

A COLLECTOR'S GUIDE



藍

JAPANESE

INDIGO

A
companion
guide to
Singing
the Blues



TO
JAPANESE
TEXTILES
with John Marshall





Saint Titus Press
in association with the
Azul Propaganda League
and the Foundation for Free the Fiber

All artwork, photos, and text are original to the author unless otherwise noted.
Book design by the staff (John) at St. Titus Press®, using Photoshop and InDesign on MAC OS.
Published and distributed through Saint Titus Press®, a subsidiary of The Church of the Divinely Amused® c/o John Marshall
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A COLLECTOR'S GUIDE
TO JAPANESE TEXTILES

藍 Japanese Indigo

A Companion Guide to Singing the Blues



with John Marshall

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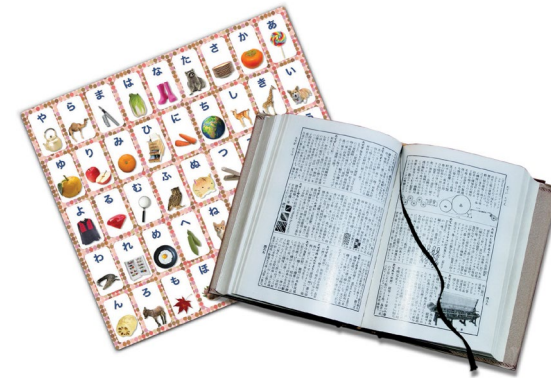
About This Book

This book is the first of a series of publications prepared as companion texts to collections of textiles I have compiled. My hope is that the compendiums, together with the text and illustrations, will help you gain a better understanding of the textile treasures you may currently possess, or perhaps be of help in making educated choices as you expand upon what you already cherish, or are able to view in the collections of others.

Simply by nature of the fact that the collections I offer are vintage and historic textiles, and are therefore limited in number, most people will not have access to them. With that in mind, I've tried to prepare this publication as a reference tool that may be of value without the presence of the actual samples—as a stand-alone book. The value of the information presented in this volume will be greatly enhanced if you have access to my book *Singing the Blues* at your side since I refer to traditional methods of Japanese indigo production.

All of the textiles presented here, in mounted form or as photographs, are pieces I have collected over the past forty-plus years in anticipation of being able to follow through on this life-long project. I've done all of the mounting and assembly myself as I wind down evenings after my daily chores. I sincerely hope you find it as useful as I would like it to be.

The box housing the deluxe collection was individually produced with care by loom-maker Anthony Klissus of Northwest Looms, Cheyenne, Wyoming. I am very pleased to have him on board with this project.



A note on Japanese terms as used in this book...warning: this may be more than you want to know!

The Japanese language is very direct and consistent in its use of its own writing system. Inconsistencies rear their ugly heads as we try to convert it to romanized versions. I've italicized all Japanese words to help them stand out. I've adhered, mostly, to the Hepburn system of spelling since I have found that it is closest to how words are actually pronounced in Japanese. The one exception is that I have chosen to write all of the sounds found in the Japanese words. For example, Tokyo would be written as *Toukyou*, since the long "o" is the correct Japanese pronunciation (とうきょう).

In addition, I've hyphenated compound words to help you identify the component parts. *Honai* (本藍・ほんあい) becomes *hon-ai* (authentic + indigo), and it also helps you to avoid pronouncing it as *ho-nai*, which has no meaning. The exception to this rule is when a phonetic change occurs, such as when two or more words are joined. A common example is *aizome*. The component parts are *ai* (藍) plus *some* (染め). When combined, the "so" of *some* changes to "zo" in pronunciation, giving us *aizome*. To hyphenate the word, as in *ai-zome*, would imply that "zome" is a stand-alone word, which in this case it is not.



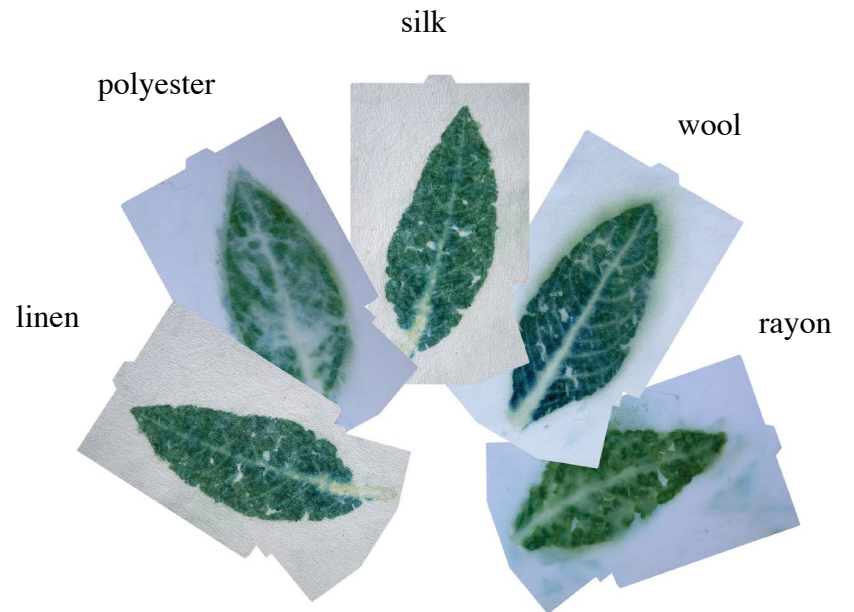
John's indigo patch in Covelo, California

Shades of Indigo

It's difficult to appreciate how blue-green the indigo leaf remains when dried unless we compare it to dry leaves of other plants randomly collected from my garden: pyracantha, privet, and wisteria.



Dried leaf—
Polygonum tinctorium



Each fiber takes the dye in a unique manner. The time of year the leaf is picked, the source of the fiber and how it was processed, and many other factors can and do play a part in the actual color achieved. I'm always delighted!

Shades of Blue

濃淡

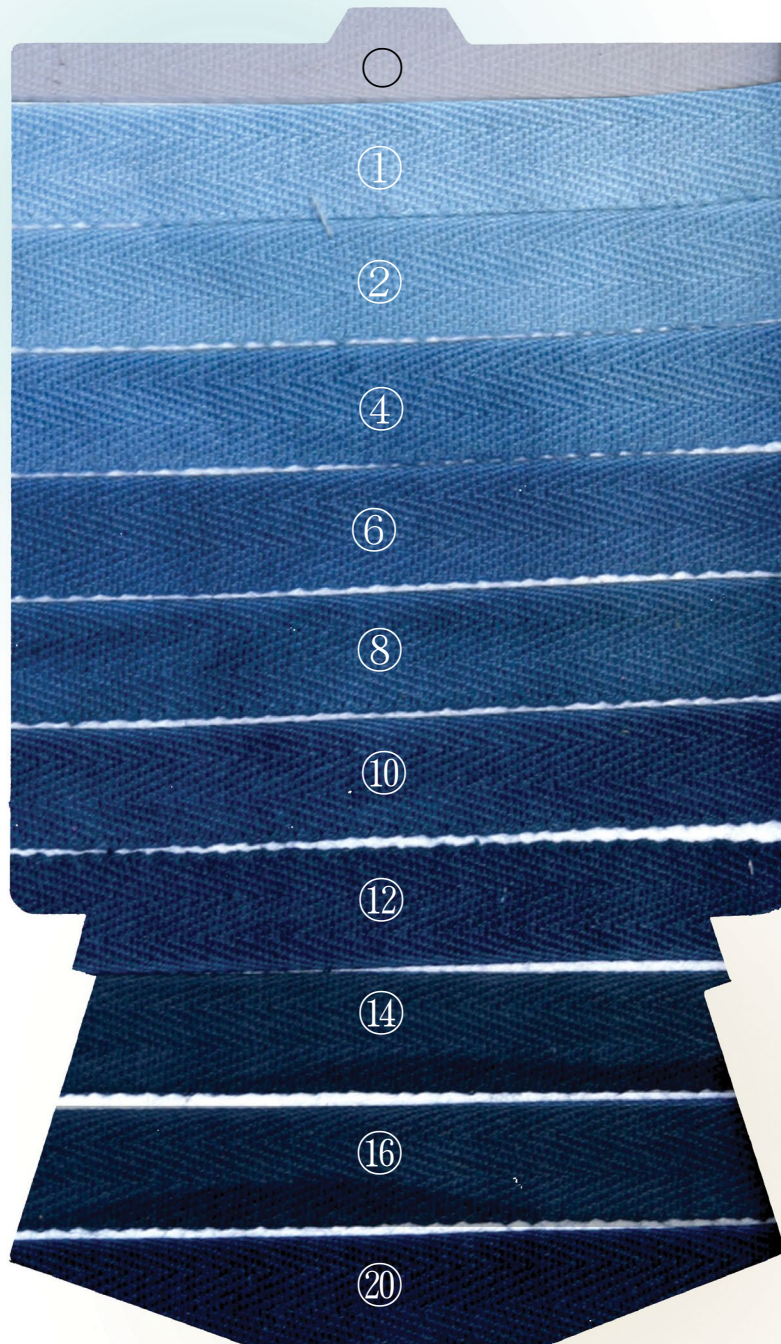
Of all the countries and cultures of the world, none seems to appreciate the delicate shades of blue produced by indigo more than Japan does. The fact that each shade of blue has its own poetic name is just one indication of this appreciation.

Several of the names below incorporate the same terms as key color reference points. I'd like to define them here to help you better understand them: *hanada* refers to the specific shade of blue achieved with eleven dips into the vat; *ai* refers to the color achieved with fourteen dips; *kachi* with eighteen dips; and *kon* is close to the deepest blue—normally twenty or more dips. Beyond *kon* the color starts to appear black.

Indigo shops in Japan are called *ai-ya*, but they are also known as *kon-ya*.

1. 藍白 *aijiro*, white-indigo
2. 水縹 *mizu-hanada*, water-hanada
3. 瓶覗 *kame-nozoki*, just-a-glance-at-the-vat
4. 水浅葱 *mizu-asagi*, color-of-green-onions-in-water
5. 浅葱 *asagi*, color-of-pale-green-onions
6. 濃縹 *kosa-hanada*, deep-hanada
7. 濃藍 *kosa-ai*, deep-indigo
8. 花浅葱 *hana-asagi*, green-onions-in-bloom
9. 浅縹 *asa-hanada*, pale-hanada
10. 納戸 *nando*, color-of-light-in-a-storage-room
11. 縹 *hanada*
12. 鉞 *buriki*, tin-sheet
13. 熨斗目 *noshime*, hair-ornaments-made-of-paper-strips
14. 藍 *ai*, indigo
15. 藍錆 *ai-sabi*, indigo-verdigris
16. 紺藍 *kon-ai*, navy-blue-indigo
17. 藍鉞 *ao-buriki*, tin-with-a-blue cast
18. 搗色 *kachi-iro*, *kachi-color*
19. 紫紺 *murasaki-kon*, purplish-kon
20. 留紺 *tome-kon*, halt-at-kon
21. 搗返 *kachi-kaeshi*, *kachi-color-revisited*
22. 濃紺 *nou-kon*, deep-kon

I dyed the samples to the left on cotton using the recipe for the reduction vat found on page 50 of Singing the Blues. The numbers represent the times dipped.





2

Diver Dan

by John Marshall

My specialty, and my passion, is a technique called *katazome*. Throughout this book you'll find references to this rice-paste resist process, along with many examples in which it has been employed. I'd like to open with a sample of a piece I have dyed, sample 2, Diver Dan.

I grew the indigo in my garden for the blues and scraped the red iron oxide from the walls of my hand-dug well to add just a hint of rose here and there to the design.

The stencil for this image was originally carved for a series of diminutive *maiwai* (fishermen's celebratory robes), called *hinagata*, that I have been working on for decades.



Hinagata (miniature garment) of Urashima Tarou visiting the Dragon King at the bottom of the ocean. Silk with natural-indigo pigments and other natural dyes, by the author.



Blue, Born of Indigo
Blue, Bluer than Indigo
 青は藍より出て藍より青し

There is a term in Japanese, *shutsuran*, which means “surpassing one’s master.” It is written 出藍. The character 出 literally means “to come from” and 藍 is the character for “indigo.”

青は藍より出て藍より青し

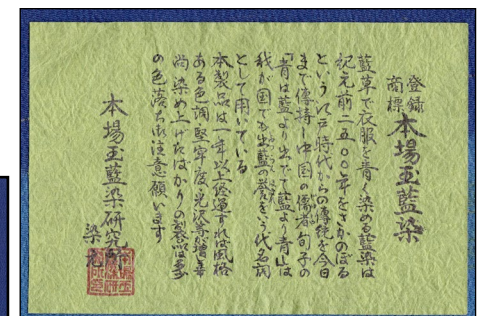
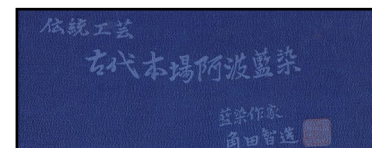
Following is the text to the green label attached to the bolt from which sample 3 was taken. Roughly translated it reads:

Authentically Dyed with Aidama®

Indigo dyeing, that is to say, textiles that have been dyed with indigo plants, has been around since prehistoric times—more than 2,500 years. There is a proverb handed down to us through Chinese Confucianism that became popular during the Edo Period that goes, “Blue, Born of Indigo; Blue, Bluer than Indigo.” It speaks of a pupil excelling his master. As a nation we may certainly lay claim to this high praise and make use of the poem as our own.

The richness of color and luster of this textile will only increase as time passes. However, initially, there is the possibility of some slight crocking. We ask that you keep this in mind during the first year of use.

Authentic Aidama Research Center
 Headmaster



The blue image, above, was dyed into one end of the silk bolt. It reads,

Traditional Craft
 Ancient Authentic Awa Indigo Dyework
 Dyed by Tsunoda Chizou (stamp)



Sample Tins

To the left are several actual samples of indigo-related products with a description of them below.



Fresh leaves picked and dried.



Sukumo, traditionally composted indigo leaves, from Tokushima.



Polygonum tinctorium seeds.



Chinden (pigment) produced through fermentation and flocculation.

Aibana collected during production of fermented, fresh-leaf pigment.





5

Stripes 縞

Stripes may not be the first pattern that comes to mind when you think of traditional Japanese textiles, but stripes, in so many forms, have always been a popular motif.

This sample offers a very warm and inviting version in its simplicity and color placement. Just three colors have been used—white, medium blue, and deep blue. The latter two were both vat dyed in a fermentation vat using natural indigo from Tokushima.



From a print by Utagawa Kuniyoshi—indigo pigment is also used in block prints.



6

Dyed in the Yarn

絲染め

There are several approaches to dyeing with indigo. The simplest approach, and the most direct, is to vat-dye the yarns before weaving. This is called *itozome*.

Itozome may be a solid color of any shade; or it may employ a resist to localize color and perhaps build up many shades with repeated dunkings, in which case it is called *kasuri*.

Kasuri also has many variations, depending on how the resist is applied or the region in which it is produced.

To the left are samples of itozome ready for the loom. All are cotton.



Above is a sample of egasuri-pictorial ikat.



7

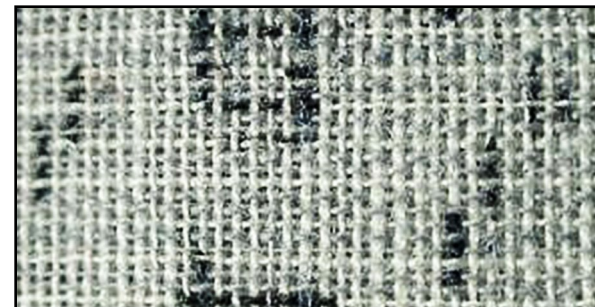
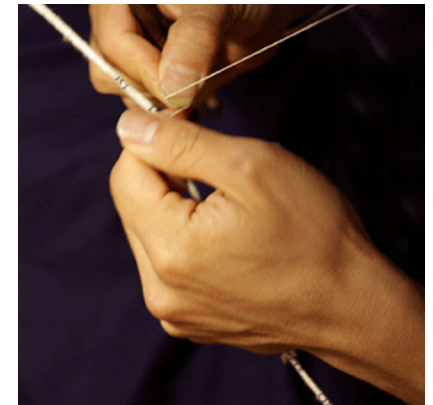
Kagasuri

蚊 紵

Kasuri-dyed fabrics come in a wide range of patterns. A popular pattern for both men and women is *kagasuri*. *Ka* means mosquito—the idea being that the little flecks of pattern are as small as the insect. Most often dyed with indigo, *kagasuri* may have a dark or a white background.

The sample shown to the left is a complicated version requiring two different sets of ties and multiple dunkings in the fermentation vat. The fiber is called *asa*. *Asa* is a somewhat loose, generic term meaning “bast fibers.” This particular sample is ramie, which is technically called *choma* or *karamushi* in Japanese.

An artist tying off bundles of thread with strong string. The string will prevent the wrapped areas from receiving any dye. The bundles must be tied several times if more than one color or shade is to be expressed. Contemporary artists will often substitute polywrap when covering larger areas.

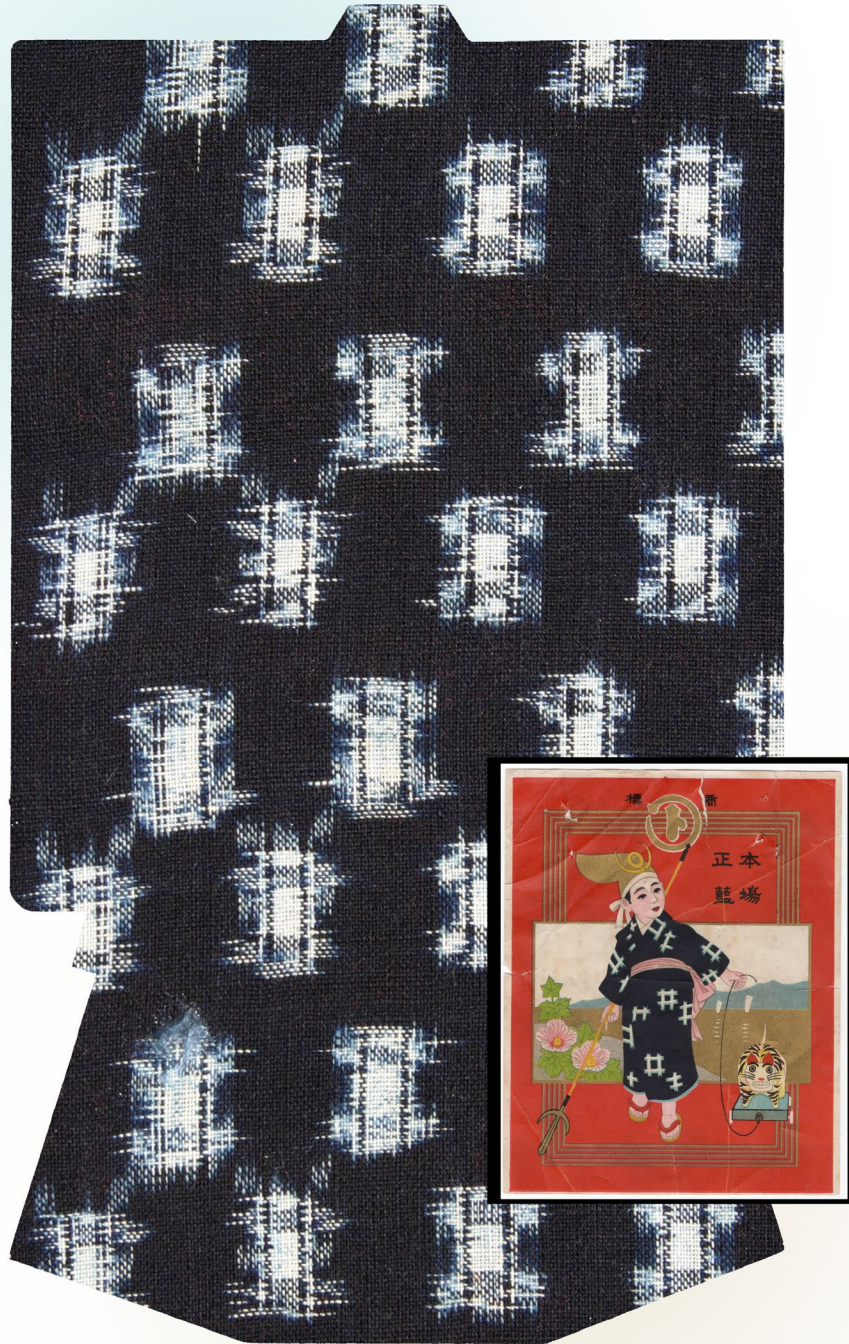


All but the indigo section was tied off to preserve the white background in the sample (to the left) of ramie kagasuri.

Another approach is to measure and hand-paint each tiny spot on each strand of yarn, carefully calculating to have them match up in the design once woven.



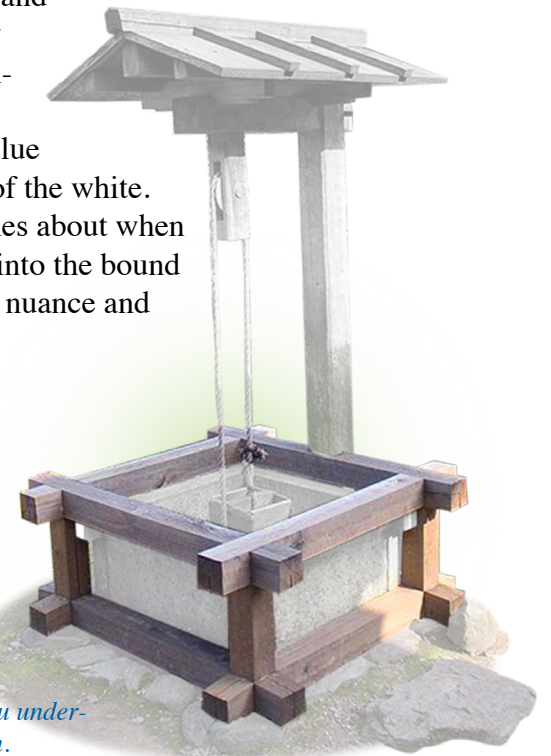
Bingogasuri • Single-Color 備後緋・一色

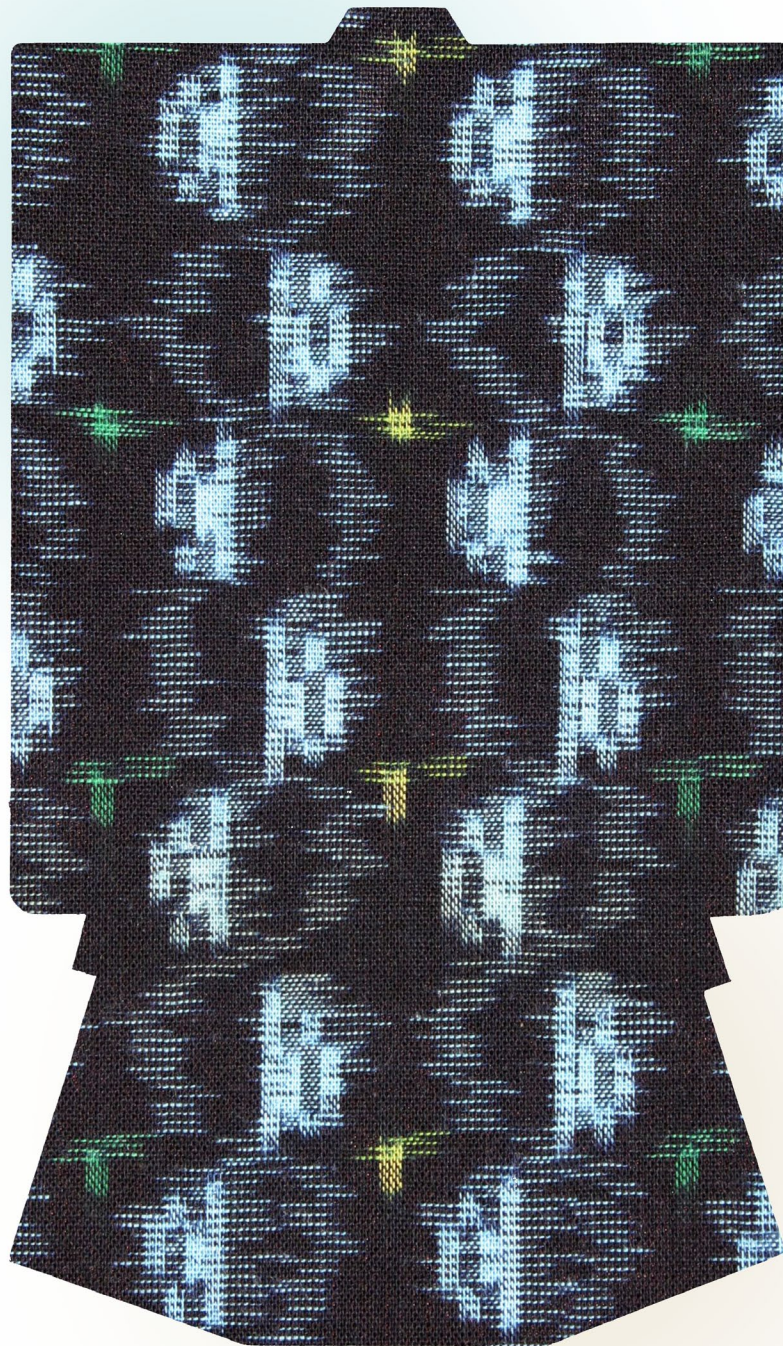


Bingo is a region nestled in the hills of Hiroshima Prefecture, reaching down to the Inland Sea. It is famous for its *kasuri* dyework. Tradition has it that *bingogasuri* was born when in 1853 Tomita Kyuusaburo (富田久三郎) decided to tie a bamboo sheath around a bundle of cotton thread to protect certain areas from the indigo dye. When both warp and weft threads are protected in this manner, dyed, and then woven, the cross-hatch formed by the intersecting blank areas gives us a pattern called *igeta*, which means “well frame.” This pattern remains popular even today. Many more patterns were devised as demand for the region’s dyeing increased.

The sample presented here is a variation on the *igeta* design. The almost-black shade of the intense indigo is a highly-sought-after color and requires sixteen to twenty dips into the fermentation-reduced vat. Notice the subtle shade of medium blue encroaching on portions of the white. This additional color comes about when the indigo wicks slightly into the bound bundle of threads, adding nuance and beauty to the imagery.

The label that came with this bolt shows a young boy dressed in bingogasuri, woven with the classic igeta design. The image of the well frame to the right may help you understand the origins of the pattern.





Bingogasuri • Multi-Color

備後絣・三色

Bingogasuri is best known as a cotton, country textile worn by farmers and townsfolk. As demand for *bingogasuri* increased, so, too, did the range of natural dyes added.

Most of the yarns in this sample were first dyed a pale robin's-egg blue; sections were tied off and then over-dyed to a deep midnight-blue. In addition, a few strands were dyed yellow, using a plant called *kariyasu*.

If you look closely at this sample, you will be able to see a total of four colors—the robin's-egg blue, the midnight blue, the *kariyasu* yellow, and one more color—a green formed by dyeing the pale blue over the yellow before tying off the strands.

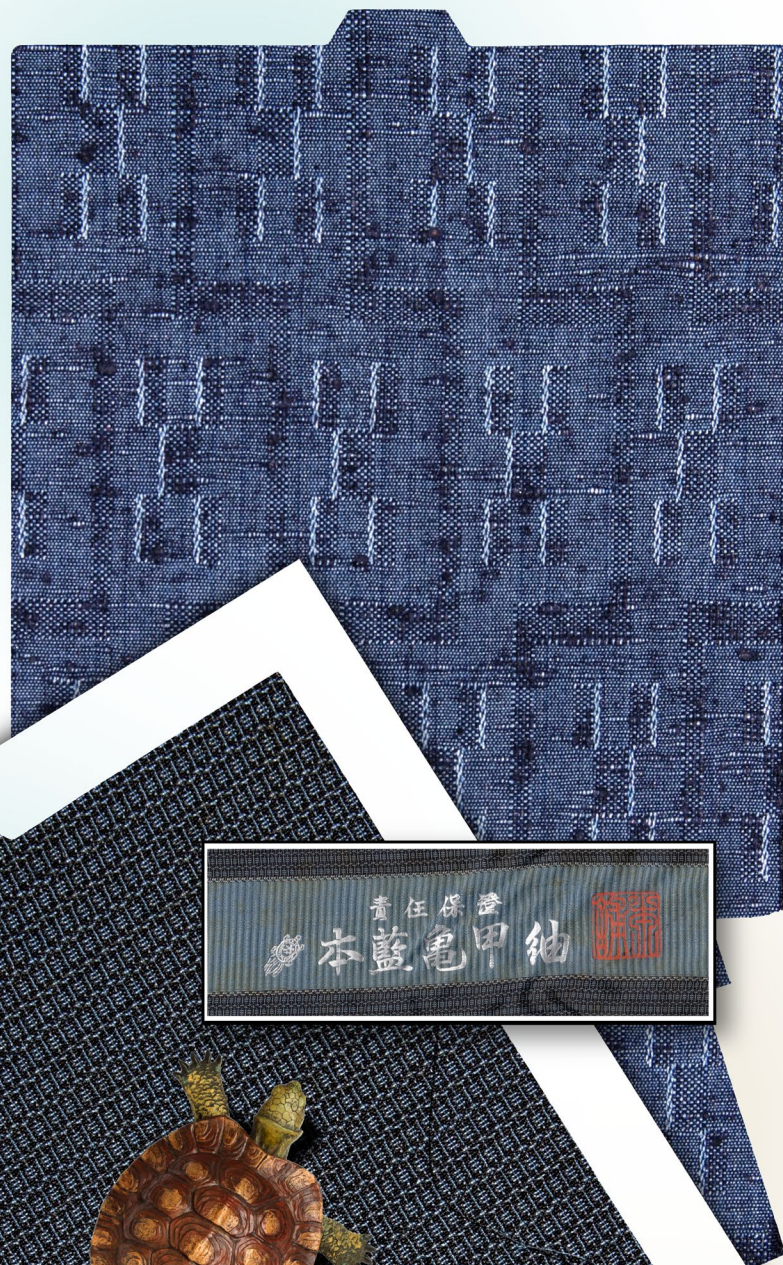


Historically, bamboo sheaths were used to help protect the yarns from being dyed in selected areas. The sheath was wrapped around the yarn and then bound in place with string. The sheath was taken from the nodes of bamboo stalks. Today, plastic wrap is commonly used instead.



All of the tags shown above came with this bolt. The one that looks like a postage stamp guarantees the product to be yarn dyed with pure natural indigo. The larger label tells us that it is authentic bingogasuri. And the lower label repeats the information already presented and also states that it is 100% cotton fiber.

10



11

Hand-Woven Tsumugi

手織り紬

This beautifully dyed fabric appears to be a *kasuri*-dyed pattern. Although it is indigo and hand-woven tsumugi, it is not what may truly be called “ikat.” The various shades of blue and white are woven such that they occasionally disappear to the back or are carried within the core of the weave, hidden from view.

Tsumugi is silk that has been spun using cocoons from which the moth has hatched. Reeled silk comes from cocoons in which the moth has been killed before it exits, allowing weavers to unroll (reel) the silk as one long strand. Reeling is virtually impossible once the moth has broken through, in which case the damaged cocoon is carded and spun into yarn. *Tsumugi* is loved for its slightly nubby texture and loft.



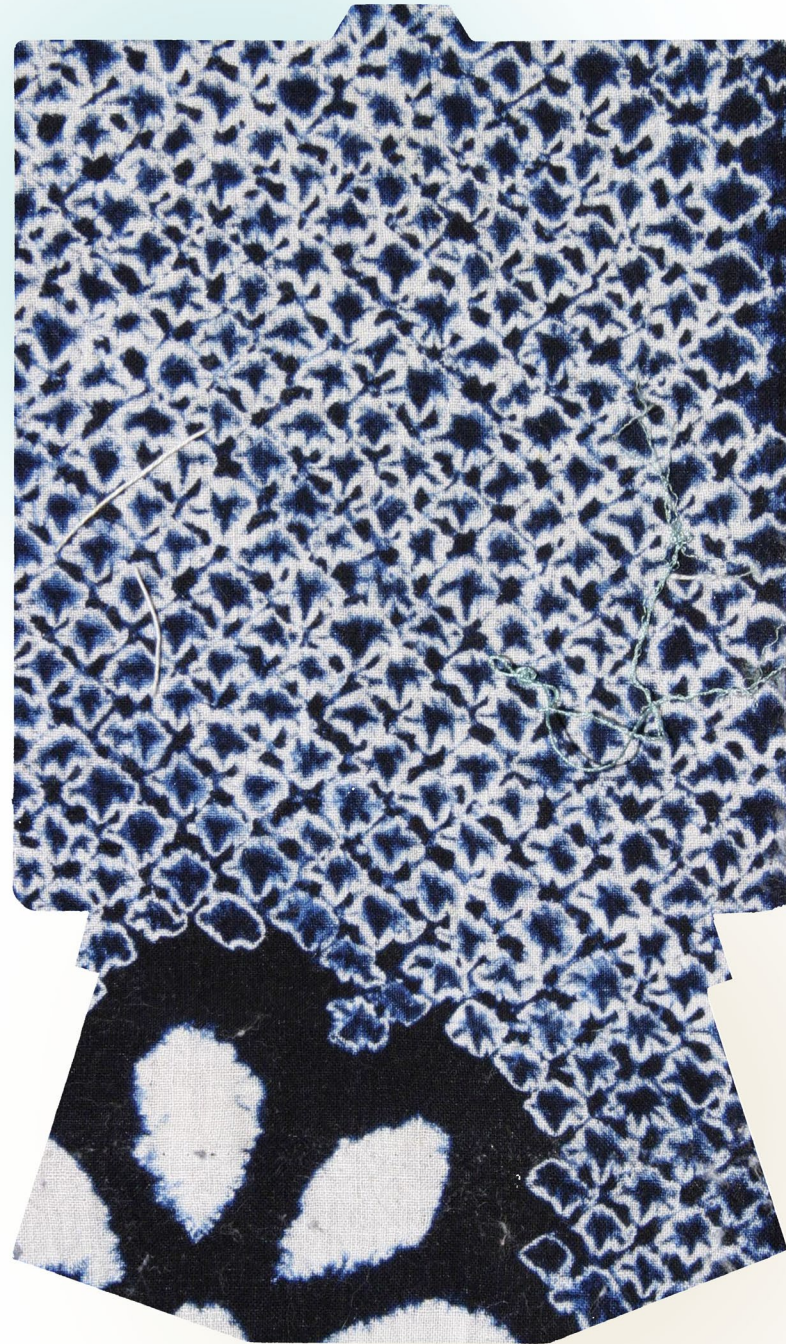
Spinning tsumugi yarn from carded cocoons.

Kikkou-Tsumugi

亀甲紬

The sample in the foreground to the left appears to be *kagasuri* (sample 7, page 18), but actually isn't *kasuri* at all. The label states that it is real indigo woven in a pattern called *kikkou*, or tortoise shell. The white threads are woven such that portions of each are hidden behind the blue strands, mimicking ikat.

This *kikkou* pattern is commonly used in men's clothing.



12

Hitta-Miura-Shibori

疋田三浦絞り

The Arimatsu district of Nagoya is famous for this style of *shibori* on cotton. As difficult as it may be to believe, each little square was pinched into quarters and tied off. A completed bolt of this fabric, tied off entirely in this manner, forms a solid and dense brick of fiber.

The tied-yardage brick is dipped up to ten or twelve times to achieve this depth of color. The little bit of wicking that does occur helps to give us the tonal shading seen here and adds greatly to the appeal of the finished garment.

This cotton sample was dyed in the late 1960s by Sugiyama Mitsuko (杉山光子).

The widely spaced polka-dot-like spots you see toward the top of the image on the right were applied through a stencil to act as a guide. As long as the craftsperson ties every spot, the image will turn out nicely. The blue dye used to prepare the guide marks is not indigo, but a dye taken from the plant called aobana, or “blueflower.”



Aobana, Commelina communis, blooms in the early spring. The petals are picked and used to make a fugitive dye—so fugitive that it is ideal for transferring guides and sketches to fabric in preparation to stitching or applying paste resist. It completely disappears when it comes in contact with water during the pre-wetting and rinsing stages.



13

Warp Daiten-Shibori

大典絞り

Many of the *shibori* techniques found in Japan are extremely labor intensive. One way to speed things up is to incorporate very strong threads in the weave and, once the yardage is taken from the loom, pull them to draw the threads in tight as the yardage is scrunched. This process is called *daiten-shibori* in Japanese. These threads may follow the warp or the weft.

The sample I've selected to represent this category was originally part of a summer kimono called a *yukata*. If you look closely, you can see where the threads were placed in the warp—they left telltale gaps in the weave once they were removed. Pulling the threads taut scrunched the yardage and created the dashlike pattern.



The threads in the bolt above have been sewn by hand in running stitches and are ready to be pulled to cinch in the fabric. They serve the same function whether they are sewn or woven. When hand-sewn, the gathers tend to be more irregular and leave no telltale gaps once removed.



14

Kanoko-Shibori

鹿の子絞り

Tie-dye has long been popular in the West, but most people don't seem to realize the exquisite level of intricacy achieved by the Japanese.

In this sample each and every little raised mountain has been pinched into shape and tied. Keep in mind that the fabric started out flat. The heat used in setting the red dye also sets the miniature pleats. Indigo pigment was brushed along the surface of what would become the right side, before untying the bolt to reveal the completed imagery. Normally, this yardage would be steamed and stretched back to its original width, leaving only a small trace of the original texture, as may be seen here, as well as in samples 12 and 13.

I've selected this swatch, freshly untied and not yet steam-stretched, to help you better appreciate how the indigo was applied—skimming just the tip of each peak.



Even an as-yet-undyed bolt of tied silk has great value. This bolt commemorates the first-year anniversary of an employee who has been promoted to shop manager. Part of the inscription reads “Just one pinch, ten thousand times...” (一粒万倍).



15

Rouketsuzome

臙纈染め

Wax resist was introduced to Japan through textile imports from Indonesia. The beautiful batiks from Java and nearby islands can readily be seen used as obi among the fashionable. As has often been the case, the technique was adopted and adapted by dyers in Japan, with the traditional patterns and colors adjusted to suit Japanese tastes.

The sample presented here had the wax applied through a metal stencil. The fabric is silk *chirimen* (crepe) and was originally worn as a *haori*.

Stencils, metal stamps, and brushes are all used to apply wax in Japan. Another name for wax resist is *rozome*.



A broad range of tools may be used to apply wax, including rollers and metal stamps.



16

Tatakizome

たたき染

The verb *tataku* means to strike or tap another object. In this case it is a wax-laden brush that is tapped against another hard object to scatter droplets of molten wax evenly over the surface of the yardage. While the tools are very simple, a great deal of skill and training is required to perfect the technique.

If you look closely at our sample, you'll see that there are many shades of blue. This indicates that the wax was first spattered over the white yardage, dyed, and spattered again as successive coats of dye were applied.

It's difficult to determine if this piece has been vat- or brush-dyed, even when reverting to our default investigative approach of looking at the reverse side of the yardage. In either case, very dilute solutions of indigo were used for each coat.

A typical fude-style brush used to apply the wax for tatakizome.





Katazome I 型染め・第一

Katazome lends itself to both simple and highly complex designs. Two events that allowed Japan to reach great heights in this area were the development of *shibugami*, a hand-made, mulberry-fiber-based paper that is infused with persimmon tannin, and rice paste, a very tenacious resist that is easy to use and washes out easily with water.

The paper is brittle when dry and very supple when wet. This makes for easy-to-carve, crisp lines and a finished stencil that will hold up to repeated abuse. This in turn spawned large-scale production of popular patterns—making fashionable textiles available to all.

The paste is easy to produce and totally nontoxic, made simply from rice and its waste product, bran. The drawback to rice-paste resist is that it will dissolve if submerged in an indigo vat for extended periods of time—unlike string, wax, or latex. This drawback may be overcome by immersing yardage in the vat for only moments at a time, giving the indigo a chance to oxidize between each dip. As the paste starts to reconstitute, the dyer simply sets it aside to dry; once dry, the paste is as good as new and ready for another round of dunks.

This simple design of cherry blossoms is on very sheer, hand-spun, hand-woven cotton from the late 1800s. It was sewn into a summer garment but apparently never worn. Paste on fabric this sheer will dissolve quickly, so the craftsman must have taken great care in monitoring it to achieve such a deep color while maintaining the integrity of the paste and clarity of the image.



Edo-Komon

江戸小紋

Edo is the old name for Tokyo and *edo-komon* style of dyeing dates back to the early days of the Edo Period (1603-1868). Literally, *komon* means “small pattern,” and the technique is known for its intricately minute imagery.

The sample included in this collection dates back to the early 1800s and is a portion of what had been a *kataginu*. It is hand-spun, hand-woven cotton. The pattern was applied to the right side through a paper stencil using rice-paste resist, then dipped up to five times in a fermentation-reduced indigo vat using *sukumo*.

The reverse side is a solid blue, indicating that it was vat dyed.



By itself, the top is called a kataginu. However, it is always worn with the bottom, skirtlike trousers, hakama. As a set they are called kamishimo, which conveniently means “top and bottom.”



Katazome II 型染め・第二

Katazome, in partnership with indigo, lends itself to vat dyeing as well as to techniques in which the dyes are brushed on. The same pros and cons apply—highly intricate and repetitive patterns become possible, but the paste must be monitored with degradation in mind.

Both *jizome* and *surikomi* brushes are employed when painting indigo yardage. The *jizomebake* (literally, “the background brush”) is used to apply even coats of color over large surfaces. The fabric is stretched much like a hammock between two posts or trees. This allows for an even flow of air on both sides of the fabric. The airflow speeds up drying. This is important because, once softened, the risk of damaging the paste (having it slough off) is increased each time the brush rubs over it. The period between each coat gives the resist time to dry completely before the paste is roughed up again.

Once the base depth of blue is achieved, the craftsman will switch to a smaller *surikomibake* (literally, “the grind-in brush”) to target specific areas with darker accents, such as the centers of flowers or the point where two images touch.

The stylized Seven Treasure pattern shown to the left is a good example of the description above. Since it is not printed color, subtle variations in the placement of each darkened accent will add to the movement and the appeal of the entire piece.

Taking a peek at the back of this silk swatch will confirm that it has not been vat dyed.



Seven Treasures: scroll, weight, key, cloves, treasure bag, cloak of invisibility, wish-granting mallet.

A paper stencil similar to the one used to apply the rice paste to the silk sample.



20

Katazome Futonji • Pristine

型染め・布団地・新

Katazome is a method of dyeing that relies on stencils and rice-paste resist to depict an image. The paste prevents areas of the fabric from receiving color and later, when washed, exposes the image hidden beneath the resist.

In this instance, the pasted yardage was dipped up to ten times in a fermentation vat then washed to reveal circles of cranes and tortoises. To further add interest, iron-oxide pigment (*bengara*) was applied selectively over many of the white areas, not taking any particular care to stay within the lines. This piece is a segment of fabric used as a *futon* cover (*futonji*).

Relatively pristine pieces, such as this sample, can look a bit sloppy in how the colors were applied—with almost a caked-on look to the red. It is only through time and use, once both the indigo and the rust have been abraded to reveal the fiber beneath, that the textile takes on its true beauty.

Compare this piece to well-worn sample 22, page 44.

The reverse side of this sample has a well-defined image rather than a more or less solid blue. In a process called *chuugata*, resist was applied to both sides of the fabric, taking care to precisely match up the pasted portion of the design, front and back. Resisting both sides helps to prevent any blue from seeping through to the front in the pasted portions, which would gray the white areas of the imagery.

Cross sections of the weave illustrate how the pigment coating is affected by the resist.



Applying one layer of paste allows some blue to seep toward the surface.



Applying two layers prevents this seepage, keeping the protected area pure white.



21

Boro

襤

The most commonly found version of indigo dyeing is vat-dyed yarns and yardage. The indigo, in pigment form, is suspended in a vat, and its oxygen molecules are stripped away. This is called a “reduction vat”—the size of the indigo molecule has been reduced in size. When the saturated fiber is pulled from the vat, the oxygen in the air reattaches itself to the molecules and the blue appears. This version of dyeing leaves the indigo sitting on the surface of the fiber as a topical dye. As such, it can mask the luster of fibers such as silk, and it can also rub off when abraded—which is called “crocking.”

Crocking may seem like a drawback to topical indigo, and it certainly is if your sporty blue jacket discolors your white silk blouse. However, the fact that it is topical, meaning that it isn’t absorbed to the core of the fiber and will wear away with time, gives us the unique worn look associated with jeans and distressed *boro* fabrics.

The kaimaki to the left is indigo-dyed with paste resist applied through a cone (tsutsugaki) to define the lines of the imagery. Kaimaki typically have an extra panel sewn into the center back, creating a wider garment that is easier to snuggle into as a bed quilt.



Well-worn cotton fabric from the lining of a kaimaki. The indigo pigment has been worn away from the surface, exposing the white core of the fiber—the essence of the beauty found in boro textiles.



Katazome Futonji • Worn

型染め・布団地・古

Indigo is a pigment and therefore topical. As it wears with age the fiber beneath becomes increasingly exposed. The sample included here is from an old bed-quilt cover (*futonji*). Long ago, additional islands of color were applied on top of the indigo in the form of iron oxide, also a pigment.

Through years of service, both types of pigments, the indigo and the rust, have sloughed off, allowing a beauty to surface that only time and use can expose.

Compare this worn bit of fabric dating from the early 1900s to the less-worn example found as sample number 19. In the West, we so often think of “new” as “better.” But traditionally many items in Japan were acquired in anticipation of what they would become in partnership with time.

Chuugata, the style of rice-paste resist used here, literally means “medium-sized pattern.” However, it also means “sandwiched-between pattern”—as in the fabric protected between two layers of paste.

The reverse side of the sample looks pretty much the same as the right side—a well-defined image. Resisting both sides keeps the white clean and sharp. And even though pigments primarily coat the surface of the fiber, some of the smaller particles do penetrate almost to the core.



When the pigment-based dyes are first applied, they create a coating around the fiber.



With age and use, the most-exposed areas of the pigment are worn down, revealing the lighter shades in the core of the weave.

23



24



Accents and After-Washes

隈取り・後塗り

To help you better appreciate the changes each new step brings about, I've prepared three samples using the same imagery. All have been dyed, starting with an application of rice paste as the resist on Japanese *sarashi* cotton. One was set aside as I applied pigment to the other two to darken the areas immediately adjacent to the paste.

All have been dunked in a reduced vat the same number of times. All had the resist washed away at the same time. I didn't do anything more to the first one, sample 23, leaving it with the one shade of solid blue. I was also finished with the second one, sample 24, with its darkened areas.

For the final piece, sample 25, I mixed soymilk with iron oxide and also with indigo pigment, thinning both down considerably. Using a *surikomi* brush, I casually applied my pigment mixtures, building up several layers of tones—allowing each application to dry completely before adding more. The final touch was to add a few spots of gold.



25

A wood spatula, called a deba-bera, was used to apply the paste through a stencil.



26

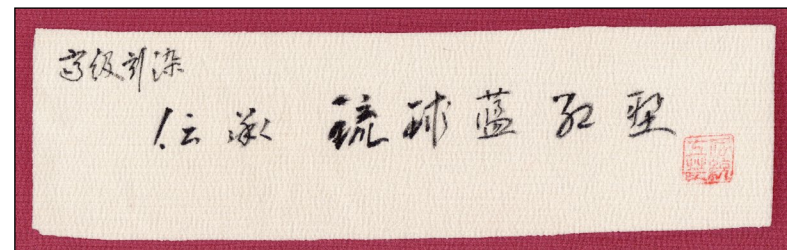
Bingata 紅型

It's often extremely difficult to distinguish between "real" *bingata* and *kata-ezome*, see sample card 27, page 52. In this case, however, it is clearly labeled.

It may be a bit difficult for some to read the cursive form of writing used in the label, so I've typed it here:

高級引染
伝家 琉球藍紅型

Top Quality Brush Dyeing
Heirloom Ryukyuu Indigo Bingata (*stamp*)



Rice paste was applied through a paper stencil to define the imagery. Cochineal mixed with barberry was brushed over the paste several times to build up depth of color. Before the paste was washed away, indigo was applied with a brush, saturating some areas while barely glossing over others to create a wide range of moody shadows, another form of *bokashi*. See sample number 28.

The fabric came to me as a bolt and is long enough (12m) to sew a standard *kosode* kimono.



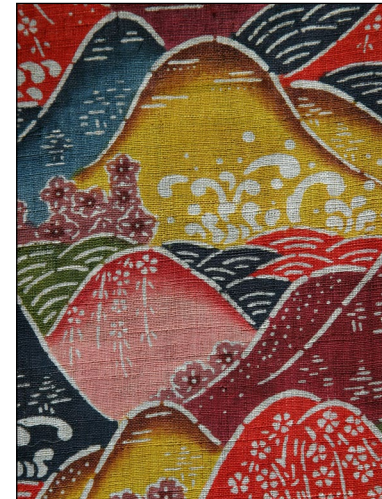
27

Kata-Ezome

型絵染め

To be politically correct, the term *bingata* should be used only in reference to textiles dyed in Okinawa by Okinawans using a rice-paste resist. *Kata-ezome* is the term used when referring to the same technique used outside of Okinawa or by artists who are not Okinawan.

The sample included here was first dyed with a pale wash of yellow on silk *chirimen*, a variety of crepe. A stencil was carved and used to apply the paste resist to the background area. The pigments (that includes indigo) were applied with a *surikomi* brush. The *surikomi* brush is designed to allow the artist to scrub the colors into the weave. To survive this step, the paste must tenaciously grip the fiber and hold on for all it is worth—otherwise, it would just be scoured away. If the paste is doing its job, the background will remain safely protected. Cracks similar to those found in some wax-resist techniques are considered a flaw.



The sample above will perhaps give you a better idea of Okinawan taste in color and design. Dyed almost entirely with pigments, the sources include indigo, orpiment, cinnabar, and cochineal, among others.



28

Oboro-Bingata

朧紅型

The term *bingata* literally means “vermillion form.” However, if we are a bit loose in the translation, it means “colorful patterns.” Having said that, it isn’t unusual to see designs dyed completely in shades of blue.

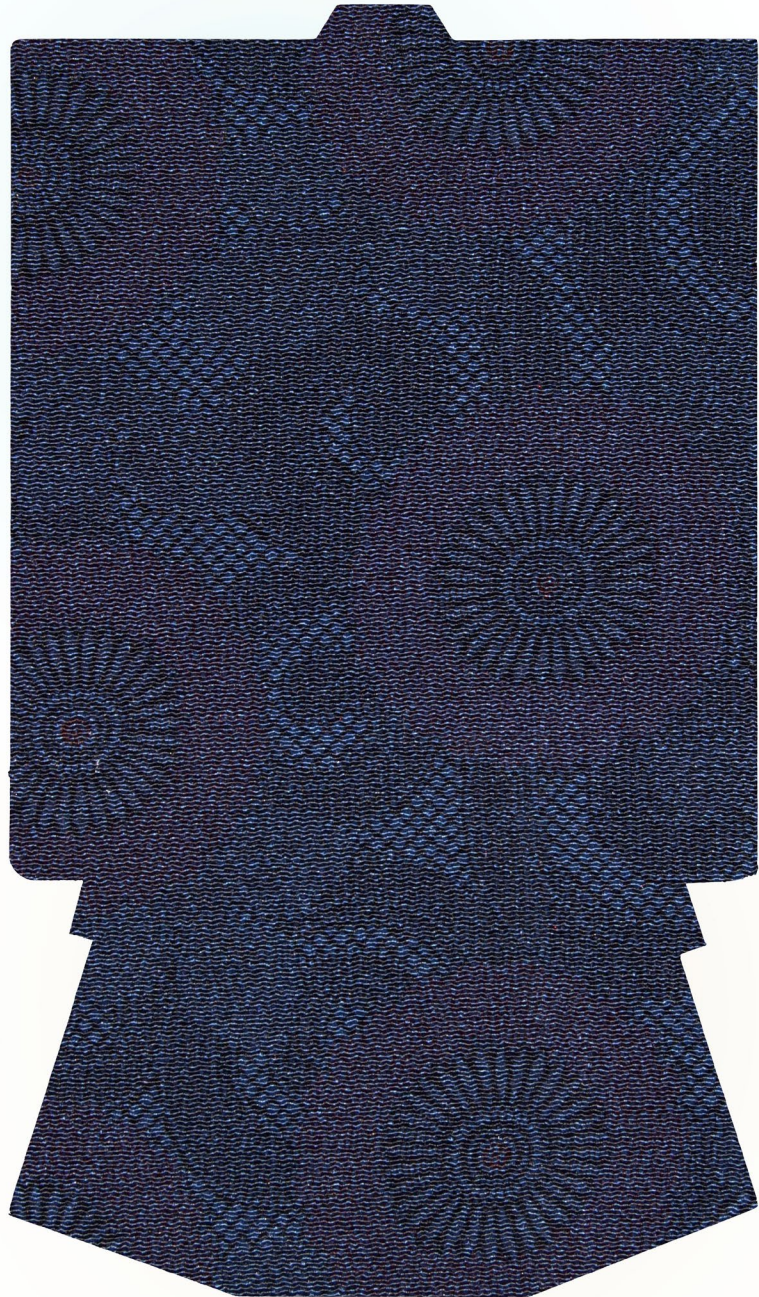
One of the distinguishing points of *bingata* is its liberal use of pigments that allow for rich and intense colors. The surrealistic relationship of the imagery, with insects towering over villages or flowers that dwarf trees, has greatly influenced mainland Japanese aesthetics. This is especially true since Japan took possession of the Kingdom of Okinawa in 1879, and the popularity of *bingata* spread.

This particular piece has been dyed in a style called *oboro-bingata*. *Oboro* means “misty” or “hazy” (the Chinese character is written as “dragon under the moon”). The first step is to apply the rice-paste resist to white fabric. Bright colors and delicate shadings are added, keeping more or less within the lines of the images. The resist is washed away, and then the colored areas are pasted over to protect them as the background is dyed.

As the protective layer of paste is applied, it is often deliberately positioned so as to miss some areas of color or leave noticeable areas of white, where more-than-the-dyed area has been covered. To some, this may look like the register is off, but it is actually considered one of the charming aspects of *oboro-bingata*. In the case of this sample, the background indigo pigment was brushed on the right side only.



The character for oboro, 朧.



Living National Treasure
Nakamura Yuujiro
 人間国宝中村勇二郎創作

Nakamura Yuujiro (1902-1985) was a very famous stencil carver and was designated a National Living Treasure in 1963. It was a great honor for dyers to be able to use his designs in their work.

The labels from this bolt of fabric reads as follows:

(In blue at top) 重要無形文化財 中村勇二郎彫刻
 Intangible Cultural Treasure Carved by Nakamura Yuujiro

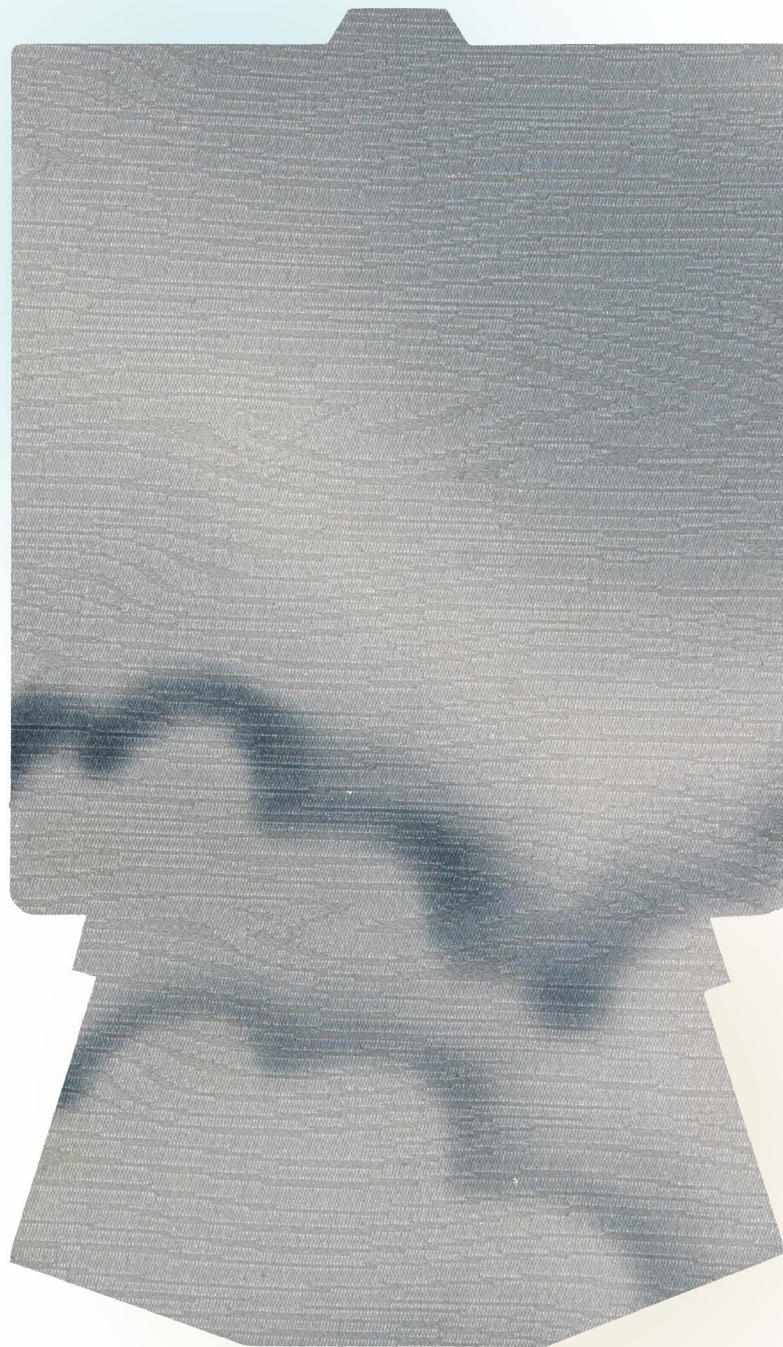
人間国宝中村勇二郎創作
 Created by the Living National Treasure Nakamura Yuujiro

天皇陛下献上伊勢型紙菊唐草絵図
 Chrysanthemum Arabesque Design Presented to His Imperial Highness.

The rest goes on to tell us of his passion for his work and the contributions he has made in helping to preserve traditional crafts.

人間国宝中村勇二郎師が天皇陛下献上に燃やした男の闘志と情熱は、道具彫の歴史に残る傑作、菊唐草絵図を生み、そこに浮彫りにされた、人の心に迫り来る見事な技は一人の人間国宝が追い求めた夢とロマンを語り続ける事だろう。





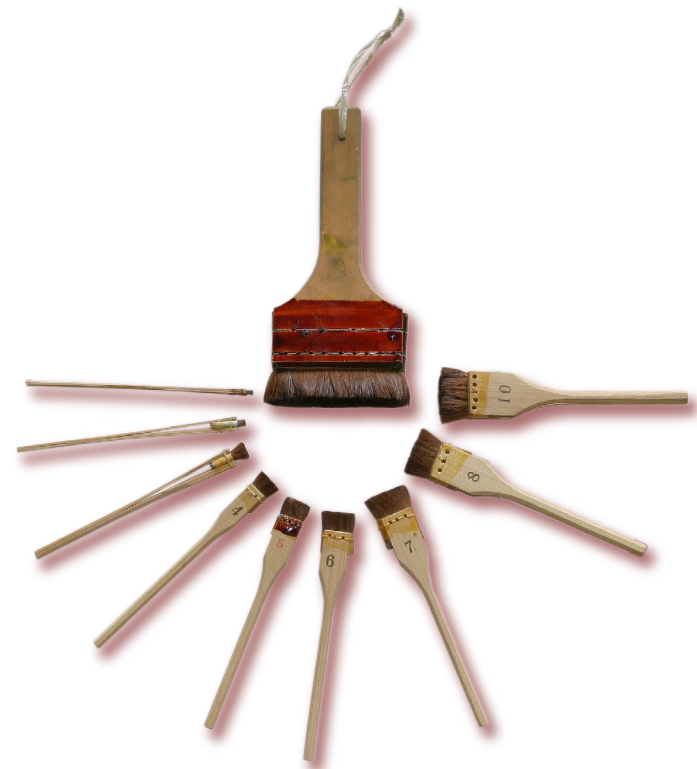
30

Hand-Brushed Shadings

手描ぼかし

Many forms of Japanese dyeing make liberal use of shadings, or *bokashi*. This may be done on a damp or dry surface. In either case, a *surikomi* brush is used, and the dyes are scrubbed in until the brush runs out of color.

This technique may be employed to create images, as we see in this sample of clouds on silk jacquard, or to add accents to the edges of petals and ships and such, as seen in traditional *bingata* pieces.



Surikomi brushes come in a wide range of sizes.



31

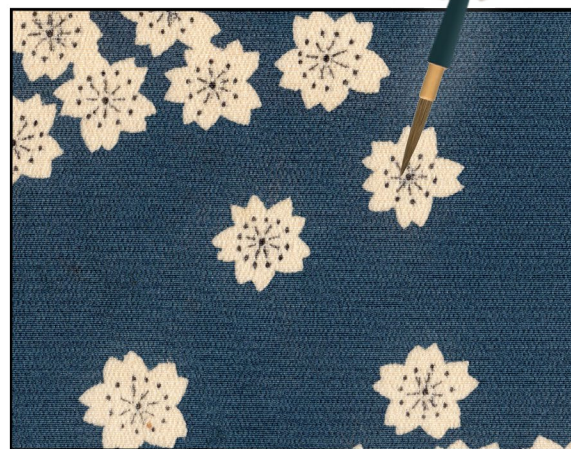
Hand-Painted Pigment

手書き・藍墨

Pigments may be used to create a reduction vat, but they may also be applied directly to the fiber with a brush.

A quick look at the reverse side of this sample shows us that any color visible is simply bleed-through from the front. Rice paste was applied to the right side to prevent the cherry-blossom pattern from receiving color. The background was dyed by applying several coats of pigment with a brush. Once the paste was washed away, the flower imagery was exposed.

The silhouette of the flower alone looks a bit forlorn. The artist chose to liven up the mood by going back with a *fude*-style brush and hand painting the anthers and filaments. The direct detailing method, with all its irregularities, softens the imagery by allowing for a kind of spontaneous movement not found in stencil work.



Crisp and delicate lines may be painted with the help of soymilk and a mensou-fude.



32

Tsujigahana

辻が花

Tsujigahana is distinguished by its marriage of *shibori* and hand-painting techniques.

The sample presented here sports *kanoko*-style *shibori*, dyed with madder root, accompanied by delicate lines of hand-painted indigo pigment depicting flowers and leaves. The leaves and blossoms have been shaded around the edges with indigo pigment to add a whimsical touch, typical of the *tsujigahana* style.

This sample was taken from fabric dyed in the early 2010s and was roughly stitched together in what is called *karinui*. These basted garments are assembled with temporary stitches to allow the potential customer to try on the piece to see how it looks before purchasing it.



Loosely basted panels help the customer to appreciate how nicely the dyed patterns match across seams and also affords the opportunity to try on the garment before it is sewn to fit.



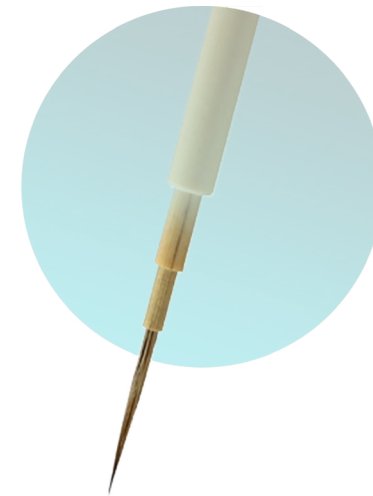
33

Wazarasa

和更紗

Sarasa is a term covering most printing techniques brought to Japan from India and Southeast Asia. This includes both block-printing and wax-resist methods. *Wa*, which means “Japan,” plus *sarasa*, gives us *wazarasa*, and refers more to the Japanese interpretation of the visual style than to the dye technique employed.

Our sample is dyed using several techniques, all employing indigo. First the yardage was vat dyed a pale gray-blue. Rice paste was applied to selected areas, and the yardage was dipped again to deepen the exposed sections. Brushes were used to apply ever-deepening shades of blue. Once the paste was washed out, the fine line details were carefully applied with a brush well suited to the task.



Mensou-fude are the preferred style of brush for all delicate hand painting.



Hand-Drawn Wazarasa

和更紗・手描き

As hard as it may be to believe, many of the *wazarasa* textiles are entirely hand drawn with pigments and dyes.

There are many instances in which an artist will do all of the painting by him or herself. However, craftspeople will specialize in a more commercial setting—with one person, following an artist's design, painting in all of the finest outlines. This requires a steady hand and intense concentration over long periods of work. The next step is for other craftspeople to fill in the colors, one specializing in a particular shade of blue, another in pink, and so on.

In this case, the entire bolt was dipped only once or twice into an indigo fermentation vat, and each successive color applied with fine brushes. With the exception of the initial outline, the colors are normally applied in progression from light to dark.

The pink employed is most likely a watered-down iron oxide, the greens formed by painting a wash of barberry (*shibuki*) or *kariyasu* over the indigo blue.

Bengara (iron oxide) is a pigment and as such tends to mat out the colors beneath (see sample 20, page 42). However, delicate tints and some transparency may be achieved by allowing the heavier bits to sink, using only the finest particles at the top of the solution to make the dye. Very fine mensou-fude-style brushes are required to draw in the delicate details.

The label, on the opposite page, states that this piece was dyed with Awa tadeai in a pine-ash reduced vat.

The dyer is Shimada Kenki.





35

Printed Wazarasa

和更紗・版

Centuries ago, the Japanese used their local materials and ingenuity to attempt to reproduce some of the treasured textiles that followed the introduction of the tea ceremony to Japan, often creating equally beautiful but distinct works of art.

Carved blocks of wood have been used to mimic the prints from India, but so have carved vegetables and, in later years, carved paper stencils.

The sample included in this collection was most likely printed using a series of woodblocks, with cat-whisker-fine lines drawn in by hand with indigo pigment. As a final step, the entire right side was brushed with a pale rinse of barberry and indigo to help soften the contrast between the printed shades and to lessen the impact of off-register or slightly blurred areas.

The reds are madder (*akane*), the yellows are barberry (*shibuki*), and the blues are indigo. The additional colors were created by overlaying the three primary dye sources.



Antique sarasa woodblocks from Japan look very much like modern-day rubber stamps.



Dorozome-Sarasa 泥染め更紗

There are many items in this collection that may be equally well placed in a variety of categories. The one thing they all share in common is that they have been at least partially dyed with natural Japanese indigo.

This piece is a rather complicated example. The label tells us that it is both *tegaki* (hand painted) and *dorozome* (mud dyed). It makes extensive use of indigo as well as several other natural dyes and so may also be classed as *kusakizome* (dyed with natural extracts).

Just as in the German language, Japanese allows for very long, compound words. The characters at the bottom of the label illustrate this well. If read as intended, we would write it *realnaturalindigomuddyed*. What a mouthful!



The label below reads,

本草木藍泥染
Authentic Natural Mud Dyeing
伝統的工芸品 証明 手描本泥染研究会
Traditional Craft Certificate of Authenticity
Hand-Painted Traditional Mud Dyeing Research Association

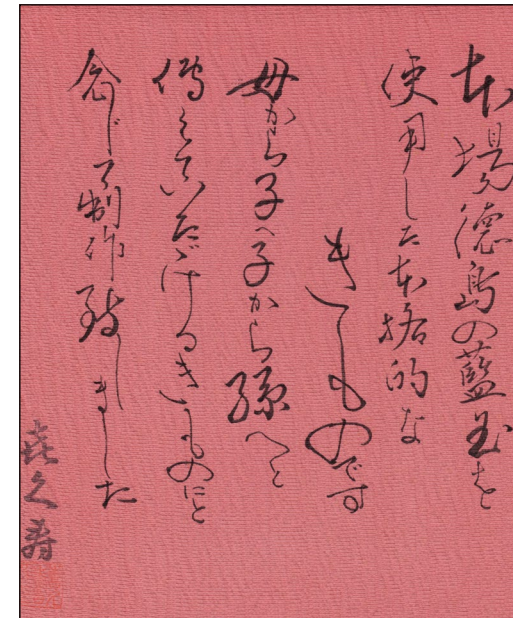


37

Categorizing Textiles

Deciding how to categorize any given sample can prove to be very difficult. This piece is a case in point.

It is *katazome*, stenciled rice-paste resist, done in the *bingata* style, typical of Okinawa, using natural indigo from Tokushima and, therefore, may also be classed as *aizome* (indigo dyeing) as well as vat dyeing. And to top it all off, it was spot dyed with and immersed in vegetable dyes—only to then be buried in mud, adding *kusakizome* (plant dyeing) and *dorozome* (mud dyeing) to its list of titles.



The text on the label accompanying the bolt of fabric reads as follows:

This yardage has been dyed using aidama from Tokushima, guaranteeing you a kimono of genuine quality. It was created with the love and knowledge that the kimono sewn from it will be passed from mother to daughter, and from daughter to grand-daughter.

(Signed and stamped) Mori Kyuuju.



38

Shijira I しじら織・第一

Shijira is one variety of cotton crepe. It makes use of over-spun yarns. The yarns are twisted to the point that they want to double back on themselves—much like the rubber band on a toy balsawood airplane when you spin the propeller too much. However, the yarns are prevented from doing that through the application of heavy starch. Once the fabric is woven and the starch washed out, the yarn relaxes and pulls back in on itself, creating the characteristically bumpy texture. Cotton is lightweight, and this raised texture helps to keep the fabric from coming in contact with the wearer's skin; both of these features contribute to a very cool feel in hot, muggy weather.



Jinbei, summer clothing for men, are very popular during the hot months as casual wear. Indigo-dyed shijira is the fabric of choice.





Shijira II しじら織・第二

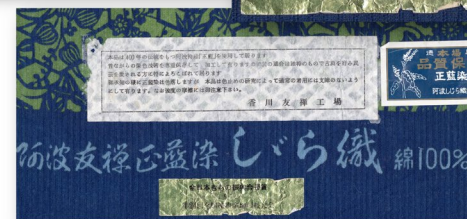
Shijira weaves are worn primarily during the hot summer months. The texture helps the garment to stand away from the wearer's skin. Indigo, too, is a color associated with summer. The mild aroma of the dye acts as an insect repellent, helping to keep mosquitoes at bay—serving the same function as that of citronella and other aromatic plants around the world.

Paste was applied to the right side to define the pattern seen here. It was vat dyed to a medium blue. The yardage was then suspended with traditional equipment and the yellow dye applied with a brush.

Certificate of Guarantee, Authentic Tokushima Natural Indigo Dyeing, Awa Consortium for the Advancement of Shijira-ori



Japanese National Kimono Advancement Director's Award, 1972, Twenty-fourth Annual National Regional Weaving Exhibition



Blue text: Awa Yuuzen Natural Indigo Dyeing, Shijira Weave, 100% cotton

White label: This product of Awa brings you four-hundred years of history in its use of natural indigo. Since ancient times people who enjoy the subtle beauty of this folk art have sought to preserve its production and maintain it as a well-respected part of the Japanese landscape.

Some of the indigo may rub off over time, as people familiar with this dye process will be well aware. However, thanks to modern research, methods have been devised to reduce the risk—however, we still encourage you to avoid excess abrasion.

—Kagawa Yuuzen Dyehouse

Kusakizome

草木染

The term *aizome* is normally reserved for fibers dyed with processed indigo—that is, indigo that has been composted in some manner or removed from the leaf as a flocculent—and most often to fiber or yardage that has been dyed in a reduction vat. In this state the indigo acts as a pigment, that is, it adheres to the fiber rather than being absorbed by it. As a result, it tends to sit on the surface, interfere with the luster of the fiber, and may crock off. Fresh-leaf indigo dyeing falls into another large category of dyes, called *kusakizome*, as do onionskins, madder, and cochineal (an insect).

In *kusakizome*, the indigo reacts with the fiber in the same manner as other vegetable dyes, by being

absorbed to the core, that is, it is no longer a topical dye, allowing the fiber to retain its original hand and luster, and virtually no risk of crocking.

It is also partly a matter of status. Normally, *aizome* textiles are produced in studios that work exclusively with indigo reduction vats, and *kusakizome* indigo is most often used in combination with other dyes, and with a broader range of production and application techniques.

Samples 40 through 44 show a range of *kusakizome*-dyed textiles using fresh-leaf indigo.

4 2

The samples below are all silk with the exception of the first one, sample card 40, which is vintage ramie.

40

41

43

44

Provenance

I was just a teenager when I began collecting Japanese textiles. Each piece seemed more awesome than the last. It wasn't long before I wanted to find out all I could about them, and the more I learned, the greater my appreciation grew. Knowing about

each piece creates an intimacy of sorts, one that can only grow with time.



- ① real raw silk floss from Yuuki
- ② colors from nature • real natural dyes
- ③ aizome
- ④ a short treatise on the wonders of natural indigo
- ⑤ the official seal of the Indigo Dyers Club
- ⑥ kusakizome
- ⑦ the official seal of the Indigo Dyers Club
- ⑧ registered production number
- ⑨ PASSED certified traditional handicraft
- ⑩ authentic hand spun raw-silk floss from Yuuki
- ⑪ authorized hand-spun Yuuki tsumugi with authorization number
- ⑫ authentic Yuuki tsumugi traditional handicraft

It's fine to take what you have collected at face value, to enjoy it simply for the joy it brings to you. However, every now and then, one will stand out, inviting you to learn more about how it was created and the role it has served.

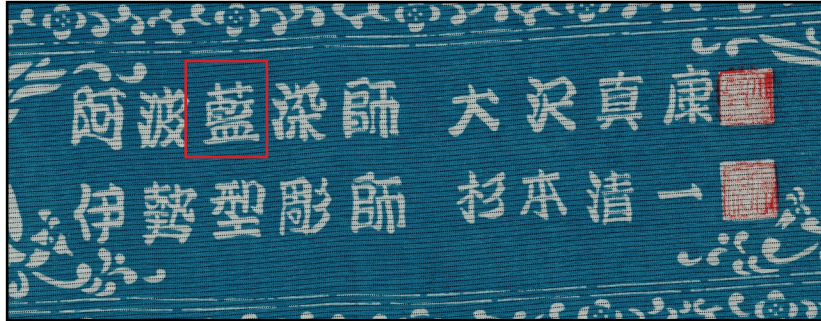
Unfortunately, I've found that even very well intentioned merchants, and even scholars, will offer up seemingly likely, but totally wrong, information. For example, have you ever heard the tale of how *kanoko-shibori* is made (see sample 14)? I was often told that the fabric was tied around small grains of rice, and then dyed. I took it at face value—after all, what did I know? But stop to think about it—if the fabric is steeped in dye, what becomes of the rice? If you've ever cooked rice, you know how impossible it would be to remove it from the finished piece. Someone had a good idea—one that at first blush seemed possible and was shared with confidence, but which lacked kitchen experience. Learn to trust your own common sense and experience, and when all else fails, ask the person who actually practices the craft.

藍 藍 藍 藍 藍 藍 藍 藍

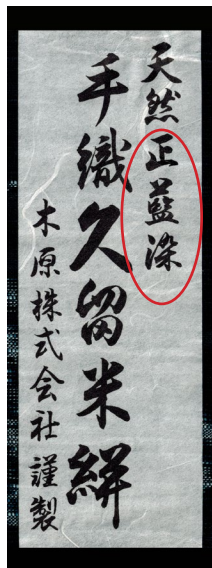
Above are just a few examples of how ai (indigo) may be written.

Another approach is to be on the lookout for textiles that tell you about themselves. Japanese are very inquisitive and textile savvy—they value knowledge and don't mind investing in quality. It isn't unusual to find a used garment with its bolt end, that is to say, the label, tucked inside one of the sleeves for safe-keeping. Most high-quality textiles leave the production studio with several labels attached, stating at least the fiber content and name of the company, and also, if it was hand-woven or -dyed, if natural dyes were used, and often who the weaver or dyer was. Whenever possible, I have tried to include those labels with the samples presented.

Once you've collected a few pieces with labels attached, you'll be able to start comparing them to other pieces in your collection and draw informed conclusions. The more you look, the more you see, and the deeper your fondness will grow.



阿波藍染師 大沢真康 Awa-Katazome Dyer, Oozawa Shintou
伊勢型彫師 杉本清一 Ise Stencil Carver, Sugimoto Kiyochi

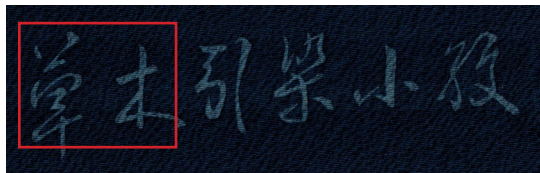


Natural, Real Indigo Dyeing

天然正藍染



阿波藍型染 Awa Indigo Katazome



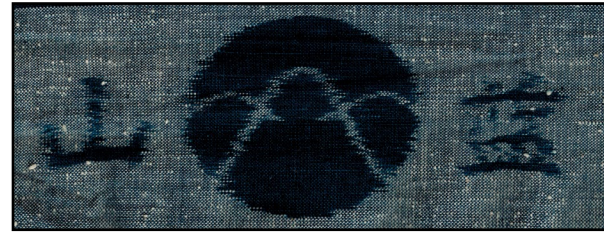
草木引染小染 Kusaki-Hikizome-Komon



琉球藍染 Ryuukyuu-Aizome (Strobilanthes cusia)



本場徳島本藍染 Authentic Tokushima Real Indigo Dyeing



山 Yama-ai (Mercurialis leiocarpa) 藍



江戸民芸草木染 Edo Folkcraft Kusakizome

阿波

正藍



Awa Real Indigo



Ryuukyuu-Ai (Strobilanthes cusia)

琉球藍

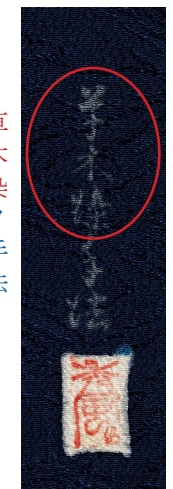


草木染...Kusakizome

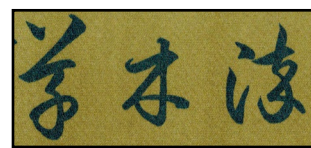


草木染...Kusakizome

草木染ノ手法



Kusakizome Technique



草木染 Kusakizome

本藍 (hon-ai) means real (original) indigo.

正藍 (shou-ai) means real (correct) indigo.

Glossary

accents (40, 48, 58) dark-colored areas applied over colors to hide mistakes or to distract from overly repetitive patterns

隈取 **ai** (6, 80, 82) indigo, most often referring to *Polygonum tinctorium*

藍 **aibana** (12) bubbles found on the surface of an indigo vat

藍花 **aidama** (10, 72) indigo pigment compressed into a cube or ball

藍玉 **akane** (68) madder, *Rubia tinctorum*, a red dye

茜 **aobana** (26) blueflower, *Commelina communis*, a fugitive dye used to apply underdrawings

青花 **asa** (18) bast fibers, normally referring to ramie

麻 **bamboo sheath** (20, 22) once used as a resist in shibori

竹皮 **barberry** (50, 66, 68) *Myrica rubra*, a natural dye yielding colors in the yellow/brown family

渋木 **bast fibers** (18) natural fibers other than animal/flower in origin

靱皮 **batik** (32) wax-resist dyeing

臙纈染 **bengara** (42, 66) iron-oxide-based pigments, normally rust-red

弁柄 **bingata** (50, 52, 54, 58, 72) Okinawan paste-resist dyeing

紅型 **boro** (44) rag, worn out

襦 **blueflower** (26) *aobana*, *Commelina communis*, a fugitive dye

襦 **bokashi** (50, 58) shading

青花 **chinden** (12) indigo pigment

ぼかし **chirimen** (32, 52, 84) a variety of Japanese crepe

沈殿 **choma** (18) ramie

縮緬 ***Commelina communis*** (26) blueflower, *aobana*

苧麻 **chuugata** (42, 46) medium-size images; images produced by applying paste-resist to both sides of yardage

中型 **cinnabar** (52) natural vermilion pigment, mercury(II) sulfide

本朱 **debabera** (48) spatula used to apply paste-resist through stencils

出刃ベラ **cochineal** (50, 52, 77) insect (*Dactylopius coccus*) derived red dye

繪緋 **egasuri** (16) pictorial ikat

筆 **fude** (34, 60, 64, 66) brushes with bristles held in bamboo shaft

布団 **futon** (42) Japanese bedding

布団地 **futonji** (42, 46) Japanese bedding cover

袴 **hakama** (38) skirtlike clothing worn by Japanese men

纏 **hanada** (6) somewhat pale shade of indigo blue

羽織 **haori** (32) garment worn over a kimono, worn by both sexes

雛形 **hinagata** (8) scaled-down garments produced by sewing students

井桁 **hon-ai** (2, 82) real (original) indigo

糸染め **igeta** (20) a wood frame encircling a well

甚平 **hikizome** (81) dye applied to large regions with a brush

iron oxide (8, 46, 66) rust-red pigment

itozome (16) process of dyeing yarns

jinbei (74) summer clothing (top and pants) worn by men

jizome (-bake) (40) applying dye to yardage (with a large brush)

kagasuri (18, 24, 29) minute-patterned ikat

kaimaki (44) kimono-shaped *futon*, aka, *yogi*

kamishimo (38) a skirt and vest outfit once worn by men

kanoko-shibori (30, 62, 80) small-dot-patterned tie-dye

karamushi (18) ramie

karinui (62) *kimono* simply basted together prior to tailoring

kariyasu (22, 66) a yellow-grass dye

kasuri (16, 18, 20, 24) ikat, string-resist dyeing

kata-ozome (50, 52) pictorial-stencil dyeing, see *bingata*

kataginu (38) the top vest portion of a *kamishimo*

katazome (8, 36, 40, 42, 46, 72, 84) stencil dyeing

kikkou (24) tortoise-shell pattern

komon (38, 81) small-patterned dyeing

kon (6) a deep indigo blue

kon-ya (6) shops specializing in deep shades of indigo

kosode (50) kimono with shorter sleeves, worn by women

madder root (62, 68, 77) red root dye, *Rubia tinctorum*

kusakizome (70, 72, 77, 79, 82) dyeing with natural dyes

maiwai (8) celebratory fisherman's robe

mensou-fude (60, 64, 66) very thin, pointy form of *fude*

National Living Treasure (56) an honor bestowed on highly skilled craftspeople by the Japanese government

oboro (54) "misty," *oboro-bingata* is one style of *bingata*

orpiment (52) a yellow pigment, arsenic sulphide, As₂S₃

Polygonum tinctorium (4, 12) Japanese indigo, *tadeai*

ramie (18, 78) one type of bast fiber, *asa*, *karamushi*

rice paste (8, 26, 36, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 60, 64, 72, 76,) resist made from sweet rice and bran

rozome (32) wax-resist dyeing

Ryuukyuu (50, 81) the Japanese name for Okinawa

sarasa (64, 68, 70) style rooted in batik and block printing

sarashi (48) lightweight Japanese cotton

seven treasures (40) a traditional-image pattern

shibori (26, 28, 30, 62, 80) string-resist dyeing, tie-dye

shibugami (36) paper used to fashion stencils for *katazome*

shibuki (66, 68) barberry, *Myrica rubra*

shou-ai (81) real (true, honest) indigo

shutsuran (10) "surpassing one's master"

sukumo (12, 38) composted indigo used in reduction vats

surikomi (-bake) (40, 48, 52, 58) detailing (brushes)

tadeai (66) Japanese indigo, *Polygonum tinctorium*

tsumugi (24, 79) spun, raw silk with a high loft

yama-ai (82) *Mercurialis leiocarpa*, an indigo producing plant

yukata (28) cotton summer kimono for men and women

地染め

蚊緋

搔卷

袴

鹿子絞り

苧麻

仮縫い

刈安

緋

型絵染

肩衣

型染め

亀甲

小紋

紺

紺屋

小袖

茜

万祝

面相筆

人間国宝

臙

石黄

蓼藍

苧麻

のり

臙染め

更紗

さらし

七宝

絞り

渋紙

渋木

出藍

菜

摺込刷毛

蓼藍

紬

浴衣



In Memory

Myrtle Tanaka Furukawa (1922-2011) was my first teacher at the Florin Japanese Language School in a rural community in California. As a twelve-year-old child, this was a very formative time of my life. It was through her very kind and supportive efforts that my interest in Japanese language and culture was encouraged. Despite the hardships she had encountered in her own life, she remained a warm and noble example to me even in later life.

she had encountered in her own life, she remained a warm and noble example to me even in later life.

A special thank you to Barbara Youngblood for her patience in editing this book. She is a delight to work with and a joy to know.

Contact Information

Please feel free to direct all inquiries and correspondence to John Marshall. Questions and comments are welcome. Dyed samples and books may be ordered from my website.

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fabric sample



Hand-dyed, katazome rice-paste-resist technique on 100% chirimen silk, using natural indigo from the Awa region of Japan.



The real deal.

At the age of seventeen, John Marshall ventured forth to Japan for what turned out to be a five-year stint and half-century adventure in historic Japanese textile arts. John has presented exhibitions of his art-to-wear internationally, with shows in Japan sponsored by the U. S. State Department, Kodansha, and Nishitetsu Corporation. Today John continues his interest in this art form, lecturing and publishing while at the same time adapting them to a modern and Western environment to ensure that these unique traditional techniques are not lost.

Having worked with natural indigo since the early 1970s, John continues working with natural dyes and Japanese dye techniques out of his studio located in a rural corner of Mendocino County in California. While specializing in katazome rice-paste resist, John also writes about a broad range of traditional Japanese textile techniques, sharing his love of these treasures and his decades of research and experience.



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