



the Yamanashi Grapevine

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Moeginomura
A Village of Dreams

山梨
グレープヴァイン

Spring
2009



From the editor's notebook:

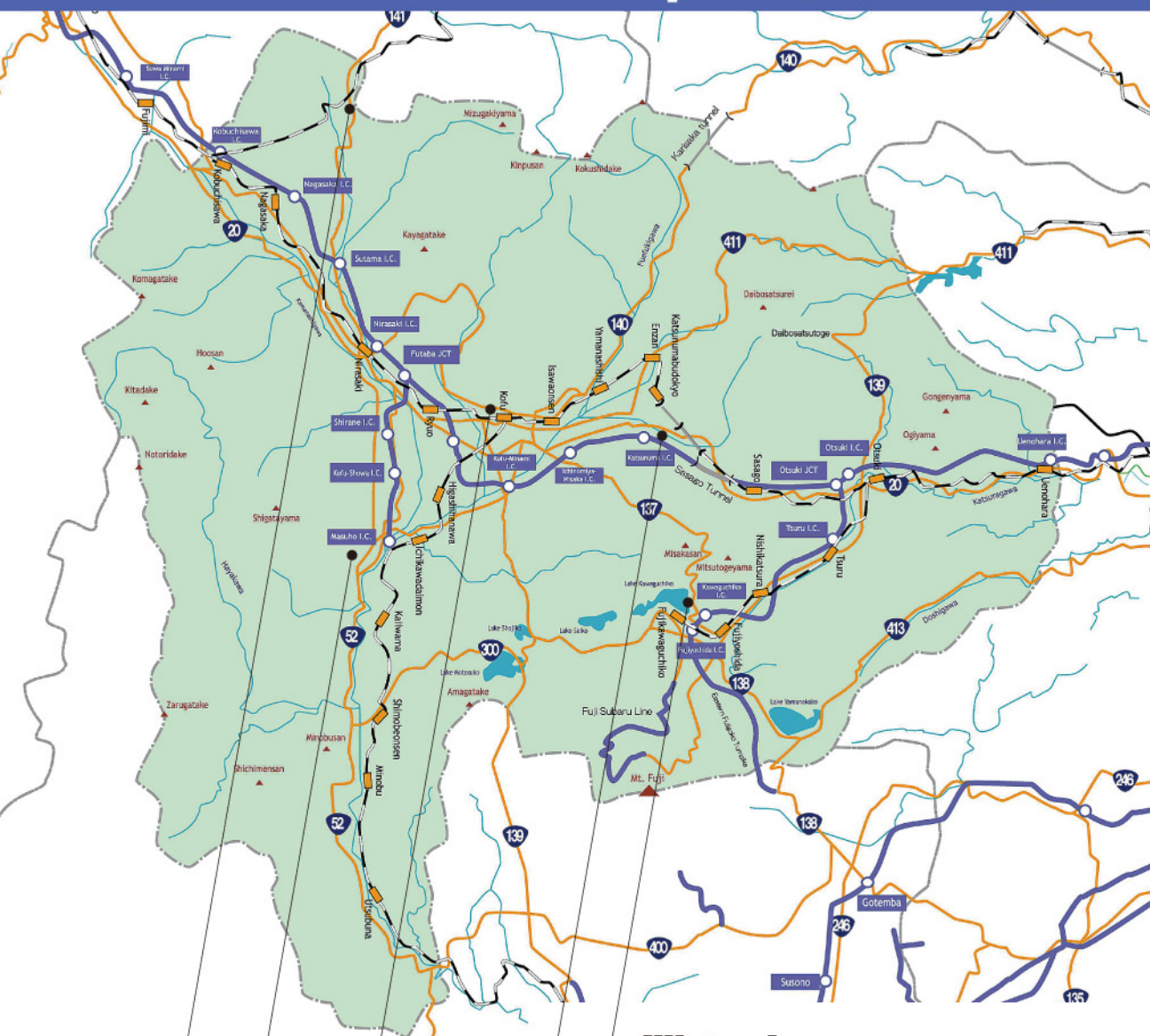
The world is network of crossroads and passages. From stories passed down through the generations by word of mouth, to the revolutionizing invention of the book and the advent of the internet, the tapestry of world history is colored by the intersection of cultural narratives as they thread across and between lands. Everything is connected. Culture has never been a static force; it has never obeyed national borders nor has it remained unchanged throughout the course of history. We could call it the movement and transformation of people, lifestyles, philosophies, theories, architecture, music, art, concepts, brands, fashion trends, food, technology, social programs, and values. You can find manga cafés in New York and McDonalds in Shibuya. Yoga and acupuncture have earned their places in the realm of health and medicine.

This spring edition of The Grapevine is an ode to such passages. From ink seals to European music boxes, blueberries to wine, jazz bars to highland cafes, Yamanashi itself lies on a peculiar intersection between East and West. Certainly, an ideal destination for a traveler in search of new crossroads. So enjoy this edition of The Grapevine as we take you on a tour through this land between lands.

Jenka Eusebio



paths and crossroads



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A Village of Dreams

Marking Passages: The Ink Seals of Rokugo

From the signet rings of the ancient Egyptian kings to the insignias of the Knights Templar and the jade seals of the Chinese emperors, the history of the seal carries with it both occidental myth and oriental mystique, cultural value and practical application. Said to have been introduced to Japan from China around 701 A.D. it is known here as a *banko* or *inkan*, serving the purpose of verifying one's identity when authenticating official documents. Portable and essential to daily life, it can be made of stone, wood, horn or even crystal.

The *banko* industry in Yamanashi's Rokugo Town flourished during the late Edo Era, having been the production center of 50 percent of Japan's ink seals. However, it was only when the likes of remarkable engravers such as Fuyo Taka, Keisho Nakai and Randai Nakamura emerged onto the scene, did Rokugo seals become well known throughout the whole country.

When Japan entered the Meiji Era in 1868, the newly implemented policies of this period created great social and economic changes within the nation. The government encouraged free mining operations in order to develop local businesses and promote industrial modernization. As a result, Yamanashi crystal rapidly gained unprecedented popularity and the Rokugo craftsmen, already deft engravers, took advantage of this economic boom and began to produce crystal seals.

Even though the *banko* industry was nationally recognized as a Yamanashi specialty, the merchants of Rokugo boosted sales by peddling these crafts across the country. This direct marketing and selling approach was originally used for the promotion of Iwama socks, a former local commodity whose production had died down due to the proliferation of automation and mass-production. Despite this economic setback, Rokugo merchants believed that by doing well in one's own professional field and banding together, sales would be efficient and successful regardless of the product. They were met with success. Because of this distinctive selling approach, Rokugo now has about 100 stores, each of which specializes in a particular aspect of the ink seal industry, whether it be engraving, case making, inkpad making, or sales.



[History]
Yi-mei Li

Traditionally, *banko* have been sold in stationary stores and seal specialty shops, however nowadays mass produced *banko* made of rubber or plastic with self-inking mechanisms have become available at 100 yen shops and even convenience stores. Given this surge of mass production, all *banko* have identical designs, therefore they are not recommended to be used for official or legally binding documents. As such, there is a major decrease in demand for *jitsuin* and *mitomein*, according to the craftsmen. A *jitsuin* (実印) is a registered seal for individual use while a *Mitomein* (認印) is used when receiving packages and for business matters.

There are several styles of engraving, but many are so highly stylized that the characters represented on the seal are difficult for untrained readers to identify. Normally it takes about 5 years for one to become a professional seal

engraver, and a master seal engraver must be able to write in different styles of Chinese scripts, such as cursive script, clerical script and standard script, and be able to arrange all the characters in a perfect balance.

Seal engraving is considered a form of calligraphy, requiring a deep knowledge of Chinese scripts and the ability to achieve aesthetic balance within a limited space. Therefore it need not be said that seal engravers are considered to be both craftsmen and artists.

A seal's perfection is determined by the engraver's speed, the strength of his wrist, and the movements of his fingers. Not a line wasted, not a stroke out of place. Seals carved by famous engravers such as Toan Kobayashi have become valuable works of art and history, products of a proud tradition handed down throughout the generations, and never to be forgotten.



"The **hanko** industry in Yamanashi's **Rokugo Town** flourished during the late Edo Era, having been the production center of 50 percent of Japan's ink seals."



Taste!

Jessiq Greenblatt

Kingdom of Fruit, Land of Wine

Wine, oft lauded as the nectar of the gods, has a history that spans the ages. Cultivated since the dawn of civilization, the fruit of the vine has traversed miles beyond measure. To appreciate wine was commended as the epitome of culture and a mark of sophistication. Surprisingly, this celebrated drink was unknown in Japan until the 16th century, when missionaries from Portugal introduced it to the noble class. It then remained a luxury import until the influx of western culture accompanying the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

The first attempts to produce wine in Japan was in the 1870's. These initial trials took place in the verdant hills of Yamanashi, Japan's "kingdom of fruit," where the country's first grapes were said to have sprouted. Now the fertile soil of Yamanashi's Katsunuma Village is home to dozens of vineyards which supply Japan with over one fourth of its domestic wine.

Some families who maintain local vineyards sell the bulk of their grapes to corporate wineries, keeping just enough for themselves to make a cask or two of their own wine. More enterprising vintners, however, chose to brand and promote their unique signature flavors, contributing to the development of the prefecture's home grown wine industry. To push this movement forward, a group of local wineries banded together to create a facility where they could showcase their best vintages.

Thus, Budo-no-Oka (literally "Grape Hill") was founded. At Budo-no-Oka, you might find yourself descending a narrow stairway into a chilly cellar, dimly illuminated and lined with a vast array of wine bottles.



This is the Katsunuma Wine Cave, a pilgrimage point for wine connoisseurs and cultivated travelers. It offers a side-by-side comparison of vintages from over 30 local wineries. Bottles with loosened corks wait atop neat rows of barrels. In lieu of a glass, you are given a *tastevin*, a shallow saucer which was used in the pre-Edison days of wine tasting to judge clarity in dusky, candle-lit cellars.

Be you an expert sommelier or a novice to this romantic pastime, it is a pleasure to be able to sample from the rosy spectrum of wines made in the top grape producing prefecture in the country. The bottles are arranged from dry to sweet, the whites lining the wall adjacent to the entrance, the reds and rosés covering the opposite wall. Approximately 20,000 bottles of 180 types of wine are stored in the Wine Cave, all of which are available for purchase straight from the Cave itself, or from the gift shop on the main floor. Families, not factories make the wine here, and one experiences a certain Old World nostalgia upon appreciating and savoring the fruits of their labor.

However, not just any wine can be displayed in this elite establishment. In order to qualify for a spot on the Cave's racks, the wines must be made in Koshu (a city encompassing the municipalities of Katsunuma, Enzan and Yamato) from a high percentage of locally grown grapes. Furthermore, each wine undergoes a bi-annual taste test from professional sommeliers who decide which vintages will be rotated in, and which vintages have exceeded their shelf life at the Wine Cave. An exclusive glass branding on the bottle is awarded only to the grade-A wines made from 100% Koshu grapes. The wines sporting the Katsunuma emblem seem to be the most popular in the Wine Cave.

Wine Cave Hours: 9:00~17:00 (Last admission), Closes at 17:30

Tasting: 1,100 Yen (includes tastevin)

Website: <http://budounooka.com>

[Sound]
Jenka Eusebio

Rhapsodies on an Autumn Night

The Kofu Machinaka Music Festa

Time seems to flow slowly here, in this city locked by rolling mountains. Always within sight, Mt. Fuji is an eternal constant. It is the same sacred mountain depicted in Hokusai and Hiroshige's woodblock prints, splattered across the Japanese government's PR campaigns, and glued into the scrapbooks of travelers. From afar, the slopes do not change from summer to summer; the winter peak always glistens beneath the sunlight. But history still manages to slip through the valleys and railway tunnels into Yamanashi.

Take the history of Kofu City's Sakura-za Theater.

During the Edo and Meiji Eras, Sakura-za flourishes as a performance hotspot in Kofu's old downtown district, showcasing kabuki, engei, and various traditional art forms. It is only one of many theaters in the area frequented by enthusiastic locals. However, due to the changing of the times and the popularization of moving pictures during the early Showa Era (1926-1989), the Sakura-za Theater quietly closes its doors as the silver screen takes the stage.

History moves on undisturbed. A war blasts through the world and air raids destroy nearly three-quarters of the city. Fast forward. Kofu is rebuilt; and eighty years after having vanished, Sakura-za reemerges as a vibrant performance venue for music concerts, dramatic plays, comedy acts, and movies.

The night of October 25, 2008 is a special one. Bathed in the spotlight of Sakura-za's stage is Kondo Fusanosuke, one of Japan's greatest blues singers, an electric guitar cradled in his arms as he belts out B.B. King's "Sweet Little Angel." Theater patrons sit atop fragrant tatami mats, sipping wine and tapping their feet.

I asked my baby for a nickel and she gave me a twenty dollar bill. I asked her for a drink of liquor and she gave me a whiskey still!

Welcome to Kofu Jazz Street. One night, one pass, six venues. It is the crowning night of the Kofu Machinaka Music Festa, the prefectural capital's yearly celebration of musical pursuit as locals drift from the opening ceremony at Sakura-za to Alfie, Hanagumi, Cotton Club, Alone, and the Vault.





“The memory of things gone is important to a jazz musician. Things like old folks singing in the moonlight in the backyard on a hot night or something said long ago.”

- Louis Armstrong

This event had its beginnings in 2006 when the Kofu Daisuki Festival, normally held in October, was moved to late summer. In its place, the city's Chamber of Commerce & Industry launched the Kofu Machinaka Music Festa, taking advantage of Kofu's lively music culture and the establishments like Sakura-za which devote themselves to promoting the arts.

“One of the main goals of the Festa,” says Hiroshi Koshiishi, director of the Kofu Chamber of Commerce & Industry's Regional Revival and Promotion Division. “Is to bring life to the city center, to bring something more to the area besides shopping. Something fun, artistic, and cultural.”

Every year since the Festa's inception, October has been geared towards performances by both professionals and amateurs alike, the latter participating in competitions to test their talent and gain exposure. Street musicians hit the pavement along Kasuga Mall for jam sessions, breaking out their guitars, trombones, trumpets, drums, and keyboards.

Call it a celebration of the three cornerstones of popular music: jazz, blues, and rock n' roll.

“While jazz may appeal to a smaller and older audience, it is an art form that has its fair share of ardent fans,” Koshiishi goes on when talking about Kofu's jazz scene.

The buzzing milieu of Kofu Jazz Street attests to the popularity of this American cultural import, which carries with it both African and European influences. It is a music based on improvisation and spontaneity, the creation and recreation of variation; a sound that effortlessly crosses international borders and makes itself at home in the jazz clubs and theaters of lands miles away from its own birthplace.

With Japan working vigorously towards the internationalization of its rural areas, ventures like the Kofu Machinaka Music Festa play leading roles at infusing life and wonder into the oppressive atmosphere festering around unstable economic conditions. It should not be forgotten that jazz, blues, and rock n' roll were born during times of social and economic turbulence. To summon them now is a gesture of faith in the midst of hard times, and a historical reminder that the creation of art is a sacred tradition, always within hearts reach, that will never change.

Less than two hours away from the urban sprawl of Tokyo, a lakeside town sits nestled between the mountains. A bustling resort destination offering water sports and museums, fresh air and naturally picturesque landscapes, it's no wonder the Kawaguchiko area is a haven for people who want to get away from it all.

The lion's share of activity and hotels is on the southern side of Lake Kawaguchi, but the bubbly ambiance shifts to a more relaxed feel as you cross to the opposite shore. Boasting one of Japan's best views of Mt. Fuji from the lake's northern bank is the Nature Life House. During late spring, guests are greeted by the sight and scent of fresh lavender as they take in the full panorama: a carpet of sun-drenched flowers painting the foreground as Mt. Fuji, with her graceful slopes mirrored upon the lake, rises into the sky.

But the feast is not for the eyes alone. The Nature Life House is home to a blueberry orchard, where you can personally select and collect the ripe berries in July and August. To sweeten the deal, they throw in an hour-long berry buffet where you can eat as many blueberries as you can pick. Venture inside, and you will find a wall of windows and tables overlooking the lake. A warmly lit café offers soft blueberry ice cream, freshly squeezed blueberry juice, and blueberry cake made on the premises. The gift shop is similarly themed, its aisles crammed with lavender potpourri and blueberry noodles, blueberry tea and other assorted blueberry treats. A door in the back leads to the greenhouse where you can buy seasonal flowers, potted plants and yes, blueberry trees.



The featured item at the gift shop is a colorful collection of handmade jams flanking a rather large kitchen. Here, visitors can learn how to make jam from scratch with a member of the friendly staff. The Nature Life House supplies all the ingredients, and language barriers are circumvented with smiles and gestures. After the culinary class is over you can go home with a recipe in one hand and a jar of your very own jam in the other.

But why lavender and blueberries? Why jam making? The village of Fuji Kawaguchiko wanted to create an inviting place for families and friends to enjoy together, a place that evoked the comfort of a country home. The Nature Life House chose its location based on the view, and found that lavender and blueberries were both very well suited to the soil and climate. As for the jam making, it's there because of the blueberries. Easily bruised in shipping, this delicate fruit made its debut in Japan in the form of preserves. Even to this day, blueberries are a rarity in the raw, and are usually associated with jam. The Nature Life House wanted to use that familiar fruity spread as an introduction to the unprocessed version of the foreign berry.

When traveling to unfamiliar places, it's nice to find somewhere that hasn't lost that homemade feel. The Natural Life House extends its personal touch not just to the visitors, but to everyone who shares and enjoys its delicious delicacies. Gifts are always nice, but if you're a believer in the old adage, "It's the thought that counts," handmade gifts make all the difference.

Hours of Operation:

Gift Shop: 9:00-18:00

Jam Making: 7 times a day by reservation,
last session at 16:00

Café Corner: 9:00-17:00

(blueberry soft serve until 17:30)

Open: Every day in July, August and September

Closed: Fridays from October - June and during
the New Year holiday.

Address: Yamanashi-ken, Minami Tsuru-gun,
Fuji Kawaguchiko-cho, Ōishi 2585 〒401-0305
Phone Number: 0555-76-8230

Access: Take the Retro Bus from Kawaguchiko Station



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世界の輸入商品と
カナダのクリスマス



[Art of Travel]

A Village of Dreams Moeginomura

By Mandy J. M. Lin

Located in the Kiyosato Highlands, Moeginomura is more than just a tourist destination. It is a village that reminds people of Yamanashi's regional history and the pioneering spirit of Dr. Paul Rusch, the “father of Kiyosato”.

Sprawled along the southern foot of the Yatsugatake Plateau, Kiyosato and its neighboring areas formed a vast wasteland in the upper reaches of Yamanashi. Deemed throughout the generations as unfit for cultivation due to its high altitude and surrounding mountains, it was not until after WWII, when Dr. Paul Rusch launched the Kiyosato Farm Village Center (known today

as the Kiyosato Educational Experiment Project), that the region was exploited. This project successfully developed a practical model for the establishment of an agricultural community functioning on democratic practices. Most importantly, Dr. Rusch's four ideals of “food,” “health,” “belief,” and “the education of youth” gave hope to the towns and villages of a war-ravaged Japan.

His pioneering spirit has since inspired thousands of people around the region, and the creation of Moeginomura displays how the intrinsic value of Dr. Rusch's philosophy is still in practice today.

Moeginomura's beginning can be traced back to 1971 with the establishment of Rock, the first café in Kiyosato. During his study tour in Europe, Jyoji Funaki, the president of Moeginomura, found himself captivated by German architecture and was fascinated by the various musical organs he saw throughout his journey. Upon returning to Japan, he brought back with him a blueprint for Moeginomura.

He wanted to create a place in Kiyosato where young people could gather and experience nature. Immediately after his proposal was finalized, the project was carried out with efforts focusing on the recreation of a western style rustic village. In fact, six architects and engineers from Canada were called to the site in the last construction, and the new Rock was built with materials imported from North America. After years of improvement, Moeginomura now presents visitors with a delightful fusion of Early-American, Swiss, German, and modern Canadian architecture styles. During the days when Yamanashi's citizens possessed only limited opportunities to explore the western world, the impact of Moeginomura's existence was undoubtedly tremendous.



Throughout the four decades since its founding, Moeginomura continued to expand. It now offers travelers a hotel, quaint cafés, a plethora of themed stores, workshops and amusement facilities. But perhaps its most unique attraction is the Hall of Halls, a museum with 300 pieces of antique music boxes and automatic musical instruments in possession. Along with an ingenious collection from France, Germany and many other European countries, this museum displays a series of Moeginomura's original music boxes. In fact, one of the current displays is a street organ made at the village's music box and organ workshop.

The musical score is delicately arranged in the form of a hole-punched paper card. In order to effectively reproduce the song at its natural rhythm, the organ grinder must maintain an even pace while turning the handle. This handle then pumps air into the bellows and melody pipes according to the notes indicated by the paper score.

The museum also houses a few musical organs which can only be found exclusively in Moeginomura, including the "Limonaire 1900" which was made for the 1900 World's Fair in Paris, and the "Mozart Barrel Organ" which plays the songs Mozart composed specifically for this mechanical orchestra. With a world-





class collection, the Hall of Halls has now become a central feature of the village.

In keeping with the image of Moeginomura, all the shops share the same calming and delightful atmosphere. Many shop owners import goods that reflect the life and culture of the product origins, such as Christmas decorations from Canada and the country-style handiworks from the U.S.

The emphasis on originality is another distinctive feature of the village. Rock has its signature beer and curry; shops sell hand-made goods such as bags, designer jewelry and pet accessories.

It goes without saying that creativity is strongly encouraged here. Outside of the organ workshop, there is also a carpenter's workshop, pottery atelier, and craft studio. Although some facilities and shops are replaced periodically, the theme of Moeginomura remains unchanged, continuing to deliver its back-to-nature message by offering travelers the simplicity and happiness of a forest life.

Address: 3545 Kiyosato, Takane chou, Hokuto
City, Yamanashi Prefecture, 407-0301

Website: <http://www.moeginomura.co.jp/>

Telephone: 0551-48-3522

Hours (General Affairs Department): 10:00 - 17:00

* Hours for individual facilities may vary, please refer to the website for details.

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Impressions of this season's edition?
Suggestions for future articles?

Send your thoughts our way by dropping us an email at
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will receive a free, Yamanashi local
specialty!***

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