

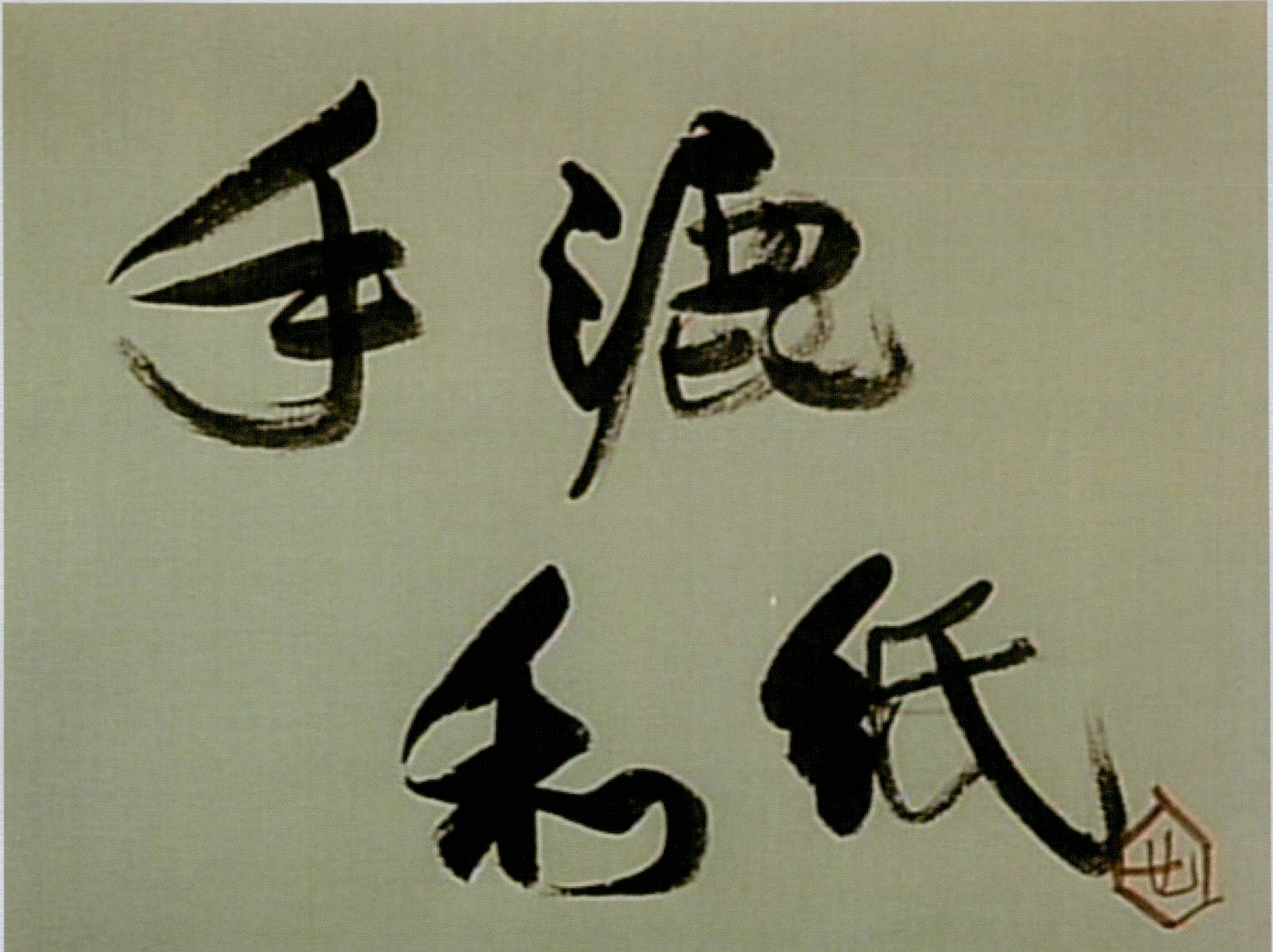
Tesukiwashi

Traditional Crafts Documentary Film (1974)

35 millimeter/color/31 minutes

Planned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs

Produced by Nikkei Visual Images, Inc.



‘Washi’ is traditional Japanese handmade paper produced through special techniques that make it exceptionally strong, sturdy and beautiful. It is typically made from fibers extracted from the bark of 3 species of trees, *kouzo*, or paper mulberry, *ganpi*, a tree of the daphne family, or *mitsumata*, another tree of the daphne family, processed in such a way as to retain and highlight the essential characteristics of these natural fibers.

This film was made to record such traditional Japanese papermaking skills by focusing on the workshops of two elite craftsmen. Mr. Ichibei Iwano has been honored by the nation as a Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Properties for his ‘Echizen Housho’—a type of ‘atsugami,’ or thick paper, made from ‘kouzo.’ Mr. Yukio Hamada has also been honored by the nation as a Preserver of Important Intangible Cultural Properties for his ‘Tosa Tengujou paper’—an ‘usugami,’ or thin paper variety also produced from ‘kouzo.’ The intent of this film is to broaden recognition of the value of ‘washi’ as a cultural asset and illustrate traditional techniques, at a time when production of such handmade paper is declining due to pressure from modern industrial papermaking.



Prologue

It has long been considered that the highest quality 'washi,' or traditional Japanese paper, is produced during the cold months of winter. Located some 300 kilometers west of Tokyo, along a snow-covered valley in the Imadate region of Fukui Prefecture, Ohtaki in Imadate-cho has been renowned for the production of 'Echizen-washi' for more than a thousand years.



Water for 'Kamisuki'

Water is the most important thing for this 'kamisuki' style of papermaking. Soft water is essential if the 'neri,' or mucilage, is to function properly.



Boiling

The natural strength, color and gloss of the 'kouzo' fibers can be clearly seen in the finished 'housho' paper. The lime process brings out the inherent features of the basic material in the purest possible way.



Removing Impurities

Three people scrutinize the 'kouzo' fibers, carefully removing every flaw and impurity. It's a rigorous process, as even blemishes that aren't obvious at this stage may be apparent in the finished product.



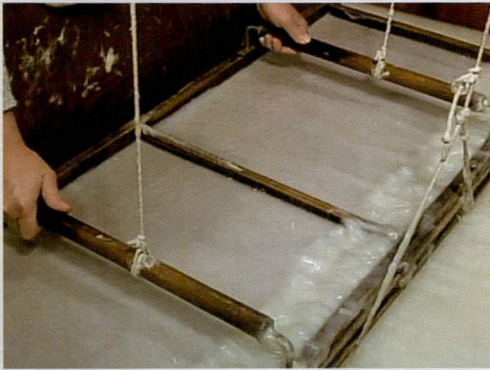
Beating

The washed 'kouzo' is beaten to separate the fibers.



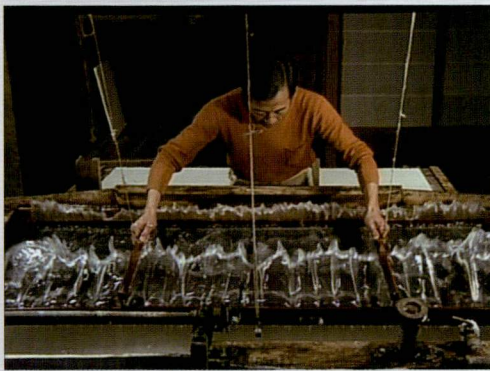
‘Neri’ (Mucilage)

The effectiveness of ‘neri,’ or mucilage, is affected by both the climate and the water temperature. It was thanks to the discovery and invention of this neri that the washi manufacturing process, unseen anywhere else in the world, came into being.



Agitation

The pulp is scooped up from down in the vat, then agitated to align and entwine the fibers in a lengthwise direction.



‘Tosa Tengujou paper’

On the island of Shikoku is Kochi prefecture, where a thin type of Japanese paper, or washi called *Tosa Tengujou* paper is made. The processes used are quite different to those used for the thick *housho* paper and represent quite a contrast.



Pressing Out the Water

The device used in this operation remains unchanged to this day in design from the time it was first conceived centuries ago.

This is done after the paper has been left overnight to allow as much water as possible to drain out of its own accord.

If pressure is applied too quickly to the stack to squeeze out the water, the sheets could be damaged, and so the stones that serve to apply the pressure are gradually increased in size to gradually build up the pressure.



Drying

The sheets of paper are dried in the sun. This, then, is how *housho* paper, so pure and white, so refined, yet still endowed with a natural warmth, is made.



Producer: Ichiro Satoh
Director: Wataru Koyata
Cinematography Assistant: Hisashi Ohnuma
Music: Joji Yuasa
Editor: Shouji Inoue
Narrator: Atsushi Wada

Screenplay: Akinao Hohjo Wataru Koyata
Cinematographer: Miyakichi Asaoka
Gaffer: Keiji Matsuda
Effects: Hideo Sato
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