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Special Issue

Evolving with Art The Challenges of Crafting Awa Washi

Deepen

Report on Handmade Washi-Making Workshop
Learning to Co-Exist With Nature

Special Feature

Looking Back on 100 Years of History
in the Paper Industry

TSUNAGU is a public relations magazine published by KPP GROUP HOLDINGS CO., LTD. An exploration in rediscovering a fascination with paper, we link paper and culture, paper and business, and paper and people.

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Evolving with Art The Challenges of Crafting Awa Washi

Washi, or Japanese paper, is a traditional craft that enriches our lives and one in which Japan takes great pride. While demand for *washi* products has fallen as life in Japan has Westernized, these products are still highly valued around the world for their durability and beautiful textures, and people are once again appreciating *washi* for its cultural value, as well. Awagami Factory in Tokushima Prefecture produces a brand of *washi* that preserves the traditions of Awa Washi, a specialty of the region, while also innovating with unique products that meet the needs of today. Awagami Factory has discovered new demand from a variety of sources, and communicates the appeal of Awa Washi, attracting attention from countries around the world. At the heart of this approach is the desire to carry the strong local *washi* culture into the future.

Washi culture will not survive if it is simply preserved as a traditional craft. So it is important to respect the essential character of *washi*, while making sure it evolves.

Awagami
Factory



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①③*Tamesuki*, a process suited to crafting thick sheets of *washi* paper. ②After a dehydrator removes water, single sheets of paper are hung on a drying board to fully dry. ④*Washi* fibers placed in buckets of water are inspected and buds, as well as damaged, irregular, discolored sections of the fibers, are removed in a process called *chiritori*. ⑤Despite being mechanized, the traditional *nagashisuki* method is still in use, making mass production possible.

Flowing west to east through Tokushima, the Yoshino River crosses the Shikoku mountains from its source in central Shikoku. Along with the Tone River and Chikugo River, the Yoshino River is one of Japan’s three mightiest rivers, boasting a great abundance of water. As such, the water transportation industry developed here, primarily to ship supplies to the Kansai region, and various manufacturing techniques were refined in areas along the river.

“*Kozo* (paper mulberry) and *mitsumata* (Oriental paper bush) used to grow in the area of the Shikoku mountains, and the *gampi* shrub also grows well in the soil of the Asan mountain range. The land here is blessed with the plants, and the clean Yoshino River

water was ideal for making *washi*, so in this sense it was only natural that it came to be a papermaking region.” So says Shigeyuki Nakajima, representative of the Fuji Paper Mills Cooperative Association, the parent company of Awagami Factory.

“There is a mountain called Mt. Koutsusan, which is a well-known symbol of the community here in Yamakawa-cho. Its other name is Mt. Yuuma. The fact that *yu* refers to *kaji* (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), which was often identified as *kozo* paper mulberry, is another indication that *washi* papermaking is an industry with a long history in this region.”

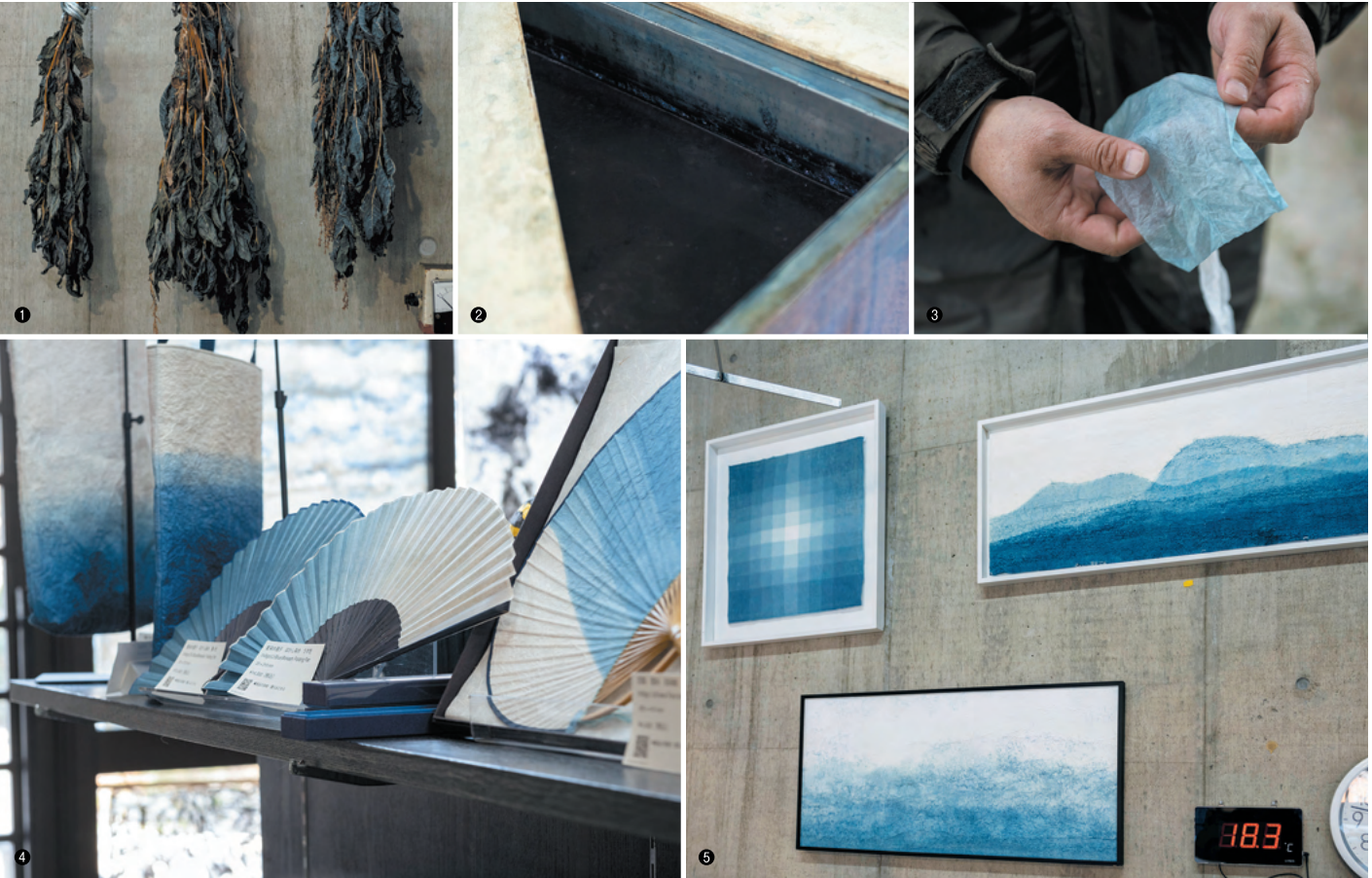
Awa Washi is made in Yamakawa-cho in Yoshinogawa City, located along the middle reaches of the Yoshino River.

The historical town dates back some 1,300 years. This was when the Inbe clan, which served the imperial court of Japan, entered the country of Awa, and the Awa-Inbe group of Inbe craftsmen began to cultivate hemp and *kozo*. The fact that this is mentioned in the *Kogo Shui*, the historical record of the Inbe clan compiled in 807, suggests that *washi* production had already begun by the Nara period (710–794).

Made using the traditional *washi* techniques of *nagashisuki* (papermaking in flowing water) and *tamesuki* (papermaking in stored water), Awa Washi is a popular paper well known across Japan for its strength and water resistance, as well as for its simple texture and supple softness. At the height of the Meiji era

(1868–1912), there were over 500 Awa Washi manufacturers along the Yoshino River. However, after World War II as demand for traditional paper gradually declined with the Westernization of life in Japan, many *washi* manufacturers went out of business. The Fujimori family, the sole remaining *washi*-making family, founded the Fuji Paper Mills Cooperative Association, which joined forces with the Awa Handmade Washi Commercial and Industrial Association, a group of handmade *washi* craftspeople, and the Hall of Awa Japanese Handmade Paper, a facility that aims to educate and pass on Awa Washi traditions. Together, the three entities developed the Awagami Factory brand of Awa Washi.

Nakajima explains, “In order to keep the traditions of Awa Washi



①Awa Ai indigo leaves, pictured here, are dried, then sprinkled with water to ferment. The resulting *sukumo* is used to make the indigo dye. ②The *sukumo* is made into the indigo-dyeing solution. ③When exposed to air, the color changes to blue and as the *washi* is rinsed, its true color becomes more pronounced. ④The Hall of Awa Japanese Handmade Paper shop sells fans, stationery and other items made of indigo-dyed *washi*. ⑤Art panels made with indigo-dyed *washi*.

alive, we have continued to produce *washi* that meets the needs of our customers. We’ve said yes to requests that seemed impossible and developed the new techniques we needed through a process of trial and error. There are still dozens of *washi* producers in other areas, like Echizen and Mino, affording them the benefit of specialization. For example, Company A might focus on creating *washi for shoji* sliding doors, while Company B might specialize in calligraphy papers. However, as the sole producers of Awa Washi, we’ve had to adapt to survive. This has meant accommodating a broad range of requests and producing *washi* for a variety of applications.”

Today, Awagami Factory produces and sells a wide variety of products that highlight the texture and design of *washi* paper.

One of these is Aizome Washi, *washi* paper dyed with indigo, another traditional Tokushima Prefecture industry. The indigo produced in Tokushima Prefecture is called Awa Ai and is shipped across Japan, gaining such renown that it is said “when you think of indigo, you think of Awa.” Yamakawa-cho in Yoshinogawa City, where Awagami Factory is located, is home to many indigo growers, and Awa Washi dyed with Awa indigo had been produced in the past. With the widespread use of chemical dyes, however, the Aizome Washi traditions had long died out. But then Minoru Fujimori, the previous Awagami Factory paper master, and his wife, Tsune, made the decision to revive Aizome Washi. After learning the indigo-dyeing technique from the ground up, the two

set out to improve the papermaking and dyeing methods. The result is Awa Washi with a beautifully nuanced blue coloration.

“No matter how long and strong the *washi* fibers, they will dissolve and fall apart when soaked in an alkaline dye. So they applied konjac paste to both sides of the *washi* paper to make it water resistant,” says Nakajima.

Washi is submerged in a solution made from *sukumo* (fresh Awa indigo leaves that are dried and fermented) and has a brown look at the moment it emerges. Once rinsed and exposed to air, however, the paper oxidizes and quickly develops an indigo color. Color gradations are achieved by adjusting the length and frequency of dyeing, and the patterns created by layering colors



Awagami Factory is also experimenting with upcycling by, for example, making *washi* incorporating scraps generated in the sneaker manufacturing process.

activities, Awagami Factory has connected with painters, sculptors artists, photographers, printmakers and other artists. With an increasing number of requests from these artists for original *washi* products, Awagami works with them to develop new papermaking techniques to craft the *washi* suitable for the pieces they wish to create.

“There is a strong preference outside of Japan for thicker *washi*, and we have also received requests for large sheets of *washi* over five meters long. At some point, while we were working to fill these requests, Awa Washi came to be known as a brand that can provide large, thick sheets of *washi* for artwork,” explains Nakajima.

Awagami Factory not only provides technical guidance and assistance on how to create pieces, but also offers a fully equipped workshop for artists to use to create artwork. Awagami has set up a lab furnished with a papermaking area, a printmaking studio, and a large-scale inkjet printer to support creative activities.

“In addition, the Awagami International Miniature Print Exhibition is held every two years to encourage the internationalization of handmade *washi* and to provide an opportunity for artists to showcase their work. Only artwork that uses *washi* paper is eligible for the competition. The sixth exhibition, held last year, attracted 1,052 applicants from countries all over the world, with a total of 1,587 submissions,” says Nakajima with a



①Lab equipped with letterpress and printmaking equipment ②The lab offers a full array of equipment for printing digital photo data on washi paper with inkjet printing. Prints on *washi* paper can be ordered online. ③④The Inbe Art Space gallery hosts the Awagami International Miniature Print Exhibition. ⑤Playful artworks made with indigo-dyed *washi* are also on display.

combine with the textural quality of the Awa Washi for a beauty of great depth.

Creating new demand for Awagami Factory paper was crucial if the area was to continue as a *washi* production center. To develop new sales channels, they turned their attention to overseas markets.

“*Washi* has always been popular overseas as high-quality paper and has been exported to many countries since the Taisho era (1912–1926). But Japanese paper goes through a number of distributors before it reaches foreign retailers, so customers do not know the paper’s origin or producer. This is why we decided to launch the Awagami Factory brand and expand sales channels on our own. To do that, we have focused on educating people on

the appeal of handmade *washi*. I have travelled overseas to teach people how to make *washi*, but now we welcome people who want to learn about *washi* at the factory and hold week-long workshops every year to teach the entire process for handmade *washi*. About 70 to 80% of the participants come from outside Japan, including museum curators who use *washi* for restorations and teachers who teach printmaking at art school. As a result overseas distribution has gradually increased. Now we have customers in 60 countries,” explains Nakajima.

Making connections with artists working within and outside of Japan was another important aspect of establishing Awa Washi as a brand. Through overseas workshops and ongoing educational

smile.

Awagami Factory also incorporates new technologies to produce unique *washi* paper and products that meet today’s needs, such as *washi* for inkjet printing, interior décor *washi* like wallpaper and art panels, and premium design lifestyle goods. As Nakajima points out, “Traditional crafts will not survive if they are simply preserved as is.” Awagami Factory continues to develop new *washi* that blends tradition and innovation, introducing even more *washi* possibilities to the world.



①Exhibitions of postcards designed by elementary school students and other events that contribute to the local community are held on the second floor of the Hall of Awa Japanese Handmade Paper. ②③A reproduction of the Hiroshige Utagawa *ukiyo-e* woodblock print depicting the Naruto whirlpool using Awa Washi and indigo dye; the final print on display. ④Shigeyuki Nakajima, representative of the Awagami Factory Group and Fuji Paper Mills Cooperative Association. ⑤Visitors to the Hall of Awa Japanese Handmade Paper can observe firsthand the process of crafting handmade *washi*.



Profits from the production and sale of Ai-iro Origami, indigo-dye origami paper, were donated to the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake Disaster Relief Fund. In addition, 8,500 sheets of Awa Washi paper were provided free of charge to the State Archival Service of Ukraine for the restoration of old documents.

Making Letters Speak

Tomone Uemura

Humans are creatures who express their thoughts. I feel that letters are the most profound and noble form of human expression. When it comes to letters, hand-written letters are best. When we try to read between the lines, we can see the personality of the writer.

Vol. 36: Kan Kikuchi (Part I)

Last time, to mark the 35th issue of this series of articles, I wrote about my uncle, Sanjugo (a pseudonym that literally means "thirty-five") Naoki. This, in turn, inspired me to write about Kan Kikuchi, who was a great benefactor to Naoki and also his best friend. Naoki’s deep connection with Kikuchi goes back to the literary lectures held at the Osaka City Central Public Hall late in 1920. The event was produced by Naoki, who invited literary figures such as Kan Kikuchi, Ryunosuke Akutagawa, and Koji Uno to deliver lectures. Naoki himself was among the lecturers. Afterwards, Naoki was accepted in the literary circles and befriended Kikuchi, who was one of their leading figures.

Before his encounter with Kikuchi, Naoki’s life had been a series of setbacks and debts. However, as I mentioned in the previous issue, the chance encounter with Kikuchi became the point at which his life took a turn in the opposite direction. After his meeting with Kikuchi and following the Great Kanto Earthquake, Naoki left Tokyo for Osaka, joined Plato Inc., became editor of the general magazine *Kuraku*, and began his writing career. His encounter with Kikuchi provided him with a network of contacts in the literary world and a foothold for the publication of his

writings. Kikuchi established the general magazine *Bungeishunju* in 1923, the year of the Great Kanto Earthquake. Naoki was given the opportunity to write for the magazine, and, from the January issue, he wrote miscellaneous articles each month. He also anonymously wrote scathing gossip articles about literary figures. These articles became very popular and played an important role in increasing the circulation of *Bungeishunju*. A particularly famous example is the “Survey of Writers’ Value,” an evaluation chart in which 68 writers active in the literary world at the time were evaluated according to 11 criteria, including “Scholarship,” “Talent,” “Courage,” “Skills,” “Fortune,” and so on. To disguise his identity as the author, Naoki included himself in the chart. In the “Fortune” criteria, Kikuchi is listed as having 280,000 yen (somewhere in the neighborhood of 100 million yen now), while Naoki is listed as “in debt,” and in the “Appearance” criteria, Naoki gave his benefactor Kikuchi 36 points and himself 86 points. In another gossip article about famous schools of literature, he calls Kikuchi a “hippopotamus.” However, perhaps thinking that this alone was rude, he added the caveat that Kikuchi was not as stupid as a hippopotamus. Neither the author nor the subject were bothered by the article, suggesting that the relationship between the two had grown over the course of a year or two.

The great earthquake of September 1923 that induced Naoki to flee to his home town Osaka had also wiped out his enormous debt. It was Kikuchi who wrote a letter of introduction to Plato Inc., a company at the forefront of the publishing and design world at the time. Coincidentally, a general magazine called *Kuraku* was to be launched the following year (1924), and Naoki slipped into the role of editor-in-chief and joined the ranks of the literati by publishing a monthly novel-like story about revenge.

Kikuchi and Naoki, one a short, sensible man, the other a skinny eccentric, were completely different in their qualities, personalities and talents. Nevertheless, Kikuchi supported and cared for Naoki for 13 years, from the time they met until Naoki’s death. In 1925, Naoki was the editor of *Kuraku* and just beginning to develop as a writer when *Shinju Kirarazaka*, a short story he had published in *Kuraku* under the name of his mistress, was made into a movie. This led to his encounter with Shozo Makino, one of Japan’s pioneering film directors and producers. Naoki quit his job at Plato Inc., founded the United Cinema Artists Association with Makino, and began

producing films. Kikuchi was also a member of the association’s literary department. Kikuchi’s *Dai ni no seppun* (“The Second Kiss”), which was serialized in the *Asahi Shimbun* and became very popular, was also made into a movie produced by Naoki and directed by Daisuke Ito. However, it was met with criticism from the outset. The movie was produced in competition with Nikkatsu, and since Nikkatsu pulled out Tokihiko Okada, who was supposed to star in the film, and due to the low production budget, the leading roles of Kyoko and Shizuko were played by, respectively, Naoki’s mistress Orie Kozai and Ito’s wife Miharu. Finally, after the filming was completed and the movie was approved by the censors, Naoki and Ito went to Kikuchi to pay their respects. This is how Ito describes what happened in his book *Jidai-geki eiga no shi to shinjitsu* (“The Poetry and Reality of Period Films”). Even though it was a bitterly cold winter, Naoki was not wearing a coat and was “freezing to death in his flimsy clothes.” “As we were leaving, Mr. Kikuchi stopped him and said, ‘You look cold. Here, put this on.’ And he handed his own coat to Naoki. The overcoat of a short man like him would never have fit the tall Naoki, but he thanked him and carried it out of the room. The cold must have really gotten to him, because with a wry smile he pulled the coat over his shoulders and shoved his hands into the pockets. Then, he suddenly stopped dead in his tracks. Several ten-yen bills were stuffed into the pocket. The arrogant and indomitable Sanjugo Naoki’s hands trembled and his cheeks tightened. At that moment, I saw a tough man cry.” The association produced a total of fourteen films. Two years later, in 1927, burdened with an enormous debt of 200,000 yen in the money of the time, Naoki dissolved the association and returned to Tokyo. Having failed in publishing and film, Naoki had only one way to live, and that was to devote himself to writing.

One of his best-known works is *Nangoku Taiheiki* (“The Chronicle of Nangoku”), a historical novel depicting the turmoil of the Shimazu family, but his earlier novel *Yui kongen daisatsuki*, which is considered a prelude to *Nangoku Taiheiki*, was serialized in the weekly magazine *Shukan Asahi* with Kikuchi’s encouragement and gained a good reputation, solidifying Naoki’s position as a writer. Starting the following year, in 1930, *Nangoku Taiheiki* was serialized in the *Tokyo Nichi Nichi Shimbun* and the *Osaka Mainichi Shimbun*, and Naoki blossomed as a popular writer.

It is unclear when and where Kikuchi and my father, Seiji, met. However, there is a letter in our house addressed to “Mr. Seiji Uemura” (written with the wrong character for “Sei” in my father’s name).

“As for the financial relationship with your brother, I am not inclined to give you the manuscript fee for *Bungeishunju* at this time, but I understand that you, who know nothing about these affairs, might be having trouble, so I will give you the small amount of 10 yen for now. I will do something about it when I have a chance to talk to your brother, so please wait until then. Kan Kikuchi!”

From the text, it would appear that for some reason my father was pressing Kikuchi for money, and this letter seems to be his response. To my father’s

credit, he was so close to Kikuchi that Kikuchi had recommended that he marry the daughter of one of his relatives, and he was not the kind of person who would ask for money without a reason. After Naoki’s death, Kikuchi took care of his debts. He also bought the house Naoki had built in Tomioka, Yokohama shortly before his death, and even allowed Naoki’s ex-wife and her family to live in the house. The events surrounding Naoki’s death will be the subject of Part II of this story, which will be published in the next issue.



Author
Tomone Uemura
Essayist

After graduating from the Department of History, the Faculty of Letters, Arts and Sciences at Waseda University in 1962, he worked at Toei Co., Ltd. before entering TV Tokyo Corporation, where he was later appointed to managing director of TV Tokyo and president and representative director of PROTX.

Kan Kikuchi

Novelist, playwright, entrepreneur
1888–1948



Born in 1888 in Takamatsu City, Kagawa Prefecture. After graduating from Kyoto University, he worked as a city news reporter of *Jiji shimpo* (“Current Events”), while publishing short stories such as *Onshu no kanata ni* (“The Realm Beyond”), and establishing himself as an up-and-coming writer. In 1923, he founded *Bungeishunju* Ltd., and published the first issue of *Bungeishunju*. He organized the Japan Writers’ Association, and became its first president in 1936. Kikuchi was also the first president of Daiei. His most famous works include *Tadanaokyo gyojo ki* (“On the Conduct of Lord Tadanao”) and *Shinju fujin* (“Madame Pearl”). In 1935, Kikuchi established two prestigious literary awards, the Akutagawa Prize and the Naoki Prize, to commemorate the achievements of Ryunosuke Akutagawa and Sanjugo Naoki. His real name was Hiroshji Kikuchi.



Papermaking Class at Miyanomori Elementary School in Miyagi Prefecture

KPP has been offering hands-on paper-making classes at the Miyanomori Elementary School in Higashi-Matsushima City, Miyagi Prefecture on an ongoing basis since 2018. These classes are part of the restoration assistance activities conducted jointly with the C.W. Nicol Afan Woodland Trust, a general incorporated association that oversaw reconstruction of the buildings of the school (formerly the Nobiru Elementary School and Miyato Elementary School), and Rogier Uitenboogaart, a *washi* paper craft artist from the Netherlands.

In the classes, students create their very own original craft papers, using paper mulberry and Oriental paperbush harvested themselves from the Restoration Forest (*Fukko-no Mori*) and incorporating other natural materials. These materials include parts of plants picked in the Restoration Forest next to the school, as well as seaweed and seashells collected around Miyato Island in Higashi-Matsushima City,



capturing features of the local environment in the paper they create.

Students not only learn about the *washi*-making process; they see and touch the actual paper mulberry and Oriental paperbush plants that supply the paper's main raw materials and are taught about the history of paper, a material that has supported our ways of life, as well. Beyond allowing students to enjoy making *washi*, the classes offer them valuable opportunities to reflect in depth on the natural environment where they live and on paper made with natural materials.

KPP is committed to helping build a sustainable society in which humans and nature can coexist in harmony by continuing to take part in offering these classes and supporting the forest conservation efforts of the C.W. Nicol Afan Woodland Trust.

Miyanomori Elementary School, Higashi-Matsushima City, Miyagi Prefecture



Established in April 2016, integrating two Higashi-Matsushima City municipal schools: Nobiru Elementary School, which was damaged in the 2011 Great East Japan earthquake, and Miyato Elementary School, which had experienced a decline in student numbers. Constructed of over 5,000 pieces of solid timber, the spacious school, fragrant with the aroma of wood, has been appraised highly for its architecture as well, including the wooden framework employed for its gymnasium and library. The C.W. Nicol Afan Woodland Trust, which oversaw rebuilding of the school, maintains the neighboring **satoyama* forest land and conducts many educational programs that take students into the field with an emphasis on encouraging senses of integration and unity with the Restoration Forest. The school song features music and lyrics by singer Tokiko Kato.

*Located near a village, this forest was once used for collecting wood for firewood and charcoal, wild vegetables, etc., and is closely related to people.

The C.W. Nicol Afan Woodland Trust <https://afan.or.jp/>



Established as a general incorporated association in 2002 with missions of “Aiming to restore Japan’s nature to its original condition and create a prosperous society that brings smiles to children’s faces” and “Expanding forests that will be rich in biodiversity 100 years from now.” The association engages in local community building with a focus on coexisting with nature through forest conservation activities centered around the Afan Woodland in Kurohime, Nagano Prefecture. At Miyanomori Elementary School, they hold outdoor classes that take advantage of the rich natural environment surrounding the school, such as restoring the neighboring Restoration Forest, as well as provide support for the children’s emotional well-being.

* Above at left, the late C.W. Nicol addresses students at the hands-on *washi* paper-making class in February 2018.

Lesson 1: Initial Preparations



After the children harvest paper mulberry and Oriental paperbush in the Restoration Forest, Rogier prepares and processes the raw materials to make them ready to be made into paper. See the following page for additional details.

Lesson 3: Making Washi



To get the finely pounded fibers to spread out evenly, a viscous liquid obtained from the roots of a plant called aibika is added, and the combination of this with the fibers is poured into a vat of water with a *sukigeta* frame. The stickiness of the aibika material astonishes the children.

Lesson 5: Finishing Touches



In addition to twigs, leaves, and so on from the forest, they also arrange seaweed and seashells, collected from the seaside along Higashi-Matsushima City, atop the paper in progress. On top of this, they add more paper material and secure it to keep the materials in place. After removing the paper from the frame, they wrap their craft work with towels to absorb moisture.

In Conclusion

From the initial harvesting of raw materials to the creation of the final product, the art of *washi*-crafting unfolds through numerous stages. Witnessing the blossoming curiosity and dedication of the children at each stage, we see our Corporate Message — “Paper Innovation for a Connected Future” — being brought to life by these little artisans. Meanwhile, the paper mulberry and Oriental paperbush in the Restoration Forest continue to flourish, quietly preparing for the hands-on learning opportunities in next year’s paper-making class.

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Lesson 2: Beating the Fibers



Clumps of white bark fibers with extraneous bits of debris removed are placed on pounding blocks and beaten with thick wooden dowels to make the fibers finer. Rogier teaches the students a distinctive *ton-ton-ton* rhythm, and they have fun proceeding with the work as he gives an old-style Tsunoyama *kagura* song-and-dance performance for them.

Lesson 4: Collecting Other Materials



Now, the children head outside the school. Wandering freely around the area of the Restoration Forest, where some snow still lingers, they search for additional materials to incorporate into their paper. They collect parts of plants and fallen leaves with colors and shapes that appeal to them to add special touches to their creations.

Lesson 6: Completion



The students’ original *washi* craft works are finished. Of the works created by the 17 children who took part in the class, no two are alike, with each one reflecting the individual character of the student who made it. Among the feedback we heard from participants were comments like “It was so much fun to all work together making the paper,” and “I wish I could make more!”



Finished *washi* craft work



Oriental paperbush growing in the Restoration Forest

Extracurricular Class with Rogier

Handmade Washi Paper Artist

Rogier Uitenboogaart

Born in 1955 in The Hague, the Netherlands, Rogier Uitenboogaart came to Japan in 1980. He spent six months touring *washi* (traditional Japanese paper) production centers throughout Japan before studying handmade *washi* for 12 years in the area that produces Tosa Washi. Later, he lived in Yusuhara Town, Kochi Prefecture, and in 2006 opened a guest house called Kamikoya, where visitors can experience paper making. Rogier grows his own raw materials and combines his unique sensibility with traditional techniques in his innumerable works. In 2007, he was recognized as a Tosa Craftsmen and in 2010 received the Hakuho Award.



Q Tell us about your recent creative activities.

A My *washi* work was used in an item designed by architect Kengo Kuma and released by a high-end Italian brand. It's a limited edition sneakers and bags made of *waranshi*, a mixture of paper mulberry and mulberry bark fiber, which are the raw materials for *washi*, and cotton. It was a good experience to have been involved in creating new ideas.



Q What do you want to get across to the children at Miyanomori Elementary School through your hands-on papermaking class?



A The purpose of the class is not so much for them to think "I made paper," but more to have them experience the process of making paper, an item they use in their daily life. I want them to realize that a single tree could produce a thing this beautiful that can retain its shape for 1,000 years, and to be able to develop the ability to create new sensibilities of their own. Since these children are the future, I'll be happy if this project turns into an opportunity for them to develop a sensitivity that drives them to learn many things from nature.

Q What will you be doing for the KPP Group's 100th anniversary project?

A I helped with the cultivation of paper mulberry and Oriental paper bush trees that are growing in the sunken garden next to the basement cafeteria at the head office. For the company's 100th anniversary in November, the plan is to make lanterns from those paper mulberry and Oriental paper bush trees. I'll oversee this project and be in charge of a paper-making workshop for the employees. These lanterns will be shown to the public, so I hope that many people will be able to come see them.



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Q Tell us about the work leading to making the paper.

A Kamikoya grows paper mulberry, Oriental paper bush, and other raw materials for *washi* in house without using pesticides or fertilizers. We steam the harvested materials in a *koshiki* (traditional Japanese steamer), peel and preserve the dried materials. In the *washi*-making stage, the outer skin is removed and the *hakuhi* (whitened and dried bark) is boiled in lime. Then, after it is bleached under the sun, the remaining black bark and other scattered and discolored parts are carefully removed in cold water. In the hands-on class at Miyanomori Elementary School, students experienced *koukai*, the process of loosening fibers by beating them with a mallet, as well as the papermaking process.

See p.10 for more details on the process.



- 1 Freshly harvested paper mulberry.
- 2 The *koshiki* steams raw materials such as bundled paper mulberry.
- 3 Peeling off the outer skin.
- 4 One by one, impurities are removed by hands placed in the cold winter water.

Explore

KPP Group's sustainable solutions to promote a recycling-oriented society

Presenting the KPP Group's Diligent Efforts toward Realizing a Sustainable Society

KPP Sustainable Times

The circulation and recycling of limited resources and energy is an extremely important issue in today's world. Based on the KPP Group mission of "Contributing to the realization of a recycling-oriented society," we are working to increase our corporate value by helping to build a sustainable society through our business activities.

Environment-Friendly Artificial Turf Made from Paper Yarn in Kids' Space at Environmental Learning and Exchange Facility in Shinagawa, Tokyo

On January 23, artificial turf made from Kaminoito OJO+ developed by Oji Fiber Co., Ltd., a KPP group company, was installed at Ecole Togoshi, an environmental learning and exchange facility in Shinagawa City. This artificial turf's piles are made of Manila hemp paper yarn. Manila hemp is grown in the tropics, and this turf achieves a feel comparable to that of natural grass. It's lighter than conventional plastic, and the paper's characteristics include excellent heat absorption and release, as well as resistance to frictional heat, making it safe even for small children to play barefoot.

A survey¹ on the problem of marine plastic pollution found that 140 tons of microplastics (plastics smaller than 5 mm) are discharged annually in Japan alone, the largest portion of which is waste derived from artificial turf. Since OJO+ artificial turf is made of naturally derived materials, which not only uses a less plastic in manufacturing, but is also made of biodegradable fibers that can be broken down by microorganisms, it is regarded as a product whose environmental burden can be suppressed when it becomes waste.

Ecole Togoshi is a facility where visitors can have fun while learning about the environment. By installing OJO+ artificial turf, we aim to provide visitors with an opportunity to learn about the current state of marine plastic waste and help solve this problem.

1. From *Microplastics Research in Japan*, Pirika Corporation



Kids' Space with artificial turf



Exterior view

Community Lounge

Shinagawa City Environmental Learning and Exchange Center Ecole Togoshi

Ecole Togoshi opened in May 2022 as a facility where visitors can learn about the importance of environmental conservation through an entertaining variety of hands-on exhibits and events. In addition to a powerful Video Exhibit and a time-themed Permanent Exhibit, the facility has a spacious Community Lounge where visitors can feel at one with the rich natural environment of Togoshi Park, a Kids' Space and a Playground where small children can play safely. People of all generations use Ecole Togoshi as a place to learn about the environment and as a place of relaxation and community exchange.

Address: 2-1-30 Yutaka-cho, Shinagawa City, Tokyo (at Togoshi Park)
Open: 7:00 - 21:30
*Exhibit area and Kids' Space are open from 9:00 to 18:00
Admission: Free for all visitors, from both inside and outside Shinagawa City
Closed: 4th Monday of each month (open when the 4th Monday is a national holiday, and closed the following weekday)
Year-end and New Year holidays (December 29 - January 3)
URL: <https://ecoru-togoshi.jp/multi-language-translation-en/>

Looking Back on 100 Years of History in the Paper Industry

PART 1
1924-1960

Social news and issues

1927

- Iwanami Shoten, Publishers launches Iwanami Bunko, Japan's first small-format paperbacks.
- Lindbergh successfully completes a solo non-stop flight across the Atlantic Ocean (US).

Charles Lindbergh
Photo: AFP/Alto



1929

- The Wall Street Crash (US) * Beginning of the Great Depression

1936

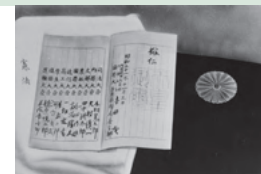
- The February 26 Incident
* An attempted coup d'etat in Japan.
- Hideko Maehata becomes the first Japanese woman to win an Olympic gold medal.



Hideko Maehata
Photo: Kin-gendai PL/Alto

1946

- Launch of Nikkan Sports newspaper
- Start of the manga series *Sazae-san*
- Promulgation of the Constitution of Japan



The Constitution of Japan
Photo: Mainichi Shimbun/Alto

1949

- Hideki Yukawa wins the Nobel Prize in Physics.
* First Japanese Nobel laureate

1951

- The First NHK Red and White Song Battle is broadcast.
* Radio broadcast

1952

- Start of the manga series *Astro Boy*



Photo: Akira Hayasaka / Alto

1956

- Shinchosha Publishing Co, Ltd. launches *Shukan Shincho*. * Japan's first weekly magazine

1957

- Jump in the popularity of the "Three Sacred Treasures": the washing machine, the refrigerator, and the black and white TV
- Tokyo Tower is completed.

1920s

1930s

1940s

1950s

KPP history

1924

- Establishment of Daido Yoshiten Ltd.
Capital 2 million yen
Head Office: Osaka
Branch Offices: Kyoto, Nagoya, Tokyo



1925

- Opening of Shanghai Local Office as the first overseas base. Subsequent opening of multiple local offices in China



Work operations at the time

1931

- First Japanese paper export to the US
- Successful export of newsprint paper through a joint project with Karafuto Kogyo.



Advertisement by Daido Yoshiten Ltd. from around 1930

1954

- Capital increases to 100 million yen.



A telephone switchboard

Developments in the pulp and paper industry

1925

- Production of kraft pulp at the Fuji Paper Mill Ochiai Factory (in today's Sakhalin)

1926

- Practical application of the chemical pulping process at a forestry research institute in the US

1933

- Oji Paper Co., Ltd. merges with Fuji Paper Co., Ltd. and Karafuto Kogyo Co., Ltd.

1941

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry promulgates Rationing Rules for Paper Distribution.

1945

- Air raids devastate the paper industry. Overseas factories in Karafuto, Korea, Manchuria, etc. are lost due to defeat in the war.

1949

- Oji Paper is divided into three companies: Tomakomai Paper, Jujo Paper, and Honshu Paper under the Law for the Elimination of Excessive Concentration of Economic Power.

1950

- Opening of the Papermaking Memorial Museum (present Paper Museum)

1954

- Around this time, a shortage of coniferous trees leads to increased use of broad-leaved trees as material.

1957

- Domestic kraft pulp production exceeds sulfite pulp production.

KPP Group 100th Anniversary Information



100th anniversary website is now open

A special website commemorating KPP's 100th anniversary is now available. The site will feature a variety of content that highlights the company's appeal from different angles, including the history of KPP from its founding in 1924 to the present day, as well as information from the Brand Book, which provides an at-a-glance look at the company's philosophy and vision.

URL: <https://100th.kpp-gr.com/> *Japanese only



Editorial postscript

After visiting two production sites for traditional *washi* Japanese paper in Tokushima and Kochi prefectures for this issue, I was reminded of the saying "All things are constantly changing" in the car on the way home.

This phrase comes from the ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus' concept of "*panta rhei*" ("everything flows"), which means that those aspects of the world that are constantly changing are the true realities.

The same concept applies to the world of paper. Over the past few days, I had opportunities to observe how the creation and use of a simple object like *washi* paper has changed over time.

The first site I visited, Awagami Factory (see page 3), is

home to a brand that continues to meet the unique demands of the modern age while carrying on the traditions of Awa Washi paper. From inkjet-compatible paper that can be used for digital content to thick, textured paper that brings expressiveness to paintings, the energy of *washi*'s limitless possibilities collides with craftsmanship, making the factory a kind of sanctuary for those of us who come from the high-rise districts of the Tokyo metropolis.

At my second destination, Kamikoya (see page 11), the owner, Rogier Uitenboogaart, said, "*Washi* paper came to Japan to convey religion, or, to put it more succinctly, to nourish the mind and heart." As part of the project to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the company in November, the KPP

Group plans to make lampshades from *washi* paper materials grown at its office under the supervision of Kamikoya. It is hard to imagine that the glaring fluorescent light that is a familiar presence in our daily lives can nourish the soul, but when it is filtered down to a warm glow through the textured surface of the shades before reaching our eyes, perhaps it can soothe even us, modern people. Together with TSUNAGU, we would like to weave the story of the new fiscal year that begins with this issue and the special project to celebrate our 100th anniversary.

(Tomoka Kato)



Shoan Bunko

3-12-22 Shoan, Suginami-ku, Tokyo

TEL: +81-3-5941-3662

Open: Wednesdays 12:00-15:00

*Only for lunch;

Thursdays and Sundays 9:00-18:00; and

Fridays and Saturdays 9:00-22:00

Closed: Monday and Tuesday

<https://shoanbunko.com/>



Feel the Passage of Time in a Book Cafe in a 90-year-old House

A 10-minute walk from the South Exit of Nishi Ogikubo Station on the JR Chuo Line brings you to a charming house that blends into a quiet residential area. Shoan Bunko is a popular book cafe that was created in 2013 by renovating an old private home that was built more than 90 years ago. Inside is a deep and spacious cafe where a modern space meets antique furniture, and beautiful furnishings blend splendidly, creating a sophisticated atmosphere. "This used to be the home of a married couple of musicians," says owner Tomomi Okazaki. She says that when she learned that the couple was selling the building and took a look inside out of curiosity, she decided to take over the house herself, as "it would be a shame to destroy such a beautiful house."

Inside the cafe, there are two types of books: new and used. The new books are mainly on the topics of food and lifestyle, and were selected by Title, a bookstore in Ogikubo. Okazaki says she got the used books from her own collection as well as from Kissa Risei (Cafe Risei), which is known as a favorite hangout of foodies and antique collectors in Kyoto. She adds, "I kept the used books for browsing when Risei's second location was closed, so they aren't for sale, but you can freely read them at your table." The building retains the memories and warmth of many years, and the precious old books are packed with knowledge. Time passes slowly at Shoan Bunko. It's a place that will remind you of something important you may have forgotten amid the busyness of everyday life.

The lunch menu, which incorporates pesticide-free rice and seasonal vegetables, and the homemade sweets are popular items. Try to visit when the beautiful flowers on the 100-year-old azalea shrub in the courtyard are blooming—they'll help soothe your body and soul.



There is also a shop in the cafe that offers a selection of carefully selected sundries and tableware.



We have adopted a bookbinding method free of staples, paste and heat, taking into consideration recycling and the risk of injuries.



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