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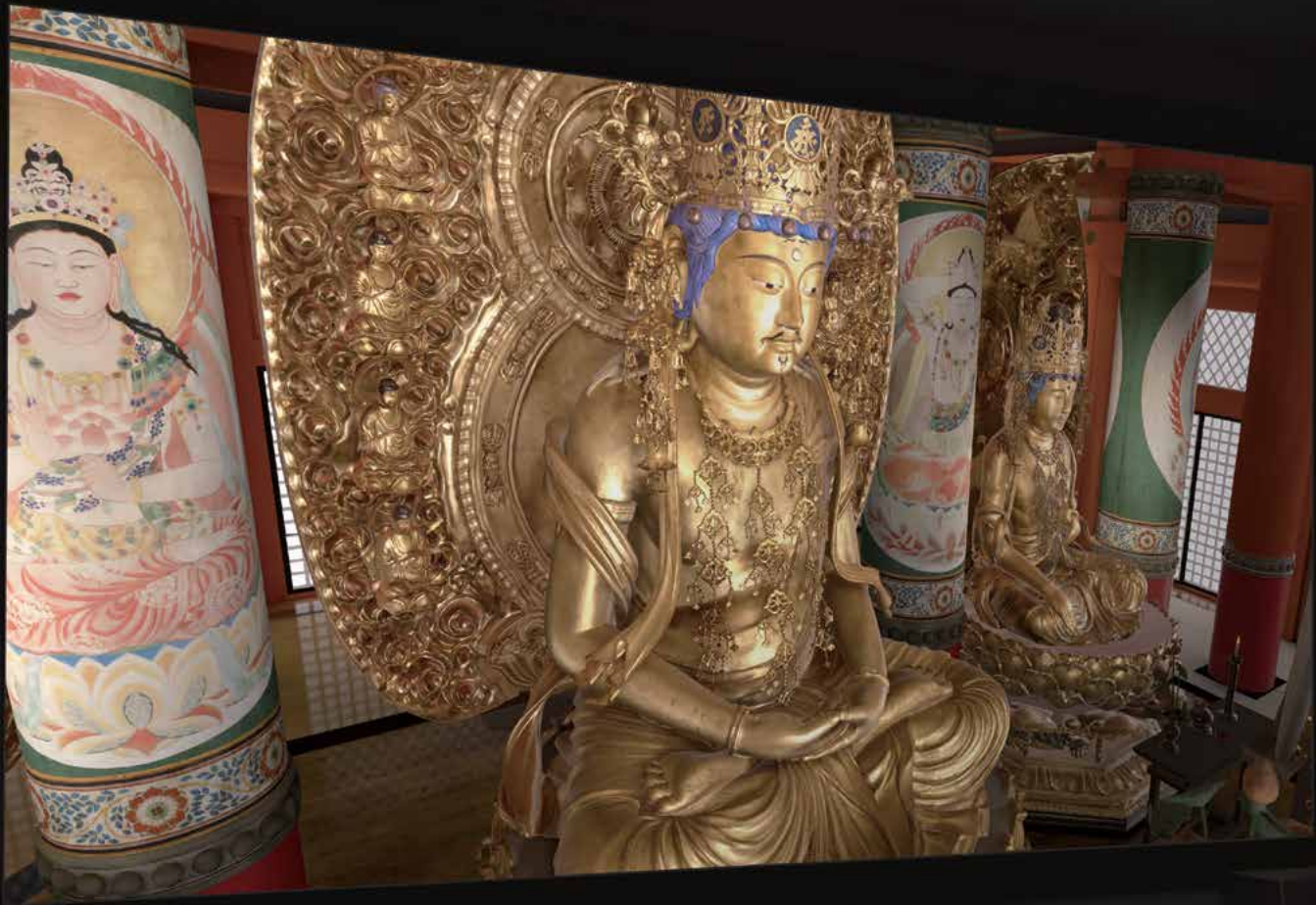


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THE ALLURE OF CULTURAL TOURISM  
IN JAPAN'S REGIONS

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## THEME FOR OCTOBER: The Allure of Cultural Tourism in Japan's Regions

In Japan, the government is working to promote “Cultural Tourism” in regions centered on hub facilities, like art galleries, museums and other base facilities for cultural tourism. In this month’s issue of *Highlighting Japan*, we feature some exemplary initiatives recognized by the government. These include traditional Buddhist temples with valuable cultural properties, a museum dedicated to the Japanese sword, and a contemporary art museum, each important in promoting cultural tourism in their respective regions.



The VR Theater allows visitors to enjoy valuable cultural properties as they move freely through the virtual space. (VR content “Koyasan Danjo Garan Monastic Complex: The Land of Mandala” produced in cooperation with Koyasan Shingon Sect Main Temple Kongobu-ji. ©TOPPAN INC.)

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## FEATURES

# The Allure of Cultural Tourism in Japan's Regions



Above: Renowned architect Ban Shigeru designed the Oita Prefectural Art Museum. The building's beautiful latticed appearance was created using the bamboo art *henso*, a technique for weaving bamboo strips into a precise pattern.

Middle: Visitors are greeted by Choi Jeonghwa's artwork "Flower Horse" (height: 5.5 meters). The street where the art museum is located represents Towada City's historical connection with horses, coming from the facility's past involvement in raising and supplying military horses.

Below: The Japanese sword *Tachi Mumei Ichimonji*, known as *Yamatorige* (and commonly referred to as *San-cho-mo*), a National Treasure. Blade Length 79.1 cm, Curvature 3.3 cm, Weight 1.06 kg.



In Japan, the government is working to promote “Cultural Tourism” in regions centered on hub facilities, like art galleries, museums and other base facilities for cultural tourism. In this month’s issue of *Highlighting Japan*, we feature some exemplary initiatives recognized by the government. These include traditional Buddhist temples with valuable cultural properties, a museum dedicated to the Japanese sword, and a contemporary art museum, each important in promoting cultural tourism in their respective regions.



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# The Significance and Potential of Cultural Tourism in Japan

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**I**n Japan, the government is working to promote “Cultural Tourism” in regions centered on hub facilities, like art galleries, museums and other base facilities for cultural tourism.<sup>1</sup> We interviewed Professor Oshita Yoshiyuki of Doshisha University about cultural tourism in Japan. A cultural policy researcher, Oshita is also a member of numerous related governmental and municipal committees.

**Please tell us about the basic concept and significance of cultural tourism as it is promoted by the Japanese government, as well as what sets it apart from sightseeing in general.**

Tourism or sightseeing, in the first place, already means taking in and learning about the culture and the sights and scenery of a place one is visiting. Think of all the people who decide to include the Louvre Museum in trips to Paris, even if they rarely visit art galleries and museums otherwise. This is tourism seeking to deepen cultural understanding; in other words: cultural tourism. Culture and tourism have an inseparable relationship, like two wheels on the same cart.

The origins of tourism are considered to be found in the tradition of the Grand Tour, where upper-class European youths of the 17th and 18th centuries would embark on educational tours around the continent to learn more about the cultures and histories of other countries before entering aristocratic society as adults. In 2020, Japan enacted legislation to encourage a return to this essential approach to tourism. The Cultural Tourism Promotion Act makes base facilities for cultural tourism the core focus of efforts to promote culture-driven regional tourism. The objective of this act is to create a virtuous cycle by promoting both culture and tourism, revitalizing the region, and reinvesting in cultural promotion efforts as an economic benefit, centered on base facilities for cultural tourism

in region.

**Could you explain what sort of effects and benefits visitors and local residents might experience as regions promote local cultural tourism, including specific examples?**

Such regions can expect to experience two main benefits: economic impact and cultural effect.

The first, positive economic impact is the benefit from the circulation of money through the region, related to the Cultural Tourism Promotion Act I just mentioned.

The second is the cultural effect. In order to obtain this effect, let's first consider the case of visitors to Japan from overseas. A prerequisite is disseminating information to effectively

convey appealing features of the culture; in other words, putting into words aspects of the culture as it exists in daily life from a third-person point of view, the tourist's perspective. For example, when explaining the history, many will not be familiar with Japan's unique system of historical periods, such as the Edo period. Expressions like “from early 17th century to mid-late 19th century” will be needed instead. Then, if one tries to give explanations that even those who know absolutely nothing about Japanese culture will understand – for instance by making comparisons with the international situation at the time when mentioning the 1700s – even visitors from overseas should be able to follow along. This can stimulate their interest in Japanese culture and help them develop deeper understanding. Also, consider that this is an era in which information is shared personally on social media. Visitors who have absorbed this information become cultural disseminators themselves, conveying aspects of Japanese culture online as they experience it. This also leads to new discoveries of appealing facets from their perspectives.

Meanwhile, we, the people of Japan, will experience benefits by promoting cultural tourism, as well.



It should provide opportunities for local residents to rediscover the charms of their own areas, for one thing. Also, textual explanations for overseas visitors retranslated into Japanese could serve as excellent materials for Japanese children to learn about their own culture. This is because, the children, just like foreigners, do not have sufficient knowledge about Japanese culture. I anticipate that the promotion of cultural tourism to bring about considerable and widespread effects not limited to the tourism industry alone.

**Could you point out some things you would like overseas visitors to see or experience for themselves when coming to Japan for cultural tourism? Please share what you think of as appealing features of cultural tourism in Japan that you would like to convey to people outside Japan.**

I would say Japan's food culture and traditional *kogei* crafts. In a survey of overseas visitors conducted by the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), "the food" ranked first in what they looked forward to experiencing on a visit to Japan, and also as the aspect they were most satisfied with on their trip. I feel it is important, however, not to be satisfied with this ranking, but to logically explain what makes Japanese food so appealing. For example, the Japanese food culture is influenced by the geographical characteristics of the land, long and narrow Japanese archipelago with many range of mountains, and the abundance of good-quality, mountain-sourced or other sourced water has aided agricultural development. Furthermore, the blessing of marine products from the surrounding seas, which has given rise to our culture of eating some seafood raw. In particular, Kyoto cuisine does not just provide deliciousness, but also expresses



Arakurayama Sengen Park in Fujiyoshida City, Yamanashi Prefecture is popular among overseas visitors to Japan as a location where Mount Fuji can be photographed together with a five-story pagoda and fall foliage or cherry blossoms. It is less familiar, however, to residents of Japan. It came to be known globally thanks to tourist guide magazines and social media, and Japanese began to visit as well.





Photo: Tsuruoka Sightseeing Navigation

Above: Mount Gassan, one of the Three Sacred Mountains of Dewa, rises behind post-harvest rice fields in Tsuruoka City, Yamagata Prefecture: an unspoiled Japanese landscape.

Below: *Dadacha* soybeans, one of the approximately 60 characteristic indigenous crops maintained in Tsuruoka City, boast a sweet, rich flavor.

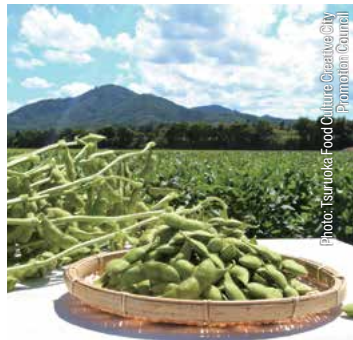


Photo: Tsuruoka Food Culture Creative City Promotion Council



Photo: Tsuruoka Food Culture Creative City Promotion Council

Shugendō culture has a 1,400-year history on the Dewa Sanzan peak of Mount Haguro. A ritual called Otaimatsu-hiki is performed overnight from New Year's Eve into New Year's Day each year, brightly illuminated with fires.

the essence of Kyoto in its entirety, including the tableware, furniture, and the atmosphere in which the meal is served. Then, the regional culinary cultures, I feel, is a form of cultural tourism that can be experienced only by visiting Japan. To actually consume local cuisine onsite oneself, with explanations of the factors that make it so appealing — this is bound to be a highly valuable cultural experience.

I'd like to illustrate this with the example of Tsuruoka City in Yamagata Prefecture where that sort of rich culinary culture can be experienced. In 2014, Tsuruoka was certified as a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network<sup>2</sup>, becoming the first UNESCO Creative City in Japan in the field of Gastronomy. Its unique climate, influenced by the four changing



Photo: Tsuruoka Food Culture Creative City Promotion Council

An example of *shojin ryori* handed down at Mt. Haguro, which has developed along with the Shugendō culture of the Haguro monks

seasons, makes the area one of the center of rice cultivation in Japan, and produces a diverse range of agricultural products with about 60 varieties of native crops including vegetables, fruit trees, and grains. There is the Dewa Sanzan<sup>3</sup> (Three Sacred Mountains of Dewa) where Shugendo<sup>4</sup> is practiced nearby. With its rich abundance of culinary delights, this is a site of *shojin ryori*<sup>5</sup> vegetarian cuisine development as well. Visitors will encounter diverse, bountiful culinary experiences here.

The other is *kogei*. While this can be translated into English as “crafts,” lately there is a tendency to leave it intentionally untranslated as *kogei*. In the historic development of art valuation in the West, “art” generally refers to pure art, fine art. There’s a division where anything created for some certain purpose will fall into the category of “crafts” rather than “art,” regardless of its beauty. This differs a bit from the Japanese sense of beauty, though, doesn’t it? “Crafts” have never been considered to be of a rank lower than “art” in Japan. The sort of beauty crafts might be endowed with has even been deemed to represent “true” beauty. This Japanese view of “functional beauty” can be shared with visitors from overseas as a kind of new value, thanks to its integration of aesthetic and practical value. Another benefit of crafts is that they can be easily purchased. If the *kogei* crafts found all throughout Japan come to be known as items of value in their respective regions, it should lead to economic circulation, providing the artisans who make them with a stable livelihood. That will be a positive effect that should help resolve difficulties finding successors to train, as well. I feel that using the term *kogei* to spread awareness of the crafts’ inherent value, rather than having them be seen as souvenirs, will be instrumental in further developing this field.

This is a trend that has already gotten underway. The large-scale “Go for Kogei”<sup>6</sup> art events being held in the three Hokuriku region prefectures of Toyama, Ishikawa, and Fukui offer a great example. The exhi-

bitions are all held in sites of flourishing *kogei* craft production, communicating the value of *kogei* as something on par with “art.”

I believe that pressing forward with the promotion of cultural tourism, taking the opportunity as people of Japan to reaffirm our own culture while conveying it to overseas visitors, will have positive impacts on a diverse range of fields here in Japan. ㊦



Example of a traditional *kogei* craft: *Hakkenshita Showakusei Raku Marin* (“Found Asteroid Raku Marin”) by Toshio Ohi Chozaemon XI. The artist is a ceramicist active in Japan and abroad, producing traditional forms of pottery used in the traditional tea ceremony while incorporating approaches rooted in contemporary art, as well. He is heir to the approximately 350-year tradition of Ohi Ware production in Kanazawa City, Ishikawa Prefecture.



At a “Go for Kogei” exhibition featuring traditional crafts, one of a number of such events held throughout the city of Toyama.

1. Japanese museums or other cultural facilities serve as bases for promoting regional cultural tourism by providing explanations and introduction to foster deeper understanding of culture and working with tourism-related personnel as defined in the Cultural Tourism Promotion Act.  
 2. A new program established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2004. It provides a framework to support international collaboration and mutual exchange between cities seeking to revitalize their respective regions with the aim of promoting creative local industries, protecting cultural diversity, and contributing to sustainable world development. In addition to gastronomy, it includes six other fields of study: literature, film, music, craft and folk arts, design, and media arts.  
 3. A collective term for the three peaks of Mount Gassan, Mount Haguro, and Mount Yudono, which

are located in the area between the city of Tsuruoka and the towns of Nishikawa and Shonai in Yamagata Prefecture.  
 4. An ancient Japanese form of mountain worship. A religion unique to Japan that formed with the influence of esoteric *mikkyo* and other Buddhist sects. Practitioners of the faith engage in ascetic practices in mountainous settings.  
 5. A plant-based cuisine that uses no meat or seafood, based on Buddhist teachings. It developed as a diet for monks.  
 6. A festival held since 2020 in the three Hokuriku region prefectures of Toyama, Ishikawa, and Fukui, with events designed to communicate the appeal of *kogei* crafts from a contemporary perspective. Encompassing exhibitions by creators of contemporary art and other events.



# Otaru Art Base, in the City of Glass

Hokkaido is located in the northernmost part of the Japanese archipelago, and Otaru City lies around the middle of its western coast, facing the Sea of Japan. The city prospered as Hokkaido's distribution center from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. Precious buildings that were constructed in those days still remain in the city and are being used as sites for passing down history, artistic culture.

(Text: Kato Yukiko)

Otaru City is a port town located northwest of Hokkaido's main city of Sapporo. It is a 75-minute train ride from New Chitose Airport, Hokkaido's largest hub airport, and a 90-minute drive to the ski resort of Niseko. Hokkaido was a major coal-producing region which supported Japan's modernization from the late 19th century, and Otaru Port was the port of shipment for that coal. Herring fishing was also a thriving industry, and at the beginning of the 20th century Otaru became one of Japan's leading distribution hubs, serving as Hokkaido's gateway to the sea, and enjoying a period of prosperity. In those days, many warehouses were built along Otaru's canal. Financial institutions and trading companies also moved in. Many examples of this modern architecture still remain today. Many of the buildings are said to be the work of the best architects of their time, befitting the prosperity of those bygone days.

Otaru Art Base, which utilizes those historical buildings, was established in 2016. Isozaki Ayako, curator of Otaru Art Base, says, "Private citizens have taken the initiative in efforts to preserve a great deal of Otaru's remaining modern architecture, which have been used for city planning."

Since Otaru is also known as the "City of Glass,"<sup>1</sup> Otaru Art Base has a large collection of stained glass, as well as glass art works in the Art Nouveau and Art Deco styles,<sup>2</sup> which have a strong affinity with Otaru. The museum has a collection of more than 500 items, and the exhibits are sometimes changed. "The museum houses mainly Western art and craftworks from the period of Otaru's rapid development, as well as *ukiyo-e* prints and other Japanese classical art. Viewing these pieces, you can feel the energy of an era when people all over the world were coming up with new forms of expression one, after the other." The glass collection is popular with tourists from Asia, while the Japanese art is popular with tourists from Europe. Many tourists take commemorative photos in front of the glass collection.

There are also many events for visitors to enjoy, including projection mapping on the first floor of the former Mitsui Bank's Otaru Branch that lets visitors appreciate a fantastic spectacle of lights, inspired by the four seasons of Hokkaido, projected on the plastered ceiling. Various other events are also planned including lectures and evening concerts held in the atmospheric old office room.



The Otaru Canal in the afternoon. The footpath lets visitors enjoy a walk along the canal.



House of Western Art



The Museum of Western Art utilizes one of the city's largest existing stone warehouses, where it exhibits stained glass windows, Art Nouveau and Art Deco glass crafts, furniture and other art objects produced in Europe and the United States from the late 19th to the early 20th century.

Nitori Museum of Art



The Nitori Museum of Art utilizes the building of the Former Hokkaido Takushoku Bank Otaru Branch.

Stained Glass Art Museum



The museum uses an old grain warehouse (in the back) and office (in the front) built in 1923. The warehouse has a fireproof timber framed stone structure.<sup>3</sup>



The Stained Glass Art Museum houses mainly windows made in United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the late 19th to the early 20th century that were used for actual church windows.



An image is projection-mapped onto the atrium ceiling.

Otaru Art Base



Otaru Art Base is the name given to a village-like cluster of five historical buildings being used as art museums.

Former Mitsui Bank Otaru Branch



The Former Mitsui Bank Otaru Branch is designated as an Important Cultural Property by the Japanese government. The bank operated from 1927 to 2002, and the building is now open to the public.



Its structural architecture was cutting-edge in its time. Visitors can see the safe-deposit box, which is left in its original state.



Art Nouveau church stained glass windows by Louis C. Tiffany<sup>4</sup> are displayed on the first floor. The iridescent glass and mosaics are beautiful.

Peacocks and peony flowers—two auspicious motifs—are depicted in this large painting on gold leaf. Tani Buncho *Kujaku-zu* (Peacock), a piece of *tsutate* (portable partition screen) art. (125.5 x 241.0 cm, production year unknown)

“A lot of people from overseas come to visit nearby Sapporo or Niseko, but we want them to also know what Otaru has to offer,” says Isozaki. “At Otaru Art Base, we want to accommodate many visitors coming from all over the world, so we are making preparations. We are scheduling the introduction of information displays and audio guides in Japanese, English, and three other languages (Korean, traditional Chinese, and simplified Chinese) by the end of March 2024.” A plan is also underway to attract visitors from nearby Niseko to Otaru by displaying high-resolution replicas of the Otaru Art Base art collection in the Niseko area, which attracts many overseas visitors but offers few opportu-

nities to experience traditional Japanese art.

You are invited to visit Otaru to experience its history and fully enjoy the arts and culture that have been cultivated there. **7**

1. In the early 20th century, the city was a center of distribution, and therefore demand for packaging materials increased, and glass containers were produced in mass quantities to be used to hold liquids and powders. In the second half of the 20th century, the use of plastic led to glass' decline, but glass manufacturers used timber-framed stone warehouses as their storefronts, and these have become popular with tourists, giving rise to the image of Otaru as a city of glass.
2. Art Nouveau is a style of art that was popular in Europe from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century, characterized by the use of curves and organic motifs such as flowers and plants. The Art Deco style was popular in Europe and the U.S., which features the linear and geometric designs.
3. Most of the stone buildings in Otaru are timber-framed stone structures. The framework is made of wood, and the exterior walls are made of piled up stones and fixed to pillars. Stone was used for the warehouses because it helps to maintain a steady temperature inside.
4. A leading American Art Nouveau glass artist known for his stained glass and glass mosaic lamps.



## FEATURES

Towada Lake: A caldera lake formed by volcanic activity. Renowned worldwide for its rare double caldera.



Photo: Nara Shuji, Winner of the 36th Lake Towada Four Seasons Photo Contest, Minister of the Environment Award

# Experience Majestic Nature and Contemporary Art

In the Tohoku region of Japan's main island, Honshu, Aomori Prefecture sits at the very northern tip. Within its southern part lies Towada City. This distinctive locale marries the untouched beauty of its national park with the modernity of art, showcased by the Towada Art Center, drawing in international tourists. This article describes the appeal of this region and its efforts in museum-centric cultural tourism.

(Text: Tanaka Nozomi)

Left: The Oirase Gorge, stretching approximately 14km from Lake Towada. Nestled deep within its diverse forest are a multitude of attractions such as waterfalls, pristine streams, and rocky formations.

Center: Aerial view of the Tsuta area in South Hakkoda with autumn foliage.

Right: The ice trees of Mount Hakkoda take on towering shapes during the harsh winter blizzards.





Left: Visitors are overwhelmed by the intricately crafted figures. On the right is the work “Standing Woman” (height: approximately 4 meters) by hyperrealist sculptor Ron Mueck. On the left is an actual person for comparison.

Below left: Opened in 2021, along with a new exhibition space, is Leandro Erlich’s “Edificio—Buenos Aires” (height: 7 meters).

Below right: “YOROSHIKU GIRL 2012” (height: approximately 10 meters), a large painting by Nara Yoshitomo, a native of Aomori Prefecture, adorns the building’s wall.



Photo: Oyemada Kuniya



Visitors are greeted by Choi Jeonghwa’s artwork “Flower Horse” (height: 5.5 meters). The street where the art museum is located represents Towada City’s historical connection with horses, coming from the facility’s past involvement in raising and supplying military horses.

Photo: Towada Art Center

In the western part of Towada City lies the Towada-Hachimantai National Park<sup>1</sup>. This park boasts numerous breathtaking views, including Lake Towada, the Oirase Gorge known for its autumn foliage and ice cascades<sup>2</sup>, and the ice trees of Mount Hakkoda<sup>3</sup>.

In the urban area of the eastern part of the city, a proactive effort to foster town development through art is underway, with the Towada Art Center at its core. Having opened its doors in 2008, the Center features a permanent exhibition of 43 works by 38 contemporary artists from both Japan and abroad (as of October 2023), with many of them being large-scale creations. Since these works are commissioned specifically for the Center, visiting here offers a unique opportunity to witness art that cannot be viewed elsewhere, enhancing its appeal.

Furthermore, the Center goes beyond preserving and displaying artworks. It operates with the concept of seamlessly integrating into the local community and mutually fostering growth, and this concept has become a reality. Shimoda Tatsuya from Towada Oirase Tourism Organization explains, “The structure allows visitors to appreciate the artworks from both inside and outside the building since works are also placed outdoors around the facility. As you stroll through the city, you’ll find yourself immersed in an ambiance that transforms the entire town into an art gallery.”

Additionally, efforts to accommodate foreign tourists are also progressing. “The proportion of overseas visitors coming to Towada City accounts for approximately 20% of all tourists. October, when attractions like the Oirase Gorge’s autumn foliage are at their peak, sees the highest number of travelers. Many tourists, I believe, enjoy both the art scene and Towada’s

natural beauty,” says Mr. Shimoda. Incidentally, the majority of international tourists come from East Asia such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea.

Tourist information tailored to visitors in multiple languages is readily available, with brochures, maps, and more provided in English, Traditional and Simplified Chinese, and Korean. In addition, tourist information centers are staffed with personnel fluent in English, Chinese, and Korean to ensure assistance for a wide range of inquiries.

Towada City is a captivating place where the forces of nature and human creativity come together, and where the beauty of both can be experienced firsthand. Towada City is one place that is not to be missed. **▼**



Above: Guide map of the Oirase Gorge in English

Middle: Leaflet for Towada Kohan Yasumiya in Chinese (Traditional)

Below: Sightseeing map of Towada City’s urban area featured in the Korean-language guidebook

Provided by: Towada Oirase Tourism Organization

1. Extending across Aomori, Iwate, and Akita Prefectures, the park is divided into two major regions: the Towada-Hakkoda region and the Hachimantai region. The park is characterized by its mountainous terrain, featuring captivating elements such as mountains, lakes, rivers, and numerous hot springs.
2. This term refers to frozen waterfalls. Waterfalls freeze when the flowing water comes into contact with cold external air. It’s a phenomenon that can be observed only in places where specific weather conditions are met. Furthermore, in the Oirase Gorge, ice columns can grow to sizes that closely resemble actual waterfalls.
3. This is the phenomenon where supercooled water droplets and snow, continuously transported by persistent winds in a single direction, freeze and cling to Aomori fir trees, gradually enveloping them entirely. Because of their distinctive appearance, resembling masses of ice and snow, they are often referred to as “snow monsters.” The best time to view them is in February.



Kiyotsu Gorge Tunnel. The breathtaking view of the gorge, glimpsed from the tunnel, swiftly gained traction on social media, drawing a surge of tourists. Ma Yansong / MAD Architects' "Tunnel of Light" (a work for the Echigo-Tsumari Art Field).

## FEATURES

# A City Where You Can Encounter Culture Unique To Snow Country And Contemporary Art

**Tokamachi City in Niigata Prefecture is one of Japan's most renowned heavy snowfall areas. The abundance of snow, the blessings it brings, and the richness of life that makes the most of the snow are proudly termed "Snow Rich" by Tokamachi, and this concept is widely promoted both domestically and internationally. We spoke to an official of city's cultural tourism about its initiatives.**

(Text: Tanaka Nozomi)

**T**okamachi City is in the mountainous region of southern Niigata Prefecture, specifically in the Tokamachi Basin. One of the city's most distinguishing features is that from December to April, even in the urban areas, there is an average snow accumulation of two meters. This profound snowfall causes both the landscape and the lifestyle of its inhabitants to undergo a striking transformation, contrasting sharply with the snow-free months from May to November. Hatori Daisuke, who oversees cultural tourism promotion at the Tokamachi City Hall, notes, "Within the city limits, we have archaeological sites from the Jomon<sup>1</sup> period, from which numerous artifacts have been unearthed. For an extremely long period, the people of this area have lived with snow and nature, passing down wisdom and culture through generations.

During the snow-free seasons, the people of this



Photo: Tokamachi City Cultural and Tourism Promotion Council

Winter scene of a rural home in the mountains. The first floor of the building is buried in snow, and shoveling snow becomes a daily chore.

region stay busy with rice cultivation and fieldwork. They also prepare for winter by making preserved foods from wild vegetables. As snow begins to fall, weaving on looms becomes a predominant household activity. This tradition played a pivotal role in establishing the area as one of Japan's premier kimono production centers. In the Edo period, from the early 17th century to the latter part of the 19th century, a luxury summer linen fabric known as *Echigo Chijimi*<sup>2</sup> was extensively produced. Later, the primary material transitioned from linen to

silk, and by the early 20th century, the region was producing a summer silk fabric named *Akashi Chijimi*. After that, the production expanded to include fabrics for autumn and winter, solidifying the region's reputation as a year-round textile production center.

“The wisdom of preserving food for extended periods<sup>3</sup> includes using snow to create storage, smoking river fish over a sunken hearth<sup>4</sup> with heat and smoke and making wild vegetables last longer by drying or pickling them. There have been continuous improvements in cooking methods to keep food tasty and fresh,” explains Hatori.

Actually, there are approximately 100 shops and facilities in the city known as “Snow-Rich Spots,” where one can experience this unique snow culture. Local people who work at these facilities act as guides, sharing with tourists the joys of life in a snowy area. At various points of interest, such as accommodation facilities, kimono workshops, taxi companies, craft beer breweries, and soba noodle shops, there are guides available to assist visitors. The objective moving forward is to offer multilingual support at each of these locations.

Another allure of Tokamachi City is the Echigo-Tsumari Art Field. This modern art festival commenced in 2000 and has been ongoing for over 20 years. Throughout the year, visitors can enjoy around



Above: The winter landscape of terraced rice fields<sup>5</sup> is breathtaking with its snow-covered beauty.

Below: Yayoi Kusama's “Tsumari in Bloom”. Among her few outdoor pieces worldwide, this one is in the Matsudai Nohbutai Field Museum.

200 permanent artworks. In addition, there are seasonal programs and tours available. Every three years, the Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennale graces the art scene, showcasing many new pieces from global artists. More than just an exhibition, it transforms the entire countryside into a vast canvas of creativity. This extensive display, unveiling countless artworks, ranks as one of the largest contemporary art spectacles globally.

Essentially, the Echigo-Tsumari Art Field is a unique event where the whole rural landscape's becomes an immersive gallery, making it one of the world's premier art displays with a diverse range of pieces spread out over a vast terrain.

Mr. Hatori shares, “While the next Art Triennale is set for 2024, around 200 works by both domestic and overseas artists are always on display. They're naturally placed throughout the mountains, villages, and connecting pathways, creating a harmonious blend of snowy culture and modern art. Think of it as a vast museum where the art guides you, allowing you to experience both the historical and cultural facets of the region, all set against the backdrop of its ever-changing seasons.”

The rich culture unique to snow regions and contemporary art stand as the two major pillars of Tokamachi City's cultural tourism. Both the snowy season and the times without snow present their own distinct allure. It's certainly worth a visit to experience it firsthand. **7**

Left: During winter, dishes such as stews are made using salt-preserved and dried wild vegetables and other vegetables. Salt-preserved leafy vegetables are eaten as they are during winter, and come spring, those that have been over-pickled are desalted and cooked. This wisdom ensures no food goes to waste.

Above center: The regionally originated *Hegi Soba* is served in a thin box called *hegi*. The soba uses *funori* (a type of seaweed) as a binder. It is said to have started when *funori*, which was used for starching weaving threads, was incorporated into the soba.

Below center: The *Kaengata* pottery excavated from archaeological sites in the city, thought to be from around 5,000 years ago, has been designated a national treasure and is on permanent display at the Tokamachi City Museum.

Right: The kimono industry in Tokamachi is characterized by its integrated production within the city, and even often within a single company. Due to the difficulties in transportation caused by snow, both the weaving and dyeing processes, beginning from the design stage, are carried out in a single workshop. These unique workshops, where all stages of production can be observed, attract many tourists who come for both viewing and hands-on experiences.



1. The Jomon period is one of the historical eras in Japan. Recently, it is generally considered to span from about 16,500 years ago to about 3,000 years ago.
2. This hemp fabric, which uses the snow to its advantage, stands out due to its unique production method. Made with tightly twisted yarn, it feels soft against the skin, which has led to its popularity as a material for summer kimonos. Tokamachi and the broader Uonuma region are its main production areas.
3. The preservation of food in this region is adapted to its seasons. In the warmer months of spring to summer, a natural cooling method called *yukimuro* (snow-aging) is employed. This involves maintaining vast amounts of snow until summer, using it to chill and preserve foodstuffs. During winter, food preservation practices are more varied: wild vegetables might be dried or salted, sweet potatoes stored in the warm interiors of homes, cabbages buried within snow, and Chinese cabbages and leeks hung in cooler indoor areas, such as workshops, to ensure the outer layer dries. Leafy greens might be transformed into pickles. Each method is carefully crafted to suit the specific type of food being preserved.
4. An indoor space where the floor is cut out to create a place for making a fire, used for both heating and cooking.
5. Terraced rice fields, carved into mountain slopes and inclined lands, form a picturesque step-like pattern.



## FEATURES

The symbolic landmark of Koya-san, Konpon Daito, is a large pagoda about 50 meters high.



Photo: PIXTA

# Experience the Mystique of Koya-san

Koya-san, an area nestled in the mountains near the border between Wakayama and Nara prefectures, is a sacred place for esoteric Buddhism<sup>1</sup> that attracts many believers and tourists. We asked about the various initiatives that have been undertaken here in the last few years, including the newly built Digital Museum. (Text: Tanaka Nozomi)



Photo: Koya-san Kongobu-ji



Photo: PIXTA



Left: Inside Konpon Daito, which is often described as a three-dimensional mandala, there are 16 columns inscribed with images of 16 Buddhas, creating a representation of the esoteric world that Kobo Daishi preached.

Above right: The entrance to Kongobu-ji Temple's Kondo, the main hall of Koya-san. The central area of Koya-san, where major religious events are held, is the temple complex called Danjo Garan. It includes numerous buildings such as the Kondo and Konpon Daito.

Below right: At 2,340 square meters, Banryu-tei ("Garden of the Guardian Dragons") is one of the largest rock gardens in Japan.



Above left: Ajikan meditation is taught at the Ajikan Dojo, which is located in the Banryu-tei rock garden. It is a precious experience to receive direct guidance from a Buddhist monk.

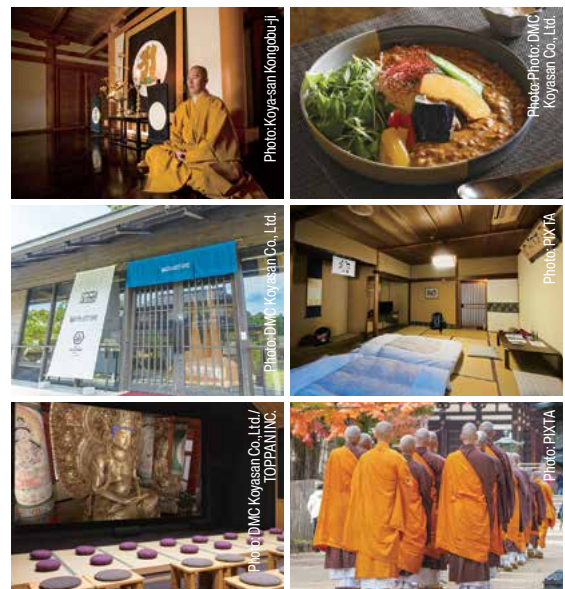
Middle left: The Koyasan Digital Museum is a cultural complex that allows visitors to experience the appeal and significance of Koya-san in a more profound way.

Below left: The VR Theater allows visitors to enjoy valuable cultural properties as they move freely through the virtual space. (VR content “Koyasan Danjo Garan Monastic Complex: The Land of Mandala” produced in cooperation with Koyasan Shingon Sect Main Temple Kongobu-ji. ©TOPPAN INC.)

Above right: Vegetarian curry served at the Koyasan Digital Museum cafe. It is made with ingredients selected in line with the teachings on the traditional *shojin ryori* cuisine of Koyasan, which does not use meat, fish, or the so-called “five pungent roots” (chives, garlic, shallots, onions, and leeks).

Middle right: *Shukubo* is a lodging facility that provides visitors with a chance to immerse themselves in the simple lifestyle of Buddhist monks. There are about 50 such lodgings facilities in the Koya-san temple complex.

Below right: Visitors who spend the night in one of the temple lodgings will have the opportunity to observe the monks as they perform their early morning rituals.



**K**oya-san is located in the central part of the Kii Peninsula in northern Wakayama Prefecture. The name refers to the entire Yamagami Basin, which is about 900 meters above sea level, four kilometers from east to west and two kilometers from north to south, and is surrounded by mountains. It is called Koya-san (“Mount Koya”) because of its historical and cultural significance, but there is actually no mountain of that name. The entire area of Koya-san is actually the grounds of Kongobu-ji Temple, the main temple of the Koyasan Shingon sect, founded in 816 by the priest Kobo Daishi (Kukai). One of its distinctive features is that it includes 117 large and small temples. We interviewed Yamagami Jo from DMC Koyasan Co., Ltd., the company that promotes cultural tourism on Koya-san.

“Koya-san” attracts many worshippers and tourists, about half of whom are now from outside Japan. It is also known abroad as a sacred place for esoteric Buddhism. The number of visitors from Europe, in particular, has been on the rise. In addition to religious institutions such as Kongobu-ji Temple, about 50 of the 117 other temples on Koya-san have *shukubo*—traditional accommodation facilities in a temple for visitors. I think the fact that we provide lodging for so many visitors to Koya-san is also a unique feature that is not found in other areas.”

In 2004, Koya-san was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List as part of the “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range.” Since then, the number of visitors has increased. In 2022, the Koyasan Digital Museum, which displays mostly digitized images, was established to provide visitors with a better understanding of the many cultural assets spread across the vast site and to assist them in their worship and sightseeing. Using high-resolution digital archiving technology a company with proven performance in the production of virtual reality (VR) content for numerous World Heritage sites photographed the interiors of the

Konpon Daito and Saito (the West Tower, a pagoda normally closed to the public) and created the VR content in order to preserve and present detailed information about the entire Danjo Garan, the central area of Koyasan. Visitors can enjoy the many valuable cultural properties in visual experiences that make the most of VR technology, such as getting a close-up view of the ceilings from a high vantage point.

“I think visitors will have a better understanding of the Konpon Daito as a three-dimensional mandala<sup>2</sup> if they experience it in VR first and then go see the real thing,” says Yamagami. After enjoying the visual experience of Koya-san in digital form, visitors can take a tour of the actual sites and explore them with deeper sensitivity.

In addition, visitors who stay overnight at one of the temple lodgings on Koya-san can also observe night and early morning events, and savor aspects of the monks’ culinary culture and lifestyle. Koya-san also offers a variety of experience-type programs. Visitors can try the forest therapy, which involves meditation in a hut and a therapeutic walk in the forest, as well as Ajikan, a form of breathing exercise and meditation technique unique to Shingon Buddhism. Meditating under the guidance of a Buddhist monk in the Ajikan Dojo (training center), which is not open to the public, is a precious experience.

Koya-san, one of Japan’s sacred sites, is a unique place that offers visitors a rare opportunity to immerse themselves in the Buddhist worldview in the mountains, far from the city. **7**

1. Esoteric Buddhism is said to have originated in India around the 7th century BC. While inheriting the Indian philosophy of Buddhism, it developed in a unique way with the addition of earthly and magical elements. The Japanese name for esoteric Buddhism, “*mikkyo*,” is an abbreviation of the words “*himitsu bukkyo*” (secret Buddhism) or “*himitsu kyo*” (secret religion). In Japan, Kobo Daishi (Kukai), the founder of Shingon esoteric Buddhism in the early 9th century, is famous.
2. A mandala is a type of painting that depicts a world view in accordance with esoteric Buddhist teachings. There are various ways to express mandalas, not just two-dimensional paintings.

# Osafune Region: Sword Village Weaves the History of Japanese Swords

Japanese swords have been gaining interest not only among young people and women but also internationally, owing to the recent boom in Japanese anime and games. Here, we introduce the Osafune region in Okayama Prefecture, which is actively promoting the appeal of Japanese swords to abroad.

(Text: Kato Yukiko)

Setouchi City, adjacent to Okayama City, the central city of Okayama Prefecture, across the Yoshii River that flows east of Okayama City, is known for its gentle climate with relatively low rainfall, even among the regions of western Japan. The upper region of the Yoshii River were rich in iron sand suitable for making Japanese swords and had a thriving iron-manufacturing industry. Since the Osafune region, located in the northern part of Setouchi City, was able to easily obtain steel<sup>1</sup> through the water transportation of the Yoshii River, it became the largest sword production center in Japan.

Mr. Wakamatsu Takashi from the Setouchi City Hall, who is involved in cultural tourism, talks about the history of sword-making in the Osafune region and its related culture.

“Long ago, the entire southeastern part of present-day Okayama Prefecture, including Osafune, was part of Bizen Province (*Bizen no kuni*). Swords produced in the downstream area of the Yoshii River, centered around Osafune, are referred to as Bizen Swords. These swords are renowned for their exceptional quality and account for 47 of the 111<sup>2</sup> designated National Treasures of swords by the government. Moreover, it is said that there are currently approximately three million Bizen Swords remaining in Japan. We may say that it was indeed the most significant production center in Japan in terms of both quality and quantity.”

In the Osafune region, sword production has been carried out since around the 10th century, and it flourished with groups of swordsmiths known as the Fukuoka Ichimonji school<sup>3</sup> and later the Osafune



The Japanese sword *Tachi Mumei Ichimonji*, known as *Yamatorige* (and commonly referred to as *San-cho-mo*), a National Treasure. Blade Length 79.1 cm, Curvature 3.3 cm, Weight 1.06 kg.

school<sup>4</sup>. The tradition of swordsmithing by the Osafune school continued until around 1920. While there are several regions known for sword production in Japan, Osafune stands out as the only one where a single school of swordsmiths continued to craft swords for over 700 years. Today, there are facilities such as the Bizen Osafune Sword Museum, forging workshops where swordsmiths work, and the Bizen Osafune Sword Village, which houses the workshops of sword artisans. These establishments continue to pass down the history and craftsmanship of Japanese swords to future generations.

The Bizen Osafune Sword Museum houses approximately 400 swords, including the National Treasure *Tachi Mumei Ichimonji*, known as *Yamatorige* (and commonly referred to as *San-cho-mo*)<sup>5</sup>, which has become a symbol of Japanese swords as the pinnacle of the Bizen Sword. The name *Yamatorige* originates from the intricate and beautiful *hamon* pattern that appears on the surface of the sword. It is said to resemble both the feathers of a mountain bird and burning mountains, reflecting the dynamic and fiery nature of the pattern. The craftsmen who heat and forge steel to create the blade are known as swordsmiths (*katana-kaji*). In this



The entrance to Bizen Osafune Sword Village, with the museum in the back.





From left to right:

Visitors can see the various stages of Japanese sword production in the workshop, which involves different craftsmen. The swordsmith heats and forges the steel to create the blade.

The polisher polishes the blade and refines its appearance. Through polishing, the distinctive patterns known as *hamon* and the forged skin of the sword emerge. This is a crucial process that greatly influences the value of a Japanese sword.

The craftsman known as *tsukamakishi* wraps cords and other materials around the handle (*tsuka*) to make it easier to grip, a part of the sword that the wielder holds. They often apply a base layer of rough-textured skin from a stingray to the handle.

This shows the silk cord being wrapped in a diamond pattern. There are various styles of wrapping, which serve both to make the grip comfortable and to enhance the visual beauty.

region, renowned swordsmiths include Norimune, the founder of the Fukuoka Ichimonji School, who was favored by Emperor Go-Toba<sup>6</sup>, and Mitsutada of the Osafune School, who crafted swords beloved by Oda Nobunaga<sup>7</sup>.

Moreover, at the workshops in Bizen Osafune Sword Village, visitors can observe the process of Japanese sword production and, by reservation, participate in a workshop for crafting small knives, where craftsmen guide directly. "It's not just about appreciating the swords, but also the opportunity for visitors to watch the craftsmen working up close. This event has been well-received by visitors from abroad," says Wakamatsu.

The same museum is actively engaged in promoting information to foreign tourists, aiming to have them think of Osafune when they hear the term "Japanese sword." It provides guided tours in English by British support staff and offer information in English. Additionally, as nearly half of its overseas visitors are from France, they are also available in French.

The radiance of Japanese swords, which do not seem to be crafted from steel, each have their own beauty. In Japan, throughout its history, swords have been regarded as vessels of divine presence<sup>8</sup>, believed to harbor the essence of a soul in exceptional blades," says Wakamatsu. "We invite visitors to experience the

spirituality and cultural allure of the Japanese people who have cherished and preserved this divinity and beauty over the centuries."

Near Bizen Osafune Sword Museum, visitors will find the Jigen-in Temple, which serves as the memorial temple for generations of swordsmiths, and the Yuki-e Shrine, revered by swordsmiths as a place of worship.

"Both places feature wooden votive plaques<sup>9</sup> and temple or shrine stamps<sup>10</sup> with depictions of swords, making them popular spots among sword enthusiasts," explains Wakamatsu. "I hope visitors thoroughly enjoy the surrounding attractions in this hub of Japanese sword culture."

For those interested in Japanese swords, a visit to the Osafune area of Setouchi City is highly recommended. ■



Above: Jigen-in is the ancestral temple of swordsmiths.

Below: Wooden votive plaques shaped like swords at Jigen-in are rare in Japan.



Above: A work by Yoshifusa, a representative swordsmith of the Fukuoka Ichimonji school, who was active in the 14th century.

Below: A sword created through the collaboration of swordsmiths and other artisans associated with the Bizen Osafune Sword Village. These is a contemporary work by modern swordsmiths.



Bizen Osafune Sword Museum, known for attracting many tourists from France.

1. Steel is made of iron and carbon and has a carbon content of 0.02% to 2% while iron has a carbon content of less than 0.02%. Although iron is easily oxidized and therefore less durable, steel has superior strength and sturdiness.
2. There are several ways to count swords, including "hon," "furi," and "koshi or yo." When written as "1□," it may be read as "ikkou," "hitofuri," or "hitokuchi."
3. A school of swordsmiths that thrived around the 12th century. The name originates from the region of Bizen-Fukuoka where they were active. They are known for their splendid blade patterns, with the National Treasure *Yamatorige* also being a creation of the Fukuoka Ichimonji school. Prominent swordsmiths from this school include Norimune, Muneyoshi, and Yoshifusa.
4. The largest school of Japanese swords founded in the 13th century. The oldest known sword with a clear date is from 1274, made by Nagamitsu, Mitsutada's son. Their distinctive features include a grand appearance and elaborate blade patterns. Notable swords from this school include the National Treasure *Daihannya Nagamitsu*.
5. The Japanese sword *Tachi Mumei Ichimonji*, known as *Yamatorige* (and commonly referred to

as *San-cho-mo*) is attributed to the Fukuoka Ichimonji school of swordsmiths who were active in the late 12th century to the middle of the Kamakura period, around 1333, in the Fukuoka region (present-day Osafune Town, Setouchi City). The swordsmith's name is unknown. It was designated as a National Treasure in 1953.

6. Emperor Go-Toba reigned during the 12th century. He was known for his appreciation of culture, the arts, and his interest in Japanese swords.
7. Oda Nobunaga was a prominent military commander who thrived in the 15th century. Known for his remarkable leadership and efforts to unify Japan, he played a significant role in the country's history.
8. An object believed to house deities or spirits is referred to as a "vessel of divine presence."
9. A wooden tablet offered at shrines or temples for making wishes.
10. A stamp or seal that visitors can receive as proof of a visit to a shrine or temple. Since the design of the stamps vary from one shrine or temple to another, collecting them is a popular activity among visitors.

# Tourism Providing Experience of Awa Culture



Photo: East Tokushima Tourism Authority

Yoshino River, nicknamed *Shikoku Saburo*. Given the area's abundance of rivers, using water taxis as a mode of transportation between tourist spots lets visitors experience the city's aquatic ambiance.

Once known as Awa Province (Awa-no-kuni), Tokushima Prefecture is renowned as the venue for the Awa Odori (Awa Dance)<sup>1</sup>. It is also famous for its high-quality indigo dye called Awa Indigo<sup>2</sup> and the Awa Ningyo (Puppet) Joruri<sup>3</sup>, designated as an Important Intangible Cultural Property of Japan. These are collectively referred to as the Three Great Awa Cultures. We spoke with the person in charge of promoting cultural tourism at the Tokushima Prefectural Government Office about tourism experiences centered on these special cultural aspects of the region. (Text: Tanaka Nozomi)

In Tokushima Prefecture, the Yoshino River, often referred to as the “raging river,” stretches from east to west. During the typhoon season, this river frequently floods, causing extensive damage. Due to that factor, it was difficult to utilize the water of the Yoshino River as a resource, and rice cultivation was difficult in parts of the river basin. So instead, indigo plant's cultivation, which is a primary source for dyes, thrived. And that is the historical background to why indigo cultivation became popular here. When the fermented indigo dye, known as *sukumo*, was harvested and introduced to the market, its superior quality gained it widespread recognition throughout the country. By the 1800s, its sales generated significant profits, prompting a surge in indigo cultivation. As a result, the *sukumo* produced in Tokushima earned its famed title as “Awa Indigo.” Crafting *sukumo* involves an extensive period, specialized techniques, and careful management, showcasing the exceptional skill of traditional craftsmanship. A visit to the House of Indigo (Ai-no-Yakata) museum in Aizumi Town exhibits the cultivation method, history of indigo, the tools and its role in creating the iconic “Japan Blue,” one of Japan's representative colors. Additionally, visitors have the opportunity to try their hand at indigo dyeing.

Backed by the economic power brought about by this indigo, the Awa indigo merchants, who had a fondness for the performing arts, fostered the development of a puppet theater known as Awa Ningyo Joruri. The format, where a narrative is accompanied by the shamisen, a traditional Japanese musical

instrument and one puppet is manipulated by three people, is unique among puppet theaters worldwide.

Kimiko Shimizu, who is involved in cultural tourism in Tokushima Prefecture, says the following: “Nowadays, Awa Ningyo Joruri can be seen every day at the Awa Jurobe Yashiki (Puppet Theater and Museum) in Tokushima City. This facility has an open design stage, modeled after the many outdoor theaters that remain within the precincts of shrines throughout the prefecture. On the upper part of the stage, there is an LED panel displaying subtitles in both English and Japanese. So, it's not only popular among foreigners but also well-received by Japanese who are unfamiliar with traditional performing arts, making it easily understandable for them.” Inside the facility, visitors also have the opportunity to try their hand at puppetry.

Also, every August, Tokushima City comes alive with the Awa Odori, a signature traditional performance of Tokushima. This event draws in over a million visitors from all over the world.

Actually, it is also said that during modern times, indigo merchants who traveled around the country trading indigo played a role in incorporating various regional cultures into this traditional dance.

In the Awa Odori Hall located in Tokushima city, visitors can watch the dance throughout the year. “During the daytime performances, our exclusive troupe, or *Ren*<sup>4</sup>, takes the stage, while at night, famous troupes perform on a rotating basis. There's also a chance at the end where the audience can join in, allowing everyone to experience the authentic Awa dance,” says Shimizu.



## Awa Ai



Aizumi Town Board of Education

Leaves of the indigo plant, the raw material for indigo dyeing. The leaves are harvested just before the flowers bloom, finely chopped, and dried.



Aizumi Town Board of Education

The raw material for indigo dye, *sukumo* (Awa Indigo). It is covered with a straw mat (*mushiro*) and fermented over approximately 100 days to complete.



Photo: PXTA

An example of cloth dyed with indigo.

## Awa Ningyo Joruri



Photo: Tokushima Prefectural Awa Jurobe Yashiki

Left: In Awa Ningyo Joruri, distinct roles exist: the main puppeteer (*omo-zukai*) operates the puppet's head and right hand, the left puppeteer (*hidari-zukai*) is in charge of the left hand, and the foot puppeteer (*ashi-zukai*) guides the feet.

Above right: The permanent stage for Awa Ningyo Joruri, Awa Jurobe Yashiki.

Below right: With bilingual subtitles on the LED panel above the stage, both novices and English-speaking foreigners can enjoy the performance.

## Awa Odori



Photo: Tokushima City

Left: A scene from the Awa Odori in August. The female dancers wear yukatas and braided hats, dancing in unison with precise choreography. This cohesive beauty is a defining characteristic.

Right: An example of the dance performed at the Awa Odori Hall.



Photo: PXTA

In Tokushima Prefecture, there are facilities themed around the three major Awa cultures: Awa Indigo, Awa Ningyo Joruri, and Awa Odori. At these venues, various experiential programs are available for visitors.

Participating in indigo dyeing, interacting with the Awa Ningyo Joruri dolls, and enjoying the Awa Odori dance - these distinct experiences are sure to leave lasting impressions from a trip to Tokushima. 7

1. While the prototype of the dance existed 400 years ago, the name "Awa Odori" was coined and became established after the Second World War.
2. Natural dye. Tokushima Prefecture is the primary producer of this plant, which belongs to the knotweed family. Tokushima excelled in the production of fermented indigo leaves, known as *sukumo*. The dye solution is created by dissolving the condensed blue color from *sukumo* in water. Then, the material intended for dyeing is repeatedly dipped in the solution and exposed to the air to achieve the desired color.
3. This form of traditional Japanese puppetry is known as *ningyo joruri*, where narration through song, called *tayu*, is accompanied by shamisen music, and three performers manipulate each puppet. This art form gained prominence from the 17th century and is designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property of Japan.
4. *Ren* refers to the groups or teams that perform the Awa Odori dance. It's essentially the team's name.



# Oita—Home of Bamboo Production Where You Can Enjoy Bamboo Art



Photo: Hroyuki Hirai

Renowned architect Ban Shigeru designed the Oita Prefectural Art Museum. The building's beautiful latticed appearance was created using the bamboo art *henso*, a technique for weaving bamboo strips into a precise pattern.

**Oita Prefecture is located on the east coast of the Kyushu region in the southwestern part of the Japanese archipelago. The area is a producer of fine quality bamboo, and bamboo crafts and art have developed here since modern times. Tourism tailored for visitors who wish to enjoy its bamboo culture and other regional cultural forms is growing. We heard more from an official of Oita Prefecture.** (Text: Kurosawa Akane)

**O**ita City is a key area in Eastern Kyushu. It is located in central Oita Prefecture, overlooking Beppu Bay, and blessed with a mild climate and natural surroundings. There you will find the Oita Prefectural Art Museum, which has a special presence.

“Oita Prefecture produces the largest amount of *madake* (giant timber bamboo) in Japan. This fine-quality bamboo is widely loved and used in a wide range of products, from daily necessities to souvenirs, as well as for works of art such as Beppu bamboo crafts, which are nationally designated Traditional Arts and Crafts. This natural feature has helped produce many bamboo craftsmen who work both in Japan and abroad. You can enjoy world-class Japanese bamboo art at the Oita Prefectural Art Museum, which boasts one of Japan’s largest collections of bamboo crafts, at over 300 pieces, including works by Shounsai Shono (1904-1974), who has been named so-called a Living National Treasure.”<sup>1</sup>

So explains Kuramoto Kohei, who works in the Arts, Culture, and Sports Promotion Section, Planning and Promotion Department, Oita Prefecture.

Bamboo crafts are a symbol of Japan, in that they have developed with deep connections to Japanese cultural forms, such as the tea ceremony and flower arranging. In recent years, they have also been highly regarded by art lovers around the world as a form of contemporary art.

“Visitors can not only appreciate these crafts as works of art, but also visit the production workplaces or even have a conversation with a bamboo craftsman. Oita Prefecture also



Photo: Oita Prefectural Art Museum

*Honoo* (“Flame”), a work by Shounsai Shono, who is Japan’s first-ever Living National Treasure in the field of bamboo art (48.0 × 33.0cm, 1957) Collection of Oita Prefectural Art Museum.





Photo: Oita Prefecture

Above left: Oita Prefecture produces some of Japan's finest *madake*.

Below left: The greatest feature of Beppu bamboo crafts is *henso*, a technique for weaving flexible bamboo strips into a precise pattern. The entire process is done by hand. Pictured here is a *goshō-kago* (tea basket) for carrying tea utensils.

Right: The steam rising from the hot spring baths of Beppu creates a rich hot spring atmosphere. Since the modern era, bamboo crafts have flourished for practical products as well as souvenirs for hot spring visitors.<sup>3</sup>



Photo: Oita Prefecture

Left: At the Usuki Takeyoi Festival each year, about 20,000 bamboo *bonbori* lights gently illuminate the castle town with a soft glow.

Right: The venue for Oita Bamboo Art & Lights 2023 Take-e, an interactive art event held in 2023.



Photo: Beppu City Traditional Bamboo Crafts Center



Photo: Oita Prefectural Art Museum



Above: Bamboo craftsman Nakatomi Hajime is based in Takeda City, Oita Prefecture, and is active on the global stage. He is the graduate of the Oita Prefectural Bamboo Craft Training Center, the only one facility in Japan that trains bamboo craft artists.

Below: Overseas visitors watch *seichiku*, the process of removing oil from bamboo in a climbing kiln filled with boiling water and processing it for bamboo crafts.



Photo: Oita Prefecture

Above: You can get a hands-on feel for bamboo at a bamboo art workshop.


Below: The museum shop at the Oita Prefectural Museum of Art offers original goods created by bamboo craft artists in the prefecture, and they are popular as souvenirs.

has hot spring areas like Beppu and Yufuin, which have been well-known for many years. In those places, visitors can find *ryokan* (Japanese-style inns) that offer first-class Japanese hospitality. So, another appeal of Oita is the large number of lodging destinations where overseas visitors with a keen interest in Japanese culture can really enjoy themselves," adds Kuramoto.

"This year, Oita Prefectural Art Museum launched a new event called Oita Bamboo Art & Lights 2023. It's a hands-on art event where you can interact with bamboo. The event seeks not only to pursue artistic qualities, but also to stimulate interest in the natural features that gave rise to our thriving bamboo art included an exhibition of large objects, workshops, and lighting of bamboo crafts a local cultural resource. During this period, we also encourage people to visit bamboo and illumination events in various places, including the Usuki Takeyoi Festival in Usuki City, which is next to Oita City, as well as Chikuraku in Takeda City, which is about a one-hour drive from Oita City.

"At the same time, modern artists reside on the Kunisaki Peninsula, where not only bamboo and crafts, but also many works of Buddhist art, including National Treasures, have been preserved in many

locations. There, we are implementing projects to create artworks and otherwise breathe new life into the art world by carrying out events that support collaborations involving local historical and cultural heritage and modern art. We are also teaming up with industry and academia to provide information on sightseeing and cultural tourism that brings people into contact with Oita Prefecture's unique culture and art."

When you come to Oita Prefecture, first visit the Prefectural Art Museum to experience its many works of art. Next, perhaps enjoy a visit to the birthplace or workshop of an artist whose creations impressed or interested you, and broaden your knowledge by seeing and experiencing the unique natural features and culture of the area. We recommend visiting at a time when various events are being held.<sup>4</sup> 

1. A perennial evergreen bamboo that grows throughout Japan except Hokkaido. Among all species of bamboo, it has the most resilient and workable culm, and has been cultivated and put to practical use throughout Japan since ancient times.
2. A person who has mastered to the highest degree an intangible skill that has been designated as an Important Intangible Cultural Property. These people are commonly referred to as Living National Treasures.
3. A long-term stay in a hot spring resort to improve symptoms or recover from illness or injury by enjoying the benefits of the hot spring.
4. Oita Prefectural Art Museum  
<https://www.opam.jp/en/>  
Japanese, English, Korean, and Chinese are available. Volunteer English language guides were introduced at temporary exhibits for the first time in FY2023. Special viewings of the collection with a curator are planned in Japanese and English.





The symposium venue, the Bar Associations Building in Kasumigaseki, Tokyo

# The Judicial Symposium on Intellectual Property / TOKYO 2023 – JSIP2023

**The Judicial Symposium on Intellectual Property / TOKYO 2023 - JSIP2023 was held from October 17 to 19, 2023. This was the seventh edition of the symposium, which has been conducted annually since 2017 under the auspices of the Supreme Court of Japan, the Intellectual Property High Court, the Ministry of Justice, the Japan Patent Office, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations, and the Intellectual Property Lawyers Network Japan. This article presents an overview of the symposium.**

## About the Judicial Symposium on Intellectual Property

At the Judicial Symposium on Intellectual Property (JSIP), trial examiners and other legal professionals from various countries conduct mock trials and discussions on current intellectual property (IP) topics and judicial decisions related to IP disputes. The symposium was first held in 2017 and has since attracted many participants each year. The event serves to share updates on the IP judicial system in Japan, as well as the systems and operations in other countries around the world, with judges and other legal experts from Europe, the United States, and Asian countries invited to attend. The seventh edition of the JSIP offered a comprehensive program on the latest arguments and issues related to IP dispute resolution in Asia. The event was attended by approximately 1,630 participants in total from 17 countries.

## Outline of JSIP2023

JSIP2023 was held at the Bar Associations Building in Tokyo's Chiyoda City over a three-day period from October 17 to 19. The symposium was conducted in two languages, Japanese and English, with simultaneous interpretation, and was made available not only to the audience at the venue, but also to online viewers via simultaneous Internet streaming.

## Outcomes of JSIP2023

The theme of this year's symposium was "IP Dispute Resolution in Asia" The program was divided into three parts, consisting of mock trials and panel discussions (see program). The panelists – judges, lawyers, trial examiners, and government officials from ASEAN countries, India, Japan, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, – presented the latest information from their respective countries and engaged in a lively exchange of opinions.





The entrance of the Bar Associations Building in Kasumigaseki, Tokyo



Inside the venue of the International Intellectual Property Judicial Symposium 2023

## Judicial Symposium on Intellectual Property/TOKYO2023-JSIP2023

- IP Dispute Resolution in Asia -

**Dates**

**From October 17 to October 19, 2023**

**Program** Language: Japanese and English (simultaneous interpretation is available)

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Tuesday, October 17</b><br/>13:30 - 18:00</p>   | <p><b>Court Part</b><br/>- Mock trials by Japan, India and Republic of Korea (issue: Exhaustion)<br/>- Panel discussion (topic: IP dispute resolution at various jurisdictions)</p>  |
| <p><b>Wednesday, October 18</b><br/>13:30 - 18:00</p> | <p><b>Ministry of Justice Part</b><br/>- Keynote Speeches (Efforts to combat counterfeit products and public-private partnerships)<br/>- Panel Discussion (Measures against counterfeit products by EC sites and other platforms)<br/>- Panel Discussion (Public-private and international cooperation to combat counterfeit products)</p> |
| <p><b>Thursday, October 19</b><br/>13:30 - 18:00</p>  | <p><b>Patent Office Part</b><br/>- Panel Discussion (Trial and Appeal practice in general in each country)<br/>- Panel Discussion (Trial and Appeal practice in the field of advanced technology in each country)</p>  |

**[Panelists] Judges, Lawyers, Referees, Government Officials, etc. from the following countries:  
Japan, People's Republic of China, India, Republic of Korea and ASEAN member states.**

**Venue**

Auditorium "Creo", Bar Associations Building  
1-1-3 Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo

**Admission FREE**

Live streaming is also available

**Hosts**

Supreme Court / Intellectual Property High Court / Ministry of Justice / Japan Patent Office / Japan Federation of Bar Associations / IP Lawyers Network Japan

**Registration Required**

Register Online at <https://www.sip-tokyo.go.jp/2023/en/>

**Support**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan / Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) / International Civil and Commercial Law Center / Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters / Japan Business Federation / AIPPI Japan / The Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry / Japan Intellectual Property Association / Japan Patent Attorneys Association / Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)

\* For more information, please visit our website: <https://www.sip-tokyo.go.jp/2023/en/>  
\* Notice: programs recorded; you may be appeared in photos and videos (live and archived) if you arrive and see at the venue.  
\* We will be uploading a series of videos introducing JSIP 2023 to the Supreme Court Administrative Office Channel on YouTube, so please take a look.

[Supreme Court Administrative Office Channel]

Leaflet about the Judicial Symposium on Intellectual Property / TOKYO 2023 - JSIP2023

### JSIP2023 Program

-IP Dispute Resolution in Asia-

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## An 8K-Image Technology: A Game-Changer for Future Surgery

Scene from an actual surgery using the 8K endoscope on a human patient. The images produced are more detailed than those visible to the naked eye. With multiple doctors and medical staff being able to watch the operation at the same time, they can undertake more difficult surgeries and share the knowledge and experience gained.

The world's first 8K endoscope has been developed by a Japanese doctor by applying the technologies of NHK Science & Technology Research Laboratories. Bringing microscopic nerves and blood vessels into full view on a big screen, it makes advanced surgical procedures safer than before. How does such unprecedented resolution transform medical practice?

“It’s as if I were performing surgery inside the patient’s stomach!”

The surgeon, Prof. MORI Toshiyuki of Kyorin University, was amazed at the high-resolution image being projected onto the monitor display when he operated to remove a gallbladder in the world’s first clinical surgery with the 8K rigid endoscope. 8K footage boasts 16 times as many pixels as the 2K footage of endoscopes widely used today. That is nearly equivalent to being able to read a newspaper from 10 meters away, and makes tiny blood vessels and

sutures—invisible to the naked eye—clearly visible.

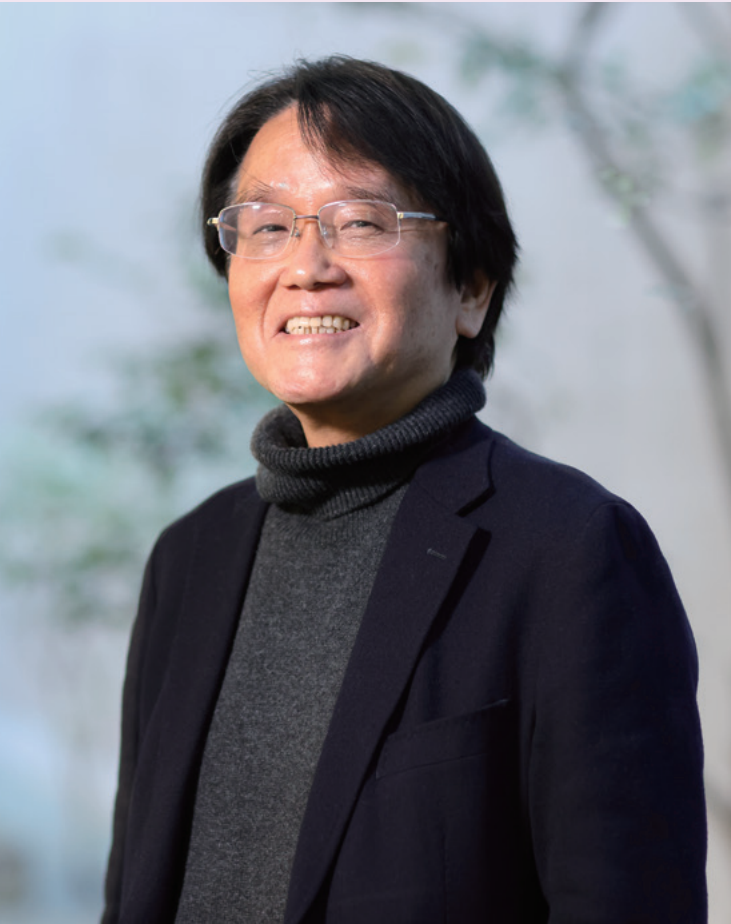
Prof. CHIBA Toshio, a Japanese surgeon who has performed endoscopic surgeries on fetal patients, developed this world’s first 8K rigid endoscope. He felt there was room to improve conventional endoscopes of the time with their low image quality and light sensitivity.

In 2006, while working as a doctor at the National Center for Child Health and Development, Prof. Chiba was transfixed by a documentary broadcast on Nippon Hoso Kyokai (NHK, or Japan Broadcasting Corporation) about

the arrest of an airplane hijacker. What captured his attention so firmly was the fact that the faces of those involved were clearly visible, even though the camera footage was taken in the middle of the night in pitch darkness.

He desperately wanted to make use of this video technology for endoscopic surgery. So, without wasting any time on making a prior appointment, he went immediately to talk to NHK Science & Technology Research Laboratories, which was conveniently located opposite his workplace. He was lucky enough to bump into the then director-general, TANIOKA Ken-





The 8K endoscope was developed by Prof. Chiba and his team by applying the 8K-image sensor technology for broadcasting used by NHK Science & Technology Research Laboratories.



An 8K image features many more pixels than the commonly used 2K image, allowing even the smallest details of the subject to be seen clearly.

CHIBA Toshio, M.D., Ph.D. Specialist in fetal and pediatric surgery. Chairman of board of directors of the Medical Innovation Consortium and project professor at Juntendo University, Faculty of Medicine. He was awarded the Albert Schweitzer Award in 2020 for his achievements in the development of 8K endoscopes.

kichi. The pair hit it off and decided on the spot to start development to incorporate first the night-vision technology known as HARP and then the ultra-high-definition 8K technology in rigid endoscopes.

At the time the prototype 8K endoscope was introduced into clinical practices in 2014, it weighed 2.5 kg. Reducing it to be small and light enough for practical use in surgery was therefore a major challenge. However, after much repeated effort, Prof. Chiba succeeded in reducing the weight of the device to 450 g in just four months. In 2017, an 8K rigid endoscope was commercially launched, and the 8K Surgical Microscope was released later.

“It’s because Japan has a very high level of technical expertise in 8K-image sensors and endoscopic lenses that we were able to make the product so much more practical,” he remarks. “Compared to conventional

endoscopes, 8K has a far greater sense of realism. Once you’ve experienced it, you can’t go back to the old image quality.” This technology, which enables observations of minute details in the inner structure of the body, not only allows for safer and more accurate surgical procedures, but also provides the means for types of surgery that have previously been extremely difficult. The possibilities for medical treatment are wide-ranging, as Prof. Chiba says: “Footage of surgery by skilled surgeons can be used for educational purposes, and online medical care and remote surgery by medical specialists can happen far more easily.”

To make the most of 8K-endoscope technology, it is vital to develop high-speed communication networks, such as 5G and fiber optics, to efficiently share the vast amounts of 8K data. And if there is progress in the

development of robotic forceps for more precise operability than with the human hand, and evolution of AI capable of faster and more accurate diagnostic imaging, then 8K endoscopes will be able to demonstrate their true value.

Prof. Chiba goes on, “How quickly we can bring good products to the practical field is important. In order to do this, I believe we need to foster open innovation across borders and industries. Certainly, I would like to cooperate with people and companies overseas to build infrastructure and develop technologies that make use of our 8K technology.”

Japan’s video technology, first developed around television broadcasting, is having an impact that could change the future of medical care. No doubt Prof. Chiba will continue to take on the challenge of creating even better medical treatment.

Note: This article is based on the article previously published in "KIZUNA" on February 24, 2022 ([https://www.japan.go.jp/kizuna/2022/02/an\\_8k-image\\_technology.html](https://www.japan.go.jp/kizuna/2022/02/an_8k-image_technology.html)). \*There are some paraphrases that do not change the meaning of the original article.



# An Illustrator Shares Fukushima's Charms with the World through Agriculture and Art



Raspberries and green beans are among the variety of fruits and vegetables Emilie grows



Potatoes from her farm sold out in a flash, appreciated for eating “even skins”

In February 2023, Emilie Bouquet, an illustrator originally from France, moved to Okuma town in Fukushima Prefecture. There, she grows raspberries and other produce, from fruit trees to vegetables, on leased farmland. She aims to share the many charms of her new home of Okuma and the rest of Fukushima through illustrations and farming.

## Murakami Kayo

Born and raised amid an abundant natural environment in France, farming interested Emilie from an early age. After visiting Japan a number of times, she moved to Tokyo in 2011 and started working as a French-language instructor. From 2018, Emilie became interested in Fukushima because one of her students was from the prefecture. That was a turning point in her life..

“At first the associations with the nuclear power plants made me hesitant,” Emilie recalls. “Then as I heard more, I realized that I knew nothing about Fukushima and decided I’d like to actually see it with my own eyes.”

The picturesque scenery captivated Emilie as she surveyed destinations including the Aizu region toward the west of the prefecture and the Goshiki-numa series of over 30 variously colored lakes, ponds, and marshes in the Ura-Bandai area north of 1,816-m Mount Bandai. She was also deeply

touched by encounters with local residents who interacted with her so warmly.

“I came to love all those places!” exclaims Emilie, who had visited Fukushima every year and began making illustrations to share the charms of these destinations. Postcards and other goods featuring her illustrations can be found for sale at locations such as variety shops throughout the area, including cutely deformed renditions of the bright red, cow-shaped, traditional Akabeko folk craft toys of the Aizu region.

Relocating to Aizu-Wakamatsu, Fukushima in 2021, a dream of Emilie’s came to grow: “Farming here in this area that is still rebuilding from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake.” After drawing up a business proposal outlining her ideal farm and presenting it to the Okuma town office, she was able to lease about 1.7 hectares (4.2 acres) of farmland. In

February 2023, she finally made the move to Okuma, where she grows a variety of vegetables, herbs, and other produce, including raspberries, as well as peach, cherry, and other fruit trees. She named her farm Amanogawa Noen (“Milky Way Farms”). Working cooperatively with local residents, she also sells jam made from her orchard fruit.

“The way I farm, I try to entrust



Emilie poses at the entrance to her farm





Emilie Bouquet's illustrations of Fukushima depict notable highlights. (Illustrations of Akabeko are at the top and bottom of the photo.)



A swinging bench installed on the farm



Photo: CORA / PIXTA

Akabeko, a traditional folk craft of Fukushima Prefecture's Aizu region

things to nature with as little human input as possible and never use agricultural chemicals. This is the original, natural way: letting plants grow on their own and maintain balance under their own strength. I hope to keep respecting natural cycles and learning from nature as I continue to farm," explains Emilie.

Furthermore, she also had the thought about Okuma town that is only known as the location of nuclear power plants, "I'd also like people outside Japan to know about Oku-

ma's many-faceted charms." Based on this idea, she shares social media posts about the area's beautiful natural scenery and updates on her farm, including illustrations of her own, in Japanese, English, and French.

"While some local residents may say there's not much in Okuma, the way the tranquil, pastoral *satoyama* land here changes appearance with each of the four seasons soothes the soul. There are lovely shrines and other attractions here as well, and the people are all so friendly and warm. I

hope everyone can find the chance to visit here at least once," says Emilie.

Looking forward, she hopes to make the farm a place where visitors can come to take in the scenery of Okuma and harvest fruit themselves. Presently, she is in the stage of working to maintain and further develop the farm little by little, while also expanding the range of produce she cultivates. Emilie's dream of spreading the charms of her beloved Okuma through agriculture is set to continue into the future.





Important Cultural Property

*Kosode* (Garment with small wrist openings), Design of Mandarin Ducks and Waves on Black Figured Satin

Edo Period, 17th Century

(Collection of Tokyo National Museum)

A formal *kosode* garment featuring a design expressed with *kanoko shibori* and embroidery. Male and female mandarin ducks float in the water around the large wave patterns and take flight between them in a symbolic representation of harmonious marriage.

Photo: ColBase (<https://colbase.nich.go.jp/>)

Oyama Yuzuruha

The garment features a design of waves making dramatic leaps in bow-like arcs against glossy figured satin<sup>1</sup> dyed jet black. Around them, embroidered mandarin ducks are depicted with beautiful coloration. In the early years of the Edo period, elegant and elaborate patterns that wrapped around the garments with embroidery, *kanoko shibori*,<sup>2</sup> and other techniques were most common. Toward the mid-17th century, however, *kosode* designs underwent a striking transformation. In 1620, Tokugawa Masako, a daughter of Hidetada (1579-1632), second shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate, was wedded to the Emperor Go-Mizunoo (1596-1680) at the Kyoto Imperial Palace. She was later called by the title “Tōfukumon-in.” She then placed orders for numerous *kosode* from Karigane-ya,<sup>3</sup> a prominent Kyoto textile dealer. The garments she asked for were of entirely different designs than those of previous fashion styles in Kyoto. The patterns of flowers and birds of the four seasons are arranged in large size on the entire *kosode* like the composition of the painting. Then, by intendedly making a margin without patterns around the waist at the left side, and making the entire pattern arranged an arc, the *kosode* gained dynamic movement appearance. These innovative new designs came to be called

Important Cultural Property  
*Kosode* (Garment with Small Wrist Openings), Design of Mandarin Ducks and Waves on Black Figured Satin  
 Edo Period, 17<sup>th</sup> Century

The kimono is much more than a garment; it is a symbol of traditional Japanese culture. The kimono of contemporary Japan originated with the short-sleeved *kosode* in the Edo period (early 17th century to mid-late 19th century). Around this time, the *kosode* came to be worn by people from a wide range of generations, by everyone from court nobility and the samurai class to commoners, as an outer layer of clothing. The garments came to feature brilliant decorations with techniques including embroidery, *shibori* (shaped resist dyeing), and *katazome* (stencil resist dyeing). This article introduces one such *kosode* from the early Edo period (17th century), a time when the most revolutionary designs appeared.





**Important Cultural Property**

*Kosode* (Garment with small wrist openings), Design of Mandarin Ducks and Waves on Black Figured Satin (Detail)

Edo Period, 17<sup>th</sup> Century

Detailed *kanoko shibori* patterns dyed in red and indigo are used to represent the large waves. *Tatsu-nami* motifs depicting spray from the cresting waves are embroidered with gold thread, adding gorgeous, glittering accents to the design.

Photo: ColBase (<https://colbase.nich.go.jp/>)



*Shinsen Onhiinakata* (“A New Selection of Patterns”)

Edo period, 1667

(Collection of Tokyo National Museum)



*Hinagatabon* books with more than 200 *kosode* patterns were published in the Edo period, the very first in 1666. Apparently quite popular, a second edition of the work appeared the following year. (Photographs here show the second edition.)

*Gosho-zome* after the *Gosho* Imperial Palace where Tōfukumon-in lived, and they attained tremendous popularity throughout the city of Kyoto.

In 1666, *Shinsen Onhiinakata* (“A New Selection of Patterns”), the first *hinagatabon*<sup>4</sup> work dedicated to *kosode* patterns, was published as a *hanpon*<sup>5</sup> woodblock-printed book. The prevalence in this work of the sort of bold designs Tōfukumon-in preferred is evidence of just how celebrated the innovative, striking designs were. The inclusion of playful designs that hardly seem like they could be *kosode* patterns suggests that, as the style’s

popularity eventually spread among the townspeople, too, approaches showing freedom and resourceful wit also became more common in garment design.

A new look at the *kosode* here against the backdrop of the era’s fashion trends in fact reveals various playful touches in its design. In the wave design with its bold sense of motion, for instance, the waves are given sharply pointed triangular forms and are filled in with stitched patterns featuring *kanoko shibori* designs in red and indigo. While appearing to be waves, they can in

fact be seen to represent fishing nets drying on the shore. Moreover, careful inspection reveals green, leafy forms embroidered around the netting, spaced at certain intervals. Just what might this be meant to represent? That expresses pointy-tipped bamboo shoots sprouting up out of the ground. By combining these various patterns, like pairing the bamboo shoot motif, representing a wish for children’s thriving growth, with mandarin ducks, symbols of harmonious marital relations, this *kosode* had the meaning with auspicious significance.

1. *Rinzu*: A type of textile with damask patterns woven into it using raw silk for both the warp and weft threads. Scouring the fabric to remove impurities from it after weaving creates a smooth, glossy white appearance. The most commonly used silk fabric used for making high-quality *kosode* in the Edo period.  
 2. A shaped resist dyeing technique featuring patterns of small, white dots like the spots on the back of a young deer, made by dyeing fabric with certain spots bound with thread.  
 3. The family business into which Ogata Kōrin was born. See “The Beauty of Kimono,” September 2023.  
 4. A book of patterns featuring selections of miniaturized sketches and designs. They also functioned as fashion books and order books.  
 5. Books printed beginning in the early Edo period using woodblocks carved with text and illustrations.



# Ao-ashi-shigi

Greenshank



Many species of birds belonging to the *shigi* (snipe or sandpiper) family (Scolopacidae) can be found in abundance in Japan. Among them, the greenshank (*ao-ashi-shigi*, or literally “blue-legged *shigi*”) is distinguished by its long legs and slender figure. This bird is from 33-35cm tall and breeds in northern areas of Eurasia. As a passage migrant, it comes to all areas of Japan in the spring and fall, and to Southeast Asia and Australia in the winter. In ancient Japanese, the word *ao* meant not only blue, but also could be more widely applied to green and indigo. However, the actual color of the greenshank’s legs is grayish green. It feeds on shellfish, small fish, and insects in tidelands, marshes, rice paddies and other shallow water areas. From ancient times, *shigi* was celebrated in Japanese *waka* poems. Although the type of *shigi* is not identified, this poem by Saigyō Hoshi (1118-1190) is the most well-known of them:

*Kokoro naki mi ni mo aware wa shiretari shigi  
tatsu sawa no aki no yugure*  
(While denying his heart,  
Even a priest must feel his body know  
The depth of a sad beauty:  
From a marsh at autumn twilight,  
Snipe that rise to wing away.)

Robert H Brower & Earl Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford Univ. Press, 1961), p. 295.  
(Explanation) Even a person like me, who has left the secular world after being ordained as a Buddhist priest, can still naturally feel profound emotion when the snip takes off from the marsh at twilight.

All photos: PIXTA

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