

作品紹介

The Colours of Kochi 土佐の色

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It was my landlady in Nagoya, Mrs Kobayashi Tomiko 小林富子, who introduced me to *washi* 和紙 as part of my *hanayome-shugyō* 花嫁修業, the ‘bridal training’ in traditional arts, crafts, and domestic skills that was once obligatory for every young Japanese woman of marriageable age. Having just arrived in Japan from my native New Zealand at the age of 26, time was of the essence, so Kobayashi-san, a talented matchmaker with no daughters of her own, immediately took me under her wing and embarked on my education, a crash course including Japanese flower arrangement, tea ceremony, calligraphy, ink painting, doll-making, and *washi chigiri-e* 和紙ちぎり絵 (‘torn Japanese-paper collage’), which involves tearing off fragments of Japanese paper and gluing them piece by piece with a brush onto a cardboard base.

I have always enjoyed any type of handcraft and love to mix and match colours, so I was in my element with *chigiri-e*. As is often the case in Japan when learning a traditional art or craft, my lessons consisted of copying a model and attempting to replicate it as closely as possible, using the materials provided. Once I had acquired the basic skills, however, I was eager to try out my own ideas and combinations of different types of *washi* (*wa* 和 meaning Japanese, and *shi* 紙 meaning paper), of which there exists a tremendous variety of colours and textures. So I began to frequent shops where *washi* was sold and attend exhibitions and museums where *washi* arts and crafts were displayed. In doing so I realized what a fundamental and ubiquitous role *washi* has played in Japanese culture throughout the ages, from interior decoration (paper doors and windows, lampshades, screens, cushions, bedding) and household items, to artwork (calligraphy, ink painting,

woodblock prints), books and writing paper, origami, boxes, dolls and toys, kites, umbrellas, bags, wallets, fans and accessories, and even clothing.

As my horizons broadened, my fascination with *washi* increased, and I developed a deep appreciation for its translucent beauty, soft warmth, and resilience. Having chosen to live in Nagoya for its central location, I often took trips to different regions in Japan and rarely returned without a few samples of the local *washi* to add to my collection. It was on one of these excursions that I happened upon Kochi and the Japanese Paper Museum in Ino¹, where the sheer variety of colours and textures filled me with delight and inspiration. This was my first encounter with Tosa *washi* 土佐和紙, which I learned has a history of more than a thousand years and has been a prominent industry of Tosa Province (now Kochi Prefecture) since the Edo period (1603–1868). Kochi remains one of the main production centres of *washi* today and Tosa *washi* is renowned for its enormous diversity – it comprises as many as 300 different types of paper – and for the durability of even its thinnest varieties, which, at 0.03 millimetres, are reputed to be the thinnest handmade papers in the world.

One thing lead to another and I ended up moving to the town of Ino the following year (1992), intent on learning more about Tosa *washi* and the art of Japanese handmade papermaking (*tesuki-washi* 手すき和紙). I was welcomed with open arms by the people of Ino, both from the kindness of their hearts and also due to their concern for the preservation of this traditional craft, which has suffered in recent years from a lack of successors as well as a reduction in the demand for handmade paper due to the availability of high-quality machine-made *washi*.

Mr Ito Tateo 伊藤建男, who was in charge of the Ino Paper Museum at the time, in liaison with my gracious new landlady Mrs Hamada Takako 浜田好子,

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¹ *Ino-chō kami no hakubutsukan* 伊野町紙の博物館 (*Tosa-washi dentō sangyō kaikan* 土佐和紙伝統産業会館), 781-2103 高知県吾川郡伊野町幸町 110-1. Tel: 088-893-0886 / Fax: 088-893-0887.

arranged for me to complete an introductory course in papermaking at the Kochi Prefectural Paper Research Center, *Kochi-ken shigyō-shikenjō* 高知県紙業試験場². This was followed by several months of practical experience at the workshop of Mr Takano Hidemi 高野秀見, a recently retired papermaker, and before long, thanks to the support and encouragement of these and many other benevolent neighbours, I was able to produce a fairly passable, albeit thick and uneven, sheet of *tesuki-washi*. Next came the dying process, and for that Mr Tamura Haruhiko 田村晴彦, another well-established local papermaker, generously shared his knowledge and the use of his workshop and mineral dyes (*ganryō* 岩料).

These were invaluable experiences, which further deepened my admiration for *tesuki-washi* and those who create it as I came to understand the extent of the arduous and time-consuming manual labour – traditionally carried out in the coldest winter months – and the depth of knowledge and skill involved in each stage of the production of a batch of handmade paper.³ During this time I was also able to realize my ambition to produce several of my own original pieces of artwork from paper that I had made and/or dyed myself.

I was still drawn, however, to the art of *chigiri-e*, or more precisely *hari-e*. These terms are often used interchangeably to refer to paper collage, but there is a slight difference between them: whereas the word *chigiri-e* specifies that the paper is torn by hand (*chigiri* ちぎり meaning torn, and *e* 絵 meaning picture), the term *hari-e* holds no such implication – *hari* 貼り means simply stuck or pasted – so the use of scissors or other cutting instruments is permitted. The majority of Tosa washi is made from *kōzo* 楮 (paper mulberry) bark. This accounts for its durability, as *kōzo* has particularly long fibres, which become securely interwoven during

the papermaking process. The beauty of tearing this paper lies in the wonderfully soft effect that is created by the lack of straight lines and sharp edges. The long feathery fibres of each fragment are separated with a brush as they are glued in consecutive layers, each piece merging into those around it, resulting in a harmonious blend of colours and textures. By contrast, when the paper is cut, the borders between each fragment are clearly defined, resulting in crisp lines, geometric shapes, and solid blocks of colour that impart a more modern, abstract quality. In either case, further depth and intensity can be achieved by applying layers of thin translucent paper so that different shades of colour show through from underneath.

Living in the town of Ino only a short walk from the paper museum, the temptation was irresistible to experiment not only with my own amateur efforts at papermaking, but with the hundreds of textures and colours of Tosa washi, born from over a millennium of skill and experience, that I found at my fingertips. In the early days when I had been exploring the possibilities of *chigiri-e* in Nagoya, I had felt that the merit of the artwork was so dependent on the beauty of the paper itself that I could not honestly call it my own unless I made and dyed the paper myself. Now, after having achieved just that, I realized that what I actually enjoyed the most was the process of selecting from the wealth of available colours and textures and rearranging the materials into the creative expression of something that amounted to more than just the sum of each fragment. I remembered one of the intrinsic concepts of Japanese flower arrangement that my landlady in Nagoya had explained to me: ‘When you cut off the life force of a flower or branch, you implicitly take on the responsibility to arrange each bloom and leaf to its best advantage, in harmony with its surroundings, so as to enhance its

² Now the Kochi Prefectural Paper Technology Center, *Kochi-kenritsu kami-sangyō gijutsu sentā* 高知県立紙産業技術センター, 781-2128 高知県吾川郡伊野町波川287-4. Tel: 088-892-2220 / Fax: 088-892-2209.

³ The production process generally comprises the following stages: First, the raw material of *kōzo* 楮 (paper mulberry), *gampi* 雁皮, or *mitsumata* 三桠 is processed by steaming and stripping the bark from the branches and removing the outer layer of black bark. The white bark is then prepared by a laborious process that involves boiling with alkaline chemicals to dissolve the non-fibre elements, soaking in pure running water, bleaching (either naturally or with chemicals), picking out any remaining extraneous particles by hand, and beating to further loosen the bonds between the fibres (this is done by machine these days). The raw material is then added to a vat of water mixed with *neri* (a mucilaginous material made from the roots of the *tororo-aoi* plant) and stirred well to completely separate the fibres before they are scooped up onto a finely woven bamboo screen (*su* 簀) secured in a wooden frame (*keta* 桁); this is then shaken from side to side and back and forth to spread the fibres evenly and interweave them to form a sheet of paper. This process may be repeated several times depending on the thickness of the paper required. The newly-formed wet sheets of paper are stacked one on top of the other to form a block, which is then pressed to dehydrate it before being dried sheet by sheet either outdoors on wooden boards or, more commonly these days, on steam-heated stainless steel plates. (My thanks to Mr Kitaoka Hirofumi 北岡広文 for his instruction regarding the details above.)

beauty and accord it even greater appreciation than it would have enjoyed in its natural state.’ So that now became my mission as I pored over the samples at the paper-museum shop, made my painstaking selection, and hurried home with my charges in hand to set to work tearing and cutting, then arranging and combining clean lines with ragged fragments, thick fibrous textures with gossamer-thin wisps, and bold colours with delicate pastels. I also experimented with combinations of *washi* and *shifu* 紙布 (fabric woven from paper thread) as well as calligraphy and ink painting.

By the end of the following year I had produced enough work to hold a solo exhibition at the Ino Paper Museum, and this led to an invitation to join Current Crafts, a group of local contemporary craftspeople, with whom I subsequently had the privilege of participating in several annual exhibitions. During this time I joined the University of Sheffield’s Advanced Japanese Studies programme, and in the year 2000, after a total of two solo and nine group exhibitions, I hung up my brush and took on a full time position as assistant professor of English at Kochi Medical School.

While I still dabble in *hari-e* from time to time and entertain ideas for future projects, my overriding passion these days is the translation of literature pertaining to Kochi Prefecture. My first book translation was about the prefectural bird, the fairy pitta (*yairo-chō* 八色鳥: *ya* 八 meaning eight, *iro* 色 meaning colour, and *chō* 鳥 meaning bird), an extraordinarily beautiful, yet mysteriously elusive, eight-coloured bird that is said to enchant any birdwatcher who is lucky enough to set eyes on it.⁴ Most recently, I participated in the translation of a compilation of research articles pertaining to precious corals, fascinating marine creatures whose skeletal axis is transformed into jewellery and craftwork that is treasured for its glossy translucence and exquisite shades of colour ranging from white through ‘angel skin’ pink to blood red.⁵

The creamy buff tones of Tosa washi, born from clear jade-green rivers, bathed in golden sunlight under azure skies, and coloured with plant and mineral dyes of every

hue, tint, and shade; the iridescent blue of the fairy pitta flitting among the dappled greens and browns of the evergreen broad-leaved forest; the delicate pinks and vivid reds of the coral that adorns the indigo depths of the Kuroshio Current – these are just a few of the colours of Kochi, reflections of nature in all its abundance, and my enduring source of wonder and inspiration.

⁴ Nakamura, Takio 中村滝男, *Yairo-chō: fukai mori de kurasu yōsei* ヤイロシヨウ: 深い森でくらす妖精, Chikyū fushigi hakken shirīzu 3 地球不思議発見シリーズ3, Kabushikigaisha Popurasha 株式会社ポプラ社, Tokyo, 2001.

⁵ Iwasaki, Nozomu et al 岩崎望編者, *Sango no bunka-shi: hōseki-sango wo meguru kagaku, bunka, rekishi* 珊瑚の文化誌: 宝石珊瑚をめぐる科学・文化・歴史, Tōkai Daigaku Shuppankai 東海大学出版会, Kanagawa, December 2008. Iwasaki, Nozomu et al 岩崎望編者, *A Biohistory of Precious Corals: Scientific, Cultural and Historical Perspectives*, Tōkai Daigaku Shuppankai 東海大学出版会, Kanagawa, Japan, February 2010.