

## ARTICLES

### SAKIORI AND BORO

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VÄV 4/08

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SAKIORIWEAVING CONTEMPORARY DESIGN  
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## PROJECTS

### SAKIORI

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WEAVE SAKIORI IN A FRAME  
TINA IGNELL

Kei Kawasaki showing a *futon*, a type of coverlet, made of small woven pieces. Some of the pieces are from *sakiori* weaves made of rags.



# Riches from Rags

KEI KAWASAKI COLLECTS ANTIQUE TEXTILES AND HAS A GALLERY IN KYOTO.

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Left, Weaves from bastfibres as wisteria and elmfibres. Some of them are indigodyed.



THE WORD 'SAKI' COMES FROM 'SAKU', meaning to tear, clip or cut rags for weaving. The verb 'ori' means to weave. Traditional sakiori weaves are made of indigo dyed cotton rags. These folk treasures caught the attention of journalist Shige Fukabori, till recently chairperson for *The Sakiori Association of Japan*, when she chanced upon an exhibition catalogue of antique sakiori weaves in an interiors shop in Kyoto. The exhibition in question, *'Riches from Rags'*, had been shown at San Francisco Craft & Folk Art Museum in 1994. The weaves at this exhibition had been loaned from a number of museums in Japan.

– I was overwhelmed by what I saw and realized that I, along with many other Japanese, knew nothing about these fantastic weaves, which were to prove an important part of our cultural heritage.

In 1996, Fukabori and other enthusiasts joined the meeting which brought well over one hundred people together in Nagano. Their aim was to preserve an interest in sakiori weaving and develop it. Today the association has over 350 members. Many of them are practising artists who are transposing sakiori

weaving into a contemporary context, with new design, interesting colour combinations, fantastic qualities, yet with the same intentions as those who wove sakiori previously; that of recycling textile material.

The original sakiori weaves made from the 19th century to the beginning of 20th century are closely linked to the availability of cotton. Cotton came to Japan via China several hundred years ago and was initially cultivated in the warmer western regions. However, it was not until the 19th century and in some isolated spots right into the 20th century, that cotton became available throughout the country.

Prior to this, the fibres being spun into yarn and woven into cloth were bast fibres from plants growing in the forests that cover about 80 per cent of Japan. Wild hemp and ramie were the two most important fibres but thread was also obtained from wisteria, lime and elm.

Collecting and processing bast fibre was time-consuming and hard work, mostly carried out by women. The yarns were not dyed and left in their natural shades. The cloths made of these bast fibres were hard, scratchy and not especially warm before being worn in

with regular usage over a long period of time.

Replacing bast fibre clothing with softer worn cotton fabrics was a longed for, welcome change. Small patches would be pieced together and padded for warm clothing or else a variety of garments would be made from the rags. These became workwear for fishermen and farmers in the countryside, people who could not afford clothes for sale. Initially the warp for those densely woven cloths was of bast fibre, as ramie or hemp, while later cotton became more accessible and began to be used as warp.

Worn, mainly indigo dyed textiles came via merchants from the towns. Much came on sea vessels via the Kitamaesen, a trade route down the west coast of Japan which had its heyday in the Edo period, (1603–1868). The cloths were sold directly in the harbours or else salesmen were paid to go to outlying villages. It could happen that families that had done piece spinning of the cotton yarn, sold to the cotton weaving mills in town, then had to buy the used clothing or rags for sale to weave garments for protection against rain and cold.

Sakiori weaves were made into different forms of apparel depending on requirements. ➤



**Below** Wisteria fibre weave.  
**Right** Wild wisteria

The fishermen's kimono-like garment had long sleeves to protect against the wind and cold while those working in the forest needed more freedom to move and wore a protective, slightly longer and sleeveless waistcoat, known as *sodenashi*.

In the northern parts of Japan where the winters are frequently long and cold with plenty of snow, sakiori garments were a huge change compared to the earlier, thinner, bast-woven garments. There, when it was at its coldest, several layers of sakiori woven and quilted garments could be piled on. Cords were used to hold the garments together. The

rag weft could be snipped, torn or cut with a knife. It was usually narrow. Noted in the San Francisco exhibition catalogue is a weave with a weft of 3 mm wide rag strips. Apart from garments woven in the kimono form, waistcoats and jackets were made as well as aprons, gloves, bags and the *futon*, a coverlet of finer rags.

The custom of wearing sakiori woven garments died out at the end of the 19th century, but reappeared during the 2nd World War when the Japanese had to live through another period of poverty. During this time people also began weaving obi (the wide piece of

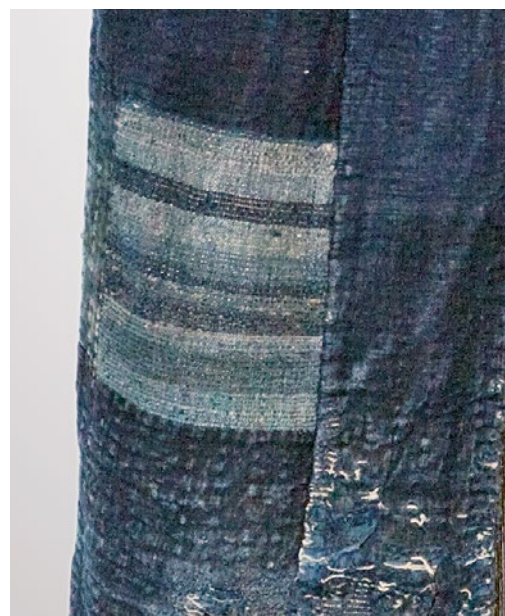
cloth holding the kimono in place) in sakiori.

Kei Kawasaki has a gallery in Kyoto where she shows and sells antique sakiori weaves. We were taken there by Fukabori and two textile artists from the Sakiori Association: Chiyoko Kumon and Junko Kobayashi. Indigo dyed antique cloths, variously sized, were laid out on the shelves, some finely striped, some with the wonderful resist dyework, *kasuri*, along with sakiori weaves and bundles of cloth woven in a variety of bast fibres.

We had just seen wild wisteria on a bus trip into the mountains and asked if there were any wisteria weaves.



Parts in this borotextile are pieces of Sakiori



Kawasaki took out a plain weave with shifting nuances reminiscent of our unbleached flax, which she rolled out on a black painted table. It was stiff and evenly beaten. The lamp cast its light over the weave; it glistened back. This narrow wisteria weave had been woven for making up into a garment.

Kawasaki then opened up one of her cupboards in which she keeps her textile collections.

Carefully, she unfolded a futon, a coverlet made like a patchwork quilt from pieces of cloth, some of which were small woven pieces, while others were remnants of a sakiori weave.

Recycling which was yet again recycled.

– For me, these textiles tell something of our amazing folk history. Each piece of cloth and each weft in a sakiori weave shows diverse patterns and ways of resist dyeing. You can't stop being amazed at the level of handwork skill here. And the care in making use of things until there was nothing left.

– The more worn and used the textiles are, the more they mean to me. This kimono was first woven. It was in all probability used a lot and worn most on the front where it has been patched with small pieces of cloth. It represents the ordinary person's clothing. People

who think silk kimonos were the traditional Japanese dress are not familiar with our history. Should you or I have worn a kimono one hundred years ago, it would have very likely been a sakiori weave, or at least in cotton, said Kawasaki.

**Above** Leno weave with indigo dyed rag strips.

**nedan** Rag sprang 1996. Winner of the Asahi Modern Craft Exhibition.

# Sakiori Weaving Contemporary Design



## Junko Kobayashi

1979 College of Comparative Culture, University of Tsukuba

1981 Joshibi University of Art and Design, Tokyo.

Selected to show work at the Japan Craft Design Association (JCDA).

1995 Solo show of sakiori weaves at SENBIKI-YA Gallery  
1996 Winner of the Asahi Modern Craft Exhibition

2000-2007 6 solo shows

2008 Selected artist for the KOKU-TEN show at The National Art Center in Tokyo.

"THE REASON I BECAME FASCINATED by sakiori is because of the amazing beauty radiating out of those cloths and because of the great scope there is to alter and revitalize this type of weaving using different techniques." After graduating in Comparative Culture Theory (theoretical studies), Kobayashi went on to do a textile oriented training at Joshibi University of Art and Design, where she learnt dyeing and weaving. She began her professional life by designing embroideries. For several years she worked in a handwork shop and wove functional cloths to be sold.

However, once she had caught sight of vintage sakiori weaves in the early 1990s, her interest turned solely to researching the potential in using fine rags of diverse qualities for weaving.

Kobayashi initially wanted to produce new qualities of sakiori weave. The old, coarse sakiori weaves are, to her, entrancing with their hand-spun, handwoven and indigo dyed cottons, but she wanted to create a fabric for contemporary use from newer and finer fabrics. Kobayashi's weaves incorporate rags from slightly rough cotton through to the very finest silk fabrics, and some new techniques.

Kobayashi brought out two weaves she made at the beginning of her career, one of which earned her first prize in a competition. It was woven



**Left** *Higaki*, (the name of a pattern to be found in Japanese wooden fencing), shown at VÄV08 in Leksand. 83 x 63 cm. Silk warp, silk fabric weft.

**Right** Kobayashi's cloths are made with silk fabric from antique kimonos, combining strips that are close in shade. One kimono is enough for about one metre.



in 1996, and made of cotton and silk in a variety of greens. The technique was sprang, whereby strips of rag hanging vertically from a stick and fastened below were crossed or interlaced from above, repeating the crossings below.

The second, a blue weave, was woven in leno, with spaced areas moving over the face like waves. This one was also made without a loom.

In recent years Kobayashi has continued to refine her saki-ori weaving, mostly staying with garment fabric. She collaborates with a professional clothes designer, Hiroko Yoshida, whose work experience includes seamstressing in the Itsuko Ueda Atelier, making garments for the Empress of Japan. As a team they offer their clientele unique, custom made garments and accessories.

Kobayashi also sells her cloth by the metre. Looking closer at one of her handwoven cloths reveals a multitude of nuances, which further off blend into one. The fabric in a kimono is enough for about one metre, which is why she combines many fabrics in close-lying shades to have enough for a new garment. To get the effect she is aiming at, she takes a lot of trouble finding the fabrics that will create the right blends. Kobayashi weaves kimonos out of any kind of fabric, top layers and linings. Sometimes she uses the reverse of a fabric to bring out other effects.

She showed us a book containing small swatches of fine saki-ori weaves with wefts of silk rags and a fine silk warp. Glued in alongside each little swatch is a sample of every fabric used in the weft. This has

become both a swatch folder of Kobayashi's own cloths, as well as an important record of vintage silk and cotton fabrics taken from antique kimonos.

To my question as to whether there are going to be enough antique kimonos for weaving saki-ori, she answered, smiling, in the affirmative. She told us her own grandmother always wore a kimono and her mother had several kimonos, but today hardly anybody wears them, at least for everyday wear. The old kimonos are sold in special shops and on the market.

– Besides, we are giving them new life, new value and I hope, cultivating an interest in and respect for our cultural heritage, both as regards the fabrics in the antique kimonos and also saki-ori weaving itself.

**Right** The first weaves were inspired by antique sakiori weaves. Two lengths, one red and one blue, have been assembled and formed.

# Beauty in Sakiori



## Chiyoko Kumon

Studied art at Joshibi University of Art and Design in Tokyo.

Achievements (selection):  
 1984 Grand Prix, Hyogo Prefecture Exhibition  
 1989 Grand Prix Craftsman competition  
 1990 Grand Prix Japan Craft Competition  
 1993 Grand Prix Asashi Contemporary Craft Exhibition  
 Member of:  
 Japan Craft Design Association, Nishinomiya Art and Culture Association and The Sakiori Association of Japan..

[chiyokokumon.com](http://chiyokokumon.com)

CHIYOKO KUMON was one of the speakers to address the gathering in Nagano at which the Sakiori Association was founded 1996. We met up with her in Kyoto at Maria Shobo Publishers, a company that produces art books including woven art. Chiyoko introduced herself as Choko.

– Like chocolate, she laughed. It is a bit easier to say.

There are three distinct parts to choko's sakiori work:

*Fabric Art* 1982–2001: These early sakiori weaves were decorative, comprising indigo dyed cotton rags. They explored diverse blues in play, sometimes as shaded transitions, sometimes with geometric forms woven in. Mostly these were in plain weave, the same technique as was used in the past for these weaves. In some there are little bits of inlay and pattern wefts reminiscent of our distorted weft. Already in these early weaves she was stretching the boundaries and adding, for example, some gleaming red weft. The red stands for energy and life and recurs in several of her later weaves made with silk.

*Kushu Kushu*, (registered in 2001). Kushu-Kushu is a Japanese concept indicating something soft, light, transparent. Choko gets her inspiration for the Kushu-Kushu weaves from trips to different countries where the landscape, towns and the people provide the stimuli. Those weaves are then photographed in different settings.



HIDEAKI MIYAKE

For these light and ethereal creations, Choko combines fine silk fabric, torn by her, silk yarns and sometimes silver or gold lamé thread. Overspun yarns in the stripes might be used to pull in some of these textile creations in different areas to help her shape something more billowy. The warp is frequently sleyed for crammed and spaced in a variety of stripe sequences. In the open areas she often uses leno to hold the weft in place. Choko brought out several shawls in this technique. She has also woven other garments such as waistcoats and jackets.

Her preference is for kimonos from the Edo period, 1603–1868, both for silk and for cot-



*Aggregation.* The whole piece is created out of small remnants. Most recently, the technique has been used for garments, shown for the first time in Paris in October 2008.



CHIYOKO KUMON

*Kushu Kushu*. Ethereal weaves with thick and fine wefts of silk rags and a fine silk warp, sleyed crammed and spaced. A vest and a shawl. The shawl is photographed in Uzbekistan.



ton. She said there are people weaving with new fabrics, but that defeats the purpose, in her view. Her aim is to use the traditional sakiori technique in textiles that open up new pathways for the 21st century. To give the fabrics a new life and value and make a new style sakiori. And to show the Japanese people the value in sakiori.

*Aggregation 1999*—: Aggregation implies uniting, putting together, creating a whole.

Choko has, all through her weaving life, saved all the small bits of sakiori cloth left over after making garments or accessories. The creations in the *Aggregation* collection each constitute a whole, made of these many small remnants. The method she uses is to lay out all the remnants on dissolvable fabric. She machine stitches a grid that holds all the pieces together. The dissolvable fabric is then removed in water.

At VÄV08 in Leksand, Choko show one

of her latest installations: a kimono form with a gleaming red ground. This meant, she explained, working on an artistic level to unite the different elements, endowing the piece with harmony and rhythm, giving significance to the whole as well as each component.

October 2008 Choko exhibited her sakiori work at the Japan Cultural Centre in Paris. This is where a garment in her *Aggregation* series was shown for the first time.



### Sakiori at VÄV08 in Leksand

Competitions are held at regular intervals by The Sakiori Association of Japan.

VM had the great honour to bring some of the competition entries, featured in the catalogues produced after each competition, over for the Weave Fair in Leksand..

1. Saguri, peasant kimono, all cotton. Typical of the Tsugaru region in Tohoku, by Ai Tanaka.
2. Suit in 100% silk by Mieko Kishine.
3. Sayogoromo, soft kimono for night wear, silk warp + vintage silk kimonos, by Sada Kobayashi.

**Right** One of five lengths woven completely in rags: cotton strips in the warp and silk strips for the weft, by Yasuko Himori.



### The Sakiori Association of Japan

- 1996 Initial meeting in Nagano of 120 people
  - 2002 Founding of the Association
  - 2002 Exhibition of new sakiori weaves at the Silklab Gallery in Tokyo. First juried show
  - 2004 Second big juried show of sakiori weaves by members held at The Kimono Museum in Tokyo.
  - 2005 Third Juried Show of Sakiori held at the Kimono Museum I Tokyo.
  - 2007 Fourth Juried Show of Sakiori held at The Ueno Royal Museum i Tokyo.
- Advisers of the Association are two; Professor Emiko Nakano of Tokyo Zokei Art University and a journalist of textile, Mr Hiroki Tomiyama.

Left, formerly chief director Mrs Shige Fukabori .  
Right, Present (2008) chief director Mr Kiyoshi Sasaki.

TEXT YOSHIKO IWAMOTO WADA

# Japanese Boro

A NEW WAY TO SEE BEAUTY

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THE TERM BORO BORO is also used to describe an extensively used and worn state of being. In the late 1960s, Kousaku Nukata, a painter, ceramist, and dentist in Osaka, Japan, was deeply moved as he observed a threadbare piece of cloth, carefully darned and mended. He was overcome by the keen perception that the kind of beauty and power he had sought with his paintings was “expressed through this humble, unpretentious, castaway rag.” It taught him a new way to see “beauty.”

UNABLE TO REFRAIN from acquiring boro, Nukata’s collection grew to nearly one thousand. He mounted a major exhibition at *ABC Gallery* in Osaka in 2002, and the response was tremendous. School teachers returned with their students in tow, a young man stood silently and wept, women stayed in the gallery for hours, and both young and old returned again and again. Viewers were fascinated by artful darns, patches, and reinforcement, and touched by the imprint of ancestral hands. The selfless labor of these un-known forebears transcended their material limitations to provide comfort and utility to the family, creating beauty that was never intended to be put on display. The exhibition led viewers into the personal inner life of common folks from the past.

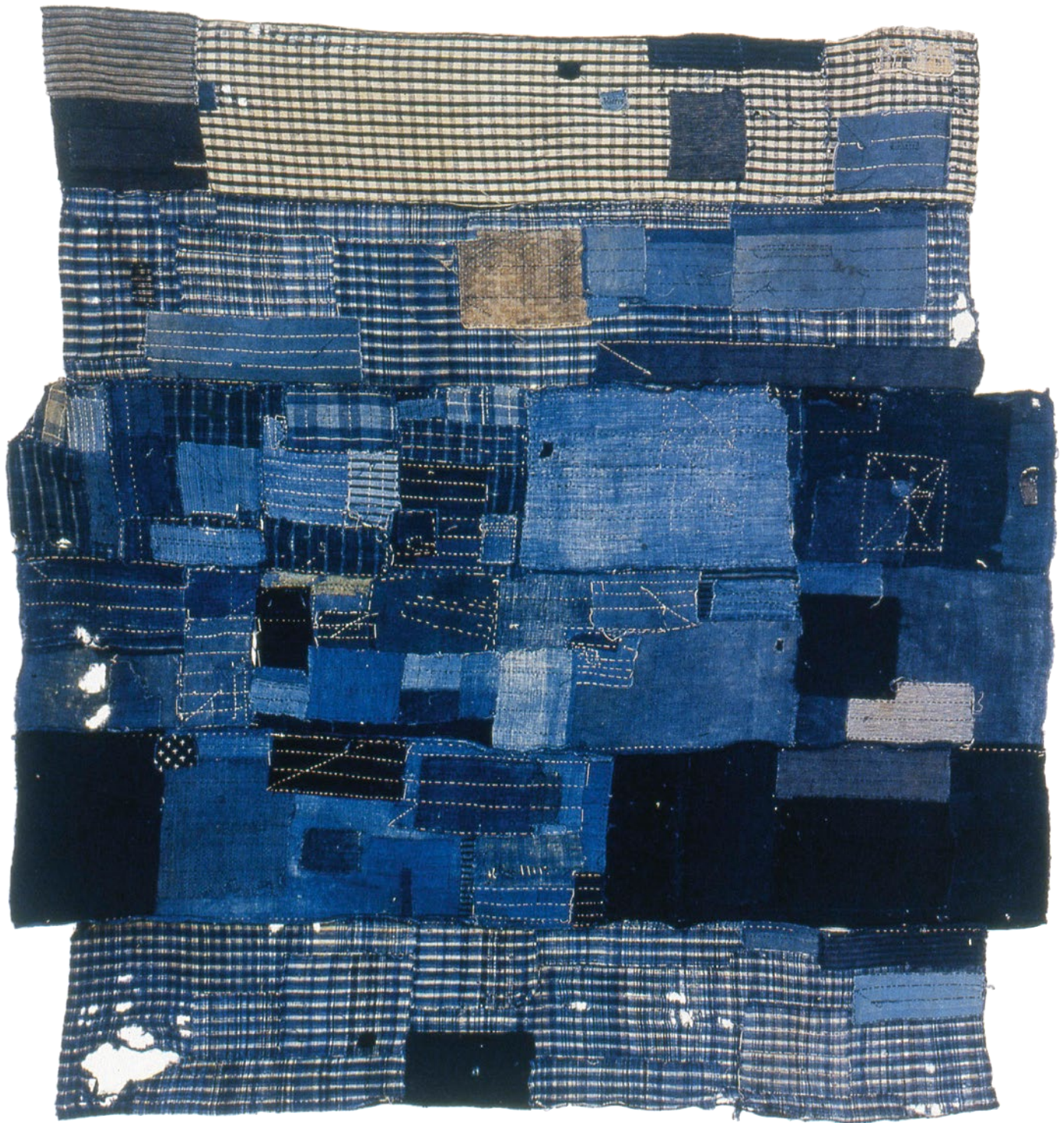
In 2004 I curated the first viewing outside Japan of Nukata’s boro collection at the Museum of Craft and Folk Art in San Francisco. The exhibition – *Ragged Beauty: Repair and Reuse, Past and Present* – also featured contemporary artwork and folk art objects that collectively explored the theme of repair and invited viewers to reassess the value of objects and consider the meaning of mending in our throwaway culture.

THE TEXTILES IN THE NUKATA COLLECTION provide a stunning example of Japanese vernacular aesthetics where there was no rule to follow other than to instinctively and selflessly uphold the basic purpose and function of the object through the

simple process of darning, using only the limited available materials. The darning process is utilitarian in function yet subtly elegant in its fascinating detail.

Each boro is an unassuming piece of artistic beauty: quiet but expressive and rich with history. At one time, these textiles were unblemished cotton fabrics, some serving as garments, others as futon bedding, furoshiki carrying cloth, and noren door curtains. Cotton cultivation was brought to Japan via China and firmly established by the seventeenth century in warmer regions where commoners could enjoy this new material as did their urban counterparts. Rag dealers collected functional cast-away textiles for a small price, and cotton rags became one of the commodities traded to rural folks in the colder regions. Worn from repeated use and further piecing and patching, these humble cloths are tangible remnants of stories lived by the common people: artisans, merchants, servants, farmers, fishermen, and lumberjacks in rural areas along the Sea of Japan and the northeastern Honshu Island until the mid-1950s.

NATURALLY, ONE WONDERS about the circumstances in which these boro came into existence. Was it poverty or merely frugality? For example, a piece of worn-out indigo textile dating over one hundred years old came from a futon bedding. It is sewn together with four panels of traditional narrow cloth and there are four patched holes visible on the surface. The reverse side of the same piece of textile reveals 147 small, rectangular patches and reinforcements in a wide variety of indigo fabric ranging in shades of blue stripes (*shima*) plaid (*koushi*) sometimes ikat (*kasuri*) and paste-resist print (*katazome*). These fragments must have come from a wide variety of sources. One wonders if they had been saved and collected in a household over generations of family members living and dying. Who pieced and patched this textile, stitching and darning it so thoroughly? And who was the recipient of such effort and care? Who used this covering night after night, to later pass it



## BORO

The Japanese term *boro* refers to objects that have been used, broken, and worn to tatters, then mended extensively and lovingly used far beyond their normal expected life cycle.



a younger generation. This transformation of material represents a visual record of the social and cultural history of common folks in Japan.

LIKE EARLY AMERICAN PATCHWORK quilts, these cloths embody cultural aesthetics, family histories, and transformation of materials while shedding light on social stratification, agriculture, economy, and trade. A majority of pieces are small fragments recycled from cotton clothing and other castaway rags brought by a ship called *Kitamae-bune*, literally “north coastal ship,” which traveled a commercial shipping route established during the Edo Period (17th to 19th centuries). Cloths were often transported from large urban cities in warmer regions and sold to residents of rural areas where severe winters and heavy snow made cotton cultivation impossible.

COTTON WAS PRECIOUS in such areas where the available local fibers included hemp, ramie, wisteria, and mulberry. These bast fibers, though strong, were not resistant to friction, not warm against the body, and laborious to produce. Owing to a harsh economy and long bitter winters, the inexpensive, warm cotton cloths were a treasure even though they were already worn, stained, and

faded. High demand for cotton led to the emergence of regional folk textile traditions such as *sakiori*, rag weaving where torn strips of castaway cotton cloth were woven with bast fiber warp yarns into a thick material and made into jackets and vests. Other forms of folk textile tradition, *sashiko* and *kogin*, were derived from stitching or quilting precious cotton yarns onto locally available bast fiber cloth or layers of worn cotton fabric, transforming them into sturdy textiles for work clothes and coverlets. Linking these traditions are two common threads: first, a respect for and ingenious use of scarce materials and goods and, second, the handwork visible in their design and manufacture. The careful and patient act of repairing or reinforcing mundane, well-worn objects was a foundation for personal relationships and a form of silent dialogue among family members. The repaired objects signify the unspoken relationships among the family members who worked on them and used them.

Subject to extensive repairs to maintain an element of functionality, the Japanese *boro* underwent significant transformation from their original form: kimono into a basic coverlet, futon into work clothes. Such transformation of goods, a common practice of economy in resources, resulted in a massive accumulation of time and memory for people who used the repaired and recycled objects.



Artifacts from the past link us to stories at once personal, social, and cultural. We are challenged to consider the perspectives of those involved in the process of an object's transformation: the creator, the mender, the owner, the community member, and the outsider. Boro may also inspire us to reexamine our notions of beauty, value, scarcity, and resources and to deepen our respect for labor and reuse as presented in both historical and present-day contexts.

Yoshiko Iwamoto Wada, originally from Japan, has since the 70s been based in Berkeley, California, USA. Wada introduced shibori to USA and is a prominent figure in American fibre art. She initiated the World Shibori Network and the Slow Fiber Studios. Yoshiko teaches at several universities in Asia and USA, inc. Berkeley University.

This article was adapted from the catalog she wrote for the exhibition she curated in 2004 at the Museum of Craft and Folk Art in San Francisco – *Ragged Beauty: Repair and Reuse, Past and Present*.





# RAGS TO RICHES

BORO FASHION

Checked, striped, plain indigo blue scraps of cloth, sewn together in a patchwork quilt ... fine thread drawing the whole thing together with the simplest of stitches, running stitch (in Japanese, sashiko). So how did these fabric creations then become the basis for exclusive jackets, cardigans, caps, trousers and T-shirts now, some 50–150 years later?

TATTERED, old, antique and semi-antique Japanese textiles in the form of domestic textiles, such as quilts and clothing, are commonly called *boro* (rags, something brittle falling to bits). Appreciated as collectables, both in Japan and not least in USA, the rus-

tic beauty of these textiles derives from the 'no waste – make it last' philosophy, known in Japanese as *mottainai*. The way they are used, however, and perhaps the perception of their value have changed: they have become appropriated by totally different social

groups. In fact, as exclusive fashion available from outlets for the Japanese brand label KUON (which roughly means 'eternity'). Does this say something about the age we live in, a time of such seemingly fast change on our one planet, with all the pressures ari-





sing through huge levels of textile consumption, so we can all potentially wear the same garb from Hawaii to Haparanda?

From being worn and used in the poorer parts, chiefly of northern Japan, these are goods that have for some time been sold online, exhibited in galleries and museums in Japan, such as the Amuse museum in Tokyo with Chuzaburo Tanaka's extensive boro collection, not to mention globally.

THE COMPANY KUON is, and has been since its inception at the end of 2015, run by Arata Fujiwara. He and designer Shinichiro Ishibashi form the nucleus of the enterprise. They themselves say KUON “charges up and reinvents the concept of vintage clothes”, free of nostalgia, and state that what they do is rooted in a social awareness. The exclusive, in many cases unique, garments in their three luxury class collections to date (spring/summer 2016, autumn/winter 2016, spring/summer 2017) comprise some twenty garments of various kinds, which have been stitched in part from boro textiles repaired and pieced together with sashiko by twenty or so women in the town of Otsuchi-cho, Iwate prefecture, lying in the north-eastern part of the Tohoku region in north Japan. Tohoku was hit very hard by the earthquake on March 11, 2011, when the Fukushima nuclear disaster occurred. Approximately 10% of the population of Otsuchi-cho went missing or died as a result of the earthquake. Fujiwara sees KUON's

stitching assignments given to the women there as one way of honouring the textile history of this region, historically marked by poverty. Some of the seamstresses themselves grew up with boro textiles.

The latest collection (spring/summer 2017) includes jackets made of recycled cloth with layers bonded by the geometrically worked sashiko stitching, as well as indigo dyed T-shirts.

DURING A RECENT INTERVIEW I did with KUON's Arata Fujiwara and the company rep in New York, Sayaka Toyama, Fujiwara made reference to the renowned Soetsu (Muneyoshi) Yanagi (1889-1961), founder of the mingei folk art movement in Japan, the influence of which has spread round the world since the 1920s. Fujiwara mentioned that he too has been influenced by Yanagi's perception of applied art and its inherent beauty, created by anonymous makers in times gone by, something Yanagi called “the beauty of usage”.

To me, aspects of the underlying philosophy in the tea ceremony (wabi-sabi: rustic beauty, patina along with the concept of shibui: a form of simple, inconspicuous beauty) also have certain connections with the KUON design aesthetic.

KUON is not the only company to have been inspired by Japanese antique and historic textile heritage. *Kapital* (under the direction of Shunji Ohashi) for example. KUON's

target group is typically men with fashion interests, specifically those drawn to vintage garments and so called heritage clothing (“classic” garments). This global network is after a unique style, with the focus on quality, and purchases of select garments are made with studied dedication or by following up vintage trails. Interest in vintage is especially strong in Japan, expressed in several ways and not least amongst men. KUON now has retail outlets in several towns in Japan as well as in Hong Kong, Beijing and New York.

In some ways, it could be said that the value of these textiles has gone full circle. Historically, cotton fabric was costly luxury for the poorest in the north, which led to the practice of painstaking patching and mending, also an expression of pride, to the luxury of today in the KUON collections. We can to some extent get a sense for the way the value of an object shifts and acquires a different status when considering lived frugality and poverty in Swedish cultural history. Swedish rustic artefacts, no longer in use, are bought at auctions, hung on the wall to serve as interior décor style details, appreciated for the beautiful patina achieved through prolonged usage.

**Petra Holmberg** is an art historian and curator for Japan at the Swedish National Museums of World Culture and is based mainly at the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm. Her remit extends to textiles, costume attire and fashion with Far Eastern origins. She has a long-standing interest in visual arts and global fashion culture.



## SAKIORI ON A FRAME

Sakiori is Japanese for weaving with rags. Saki = tear or rip; ori = weaving. The warp yarn is generally made of hemp or some bastfibre, or later cotton, while the weft consists of fine rag strips of cotton. When we visited Japan we saw also that rag strips can be found in both warp and weft.

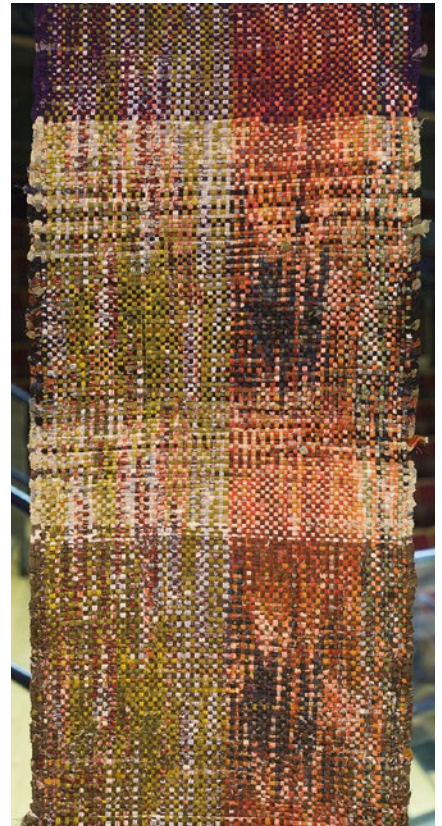
### YOU NEED:

ca 1 cm wide rag strips  
Tapestry bobbin  
Frame.

Two well loved shirts were cut into rag strips and interlaced into one compact plain weave. Keep weaving to the very end, as close as you can. Unscrew the frame and loosen the weft somewhat into loops on each side of the weave to serve as selvages. The narrow, smaller weave turned into a teapot mat.



A woven piece and edges with sashiko.



Sakiori with silk rags, Yasuko Himori.

