

Multilingual Electronic Newsletter

多言語メールマガジン

かごしま南の風便り

Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings



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Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Column

● **Traditional Indigo Dyeing: The Charm of Japan Blue** ●

- By Yimin Wong (CIR from Singapore)

Do you know that you can try your hand at the traditional art of indigo dyeing here in Kagoshima?

Today, let's take a trip down to Minamisatsuma, where a little studio called Aizomeya is still keeping this traditional art alive.

What is traditional indigo dyeing?

Known as *aizome* in Japanese, it is a 100% natural and chemical-free process that is one of Japan's traditional dyeing techniques.

A series of intricate fermentation processes result in a dye that produces a beautifully vivid and long-lasting deep indigo blue, and has been renowned worldwide as 'Japan Blue'. In fact, it can even be described as the symbolic colour of Japan.

Indigo is said to be one of the oldest plant dyes in existence, and the history of it in Japan dates back a long way. However, it was in the Edo period (1603-1868) where it rose to prominence due to the increase in cotton clothing that takes indigo dye well, and as a result became widely popular among the masses.

Foreign people who visited Japan at that time thought of the rich deep hue as a symbol of Japan, and the name 'Japan Blue' was coined by a visiting British scholar in the 1870s.

Nowadays, chemical dye is used for many indigo products instead.

But thanks to the dedicated craftsmen who have inherited and passed down the traditions and techniques throughout the years, this traditional craft has been kept alive and going strong even today.



The studio Aizomeya



Within the studio

Aizomeya



The studio surrounded by lush nature

Surrounded by lush mountains, natural scenery and fresh air, the studio Aizomeya offers an engaging indigo dyeing experience, as well as an adjoining store selling clothing and accessories dyed in the striking indigo blue.

The master, Mr. Kamizono, has over 30 years of experience and carefully guided us throughout.

The Dyeing Experience

Firstly, he introduces us to the large vats of fermenting dye around the studio, and gives a brief introduction of the fermentation process and raw materials used.

I also learnt that unlike what I had imagined, the fermented dye liquid is actually alive and full of fickle-minded microorganisms that has to be fed, nurtured, and has a direct impact on the final colour outcome. Even with the same raw materials, the slight variations in each vat can actually result in different hues of blue!

He then explains the various techniques such as *Danzome* (gradation dip-dyeing) and *Shiborizome* (tie-dyeing), and has us decide on our desired pattern and item (handkerchief, bandana or scarf).



Dye vats



Raw materials

After deciding on a scarf with a gradation pattern, I started off carefully dyeing the entire base first, and then gradually tying off a section and repeatedly dipping the rest of the fabric thereafter.

In between dips, the fabric is hung to air-dry, and this is continued until the desired shade and pattern is achieved.

At this point, the colour is a deep green. Once satisfied with the shade, the fabric is thoroughly washed and then dried.

It is then that we could see the final fruits of our labour, and the beautiful blues are revealed!



Dipping the fabric into the dye



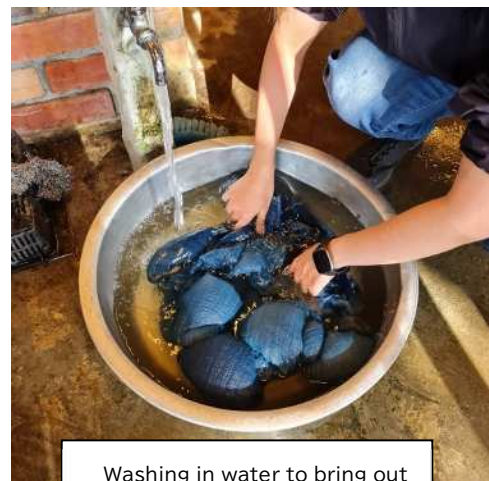
Soaking the fabric in dye



A deep green colour while air-drying
in between dips



My design inspired from Sakurajima's
silhouette is completed!



Washing in water to bring out
the final blue colour

Thoughts

As I have always enjoyed handicrafts, it was a very enjoyable experience to learn about the ancient craft of traditional indigo dyeing through this hands-on experience. Thanks to Mr. Kamizono, the workshop was both very fun and educational!!

My appreciation for how much goes into the production of indigo dye and its products has only risen as I learned about and experienced this incredible process.

Trying my hand at it really strikes home how challenging the entire process is. The delicate fermentation process, the labour-intensive dyeing process, and the design craftsmanship; each step is indeed a labour of love!

The fact that this is also a traditional artform passed down through generations makes this really meaningful too.

If you're looking to get an authentic taste of traditional Japanese craftsmanship and an afternoon of wonderfully-enriching experiences, look no further than Aizomeya and its all-natural indigo dyeing experience!



Our dyed fabrics drying in the natural sunlight

藍染屋 | aizomeya 

Aizomeya

Address: 7764-1 Kinpocho Daizaka,
Minamisatsuma, Kagoshima
899-3402

Tel: 0993-78-2897

Website: <https://aizomeya.work/>



Dye master Mr. Kamizono together with our completed pieces

The Governor's Activities

● 27th March: The Governor greeted visitors and participated in a ceremony to commemorate the launch of charter flights by Vietnam Airlines●

To coincide with the launch of Vietnam Airlines' charter flights, the Governor participated in a commemorative ceremony and greeted visitors arriving in Kagoshima.

The charter flights in question were the first to operate in approximately five years (since October 2019), and for the first time they were provided through a cooperation agreement with Vietnam Airlines and HIS.

At the commemorative ceremony, the Governor saw off guests departing from Kagoshima for Vietnam.

Then, he greeted tourists from Vietnam arriving in Kagoshima, welcoming their arrival and handing out novelty items.

Based on the cooperation agreement and in anticipation of establishing a regular service in future, we will continue to work actively on the provision of a number of charter flights and on joint promotion of the route in both Kagoshima and Vietnam in the new fiscal year.

Governor SHIOTA shaking hands with Mr YADA Motoshi, CEO of HIS, and Mr NGO Sy Anh, General Manager (Japan), Vietnam Airlines.



Governor SHIOTA welcoming travelers from Vietnam to Kagoshima.

Governor SHIOTA giving his address.



Kagoshima's International Relations

● 16th February: Completion Ceremony and Debriefing Presentations for the FY2023 Kagoshima Overseas Technical Trainee and Prefectural Scholarship Student Programmes ●

Every year, Kagoshima Prefecture hosts a number of Overseas Technical Trainees from developing nations, who are able to contribute to the development and prosperity of their home countries. Alongside this, a number of individuals are selected from among the descendants of people who emigrated from Kagoshima to other countries, and are hosted by the prefecture as Prefectural Scholarship Students who can contribute to strengthening relations between Kagoshima and their home countries.

On 16th February 2024, debriefing presentations and a completion ceremony were held at the Prefectural Office for the three Overseas Technical Trainees (from Brazil, Paraguay and China) and three Prefectural Scholarship Students (from Brazil and Peru) that participated in the FY2023 programmes.

At the completion ceremony, programme participants were given completion certificates and commemorative gifts by Vice-Governor Fujimoto. This was followed by a debriefing session, during which each technical trainee and each scholarship student delivered presentations about their daily lives in Kagoshima and what they had learned at their training institute or university.

The event was attended by the many people who had supported the participants, including representatives from each host institute and university, as well as the accommodation facilities and homestay families.

As they return home, we look forward to seeing the participants use the skills, knowledge and experience they gained here to contribute to the development of their home countries, all while they continue to forge stronger bonds between their countries and Kagoshima!



◀ The participants with the people that supported them

Speeches from the Prefectural Scholarship Students ▶



◀ Speeches from the Overseas Technical Trainees

What's New in Kagoshima?

●17th March: The 2024 Kagoshima Cooperation Volunteers Festival●



▲ The Stage Event



▲ Booths run by Local Revitalization Cooperation Volunteers



▲ Visitors Gathered in the Gym



▲ Workshop

The 2024 Kagoshima Cooperation Volunteers Festival was held on 17th March at the Takakuma Exchange Promotion Center in Kanoya City, organized by the Kagoshima Cooperation Volunteers Festival Executive Committee (Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Kagoshima Prefecture Alumni Association).

The festival allows prefectural citizens to feel closer to JICA Overseas Cooperation Volunteers and Local Revitalization Cooperation Volunteers, and aims to have visitors deepen their understanding of international cooperation and multiculturalism, as well as the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and local redevelopment.

On the day, in spite of the unfortunate weather, the venue was bustling with families, students and many other visitors, enjoying booths showcasing delicious dishes and regional specialty products from around the world, as well as fun stage events and workshops in which participants could make their own masks and try on national costumes from a range of different countries. At the end of the festival a raffle was held, and with luxurious prizes up for grabs including a globe, an assortment of specialty products, and for 1st prize, a JTB travel coupon, the excitement in the venue was palpable!



Kagoshima Prefectural Office Website: <http://www.pref.kagoshima.jp/>

Editor's Note (International Affairs Division, Department of Tourism, Culture and Sports, Kagoshima Prefectural Government)

Hello, everyone! Well, spring has now been and gone, and the seasons seem to be changing at dizzying speed, with the rainy season almost upon us and summer soon to follow. How have you all been?

It's been around 2 months since the start of the new fiscal year, and I'm sure some of our readers will be feeling a little weary from their new environments and lifestyles. It's a time when we want to find our own ways to rejuvenate ourselves and to brighten up our routines.

That's all for now – please look forward to our next issue!

The Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings Bulletin Board is looking for the following Kagoshima-related content!

☆Kagoshima Photo Gallery

We invite people to send us photos that remind them of Kagoshima, or photos of Kagoshima that they have seen overseas. Please also attach a brief description along with the photo. (E.g., a mountain of volcanic ash bags.)

☆Kagoshima Lifestyle Know-How

We invite people to share with us information related to life in Kagoshima. (E.g., delicious ways to enjoy fried fish cakes, how to deal with volcanic ash, etc.)

We also welcome any other information that you would like to share with our readers.

▲▽▲▽ **Inquiries** ▲▽▲▽

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