

## Japanese Paper<sup>1</sup>

**Washi** (和紙) is traditional Japanese paper. The word "washi" comes from *wa* meaning 'Japanese' and *shi* meaning 'paper'. The term is used to describe paper for which local fibre is used and which is processed by hand and made in the traditional manner. *Washi* is made using fibres from the inner bark of the gampi tree, the mitsumata shrub, or the paper mulberry (*kōzo*) bush. As a Japanese craft it registered as a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage.

*Washi* is produced in a way similar to that of ordinary paper, but relies heavily on manual methods. It involves a long and intricate process that is often undertaken in the cold weather of winter, as pure, cold running water is essential to the production of *washi*. Cold inhibits bacteria, preventing the decomposition of the fibres. Cold also makes the fibres contract, producing a crisp feel to the paper. It is traditionally the winter work of farmers, a task that supplemented a farmer's income. For a detailed description of the process see links mentioned below.

*Chiyogami/ Yuzen* refers to Japanese hand-screened decorative kozo washi consisting of repetitive patterns. Originally the design was applied to handmade kozo paper with wood blocks, but today most *chiyogami* is produced with silkscreen techniques.

*Katazome* is a Japanese method of dyeing fabrics using a resist paste applied through a stencil. With this kind of resist dyeing, a rice flour mixture is applied using a brush or a tool such as a palette knife. Pigment is added by hand-painting, immersion or both. Where the paste mixture covers and permeates the cloth, dye applied later will not penetrate.



Gampi or Ganpi are a group of Japanese shrubs, members of the genus *Wikstroemia*, some of which have been used for making paper since the 8th century.

Ganpishi has a smooth, shiny surface and is used for books and crafts.



Mitsumata : *Edgeworthia chrysantha* (common names: Oriental Paperbush) is a plant in the Thymelaeaceae family.

Mitsumatagami has an ivory-coloured, fine surface and is used for shodō as well as printing. It was used to print paper money in Meiji period.



Kozo: The paper mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*, syn. *Morus papyrifera* L.) is a species of flowering plant in the family Moraceae.

Kōzogami has a toughness closer to cloth than to ordinary paper and does not weaken significantly when treated to be water-resistant.



Tororo Aoi: The aibika (*Abelmoschus manihot*) is a flowering plant in the mallow family Malvaceae. This plant is used to make *neri*, a starchy substance used in making *washi*.

Links to websites and films on making paper:

- <http://www.sekishu.jp/en/process/index.html> (website with terms and pictures from below mentioned film)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2WXBZQ3S18>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0IcPx CvIcA> on how to prepare bamboo strip

<sup>1</sup> Source : Wikipedia.org