

FY2011 Craft Technique Documentary

Kenjo Hakata Ori

—The Technique of OGAWA Kisaburo—

35mm / color / 35 min.

Planned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs
Produced by RKB Motion Picture Co., Ltd.



Kenjo Hakata Ori is the technique of producing a silk textile for obi, etc., which is traditional around the city of Fukuoka. In the Edo period, the Kuroda clan reserved this textile for annual presentation as a tribute, or kenjo, to the shogunate. Hence the name Kenjo Hakata. The traditional pattern of Kenjo Hakata Ori, called kenjo-gara, consists of dokko and hanazara, inspired by Buddhist altar fittings, and stripe. Its technique is distinguished by dense warp threads, stout weft threads, and a strongly battened weave that forms ridges. OGAWA Kisaburo, the holder of the Important Intangible Cultural Property "Kenjo Hakata Ori" learned the craft from childhood under his father, Zenzaburo (recognized in 1971 as holder of the Important Intangible Cultural Property "Kenjo Hakata Ori"), and acquired expertise in making traditional Kenjo Hakata Ori by experience. His entries in the Exhibition of Japan Traditional Art Crafts Exhibition and the Japan Traditional Textile Arts Exhibition have been acclaimed for their distinctive technique and design.

This film faithfully documents the entire process by which Ogawa produces a Gokenjo Hakata Ori Obi.

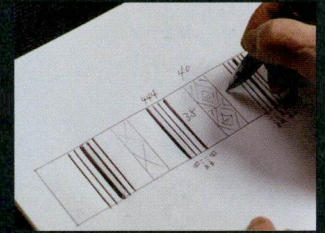


OGAWA Kisaburo

- 1936 Born in Fukuoka, Fukuoka Prefecture
- 1986 23rd Japan Traditional Textile Arts Exhibition
Wins the Nihon Kogeikai Prize for Kawari Kanto Obi
- 1987 Becomes full member of the Nihon Kogeikai
(The Japan Art Crafts Association)
- 1994 31st Japan Traditional Textile Arts Exhibition
Wins the Nihon Keizai Shimbun Inc. Award for Shimakenjo Ukiori Obi
- 2003 Receives Medal with Yellow Ribbon
- 2003 Holder of the Important Intangible Cultural Property "Kenjo Hakata Ori"
- 2008 Receives the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette

Planning

In Kenjo Hakata Ori, the pattern is expressed with the warp threads alone. Ogawa uses more than 6,000 warp threads in a single work. After deciding the colors and arrangement of the pattern, he calculates the required number and placement of warp threads. For the present work, he is making the background white, the dokko dark red, and the hanazara and the stripe dark blue.



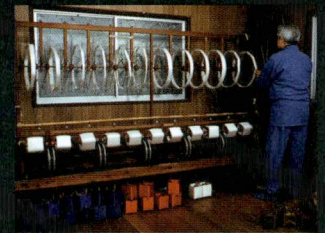
Examining the thread

Ogawa examines the dyed thread to be sure it is not broken or soiled. Having learned dyeing under a Kyoyuzen artisan when he was young, he has an exacting eye for dyes.



Winding off

Skeins of thread are placed on the wheels of a reeling machine, which are called swifts, and are wound onto reels at a constant tension.



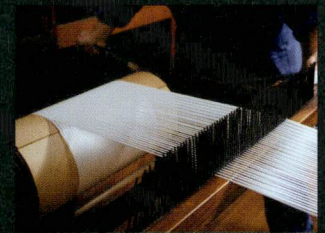
Warping

This is the process of arranging the necessary number and length of warp threads. Ogawa does the work by hand, in the old-fashioned way. Separating the threads in pairs with a finger, he makes paths for the weft thread to pass through during weaving.



Rolling

After the warped threads are wound onto the frame of the warp-beam, their ends are drawn out and passed through the pre-sleying reed, thereby determining the width of the obi. Ogawa rolls the threads onto the cloth-roll at constant tension. Cardboard treated with persimmon tannin is inserted between the threads to keep them from getting tangled with each other.



Separation of warp threads

The trailing ends of the warp threads rolled onto the cloth-roll are counted to match the planned pattern and are bundled at the completion of each array.



Bobbin-winding of weft threads

To make the distinctively stout weft threads of Hakata Ori, threads drawn off the reels are placed on swifts and wound onto bobbins. Here, Ogawa has combined more than twenty threads.



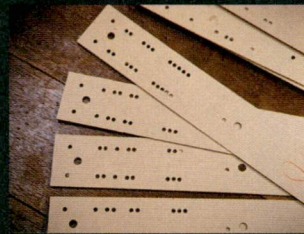
Forming pattern heddles

Ogawa makes the heddles which raise and lower the warp threads in the process of weaving. The "raised threads" for the dokko and hanazara are raised and lowered by pattern heddles. Ogawa links rings of nylon thread in pairs and hangs metal weights from them. Here, he has made about 280 such pattern heddles.



Making jacquard boards

Jacquard boards, which will manipulate the pattern heddles. Using a special tool, Ogawa punches holes in cardboard according to the planned design. When twenty of these boards are strung together in a ring and set in a Jacquard loom, each press of the treadle moves one board and the appropriate pattern heddle.



Making background heddles

A background heddle manipulates the warp thread which forms the background and stripe. Ogawa makes a heddle with a tool that has been used since his grandfather's time. After wrapping thread around the tool, he bonds the thread to sticks with glue. When it has dried, a completed background heddle is removed from the tool. Four such heddles are prepared.



Setting the loom : threading the pattern heddles

From the cloth-roll on the loom, the warp threads for the dokko and hanazara are drawn off and passed through the eyes of pattern heddles hung on a shaft. This work takes the couple half a day.



Setting the loom : threading the background heddles

More than 5,800 warp threads for the background and stripe are passed through the background heddles. This laborious task takes two days even for the couple working together.



Setting the loom : sleying

All of the warp threads are passed through reeds. Eight threads each for the background and for the colorful dokko and hanazara are passed through a single eye, and twelve for the stripes to give them a three-dimensional look.



Adjusting thread tension

Now the weaving begins. As silk thread is sensitive to changes in humidity and temperature, weights are used to counteract daily changes in tension.



Test-weaving

For a while, Ogawa checks thread tension and loom operation while noting how the pattern and signature look. Since the obi is turned face-down to avoid soiling it, he observes these in a mirror.



Weaving

In Kenjo Hakata Ori, the traditional technique is "Batten three, and batten back." Each time Ogawa weaves in a layer of weft, he battens the reed three times; and once more, with all his might. To make the "drum" knot and the front of the obi stiff, and the part to be tied softer, Ogawa applies his strength with subtle variations.



Bag weaving

The edges of the obi are done in bag weave. This displays the density of the warp thread as well as the artisan's painstaking work.



"Misty cloud" motif

Two lines inserted horizontally are called "misty cloud." They prove that there is no contortion in the obi. It takes an experienced craftsman to execute this technique.



Completion

The completed Gokenjo Hakata Ori Obi. The dark red dokko and dark blue hanazara are strikingly beautiful against the white background.



Narration : David MAYO

Produced with the cooperation of
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