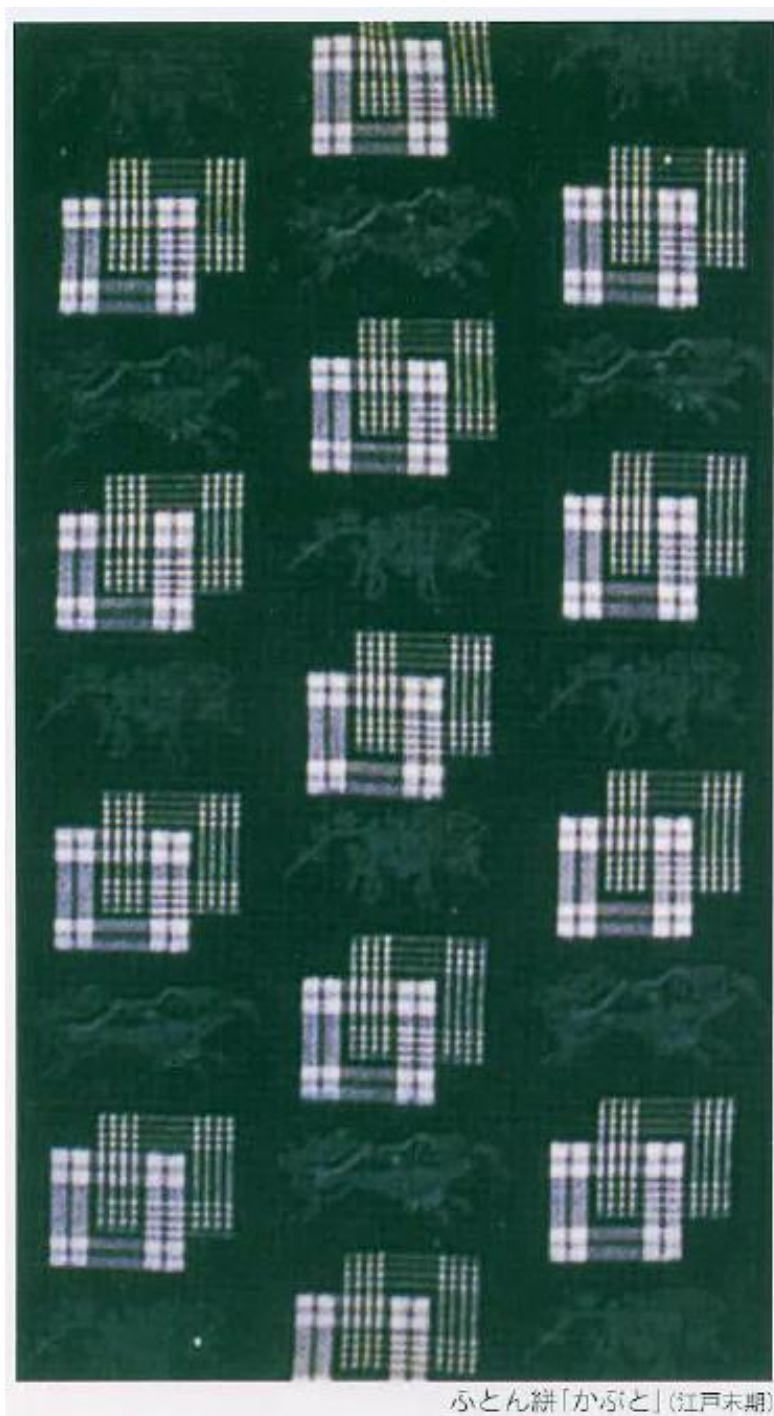


Kurume History Walks

No.21 久留米絣 Kurume Kasuri

A National Important Intangible Cultural Property, designated on April 25th, 1957



Kurume Kasuri for futon named “Warrior helmets” (19th Century)

■ What is Kasuri?

Kasuri is a term to refer to a type of Japanese cotton fabrics and to the blurred pattern. Either the warp and the weft or the both dyed with partial blanks create the pattern or image of Kasuri, when they are woven according to a fabric pattern in advance.

Since ancient times, this type of fabrics has been produced in Egypt, Persia, India, Peru, and Southeast Asia. The Indonesian one, called ikat, is well known for its complexity of the pattern and its beauty.

In Japan, it is only in the eighteenth century that people started to produce in earnest Kasuri fabrics. And it should have been newly transmitted from the region around Okinawa.

In the early nineteenth century, Kasuri fabrics were greatly developed. Then, it came to vary in material: silk, cotton, and hemp and be produced across the country.

Representative fabrics: Oshima Tsumugi (silk; Kagoshima), Yuki Tsumugi (silk; Ibaraki and Tochigi), Kurume Kasuri (cotton; Fukuoka), Satsuma Kasuri (cotton; originally Kagoshima), Iyo Tsumugi (cotton; Ehime), Miyako Jofu (hemp; Okinawa), Echigo Jofu (hemp; Niigata)

■ Kurume Kasuri

The pioneer of Kurume Kasuri is said to be Inoue Den who was born into a family of the rice dealer in Torihokamachi, Kurume in 1788. When she was the age of twelve or thirteen, she wondered how white spots, which looked like a pattern, formed on some old clothes. She unraveled it into the warp and the weft to understand the structure. She finally came up with an idea for creating patterns by the yarns tied

with threads at some intervals before dyeing them in indigo. After many tries, she succeeded in producing the Kasuri pattern, and then her fabric gained an excellent reputation in Kurume.

At the age of forty, she taught over 400 women.

Then, the lord established the Invention and Development Division, which encouraged common

30 steps to manufacture a Kurume Kasuri fabric

1 Making pattern (柄づくり *garatsukuri*)

Its design is required to be appropriate as “National Cultural Property” with grace and style.

2 Making pattern sheets (絵紙 *egami*)

Based on pattern sheets, the number of yarns is determined as well as each length of the interval to be dyed or undyed for expressing patterns.

3 Drawing(下絵 *shitae*)

The pattern design is drawn in color on graph paper, while taking into consideration weft shrinkage.

4 Making base weft (絵糸書き *eitogaki*)

Being stretched and attached over the drawing on a board, yarns are marked at points where to bind. It is the base for the dyeing of the weft.

5 Making a warp scale (経尺づくり *tatejaku tsukuri*)

It is the scale pointed at calculated intervals for indicating where to bind warp before dyeing.

6 Preparing the warp (経はえ *tatehae*)

Needed number and length of the warp is wound onto a kind of cylinder.

7 Preparing the weft (ぬきはえ *nukihae*)

The weft is prepared by about twenty, depending on a pattern.

8 Boiling yarns (糸たき *itotaki*)

Yarns become stronger and get rid of impurities.

9 Bleaching yarns (さらし *sarashi*)

10 Sizing yarns (のりづけ *norizuke*)

11 Binding by hand (手くぶり *tekubiri*)

Yarns are bound at marked points with hemp plants bark string by hand for preventing from being dyed.

12 Preparing the indigo (藍建 *aidate*)

Mix fermented indigo plant dye, lye, alcohol, and shell lime in half-buried large pots for letting ferment further.

13 Indigo dyeing (藍染 *aizome*)

Yarns are dipped in the indigo dye from lower concentration, middle and higher, while being beaten for

14 Washing in water (水洗 *mizuarai*)

15 Unbinding (緋解き *kasuritoki*)

16 Washing and bleaching (水洗、漂白 *mizuarai, hyohaku*)

17 Sizing and drying (糊付、乾燥 *noritsuke, kanso*)

18 Bundling the warp (経割 *tatewari*)

The warp yarns are divided into bundles, adjusting the pattern design.

19 Sizing and drying (糊付、乾燥 *noritsuke, kanso*)

20 Threading a reed (割り込み *warikomi*)

The calculated number of warp is threaded the reed, which separates each yarn for weaving in standard width of kimono fabric.

21 Winding the warp (経巻 *tatemaki*)

The warp will be wound onto a wooden frame for keeping its adjusted pattern.

22 Passing the warp to a heddle (あぜかけ *azekake*)

23 Setting the warp on a loop (機仕掛 *hatashikake*)

24 Making into bundles (緯割 *nukiwari*)

The weft is bundled by about twenty.

25 Separating the bundle (枠上げ *wakuage*)

The weft yarn is wound separately onto a long frame.

26 Winding the weft (管巻 *kudamaki*)

Each weft yarn is rewound onto small bobbins.

27 Handweaving (手織 *teori*)

28 Washing in hot water, drying (湯のし、乾燥 *yunoshi, kanso*)

29 Finishing (整反 *seitai*)

While examining the finished fabric, cut it to the specified length and fold it.

30 Examining (検査 *kensa*)

The production committee examines the fabrics.

■ Tools for producing Kurume Kasuri



● Indigo dye in half-buried pots



● Board for making the weft marker

● Reed: a tool for calculating the needed number of the yarns for expressing a pattern



● Kurume Kasuri Sitting Loom
(Prefectural Tangible Folk Cultural Property)

households and lower-class samurai to produce it.

After the Tokugawa shogunate, under the circumstances in the encouragement of new industries and increment of production by the new government, Kurume Kasuri became popular throughout the country.

Strong and less color fading, it is elaborately woven with yarns partially tied with hemp plants bark strings during indigo dyeing. And characteristic patterns abound regionally.

■ Designation as National Cultural Property

During World War II, the distribution of cotton was controlled by the government. Soon after the end of the war, its regulation was abolished and the production of Kurume Kasuri was restarted. However, the textile industry shrank, facing the overseas production of synthetic fibers and the changing preferences of clothes (from kimono to western clothes). And, Kurume Kasuri craft workers also decreased.

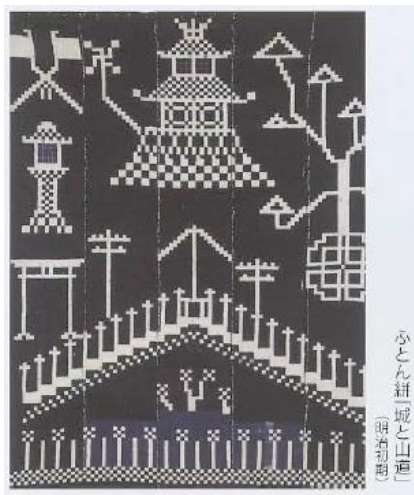
Under these circumstances, to protect the industrial arts possessing a high artistic value of Kurume Kasuri, the government of Japan designated it an Important Intangible Cultural Property on October 27th, 1957. Besides, the Kurume Kasuri Technique Preservation Society was established and is today organizing seminars and exhibitions for preserving their works and educating/training the newcomers.



ふとん絣「高砂翁媪」
(明治末期)



ふとん絣「松竹梅」
(明治末期)



ふとん絣「城と山道」
(明治初期)

Kurume Kasuri for futon "Castle and mountain path" (Early Meiji era, 1860s-70s)



ふとん絣「市松 お多福と扇」
(大正初期)

"Old couple" symbolizing prosperity (Late Meiji era, 1900s-1910s)

"Pine, Bamboo, and Plum Tree" symbolizing auspiciousness (Late Meiji era, 1900s-1910s)

"Otafuku and Fan" symbolizing luck and increasing success (Early Taisho era, 1910s)

Cultural Properties Protection Department of Kurume

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