, sato-numa were described as "hidden marshes"; surrounded by reeds, they had a solitary appearance, and were sacred places from which people kept their distance. However, little by little, as people began to approach and gather around marshes, these became a part of their daily lives, producing ways of making a living and culture which coexisted with the marshes. These became sato-numa, cultivated marshes. Sato-numa are valuable national assets which pass down to the present a culture of daily life in which people lived in harmony with nature. The conversion of land into new rice fields and the process of modernization are overtaking marshes around the country, causing them to disappear; however, in Tatebayashi, you can see these rare sato-numa, each with their individual characteristics refined over the ages.

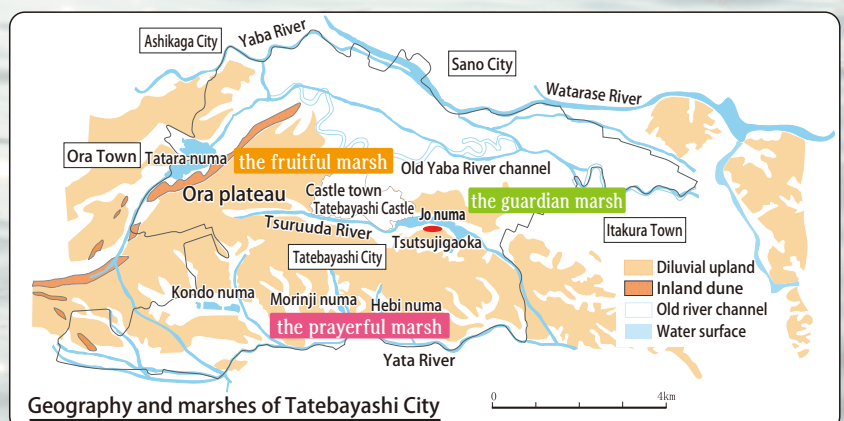
Prayerful
Morinji numa (marsh) and marshy lowland



Fruitful
Tatara numa (marsh) with
Mt. Fuji in the distance



Guardian
Jo numa (marsh) and Tsutsujigaoka,
a scenic spot known for azaleas



Prayerful marsh

1 Morinji numa



Morinji Marsh, which still retains its archetypal sato-numa scenery

- ❖ Once upon a time, wetlands and bogs lined rivers and marshes, and lowland forests could be seen around them. Aquatic animals and insects such as carp, crucian carp, and dragonflies, and aquatic and wetland plants such including water chestnut and duckweed inhabited marshes and wetlands, while the lowland forests surrounding the marshes were home to raccoon dogs, snakes, wild birds, and more. These kinds of waterfront natural environment have almost disappeared from urban areas on the plains due to land development. Although the surrounding area has become residential, this archetypal scenery has been preserved at Morinji Marsh. Rare plant species such as Japanese spatterdock, water iris, and euphorbia adenochlora inhabit the banks of the marsh, making this a precious lowland wetland which is one of only a few in the whole Kanto region.
- ❖ Why can this archetypal scenery still be found at Morinji Marsh? It is thanks to the presence of Morinji, an ancient temple founded 600 years ago. Due to the appearance of "places of prayer," focal points for devotion in the Soto school of Buddhism, on the banks of the marsh, people's sense of awe towards nature was heightened, and the tranquility of this "prayerful marsh" was passed down through the ages. Over time, people came to call this marsh "Morinji Marsh." The traditional tale Bunbuku Chagama ("The Magic Tea-kettle") about a raccoon-dog, which was handed down at the temple, still tells us in a humorous way about the connections between humans and animals: the temple priest is an incarnation of the raccoon-dog, and the raccoon-dog changes himself into a tea-kettle.
- ❖ Morinji Temple, which has a thatched main hall and front gate, has made use of the reeds from the marsh each time its roofs are rethatched. By cutting the reeds which grow in abundance, people preserve the marsh's ecosystem: the coexistence between humans and Morinji Marsh has been maintained due to its nature as a sato-numa. Even today, the temple, with its steady stream of worshippers, and the marsh, a habitat for rare animals and plants, depend on one another.



2 Morinji Temple's main gate



4 The Horiku-cho "Dondo-Yaki" (bonfire)

Tatara Marsh, which underpinned Tatebayashi's role as the "wheat capital"

- ❖ Pine woods stretch along the banks of Tatara Marsh. These woods bear traces of steelmaking in ancient times, the origin of the name "tatara," and the history of tree plantation and irrigation ditch construction by Kyuhaku Ooya, who developed the area 500 years ago. Tatara Marsh was developed into a sato-numa which could help to provide a livelihood for local residents.
- ❖ The irrigation of fields with water from the marsh allowed double-cropping of rice and wheat. In the Edo Period, Tatebayashi became a wheat-producing area, with wheat flour sent as a gift from the Tatebayashi domain to the shogun's household. During the Meiji Period, modern flour-milling and brewing industries flourished thanks to this wheat, and rakugan confectioneries, udon noodles, and soy sauce made from wheat became the most famous products of Tatebayashi, which had come to be known as the "wheat capital." The water from the sato-numa and the riches of the land turned Tatara Marsh into "the fruitful marsh," which has indeed borne fruit in the prosperity of Tatebayashi's food industries today.
- ❖ "The fruitful marsh" also helped to sustain people's livelihoods as a place for fishing, giving rise to a unique food culture making full use of the bounty of the marsh in dishes such as catfish tempura, carp sashimi, and candied boiled crucian carp. These various flavors, cultivated over many years, were a valuable source of protein for the area's residents, and are still deeply rooted in local life as food for guests or to serve on special occasions.



12 Freshwater fish eateries



8 The Tomb of Ooya Kyuhaku



Fruitful marsh

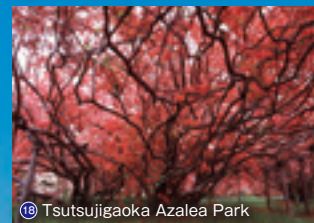
5 Tatara numa

Jo Marsh, which guarded Tatebayashi Castle and Tsutsujigasaki for many years

- ❖ Tatebayashi Castle was built 550 years ago, with Jo Marsh, which is long and thin, stretching from east to west, and has a circumference of 5 km, making it a natural stronghold. Jo Marsh plays the role of an outer moat surrounding the plateau on which Tatebayashi Castle is built, and so acted as a “guardian marsh” for the shoguns. In modern times, this impregnable castle, guarded by the marsh, became one of key strongholds protecting Edo as the castle of Yasumasa Sakakibara, one of the “Four Guardian Kings” of the Tokugawa clan, and of the fifth shogun, Tsunayoshi Tokugawa. A town grew up around the castle to protect it further, and water was channeled into a moat which surrounded the area in addition to earthworks.
- ❖ Two legends grew up around the “guardian marsh.” One was the legend of the dragon god. In order to keep people away, Jo Marsh became the home of the dragon god, the lord of the marsh, and a well which tells of this legend can still be found in the castle town. The other is the azalea legend. Around 400 years ago, the dragon god fell in love at first sight with a woman named Otsuji, who jumped into Jo Marsh and drowned herself. In their grief, the local residents planted azalea (“tsutsuji”) on high ground overlooking the marsh, and called this place Tsutsujigasaki (“Azalea Cape”). Successive lords of Tatebayashi Castle continued to plant azaleas there, creating a majestic stroll garden of the type popularized by the daimyo with the high ground on which azaleas bloomed in profusion being used as a hill and Jo Marsh as a pond. Tsutsujigasaki, which was protected by the lords of the castle, came to be known as “flower mountain,” and was opened up to local residents during the season when the flowers bloomed.
- ❖ The modernization which took place after the Meiji Restoration transformed the “guardian marsh”. Jo Marsh, where fishing was not permitted in the Edo Period and from which people were kept away, was opened up to the local residents. It was used for business activities such as fishing, the reclamation of land for rice fields, and ferry services, beginning its history as a sato-numa.



15 The ruins of Tatebayashi Castle



18 Tsutsujigaoka Azalea Park

Guardian marsh 13 Jo numa

Sato-numa culture of hospitality

Tatebayashi's marshside culture, honed to become a “spirit of hospitality”

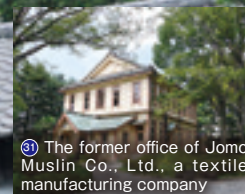
- ❖ The transformation of the “guardian marsh” due to modernization also brought great change to Tsutsujigasaki, a place in which Jo Marsh and the surrounding landscape came together as one. Tsutsujigasaki, which had been protected by the lord of the castle up to that point, was reborn as a park, “Tsutsujigaoka,” through the efforts of town and village residents. The azaleas planted 400 years earlier became precious ancient trees, and it was given a new lease of life as a scenic spot. A culture of welcome for the many tourists who visited the marsh grew up on its shores, and a “spirit of hospitality” blossomed.
- ❖ The flour milling, soy sauce manufacturing, weaving, and other companies which had prospered in the castle town due to modernization used Tsutsujigaoka as a place to entertain internal and external guests. The opening of the Tobu Line and the publication of a travel guide written by the literary giant Katai Tayama, who came from Tatebayashi, attracted many people to Tsutsujigaoka and Morinji Temple, on the banks of the marshes. Furthermore, the most famous local products, such as rakugan confectioneries and udon noodles, which depended on the bounty of the “fruitful marsh”, gained widespread recognition as simple and convenient souvenirs of Tatebayashi, and a “spirit of hospitality” took root which made the most of the unique characteristics of the sato-numa.
- ❖ If you stand for a while on the banks of Tatebayashi's marshes, you will get a view of Mount Akagi, the Nikko mountain range, and, in the distance, Mount Tsukuba and Mount Fuji. Tatebayashi's sato-numa, “the prayerful marsh,” “the fruitful marsh,” and “the guardian marsh,” each have their own unique characteristics and gave birth to diverse cultures. These characteristics were refined into a “spirit of hospitality” from the modernization of the Meiji Period onwards, and continue to be handed down even today as Tatebayashi's marshside culture.



27 Former villa of the Akimoto family



28 Shoda Memorial Museum



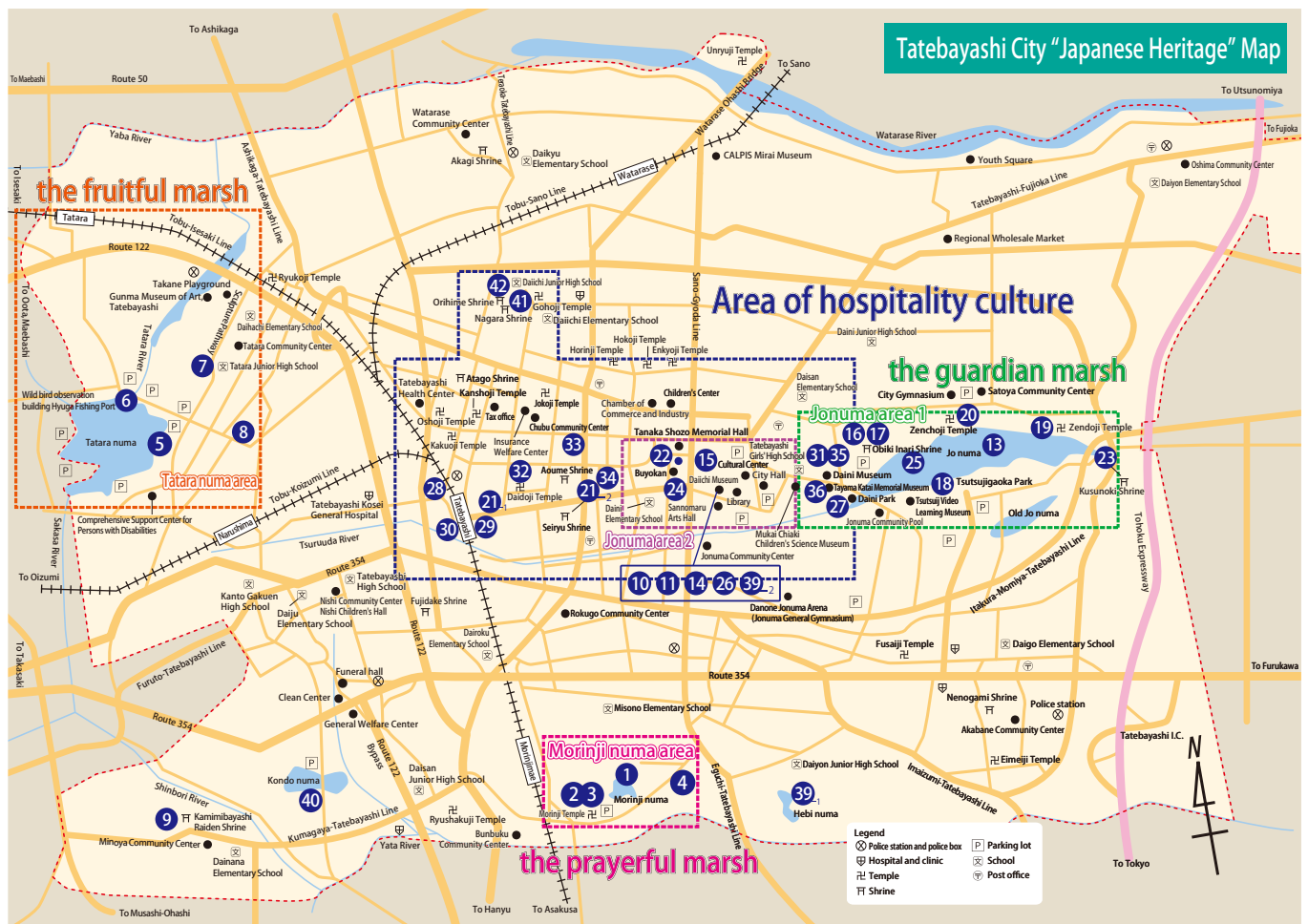
31 The former office of Jomo Muslin Co., Ltd., a textile manufacturing company



30 Nisshin Milling Museum



32 Kezuka Memorial Hall



You can eat 12, 37, and 38, which are not marked on the general map, at restaurants within the city.

No.	Name
1	Moringi numa (marsh) and marshy lowland
2	Moringi Temple [Bunbuku Chagama (teapot)]
3	Yew plum pine at Moringi
4	The Horiku-cho "Dondo-Yaki" (bonfire)
5	Tatara numa (marsh)
6	Tatara numa ruins (slag)
7	Ancient inland dune
8	The Tomb of Ooya Kyuhaku
9	"Sasara," the lion and sword dance in Kamimibayashi (traditional culture)
10	Historical "Hounai keikai zushi" map, 1855
11	Fishing gear and Hinata boats
12	Freshwater fish eateries (catfish, carp, crucian carp and eel dishes)
13	Jo numa (marsh)
14	"Jomo Tatebayashi Jo numa shosan suisouzu" scroll of aquatic plants, 1845
15	The ruins of Tatebayashi Castle ["Sannomaru Dobashimon" (gate)/Monument for the Cultivated Field at Jo numa]
16	Obiki Inari Shrine
17	The "Ema" wooden votive plaque of Tatebayashi Castle
18	Tsutsujigaoka Azalea Park
19	Zendoji Temple (The Tomb of Sakakibara Yasumasa)
20	Zenchoji Temple (The Tomb of Shoshitsuinden/The Tombs of Otsuji and Matsujo)
21	The "Tatsu no I" and "Seiryu no Ido" wells
22	"Kyu Tatebayashi Hanshi Jyutaku," the residence of the former feudal retainers
23	"Koseki Araizeki," the historic site of the Wash Dam incident

No.	Name
24	Chikubushima Shrine
25	The "Jo numa" ferries
26	"Oura Kouen Tsutsujigaoka," painting by Komuro Suion (famous painter from Tatebayashi)
27	Former villa of the Akimoto family
28	Former store and the main house of the founder of Shoda Shoyu Co., Ltd. (Shoda Memorial Museum)
29	Tatebayashi Station of Tobu Railway Co., Ltd.
30	The founding Tatebayashi factory office of the Nisshin Seifun Group, Inc., Ltd. (Nisshin Milling Museum)
31	The former office of Jomo Muslin Co., Ltd., a textile manufacturing company
32	The "Bunbuku Shuzo" store of the sake brewing company (Kazuka Memorial Hall)
33	The former building of Tatebayashi Shinkin Bank (Civic Center branch office)
34	The former office building of "Tatebayashi Nigyo Kenban Kumiai," the union for restaurants and geisha
35	The residence of author Tayama Katai
36	Tayama Katai Literature Museum (documents about Tayama Katai)
37	Udon noodles in Tatebayashi
38	"Rakugan," dry confection
39	Hebi numa (marsh) and Archeological Finds of the Mabori Ruins
40	Kondo numa (marsh) - Horiageta (rice paddies formed by dredging earth from the bottom of shallow marshes and wetlands)
41	Nagara Shrine and Tatebayashi Castle Town's Outer Bailey
42	Orihime Shrine and Tatebayashi Tsumugi (pongee)

