

The Yamanashi Grapevine

山梨 グレープヴァイン

Winter 2007



Editor's note:

As the tradition goes, every winter edition of the Grapevine ought to include its share of references about the freezing weather going around the prefecture and this edition is no exception. But more than the coldness itself, it is the little-if any-difference between outside and inside temperatures that makes you doubt the quality of Japanese houses'insulation- readers who have experienced winter in Japan will sympathize for sure! Looking at the bright side, I have been enjoying some snowboarding, because winter is also a great time to hit the slopes while the beautiful blanket of snow atop Mount Fuji cheers us up until the arrival of spring. Hope you will enjoy reading this Grapevine issue as much as we enjoyed writing it!

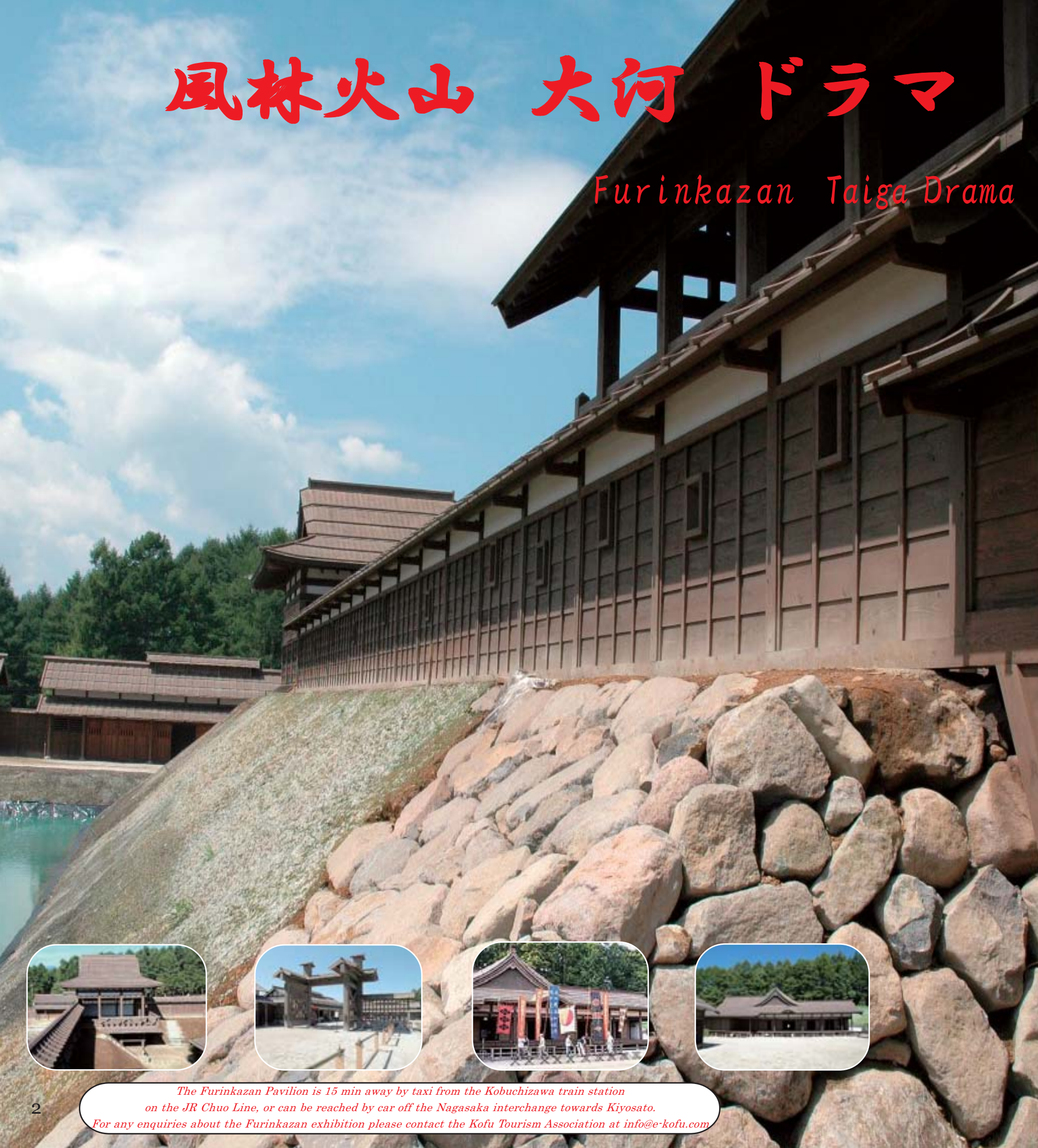
Mathieu Bellier

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風林火山 大河 ドラマ

Furinkazan Taiga Drama



The Furinkazan Pavilion is 15 min away by taxi from the Kobuchizawa train station
on the JR Chuo Line, or can be reached by car off the Nagasaka interchange towards Kiyosato.

For any enquiries about the Furinkazan exhibition please contact the Kofu Tourism Association at info@e-kofu.com

New Year's in Japanese society is a long-awaited period when one can finally enjoy some rest after a hard year of labor, appreciate traditional soba noodles and mochi (glutinous rice cake), pray at the temple and spend time with its family. However this scene would not be complete without another institution of Japanese New Year time: Taiga Drama.

Appearing for the first time in 1963 on NHK (Japan's public broadcaster), Taiga Drama are yearlong historical fiction television series, generally airing on Sunday nights, and depicting the famous exploits and charismatic characters of Japan's rich past. This year's new Taiga Drama, entitled Furinkazan and starting on January 8th, is particularly interesting for Yamanashi inhabitants because the prefecture's history and beautiful scenery will be at the center of Furinkazan's plot.

Furinkazan, takes its name from the Japanese transcription of a famous passage of Sun Tzu's "The Art of War" which can be translated as "move as swift as a wind, stay as silent as forest, attack fierce like fire, unmovable defense like a mountain." What made the expression Furinkazan so popular in Japan was its use as a cavalry emblem by Yamanashi's famous warlord Takeda Shingen.

Takeda Shingen was born right in the middle of the Sengoku Jidai—Warring Provinces Era—when Japanese feudal lords were fighting to conquest new territories and opposed the shogun authority. Descendant of a family of daimyo, Shingen overthrew his own father and after numerous battles brought unification, peace and stability to the Kai province (the current Yamanashi prefecture). It is said that Shingen's power derived from a strict respect of Sun Tzu's precepts combined with innovative war methods, and some say that he might even have become Shogun had he not died suddenly from illness.

But this time, the true hero of Furinkazan will not be Takeda Shingen—who had already been the main character of an eponymous 1988 Taiga Drama—but rather one of his generals: Yamamoto Kansuke. The story, adapted from a novel by Inoue Yasushi, will lead us through the ascension of Yamamoto in Shingen's army. Despite being blind in one eye and partially lame, Yamamoto was a fierce warrior and a devoted retainer of Shingen. As a brilliant tactician, his strategies offered his lord some famous victories, including the decisive 4th

Kawanakajima battle against Shingen's sworn enemy: Uesugi Kenshin.

The broadcasting of Furinkazan throughout Japan is a unique opportunity for Yamanashi to introduce to a wider audience an important part of its history and one of its main assets: beautiful natural landscapes. Hokuto city, located in the north-east of the prefecture, has invested more than 170 million yen in the construction of a full size replica of Shingen's battle headquarters. The Furinkazan Pavilion, nested close to the Yatsugatake mountain chain, takes up an area of 19,000m² and includes replicas of Shingen's residence, wooden gates, watch towers, a courtyard, stables and even moats. Constructed in less than two months by the Toei Company with the cooperation of famous Japanese carpenters specialized in historical reproduction, the pavilion has been used as one of the main set for the Furinkazan drama and will be available for other historical movies and TV commercials in the future.

More than a mere ephemeral attraction, the Furinkazan Pavilion was constructed to last and is expected to become a very popular tourism spot in the prefecture. Open every day, except on Tuesdays and when shootings occur, the pavilion has attracted more than 500 visitors daily and twice as many on the weekends since its opening last September. Surrounded by mountains and forests, the Furinkazan Pavilion is also the perfect place for tourists to enjoy the leaves turning red and yellow in the autumn, and is close to Hokuto's Jindaizakura, a two thousand year old cherry tree whose blossoming visitors can admire in the spring.

With commemorative flags of the Furinkazan drama hung all over the prefecture, the enthusiasm of Yamanashi inhabitants is truly palpable. In order to satisfy the curiosity of history lovers, a special Furinkazan exhibition will be held in the Kofu Prefectural Hall starting from January 20th and running for one year. Along with displays of historical weapons, war equipments, kimonos and a reproduction of Shingen's cavalry, visitors will have access to a large choice of information about the background of the warring provinces era thanks to the showing of documentaries. And of course before leaving the exhibition, they will have the possibility to bring back home some souvenirs and taste the delicious specialties of the region!

Let's hope that Furinkazan will be a true success as a drama and that it will encourage people to come and discover Yamanashi's many charms!

by Mathieu Bellier

Through the paths to Doshi Village

Set in the eastern area of Yamanashi, on the border with Kanagawa Prefecture, Doshi is a village of 79.57 km² that attracts many visitors seeking tranquillity every year from all over, yet its people never lose their countryside charms.

Doshi is known as the second oldest area in Japan that started to provide *minshuku* – private citizens’ bed and lodgings for tourists – and this might explain the hospitality and compassion seen between neighbours, who still offer and share food or vegetables grown in their yards.

Why Doshi? *Doshite Doshi?*

There are many different popular theories surrounding the source of Doshi’s name:

1. The first one supposes that Doshi was part of the beginning of a shortcut from the Kanto area to reach Mt.Fuji (道始 in Japanese characters 道 “path” and 始 “beginning,” a homonym of DOSHI 道志).
2. The second is that there were four old paths in Doshi Valley so 道四 (道 “path” and 四 “four,” which is also a homonym of DOSHI 道志).
3. In a time when there were no roads, people would guide themselves through the small streams throughout the narrow valley - 沢通し *sawa dooshi* (通し – homonym to DOSHI 道志).
4. Many Taoists would visit the area, so, 道志 (Doshi, as it is written currently, might mean the Will and the Way).

THE OFFICIAL VERSION IS THAT:

Police or court officials of Heian Period Japan used to be known as kebiishi, and SHI 志 was one of their hierarchical positions. Since these officials studied law in the university Meiho Doin, graduates from this institution were called as DOSHI 道志.

For more information, please visit the Fuji Visitor Center’s English webpage: <http://www.yamanashi-kankou.jp/fujivisi/fujivisi011.html>

Soba - savored from scratch

Doshi’s Soba – buckwheat noodles that are commonly eaten either cold or hot in Japan – is Doshi’s own unique pride and joy, given that it contains pure Doshi water in its dough and in the zesty, accompanying broth, as well as fresh, locally-grown vegetables and Doshi River fish as garnish or toppings. However, the best way to have truly unique soba is to make it from scratch, yourself.

In the Doshi Suigen-no-Mori, experienced soba makers—all local residents—offer to teach any beginner or experienced candidate how to prepare the genuine hand-beaten (te uchi) soba from the dough.

The Grapevine staff took on this challenge.



1. The soba-making begins almost ritualistically by putting on the apron and kneeling to touch the buckwheat flour.



2. Gentle movements knead together the flour and the pure water of Doshi to form the dough.



3. The movements should be a little more gentle than kneading a pasta dough. The instructor’s help is required to add the finishing touches.



4. A long rolling pin is used to flatten the dough. It is vital to make sure that it doesn’t tear, or else it would break during the boiling process.



5. The fast and precise movements of the experienced instructor neatly slice the noodles. However, it is not as easy as it seems. In order to make the dough of a genuine hand-beaten soba noodle homogeneous—and not like a *hoto* noodle—a lot of concentration—and practice—is required.



6. The noodle is taken to the kitchen to be cooked and some minutes later...Voilà! The best first soba ever made by the Grapevine staff. Savoring the al-dente strands together with watercress tempura is highly recommended!

Adopt a tree in Doshi

Doshi is an exceptional place, a truly peaceful village that has managed to keep its traditional countryside style and sense of history. You will be breathtaken in Doshi, but one thing is certain; you will never get bored going back—so why not adopt a tree there?

As the years went by, many cedar trees were grown in the area. However, due to the increase of hay fever caused by cedars, the lack of people to care for the trees, and their bad conservation in the forests, Doshi has taken up a forestry project that involves everyone from TV artists to the general public. This is a long-term project that intends to forest the area with at least 10,000 trees in the next five years.

You can contribute by purchasing a 10,000 yen mountain cherry blossom – *yamazakura* – and/or maple tree – *kaede* – seedling and planting them yourself, or let a local take care of the planting — without a doubt, though, doing it

yourself would be the funnest part of all. *Yamazakura* and *kaede* were chosen because they both will attract their sponsors to enjoy viewing either cherry-blossoms in spring, or scarlet-tinged leaves in the autumn, respectively.

The tree will display a wooden name plate on it with its sponsor(s), who have the right to carve their message on it as well. Although you buy the seedling, you are not the owner of the tree, explains a Doshi official. The name plate will last at least fifteen years, after which time it may very well eventually fertilize the tree it was placed on.

The tree-planting is scheduled to be held twice a year, once in spring and again in autumn. Seeing your cherished cherry blossom tree or just taking a break in the numerous natural spots around Doshi are without a doubt two great reasons to pay a visit to Doshi.

by Érica Tanaka

A Lakeside Literary Enclave



"The ground of the sparse woodland on the shores of Lake Yamanaka was covered with a frost reminiscent of the uneven surface of Shijira-ori cloth. With the pine trees tinted yellow, the only brightness to be found was on the water of the lake. Looking back, the alabaster skin of Mt. Fuji—the source of all that was white in the region—glistened as if anointed with oil."

—Mishima Yukio, *The Temple of Dawn* (*Sea of Fertility*, 3)



The Lake Yamanaka Library Grove can be reached by bus from either Fujiyoshida or Gotemba Stations, or by car on Route 138, off of the Lake Yamanaka Interchange.

For further information please visit the Fuji Visitor Center's English webpage:

<http://www.yamanashi-kankou.jp/fujivisi/fujivisi011.html>

The Mishima Yukio Museum at the Lake Yamanaka Library Grove

Raw energy housed within a classical structure. This image can just as well be applied to the romantic themes present beneath the neo-classic structure of the works of author Yukio Mishima, as to the bubbling magma buried deep within the symmetrical serenity of Mt. Fuji. What better location, then, for a museum that pays homage to the life and works of Mishima, one of Japan's most internationally renowned authors, than here at the base of Mt. Fuji, one of Japan's most internationally renowned natural features?

The Mishima Yukio Museum is just one of the establishments that make up the Lake Yamanaka Library Grove, a literary enclave tucked away amidst the scenic woodlands to the south of Lake Yamanaka and its many other tourist attractions. The grove also offers museums that commemorate the life and works of journalist Tokutomi Soho and haiku poet Tomiyasu Fusei, yet it is probably the museum in honor of Mishima Yukio—one of the most widely translated Japanese authors, and thrice nominated for the Nobel Prize—that yields the most immediate interest to international visitors. Unfortunately, when *The Grapevine* visited the museum, it was still too early in the year to enjoy the snow-capped Fuji and frost-covered lakeside Mishima describes in his *The Temple of Dawn*, but we were lucky enough to enjoy the autumn scenery of the inspiring radiant leaves that colored the grove.

The Mishima Yukio Museum is housed in a building made to resemble the author's own personal residence. With its high arches, stained glass windows, Mediterranean-white bricks, and marble entrance hall, one can easily sense just how much Mishima's fondness for Ancient Grecian culture permeated not only his literary output, but the architectural features of his house—and the museum modeled after it—as well. The statue of Apollo that watches over the museum from the inner garden does not seem out of place in the least.

Inside, visitors are treated to a vast array of documents and first editions of Mishima's works, including a nearly hour-long film about the author. In fact, the museum has on display the first editions of every Mishima book published in Japan, and the collection of foreign editions in translation is quite thorough as well. There are also many of Mishima's own photographs and handwritten documents on display, and a glance at the changes and corrections made on some of his early drafts offers unparalleled insight into the creative process. Interested visitors may also be granted special permission to the museum repository, whose wealth of detailed documents attracts Mishima researchers from across the globe.

One of the museum's main goals is to promote the readership and research of Mishima's literature. In addition to the above-mentioned repository open to researchers, the museum also holds annual "Mishima Yukio Museum Lake Salons," or lecture-discussions by leading literature scholars that are open to the public. The museum also frequently loans out pieces in its collection to other literary establishments, and has compiled the "Definitive Collection of the Complete Works of Mishima Yukio," which is in storage in the repository.

It is thus through such research and activity that the Mishima Yukio Museum attracts visitors from the world over to this serene literary grove nestled between the base of Mt. Fuji and the waters of Lake Yamanaka. And though the interpretations surrounding the works of Mishima Yukio may differ as widely as the scenery of this library grove differs with the seasons, it is the undeniable beauty of both Mishima's literature and Lake Yamanaka's nature that remains unchanged.

by Jonathan Smith



Running the Runners

Masahito Ueda arrived at Yamanashi Gakuin University in 1985 to act as head coach to the university's brand new track and field team, quickly leading the team to its first Hakone Ekiden victory (the term "ekiden" originates in Japan and has come to mean a long distance marathon relay). The university team has become one of the most well known stars of the Hakone Ekiden, itself one of the most well known races in Japan. *The Grapevine* sat down with Coach Ueda during the first training session at the team's brand new athletic track to talk about ekiden, internationalization, and udon noodles.

GV: Why do you think that the Hakone Ekiden, or just ekidens in general, have become so popular in Japan?

MU: First off, the timing of Hakone is great: it's held right after the New Year, when all of Japan is off from work. New Year's Day is usually spent together with family, but on January 2nd and 3rd people are still off and can enjoy watching the race. The race course itself stretches from Tokyo to Hakone—two very popular tourist destinations—and includes many glimpses of Mt. Fuji in the background. Hakone is pretty much on par with the Super Bowl in the United States: it's the big domestic sporting event of the year.

But more in general, I think the reason that long-distance running is such a popular spectator sport in Japan is that viewers can delve into the psychological aspects of the race. With sports like football or basketball, it's all instantaneous, it's all reflexes. But with long-distance running, you can imagine what the athlete is going through, you can see the fruition of hard training, you can share in their emotions and struggle.



GV: Yamanashi Gakuin was able to pull off its first Hakone win on only its 6th entry into the race. How were you able to build up such a strong team in such a short amount of time?

MU: In Japanese we have three expressions [originally from Mencius's *Kung-Sun Ch'au* – Ed.] Ten-no-toki(天の時, opportunities of time), Chi-no-ri(地の利, advantages of location), and Hito-no-wa(人の和, harmony among men). The first time we ran Hakone was also the first year it was broadcast on television—so we entered right at the start of a new period for the Hakone Ekiden, quite an "opportunity of time." For our "advantage of location," we had the benefit of being from Yamanashi Prefecture—though our track and field team was still in its infancy, we had Yamanashi's long history, plus the recognizability of historical figures from Yamanashi such as Takeda Shingen, to help us along. Also, the geography of Yamanashi, with Mt. Fuji and its many other mountains, affords lots of high-altitude training possibilities—not to mention the many nature trails here, or running around the Fuji Five Lakes in the autumn. We also had an international student from Kenya, Joseph Otwor, running for us at the time—unfortunately he passed away last August. Not only was he an excellent runner, but his good spirit helped motivate the team, and really contributed to the "harmony among men" of the runners. Otwor was very serious, really helping to push the other team members to new heights.

An Interview with Masahito Ueda by Jonathan Smith

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GV: Has there been any change in Ekiden racing strategies in the years you've been training and coaching?

MU: After being in this for so many years, you learn that you can't win ekidens with just a few runners; from the fastest runners to the injured runners, how they all work together as one entity is the important thing.

In the Ekiden, instead of a baton, each runner passes along a sash to the next teammate. This sash is made on a loom by shuttling the horizontal woof yarn through the vertical warp yarn. The vertical warp can be thought to symbolize the time axis, 365 days in a year—365 days that all collegiate teams share to train for Hakone. It's the same for every team, and for every team member. What's different is the woof, the horizontal thread that ties the aspirations of the team members together into a single, strong cloth. It's not something you can rush: it's something you do little by little, everyday.



GV: How did you end up in your current position in Yamanashi Prefecture?

MU: I have a friend from Kofu who heard that a university in his hometown was looking for a track and field coach, and he got in contact with my old coach from Juntendo University in Tokyo, who suggested me. At the time, I was teaching at a junior high in my home prefecture of Kagawa. It was a tiny school located on an island, so I had to commute by boat everyday. The udon noodles from my area of Kagawa are very famous throughout Japan, a little different from the Yoshida noodles here in Yamanashi. But anyway, when I decided to move to Yamanashi my family took it pretty hard, but my father gave me these great words of encouragement: "It's sad to see you leave, but it'd be even sadder to see you do a 180." Meaning it would be even worse if things didn't go well in Yamanashi and I had to turn around and trek back to Kagawa.

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GV: Yamanashi Gakuin was one of the first universities to welcome international students onto its track and field team. What do you think the team has gained out of such active international exchange?

MU: I truly think team members have learned a lot by these opportunities to build strong personal relationships across cultures. For example, we have a student now from Kenya named Megubo Mogusu—when team members talk about Mogusu, they've learned not to generalize his actions or thoughts and apply them to the entire nation of Kenya. Instead of saying "I guess all Kenyans do such and such," they now specify and say, "I guess Mogusu does such and such." They no longer see him as a culture, but rather as a person, which is a lot closer to the truth, right?

And for the international students themselves, it's a great challenge to come to Japan to study and train—they have to work extra hard, and in the process they inspire their other teammates to work extra hard as well.

And then there are the spectators; for as many fans who support the international team members, there are those who are opposed to them, lashing out in hate mail. But then there are those older fans that still stand by the side of the road and cheer on our current Kenyan runner, Megubo Mogusu, calling out "Go Otwor! You can do it!" confusing Mogusu with Joseph Otwor, our runner of 15 or so years ago. I remember bringing up the subject of hate mail with Otwor once before he left Gakuin. He told me, "Don't worry about it, because I don't either. There are people like that all over the world. Instead, look at all the people that have come out to support me. That's what really matters."



Yamanashi Artistry - Inden by Yi Mei Lee

"We dye the leather using colors, but the Japanese ingeniously adorned the dyes with the smoke from straws" said the Portuguese missionary Luis Frois, who came to visit Japan 440 years ago, and was amazed by *Inden's* dying technique. As the unique traditional leather work of Yamanashi, *Inden* shares the same glory with wines and crystals as a local specialty. *Inden* symbolizes the leather goods that use lacquer to print patterns on deerskin. Since the "Warring state period" numerous people have adored *Inden*, which has retained its traditions in the leather industry and has been designated a national traditional craft.



It is said that *Inden* (印伝) was originally introduced to Japan from India, therefore the written characters (kanji) used *In* (印) meaning "India", and *den* (伝) "introduced from" to represent *Inden*. Legend has it: *Inden* first came to Japan as a souvenir for a warlord in the 16th century. Deerskin is believed to be tough and is nearly as soft as human skin; later, it became widely used on warrior's armors. It was not until the Edo period (1603-1867) that the commoners started to use deerskins on cigarette covers, money pouches and bags. Yamanashi became the perfect location to make *Inden* because it is surrounded by mountains, where deers were plentiful and lacquer was easy to obtain as product materials.

According to the Inden-Ya, an established shop in Yamanashi since the 17th century, there are three main techniques required to make *Inden*, which are the "Smoke technique" the "Sarasa technique" and the "Lacquer printing technique".

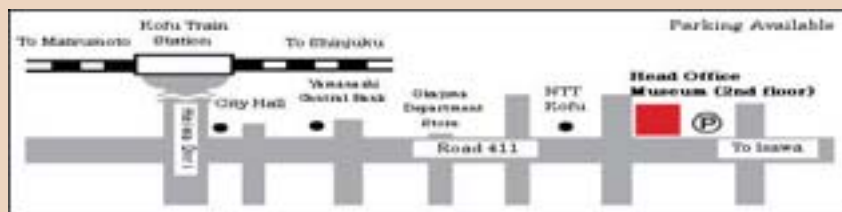
The Smoke technique darkens the cut-fitted deerskin with straws and resin. First, the craftsman nails the deerskin on a drum and kindles a fire with bunches of straws. So the smoke creates light brown marks on the deerskin. In the meantime, the craftsman has to keep turning the drum in order to have the design and color smoked evenly.



The Sarasa technique tinges the colored textile with layers of hues: as a result, the finished products display a magnificent harmony. In addition, Sarasa is an Indian fabric pattern with small spots. The patterns used in *Inden* look like this Indian fabric, so the name Sarasa was applied to the Inden.

The Lacquer printing technique uses a hand-carved Japanese pattern board as primer paint, then brushes the deerskin with either black, red or brown lacquer. Such manual production requires experienced craftsmen's intuition, and without the knowledge and skills they have acquired over the years, *Inden* would not exist.

Various patterns have been used to make *Inden*. The Inden-Ya alone has produced more than 500 patterns, among them the "Dragonfly" is the most popular of all. The dragonflies not only show braveness and fierceness in fighting, but their behavior of constant forwarding motion has won them the name "Victory bugs". Warriors would use the dragonfly pattern on their helmet as a symbol of victory in battles. The softness of the deerskin coupled with its superb craftsmanship has made *Inden* an extraordinary commodity. *Inden* is believed to be very popular not only in Japan, but also all over the world, placing Yamanashi on the map!



やまなし いんでん 山梨の印伝

「我々は、染料を使って皮を染めるが、日本人は、藁の煙だけで極めて巧みに染色する」とは、440年程前に日本を訪れたポルトガルの宣教師ルイス・フロイスの驚きの言葉です。彼が驚いているのは印伝を作る技法の一つです。ワインや宝石と同様に有名な甲州印伝は、山梨の伝統的な革工芸です。戦国時代から今まで、大勢の人々に愛されると同時に、珍しい日本の革工芸の文化を伝えてきました。国の伝統的工芸品にも指定されています。

「印伝」とは、印度伝来を略したものとも、また印度更紗の技法からともいわれています。16世紀頃、来航した外国人によってお土産として幕府に上納されたのが始まりと言われており、同じ頃甲州(今の山梨)でも作られるようになりました。なぜかという、四方を山で囲まれた甲州は、原料の鹿革と漆がたくさん取れたので、甲州印伝が生まれ育つには最適の場所だったようです。

鹿革の柔らかな肌触りは人肌に最も近いといわれ、強度も備えているので、戦国時代に武具の一部として使われていたそうです。江戸時代になると庶民の間で、タバコ入れ、巾着、財布などにも使われるようになりました。今回取材に伺った(株)印傳屋上原勇七は十七世紀からの歴史を持つ老舗ですが、印傳屋に伝わる技法にはどのようなものがあるのでしょうか。印伝の柄と色を作る技法は主に三つあります。「ふすべ技法」、「更紗技法」、そして「革に漆を塗る技法」です。



「ふすべ技法」は形に合わせて裁断した鹿革をドラムに釘で貼り、藁と松脂でいぶします。その黒煙で革が褐色になるまで、何回も繰り返します。と同時に柄と色を平均に付けるため、職人が上にあるドラムを回転し続けます。



「更紗技法」は型紙で色を重ねます。主に漆付けの前の下地模様として使われます。「革に漆を塗る技法」は日本の小紋柄を、手彫りした型紙を使い生地一面に漆をプリントします。全ての技法は手作業であり、職人の長年の熟練した知恵と勘が必要です。

印伝には様々な柄の種類があります。長い歴史のある(株)印傳屋上原勇七では柄の種類は500を超えるそうです。代表的な印伝の柄の一つ「蜻蛉」の柄は、前へ前へと進んで後ろに下がらず、勇猛果敢で勝負強い、別名「勝虫」いわれ、昔から愛好されてきました。この為に、戦国時代の武将は「勝って帰る」との心から、鎧や兜にとんぼの模様を使ったそうです。鹿革の柔らかさと職人達の神技とが融合した印伝は、魅力的な商品であり、印伝は山梨の伝統文化として、日本国内だけではなく、海外でも大いに名を馳せるはずだと思います。

取材協力：(株)印傳屋上原勇七
印傳博物館
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甲府駅より徒歩 15 分、タクシーで約 5 分
<http://www.inden-ya.co.jp/> 電話 055-233-1100



Meet the authors...

When not running up Mt. Fuji in the summer or running up his heating bill in the winter, American CIR **Jonathan Smith** likes to relax by immersing himself in both Japanese literature and Japanese hot springs. After living in Yamanashi for a year and a half, he no longer automatically says “Gesundheit” after hearing someone sneeze, though he has picked up the habit of making the peace sign after hearing someone say “cheese.” One good year-and-a-half in Yamanashi deserves another, and so he has decided to extend his stay. Only time will tell if, after returning home from his three-year absence, he is not culturally confused enough to give the peace sign when somebody sneezes.



Érica Tanaka – currently a second year Brazilian CIR, has just come back to the freezing winter in Yamanashi with a warmed heart and tanned skin after having spent Christmas and New Year’s celebrations doing volunteer work in an orphanage in Thailand. While working hard for the promotion and integration of the Brazilian community in the Prefecture, she is planning her next volunteer work destination.



Yi-Mei Lee is a first year New Zealand CIR working in the Yamanashi International Center. It is her second time in Japan and she still feels that there is much to learn about Japanese language and culture. Although she’s only been in Yamanashi for 6 months, she has already fallen in love with the prefecture because of all the fruits. Oops, and the people as well.



Mathieu Bellier, first year CIR from France, is one of the few people whose interest for sushi is indirectly proportional to his passion for Japan! After having spent a year in Okinawa as an exchange student in 2004 and being laughed at once back home when bowing to the pizza delivery man, he realized he needed to return to Japan as soon as possible! He is now enjoying his life in Yamanashi.



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