

The Yamanashi Grapevine

山梨グレープヴァイン

Winter 2008

Osano Memorial Foundation 20th Anniversary

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At the time of going to press it will be way too late for the traditional New Year's greetings, the day after *setsubun* marking the new year of the old Japanese lunar calendar was this past Monday and we are even going to just miss the Chinese New year...but anyways welcome to this first Grapevine edition of 2008! Along with the never-kept resolutions towards a healthier life, the team has also decided this year to work twice as hard for introducing new aspects of the prefecture and to keep spreading its charms to all of our readers!

Mathieu Bellier

Osano Memorial Foundation

Commemorative

In 2007 the administrative board of the Osano Memorial Foundation conducted the following three programs to celebrate the Foundation's 20th anniversary.

1) International Cooperation Youth Study Tour

During one week, from August 13th to 19th, a total of 25 people (including 5 junior high school students, 9 high school students, 6 volunteer students and 5 supervisors) visited Thailand for a study tour. In a country even hotter than Yamanashi Prefecture, we managed-through a hard schedule of school visits, home-stays in a hillside tribal village and volunteer activities in slums-to raise awareness and deepen youths' understanding towards the value of peace and international cooperation by experiencing the activities of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, fostering exchanges with locals and visiting schools. We hope that what each participant has experienced will be useful in many future situations and give them much food for thought.

Participants became very close friends and developed strong ties, so that now, even though the study tour is over, they are still actively taking part in international events in their schools, local communities and various other places. As the organizers, we would be pleased if it has helped them to look towards and play an active part in international exchange, global understanding and international cooperation.

2) Prefectural Citizen's Day Commemorative Event "International Festa 2007"

To celebrate Yamanashi Prefectural Citizen's Day (20th of November), commemorative events were organized during two days, on the 10th and the 11th of November in Kose Sports Park. The Osano Memorial Foundation held in collaboration with the Yamanashi International Association the "International Festa 2007". The public was thrilled by the African music concert of Ousmane Sankhon, the folk music of the Yamanashi African music band Donshaka People, the salsa and the merengue show of the Peruvian singer Magnolia, and the really cute performance of the Yamanashi Brazilian school Pitagoras and the Labo International Exchange Foundation kids.

The participants of the study tour performed the para-para dancing they used for introducing Japanese culture in Thailand, and shared their experiences with the public through a quiz about living conditions in Thailand. In the "World Gourmet" booths set up around the stage, visitors could enjoy food from Brazil, China, Korea, Thailand, Bangladesh and Haiti.

3) Osano Memorial Foundation 20th Anniversary Commemorative Support Program

To promote internationalization in Yamanashi, every year the Osano Memorial Foundation distributes 100,000 yen to prefectural associations working in the fields of international exchange, international cooperation and multiculturalism. This year we decided to double the amount of our support and as of December 2007, 9 associations have benefited from this program.

Comorative Programs

20th Anniversary



多摩源流 Kosuge Village 小菅村

Paradise Tucked Into



The Tama River



Mountainside konnyaku fields



Riverside fish-breeding tank



Otaki "Male" Waterfall

Access:

Fujikyū Bus service from JR Uenohara Station to Kosuge-no-Yu and Matsuhime Pass (Weekdays and Holydays only, Spring through Autumn). Nishi Tokyo Bus

Ask any Yamanashi resident what the top local attraction is, and no doubt they'll reply with a locale in or around the Kofu Basin or the northern side of Mt. Fuji-rarely you'll hear mention of Kosuge Village. But tucked away in the northeastern mountains of Yamanashi lies this quiet, little hamlet full of enough natural beauty to rival that of the larger cities and towns in the Prefecture. And while many Yamanashi residents might inadvertently overlook the village's charms, residents of the bordering Tokyo Prefecture and surrounding National Capital Region are increasingly turning their eyes towards Kosuge.

the Mountainside

by Jonathan Smith

The close ties between Kosuge and the Greater Tokyo Area are only natural-or geographical, to be more precise. Kosuge Village is part of the headwater area of the Tama River, which flows down through Tokyo Prefecture towards the Tokyo Bay. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government Bureau of Waterworks, in fact, owns land in Kosuge in order to ensure that Tokyo's tap water be as clean as possible. Kosuge, incidentally, had installed a full sewage system by a relatively early time for Japan. The Tokyo University of Agriculture has also recently refurbished an old schoolhouse in the village and turned it into the "Tama Riverhead University," where both students and the general public can learn about sustainable living through hands-on programs in forestation, agriculture, landscaping, woodworking, and other areas.

Many residents of suburban Tokyo and Greater Tokyo Area, too, have stopped flowing down towards the hustle and bustle of downtown Tokyo, and started to go against the current, heading towards the natural tranquility of Kosuge. Elementary school students from the Tokyo Area go on river trekking trips up the Tama River to learn more about the source of their tap water. The riverbed just downstream is filled on the weekends with fishers both amateur and professional, many of whose cars carry license plates from Tokyo or Saitama Prefectures. The brook trout, rainbow trout, and seema that are fished here can be tried at the restaurant in the nearby Kosuge-no-Yu, an extensive hot spring spa frequented by companies and social clubs from the National Capital Region. And many of those bathers choose to take in the springs after a day of exploring the mountain trails that are filled with visiting photography and trekking enthusiasts-the path that traces the southern border of Kosuge from the breathtaking Matsuhime Pass to Mt. Daibosatsu is particularly popular now.

Yet exchanges between Kosuge and the National Capital Region do not stop at just weekend excursions. Tokyoites make up the bulk of respondents to the village government's initiative to invite people to rent homes in the village-or enter pre-existing ones. Official advertisements to marry Kosuge bachelors were started more than a decade ago as yet another countermeasure for population decline, and the local government has so far played Cupid to over a dozen happy couples.

Though a major reason for Kosuge's close connection with the Tokyo Area is its relative ease of access from the metropolis, Yamanashi residents need not miss out on all the fun for long. A tunnel between Kosuge to the Yamanashi city of Otsuki is scheduled to be completed by 2013, and would cut driving times between the two municipalities by half. No doubt many a Yamanashi Resident would be surprised to find sites hard to find in any other corner of the prefecture; such as the precariously steep fields along the mountainside where konnyaku (a tuber whose starch is made into edible gelatin) is raised, or the small wasabi fields that dot the riverside path towards the curiously shaped and appropriately named Otaki (or, "Male Waterfall"). It is the little surprises like these that make a visit to Kosuge Village a perfect break for both neighboring residents and city-weary travelers.

The Official Kosuge Village Website:

<http://www.vill.kosuge.yamanashi.jp/>

from JR Okutama Station to Kosuge-no-Yu (must change buses halfway).

Hoshigaki: a Taste of Autumn

by Matthew Bellier

When autumn falls on Yamanashi, not only does maple foliage start to slowly turn red and yellow, but an orange fruit begins to pop up in front of many houses all over the prefecture. No, these are not the traditional jack-o'-lanterns of Halloween, but rather kaki (persimmons as they are mostly known outside of Japan)-or more precisely, its dried form: hoshigaki.

The origins of kaki are unclear, though they most probably came from China. They have been grown in Asia since antiquity and were introduced to America and Europe during the 1800s. Their cultivation in Yamanashi is said to have been encouraged first by the famous warlord Takeda Shingen, before expanding in the eastern part of the Kofu basin at the beginning of the 20th century. Home of the famous big-sized koshu hyakume variety, Yamanashi is now the third largest domestic producer of hoshigaki (dried persimmons), which have become a local specialty alongside peaches, grapes and plums, to name only a few.

Walking in November through the narrow streets of the Enzan Matsusato area in Koshu City-the heart of the hoshigaki tradition in Yamanashi-one is surprised by the bright color of freshly peeled and hanged hoshigaki dotting the landscape. From simple poles in front of houses to big scaffolding-like structures in

farmers' gardens, hoshigaki are almost everywhere, and before turning into much appreciated year-end gifts for friends and relatives, they make the delight of photographers and pedestrians looking for authentic autumnal sceneries.

With more than a thousand different varieties, kaki vary greatly but can be divided roughly into two categories: astringent (shibugaki) and non-astringent (amagaki). Astringent kaki contain high levels of soluble tannins, and thus cannot be eaten without softening (artificially with chemicals or naturally by exposure to light) or before a very advanced ripened stage. Non-astringent kaki are, despite their name, not tannin-free but are far less astringent and can be savored firm like an apple. However, when it comes to making hoshigaki, only astringent kaki are used, because when they dry the astringent taste disappears (the soluble tannins become insoluble and thus do not dissolve inside the mouth) and the level of sugars increases more than it would for non-astringent kaki, resulting in a very sweet and moist dried fruit.

We here at The Grapevine wanted to check this out ourselves, so we infiltrated a farming family in Misaka and had a hoshigaki hands-on experience-under the supervision of a sweet 82 year-old expert grandma! Just follow these steps!



Step 1 Picking

Kaki trees grow naturally with little to no human attention, and are very prolific, producing a significant quantity of fruits every year. To pick up kaki out of harm's reach, a long bamboo tool cut in two at its extremity is used to transfer them safely into the bucket. At this stage kaki (the koshu hyakume variety) are almost the size of an orange or a big apple.



Step 2 Stem and Calyx Cutting, and Peeling

After having shortened with a knife the stem to an appropriate size (around one centimeter) and neatly cut the calyx, the skin is peeled with a normal household peeler.



Step 3 Binding

In order to hang kaki easily afterwards, they are tied two by two with a string.



Step 4 Boiling

Kaki are boiled for a few minutes to prevent molding, which darkens their color. Professionals also often fumigate them with sulfur.



Step 5 Hanging

The best way for drying kaki naturally is to hang them outside in a sunny and windy place for two or three weeks. It can be anywhere: clotheslines or balconies, under eaves...



Step 6 Massaging

Once the surfaces of the kaki are dry enough, they are massaged one by one in order to break up the inner pulp and bring out the juice to the surface. Kaki then dry easier and become more tender. When they are dry enough, the sugars contained inside crystallize and form a white powder on the skin. Kaki that have shrunk dramatically (to the size of a mandarin orange) are ready to be eaten and enjoyed.





Aokigahara Jukai - 青木ヶ原樹海

Aokigahara Jukai is a wide woodland of over 3000-hectares that spreads out at the base of Mount Fuji in Japan. It is also known as the Aokigahara Sea of Trees.



The majority of people go there for its genuine, undeveloped wilderness. The forest accommodates over 100 varieties of rare plants in and it is home to over 200 wild animals such as martens and weasels. You can often find delicious wild mushrooms growing in its mossy grounds; this is truly a primeval forest full of living things.



In the lava tunnel, you can see the original ropy lava floor.

Access: from JR (Japan Rail) Shinjuku station, take the Chuo line until Otsuki station and transfer to the Fujikyuko line until Kawaguchiko station. For further information please visit Fujigawaguchiko Sightseeing Information http://www.fujisan.ne.jp/index_e.php

There was an eruption on the northwest side of Mount Fuji in 864, and a great amount of lava filled up the large lake *Senoumi* (せの海), which formed the *Aokigahara jukai* and divided the lake into three lakes now called *Saiko*, *Shojiko* and *Motosuko*. The forest is only a few hundred years old, therefore, the surface is actually mantled by rotten leaves and stems rather than soil. The lava streams created areas of striking beauty both above and below *Aokigahara* forest. *Saiko* Bat Cave is one example. The locals discovered it and made it accessible some time later. Inside the lava tunnel it is dark and damp with the cool draft that blows on the side of the tunnel. The short magnetic lavacicles that hang from the roof and the wave-shaped lava-flow field marked the history of eruptions, and the fact that this was once part of a lake. The lava tunnel is sometimes as wide as 5 meters, though it is often narrower. Before you could reach the bat cave, you have to stoop to get through the tunnel. It is almost too dark for human eyes to see, but maybe just dark enough for the bats. There are currently 5 different types of bats inhabiting the site. The Bat Cave is generally closed to visitor during the hibernation season, which is around December to March. If you missed the season, then there are also the Ice Cave and Wind Cave that have been developed as tourist spots.

On the other hand, the *Aokigahara Jukai* is also known for its mysteriousness. The dense and thick forest covers most of the noises away, even the noise of cars rushing through Route 139; therefore, no sounds can be heard other than those produced by the forest itself. This makes the innocents to break away from their lost routes even harder. Furthermore, as the forest floor consists of massive magnetic iron deposits underground that cause compasses to go haywire every now and then, to enter the forest without a tour guide is considered to be a very dangerous choice. The local people and officials hope people could enjoy the wonderful nature in the forest only and nothing else. There are many entrances to the forest, and there is no requirement to apply for an entry permit. Once you enter the forest, please follow the pathway, which has been created with stones and trees by the locals after years of inspection.

The Grapevine team had the opportunity to explore the forest accompanied by an experienced guide. The pathway was somehow darker than outside, with trees as tall as the sky that could easily cover the daylight. The surrounding trees that all look similar with minor differences make it easy to lose one's way. There is not particularly much sign of human contact along with the chilly breeze; I can image the

fear and panic when people got lost. After saying that, I tagged along carefully to the guide while enjoying the phytoncide distributed from the forest; it was like having a green shower. The guide pointed out a number of rare plants throughout our way, such as the wax flowers and alnus firma. Many lava burrows can be seen on both side of the pathway as if the underground could be passed freely. Later, we were shown by the tour guide that compasses only go haywire in some places, due to the lava rocks on the ground. That was very impressive.

Recent littering have caused problems for the officials and locals. People throw all sorts of rubbish on Route 139 and the exhaust gas generated from cars has been gradually affecting the forest. *Aokigahara Jukai* provides an outstanding source of nature and scenic wonder. Even the legends increased the forest's somewhat mysterious charm. If you ever have a chance to visit Yamanashi Prefecture, don't forget to stop by and enjoy the breathtaking scenery of Mount Fuji and the *Aokigahara Jukai*.

by Yi-Mei Lee





Washi - a Yamanashi Art

Without a doubt the dichotomy of high technology and tradition is always mentioned when discussing the image of Japan. The magic feeling of creation in these dichotomous times is unique, and art, in its essence, can provide it.

By Érica Tanaka

Nishijima Washi - Yamanashi's Washi

Yamanashi is famous for its wine, fruits and industries and is also nationally renowned for its Japanese traditional artistic products such as suzuri (see the previous edition of The Grapevine) and the manufacture of washi (literally, "Japanese paper"), which is made by hand. The prefecture has been cultivating the traditional art of papermaking, and washi production is active in Minobu and Ichikawamisato Towns, which are considered the homeland to the practitioners of shodo calligraphy. Especially the local Nishijima Washi, produced in Minobu town is very renowned all over Japan.

The main ingredients for the production of Nishijima Washi are koshi (recycled papers made from the fibers of Mitsumata and straw), which are blended and form a texture appreciated by many Japanese calligraphy practitioners and artists who are keen on craft, papermaking and uniqueness.

Washi is not only the privilege of Japanese calligraphers. We paid a visit to Nakatomi Washi-no-Sato (the "homeland of washi") in Minobu Town, where visitors can experience the art of making washi paper. From moving the mixture back and forth on the mold, according to the individual visitor's imagination, one can create a variety of interior ornaments, from fans and lamps to

decorate your room to wall papers and wall clocks with unique designs. These activities aim to promote the uniqueness of washi making and it is an opportunity to find future washi-loving artists.

The Past, Present and Future

Papermaking has a history of over 430 years in Yamanashi with its origin in the techniques brought from Shizuoka Prefecture by Seibei Mochizuki. There were times when washi production boomed in the prefecture and there was an abundance of raw material being turned into paper. But nowadays, the washi industry of Minobu and Ichikawa Towns are what remain of that illustrious past. With the market pressures from imported products from foreign countries, and the aging of craftsmen who retain the papermaking techniques, even in the homeland of washi, it has been hard to sustain the production of raw materials.

Among many utilities, washi is commonly used to print school graduation certificates due to its lasting and beauty. So some of the schools that adopt high-quality washi for printing their graduation certificates are growing their own raw materials in order to guarantee its production for their students. Another influence is that due to the diffusion of computers and less hours for shodo training, its practitioners are decreasing. The local government has also been subsidizing

production to support the longevity of this art, and is also considering to dedicate more time to Calligraphy lessons.

Washi-no-Sato has also been holding various seminars and training workshops to help perpetuate papermaking production. Also, by holding events and exhibitions, visiting schools, and receiving visits from school children and researchers to experience and experiment about papermaking, the facility has been playing an active role in its promotion, research and development.

The Tradition Goes On

Aside from shodo, washi can be used in the creation of various interior ornaments, traditional Japanese sliding doors - shoji, fusuma -, interior decorative typical ornaments, Japanese lanterns, and even for special wallpaper that does not emit house dust.

Moreover, followers of traditional drawing letters - etegami, usually sent when the seasons change -, or drawing with cutting paper techniques - kirigami- just to name a few, help perpetuate the uniqueness of the washi tradition to future generations.



わ し やまなし げいじゅつひん 和紙—山梨の芸術品

日本のイメージについて議論になる際、必ずと言っていいほど、ハイテクノロジーと伝統の二項対立について言及されます。こういった二項対立が一層顕著になっている現代日本においては、自分の手を使って物を創るということが持つ魅力は特別なもので、それは、本質的に芸術作品を創造する時に人が感じるものと同様であるとも言えます。

にしじま わ し やまなし わ し 西嶋和紙—山梨の和紙

山梨はワインや果物、工業等で有名ですが、日本の伝統的な工芸品である硯（本誌前号をご覧ください）や手漉き和紙の産地としても、全国的に広く知られています。県も生産を奨励してきたこの伝統的な和紙産業は、書道家を多く輩出する地としても知られている現在の身延町や市川三郷町で盛んですが、身延町産の和紙は、西嶋和紙と呼ばれ、多くの書道家に親しまれています。

西嶋和紙の原料の主なものは、三桧故紙（三桧を原料とした和紙で、一度紙として漉き上がったもの）と稲ワラで、それらをブレンドすることにより、紙漉き技術の高さだけでなく、紙の個性も重視する書道家や芸術家からも絶賛される紙質を実現しています。といっても、和紙に親しむ機会は、日本の書道関係者だけに限られているわけではありません。今回、我々グレイプヴァインスタッフは、和紙の故郷ともいえる身延町の「なかとみ和紙の里」を訪ねましたが、そこでは、訪問者は紙漉きを体験することができます。わく なか わ し げんりょう い ぜん どの せう かく 梓の中に和紙の原料を入れ、前後左右に梓を傾け紙を漉き、イメージネーションを駆使して、訪問者は、うちわや部屋を彩る灯り、タペストリー、時計ストリーといった、和紙でできた様々なインテリア用品を製作することができます。

こういった体験を通して、紙漉きの独創性を感じ、和紙に親しみを覚えることで、訪問者が将来の和紙愛好家となることが期待されています。

か こ げんざい みらい 過去、現在、そして未来

山梨の和紙作りの歴史は、約430年前にさかのぼることができ、望月清兵衛という人が現在の静岡県から紙漉きの技術を伝えたのが始まりであるとされています。以後、原料の調達にも恵まれたこともあり、県の和紙産業は成長を続け、何度かの黄金時代を経験しました。しかし、残念ながら、身延町や市川三郷町の和紙産業は、昔日の栄光に比べると陰りが見えてきているのが現状です。海外からの安価な製品の流入によって市場競争が厳しさを増し、また職人の高齢化によって、技術の継承が難しくなっています。和紙の故郷として知られる地域においても、それは例外ではなく、生産規模を維持するのはますます難しくなっています。和紙は様々な用途に使用されていますが、その耐久性と美しさから、近年学校の卒業証書にも広く使用されています。中には和紙の原料となる三桧を自分達で育て、それを漉いて作った和紙を卒業証書に使う学校もあります。学校における書道時間の減少傾向やパソコン等の普及により書道をたしなむ人の数が減ってきていることから、県が和紙の生産

に対し補助を行ってこの長い歴史を誇る地場産業を保護するとともに、書道の時間数を増やすことも検討課題となっているようです。和紙の里では、和紙の伝統を保持するための、様々なセミナーやワークショップも行っています。また、イベントの開催をはじめとして、学校へ職員を派遣して普及事業を行ったり、学校の授業の一環として、児童生徒を受け入れて紙漉き体験をしてもらったりと、和紙の普及に大きな役割を果たしている他、より良い品質の和紙を生産するための調査研究・開発機関としても活躍しています。

でんとう つづ そして伝統は続く

書道以外にも、和紙はさまざまなインテリア用品に用いられています。障子紙や襖に始まり、インテリア装飾品、灯り、また近年ではシック・ハウス症候群対策として壁紙にも使用されています。更に、近年は、普通の手紙ではなく、絵手紙を書いたり、切り紙を使って絵を描く人も増えていますが、そういった際にも和紙は広く用いられています。このように、他に類を見ない和紙の伝統を将来の世代に伝えていくため、様々な方法が模索されています。

Meet the authors



Yi-Mei Lee wanted to visit the Aokigahara forest ever since she arrived in Yamanashi Prefecture. It was its mysteriousness and the natural beauty that attracted her (and nothing else, so she said). It was supposed to be a simple trip to gather materials for the article, but she got lost halfway through. She said that she was able to hear noises from Route 139, but still couldn't figure the way out, so she stayed where she was and waited for someone to rescue her. Luckily, her colleagues found her, after they took a photo of her looking terrified. **The story above is a work of fiction, any resemblance is purely coincidental.**



Mathieu Bellier, second year CIR from France, turned into a fruit farmer for a day and was so proud of his hand-made *hoshigaki* that he even thought for a second to embrace a new professional career in Yamanashi! However he still has a lot to do to bring the prefecture and its French sister department Saône-et-Loire closer before he can retire and live off what grows in his fields.



Érica Tanaka is a 3rd year Brazilian Coordinator for International Relations in Yamanashi. She was delighted to have experienced the energy of the pyramids and people of Mexico and the warmth of Miamians while Yamanashi was freezing this past winter break. After making washi, she is looking forward to writing about the history of Nipo-Brazilian integration, and is determined to keep following the paths of shodo as a means to find her own way through its strokes.



American CIR **Jonathan Smith** is seen here deep within the forest, soaking up the minus ions that waft out of Kosuge's Otaki Waterfall. When not reveling in pseudoscience or tittering before suggestively-shaped natural features, though, he enjoys exploring the many other out-of-the-way gems hidden in every corner of Yamanashi. He returns from a winter sojourn in Mexico and Miami tanned and ready to take on the next nook and/or cranny the prefecture has to offer.



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