

## How rip weaving spread in Japan: Interpreting maps of words and referents

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**Abstract:** Rip weaving is a way of weaving a fabric using rip cloth as crosswise yarn on a loom. The textile spread during the Edo Period (1603-1868) after cotton was introduced to Japan. The old cotton cloths were used to make a typical *sakiori* fabric. There are three groups of words denoting rip weaving: *sakiori*, *cuzure*, and *boro*. *Sakiori* literally means rip weaving (*saki* “rip” + *ori* “weaving”), while *cuzure* and *boro* mean “rags or tattered clothes”. Interestingly the referents of *sakiori* extended to 1) traditional fabric which is woven using hemp (*asa*), Japanese wisteria (*fuji*), false nettle (*karamushi*), etc., 2) newer fabric which is woven using cotton threads as crosswise and lengthwise threads, and 3) work clothes in general, which are not always made of *sakiori* fabric. This might be caused by the phonetic changes of *sakiori* words (*sakkyori*, *sakkori*, *sakkuri*, *zakkuri* etc.). On the other hand, *cuzure* is used for clothes made by rip weaving in some areas while it is used for clothes made by quilting (*sashiko*) in other areas. *Boro* is mainly used for sashes made by rip weaving. The distributions of the forms and the referents show the variation and change of words related with rip weaving.

**Key words:** geographical distributions, rip weaving, workwear, referents

### 1. Introduction: what is *sakiori* ‘rip weaving’?

*Sakiori* “rip weaving” is a way of weaving a fabric using ripped cloths (usually cotton) as crosswise yarn (weft) on a loom. Before cotton was introduced to Japan, traditional plants such as *asa* “hemp”, *karamusi* “false nettle”, *fuji* “Japanese wisteria”, *koozo* “a kind of papyrifera”, etc. were used for weaving a fabric.

Cotton-growing was established in the 15th to 16th century in some specific areas of Japan. Cotton was planted only in the southern warmer area and not planted in the northern colder area. Thus, cotton wool and old cotton cloths were transported to the

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latter areas by ship during the Edo Period (1603-1868). Around the same time, *sakiori*, the textile made by rip weaving, also spread.

Cotton cloths were valuable as they were warm and strong. Old cotton cloths were useful since they were used to remake fabric and clothes. One way of making use of old cotton cloths is rip weaving (to cut cloths into rips and weave a fabric by using the rips as crosswise yarn on a loom), and another way is quilting (to lay cloth on top of another and stitch them). You can also patch clothes using cotton cloths. In any of these ways, reproduced clothes are warmer and stronger.

## 2. Three words denoting *sakiori*

It has been found out that there are three words which denote *sakiori* ‘rip weaving’ (Nakamura 1984; Fukushima 2023a). First, the word *sakiori*, literally meaning “rip weaving”, is a term for the fabric woven using ripped cloths. Second, the word *cuzure*, which originally meant “patchwork” or “patchworked clothes”, is not a term for the fabric originally. Third, the word *boro*, whose meaning is “rag” or “tatters”, is not a term for the fabric at all.

**Fig. 1** shows the geographical distributions of these three words, which include cases in which the referent of the words is not the fabric woven using ripped cloths. Here I examine how the distributions of the forms and the referents have been produced.

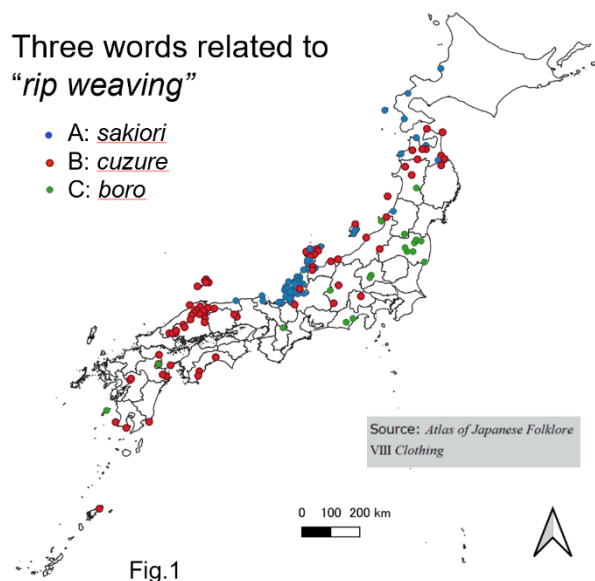


Figure 1: Geographical distributions of three words related to *sakiori* “rip weaving”

All the data for maps in this paper is taken from the *Atlas of Japanese Folklore VIII Clothing* (except the last map **Fig. 7**). **Figs. 2-3** are made using ArcGIS online, and the other figures, **Figs. 1** and **4-6**, using QGIS. See the photos at the end of this paper to see samples of *saguri*, a workwear and *boroobi*, a sash made by rip weaving.

## 2.1. The word *sakiori*

### 2.1.1. The geographical distributions of the forms of *sakiori*

**Fig. 2** is a map of the forms of *sakiori*. The forms are distributed on the coast of the Sea of Japan. There are two groups of forms: the -o- group such as *sakkiyori* and *sakkori*, the -u- group such as *sakkuri*, and the -i- group such as *sakkiri*. Obviously, the form *sakiori* changed to the -o- forms, and to the -u- forms, and then to the -i- forms. Each group has a variation caused by the changes such as *sa* > *sha*, *sa* > *za* > *zja*, and *k* > *g*. Thus, the following changes are inferred.

*sakiori* > *sakkiyori* > *sakkori* > *sakkuri* > *sakkiri*  
 > *zakkuri*  
 > *sakuri* > *shakuri* > *zjakuri*  
 > *saguri* > *zaguri*  
 > *shakkuri* > *shakkiri*

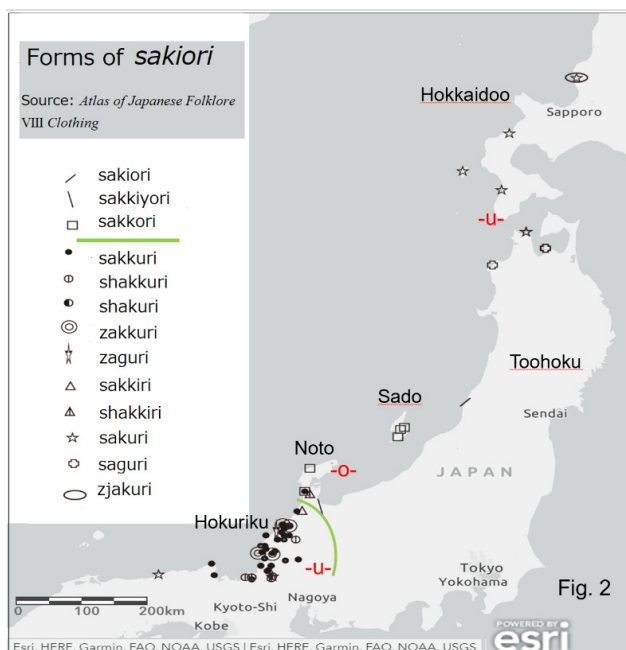


Figure 2: Geographical distributions of the forms of *sakiori*

These changes occurred in the Hokuriku area basically. The -u- forms such as *sakuri*, *saguri*, and *zjakuri* distributed in the northern Japan were transported from Hokuriku with the shipping route along the Sea of Japan.

### 2.1.2. The geographical distributions of the referents of *sakiori*

**Fig. 3** is a map of the referents of *sakiori*. The original referent should be the textile, rip weaving, but it was expanded to the workwear (not specified to that made of rip weaving), men's workwear, or women's workwear. Again, these changes occurred in the Hokuriku area and spread to the northern Japan with the same route. Clothes made by rip weaving are warm, strong, and waterproof; the term was maybe expanded by people involved in farming, fishery, and forestry.



Figure 3: Geographical distributions of the referents of *sakiori*

## 2.2. The word *cuzure*

### 2.2.1. The geographical distributions of the forms of *cuzure*

**Fig. 4** is a map of the forms of *cuzure*. The forms are distributed more broadly compared with *sakiori*. In the northern Japan, they are found along the coast of the Sea

of Japan. In the center of Japan, they are found in the mountainous area and also densely distributed in Noto. In the western Japan, the distributions are dense along the Chuugoku mountainous region, scattered in Shikoku and Kyuushuu. The variation of forms is mostly phonological; the forms in Noto such as *cuuri* or *cuure* are peculiar.

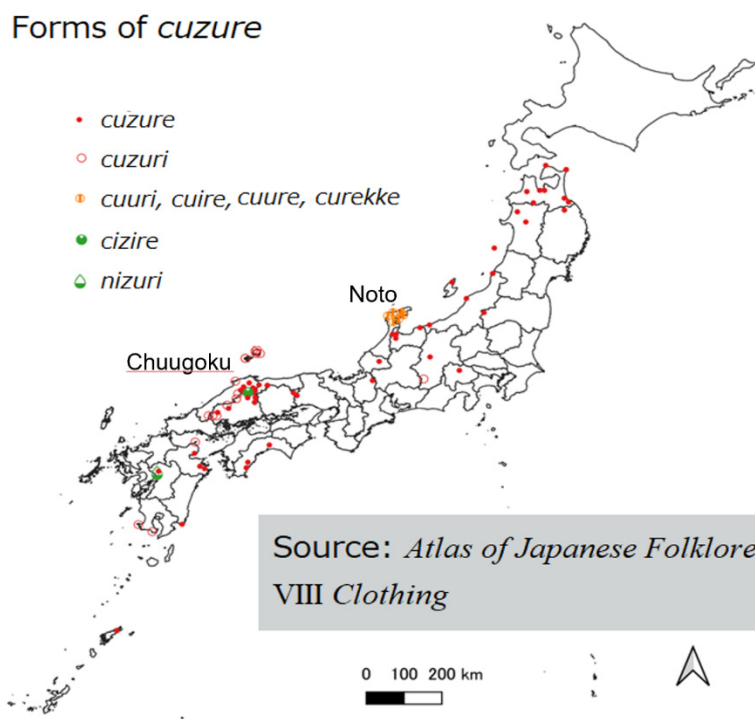


Figure 4: Geographical distributions of the forms of *cuzure*

### 2.2.2. The geographical distributions of the referents of *cuzure*

**Fig. 5** is a map of the referents of *cuzure*. While the original referent, “patched clothes”, is found peripherally, “clothes made by quilting” is found in the broad area from the north to the south, and “clothes by rip weaving” is distributed in Echigo, Noto, and Chuugoku surrounded by “clothes made by quilting”; therefore, it is considered that “clothes by rip weaving” is newer than “clothes made by quilting”. As a variation, “sash made by rip weaving” and “clothes made by paper as weft” is found in some localities. The referent of *cuzure* has also expanded to the workwear where the word is used to denote some kind of clothes, which is similar to *sakiori*.

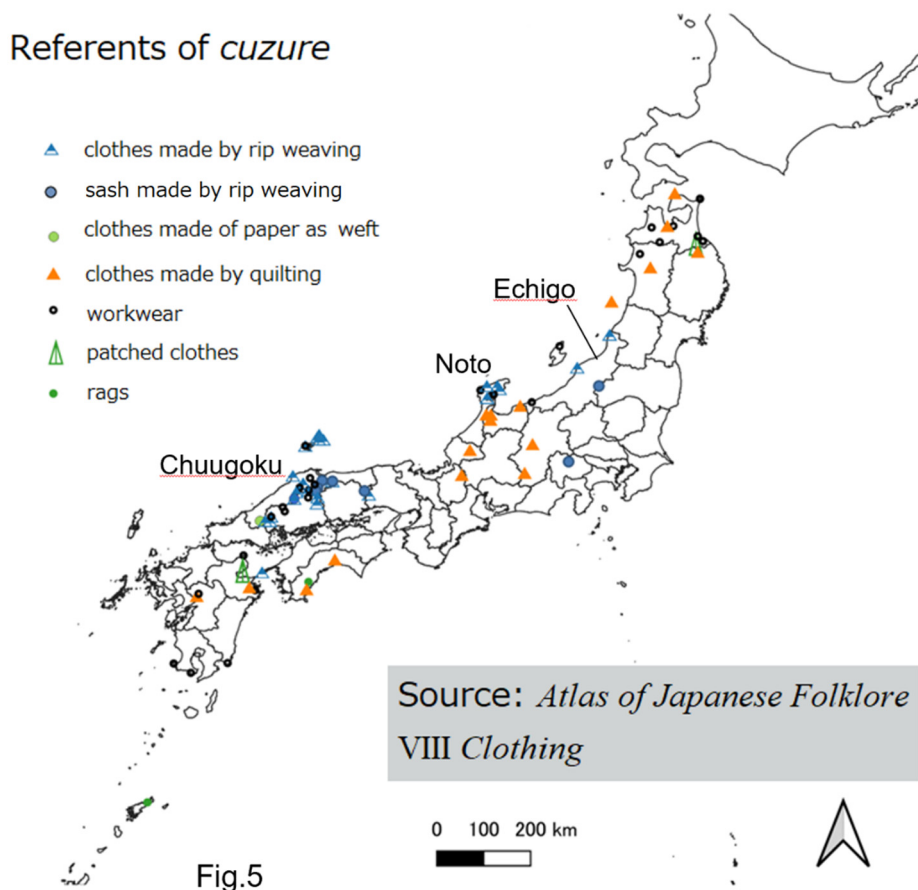


Figure 5: Geographical distributions of the referents of *cuzure*

### 2.3. The word *boro*

See **Fig. 1**. *Boro* is often used as *boroobi*, “sash made by rip weaving”, in the Eastern Japan. The distribution of *boro* is close to the distribution of *cuzure* as “sash made by rip weaving” in **Fig. 5**. Rip weaving is used for making sash in this area using tattered old clothes.

### 3. The varieties of *sakiori*

Nakamura (1984) classified *sakiori* “rip weaving” into three categories by focusing on the materials. See **Table 1**. In addition to two typical categories using ripped cotton cloth as weft, “*sakiori* made of cotton cloth” and “*sakiori* made of cotton thread”, there is another category whose warp and weft are traditional plants such as hemp, thus “*sakiori* made of hemp”. This category is called *sakiori* although it is not rip weaving

at all. Otsuka et al. (2003) called these categories as *sakiori* B, C and A, respectively. I added one more category, which is made of cotton thread as both warp and weft (I call this *sakiori* D). Using cotton thread is considered new since it is manually made from cotton wool or it is made at the factory. I also added two more categories as varieties of *sakiori* A. One is *sakiori* A' whose weft is paper. Another is *sakiori* A'' whose warp is cotton thread.

Table 1: Categories of *sakiori*

<b>Nakamura 1984</b>	lengthwise thread/yarn (warp)	crosswise thread/yarn (weft)	<b>Otsuka 2003</b>	<b>Fukushima 2023</b>
<i>sakiori</i> made of hemp	hemp, Japanese wisteria etc.	hemp, hemp cotton, Japanese wisteria, nettle, kudzu vine etc.	<i>sakiori</i> A	<i>sakiori</i> A
				<i>sakiori</i> A' (weft: paper)
				<i>sakiori</i> A'' (warp: cotton thread)
<i>sakiori</i> made of cotton cloth	hemp, Japanese wisteria etc.	rips cut from cotton cloths	<i>sakiori</i> B	<i>sakiori</i> B
<i>sakiori</i> made of cotton thread	cotton thread	rips cut from cotton cloths	<i>sakiori</i> C	<i>sakiori</i> C
-	cotton thread	cotton thread	-	<i>sakiori</i> D

I made a map of *sakiori* categories based on my classification. See **Fig. 6**. *Sakiori* A is found in peripheries such as northern Tohoku and Chuugoku, but also in Hokuriku. *Sakiori* A' is rare but considered as traditional. *Sakiori* A'' is found in the southern area and considered as new. *Sakiori* B is found in the broad area including Tohoku, Hokuriku, and Chuugoku. *Sakiori* D is rare but found in Hokuriku and Oki. It is interesting that both new and traditional varieties are found in Hokuriku.

I found a map of *sakiori* materials in the Hokuriku area where there are varieties of *sakiori* words and referents. See **Fig. 7**. This is a map of materials of *sakkuri* (<*sakiori*) reproduced from Fig. 4-2 in Yamazaki 1995. Ripped cloth is used in two parts, Wakasa and Noto. In between, in Kaga and Echizen, both traditional plants and cotton threads are used. In the latter area, cotton was not been planted and cotton cloths were transported from outside (cf. my research on the data of the *Atlas of Japanese Folklore VIII Folklore*). The making of the typical rip weaving spread from Wakasa to Noto, but not to Kaga and Echizen. In the latter areas, old materials (hemp, Japanese

wisteria, papyrifera, etc.) and new materials (cotton cloth and cotton thread) are both used.

### Categories of *sakiori*

- sakiori A
- sakiori A'
- ⊙ sakiori A''
- sakiori B
- ▣ sakiori C
- ◇ sakiori D
- sakiori (textile, clothes)
- quilting (textile, clothes)

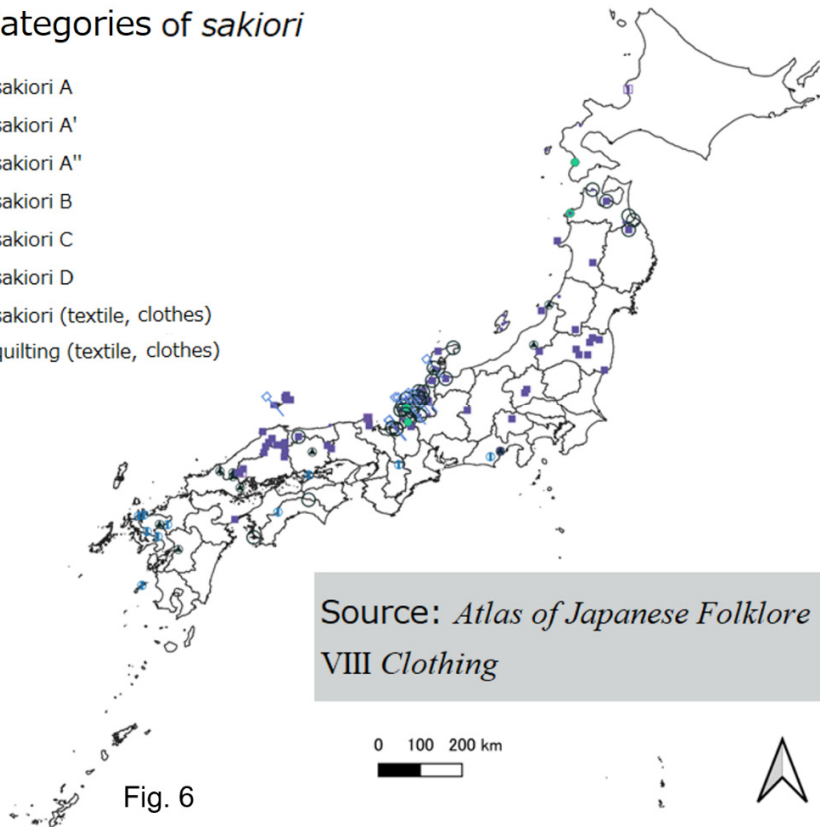


Fig. 6

### Fig. 6 enlarged

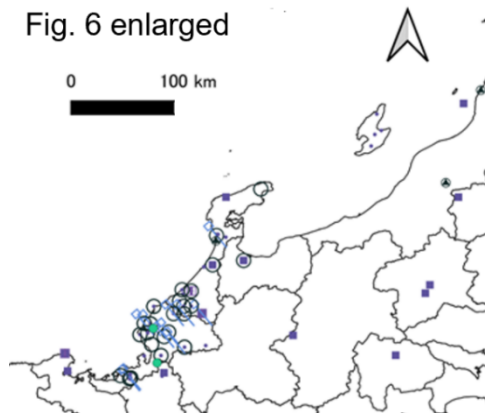


Figure 6: Categories of *sakiori*



Materials of *sakkuri*

Reproduced from Fig.4-2, Yamazaki 1995

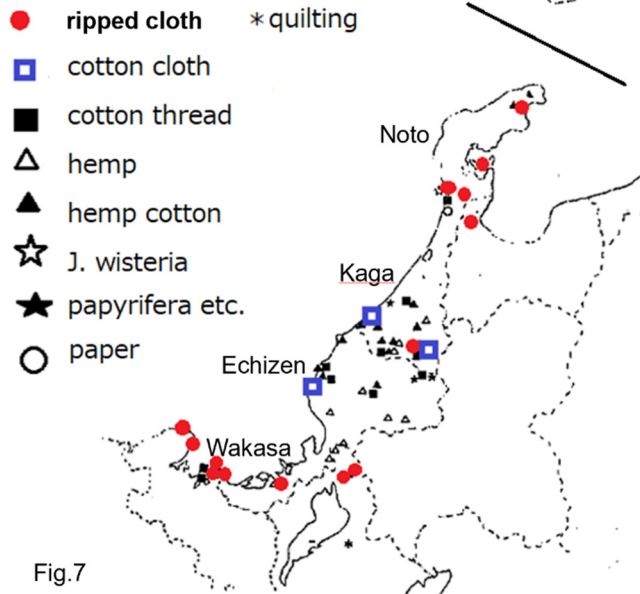


Figure 7: Materials of *sakkuri* in the Hokuriku area

Areas of *sakiori* /*sakkuri*

And the shipping route along the Sea of Japan

Source: Yamazaki 1989: 10

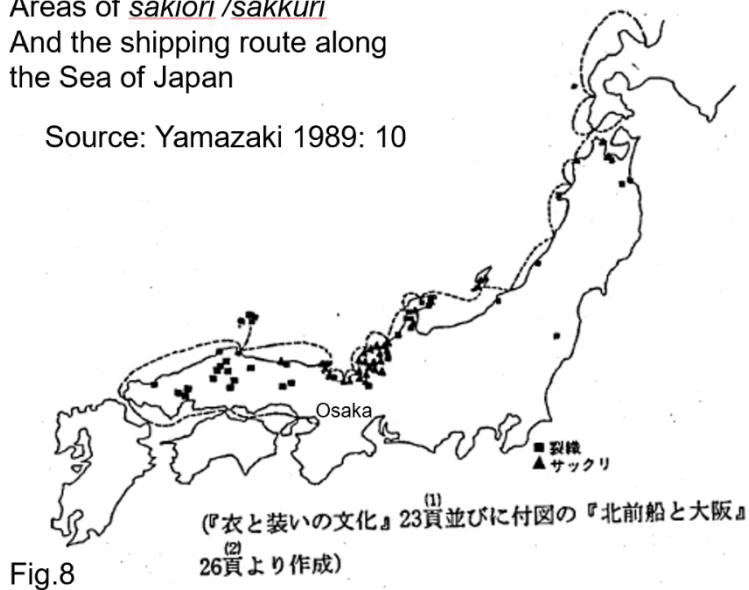


Figure 8: Areas of *sakiori*/*sakkuri* and the shipping route along the Sea of Japan

#### 4. Conclusion

Rip weaving has been especially useful for people living in the colder area. The making of the textile spread with old cotton cloths transported on the shipping route along the coast of the Sea of Japan shown in **Fig. 8** (Yamazaki 1989).

The brief history of words related with *sakiori* is summarized as below. First, in the Hokuriku area, the referent of the word *sakiori* expanded to 1) traditional fabric which is woven using hemp (*asa*), Japanese wisteria (*fuji*), false nettle (*karamushi*), etc., that is, *sakiori* A, 2) newer fabric which is woven using cotton threads as crosswise and lengthwise threads, that is, *sakiori* C or D, and 3) workwear in general maybe because the wordforms changed to *sakkuri* etc. and were no more transparent. As a result, the words were used to denote various referents, and then the words spread to the North along the shipping route.

As for *cuzure*, in the Chuugoku area, Noto, and Sado, the word *cuzure* was used to denote the workwear made of rip weaving. Maybe the textile, rip weaving, replaced the older material and inherited the older name for the textile or workwear. This change should have occurred before the words originating from *sakiori* spread.

As for *boro*, in part of the Eastern Japan, rip weaving was applied to make sashes and *boro* was used to denote it. *Boro* was a term for the old clothes used to make sashes. This usage could have occurred independently in separate areas.

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Photos:



*Saguri*, a workwear  
Source: Rias Ark Museum of Art 1999: 27



*Boroobi*, a sash made by rip weaving  
Source: Rias Ark Museum of Art 1999: 30