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Mottainai: The old spirit of
making things renewed

FROM THE EDITOR

By YOSHIKUNI SHIRAI / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

One of the words that Japanese people often use is “*mottainai*.” It describes the sense of regret you get when you lose or discard something without having made the most of its inherent value. In English, the term “wasteful” may be the closest to it in meaning, but doesn’t quite do it justice.

Records show the word “*mottainai*” was used during the Muromachi Period, about 500 to 600 years ago. It is linked with the profound feelings of respect, affection and awe that Japa-

nese life has long nurtured in relation to both the natural world and inanimate objects. From those feelings stem the idea that wastefulness occasions pain or even divine punishment.

Perhaps you have heard of Japan’s “needle memorial services”? These are a traditional event in which old or broken sewing needles are presented at shrines and temples for dedication. The custom, which is said to have been held since the Heian Period about 1,200 years ago, demonstrates the Japanese way of dealing with even

human-made tools with a sense of respect, affection, and awe.

In the present day, as we are encouraged to reduce, reuse and recycle, it would appear that we modern people, the Japanese included, lack respect for both the natural world and inanimate objects. Without feelings of gratitude and affection for those things, we won’t be able to maintain sustainable lives. In this special feature, we examine the deeply rooted concept of *mottainai* and think about what lessons it might hold for our futures.

「MOTTAINAI」という言葉があります。これは「物が本来持っている、能力や使い道などを活かし切らずに失うのは、無駄にしてしまって惜しい」という意味で使われます。これを英語に置き換えると、「wasteful」が一番その意味に近いかもしれませんが、でも単に「無駄」とか「浪費」ということだけではありません。無駄にしてしまって心が痛む、浪費をしたらバチが当たるといった、日本人が生活の中で長年育んできた、自然や物に対する「敬意」や「慈しみ」、

「畏れ」などのニュアンスを含んでいます。消費削減 (reduce)、再利用 (reuse)、再使用 (recycle) が特に叫ばれる今の時代ですが、日本人も含め、私たち現代人に足りないのは、自然や物に対する尊敬の念 (respect) ではないでしょうか。このリスペクトの気持ち、愛情の心がなく、サステイナブルな生活は上手く続けていけません。今回は日本文化の中に根づく「MOTTAINAI」の実例を見ながら、私たちの生活を考えてみたいと思います。



1 Kimono

【着物】

Kimono couldn’t be washed repeatedly, so daily care was important. Measures to make them last included removing small stains using hot water and hanging them out to dry on humid days.

ILLUSTRATIONS: ROMI WATANABE



Feature MOTTAINAI

KIMONO

Edo Period lessons on a truly circular economy

By ARINA TSUKADA

YUKO TANAKA

Yuko Tanaka, a researcher into Edo culture, was born in 1952. She became a professor in the Faculty of Sociology at Hosei University, then was Hosei’s president from 2014 to 2021. She is currently a specially appointed professor at the school’s Research Center for Edo-Tokyo Studies. She is the author of “Edo’s Imagination” and other works.

PHOTOS: KOUTAROU WASHIZAKI



● Summary

江戸の暮らしに学ぶ
サーキュラーエコノミー

江戸時代までの日本社会において、生活ゴミはほとんど出なかったという。いまなら廃棄されてしまう生活道具や衣服も、当時は何度も補修して使い続け、ときには形を変えてリユースを繰り返していた。

日本でこうした文化が定着した背景を知るべく、江戸文化研究者の田中優子に話を聞いた。田中は着物を例

に、江戸時代のリサイクルシステムを説明する。「使えなくなった着物は、古着に出すこともあれば、子供の着物や布団カバー、モノを持ち運ぶ時に用いる風呂敷などにつくり直して使っていました。最終的にぼろぼろになった布は、かまどで燃やして灰にします。灰は染め物の原料や肥料などに転用できるため、「灰屋」

という専門のリサイクル業者がいたと田中は語る。「ほかにも鍋や下駄、キセルなどの道具には、それぞれ作り手の職人以外に、壊れた部分を修理する専門の職人がいました。現代のような生産と消費を繰り返すだけのサイクルではなく、ゴミを利用可能なものへと再構築する循環のシステムが成立していたのです」。



日本語全文はこちらから



Tanaka enjoys wearing her mother's old kimono. She has redyed stripes and made many other adjustments over time.

2 Reuse 【再利用】

Old kimono were repurposed by unstitching the pieces of fabric and making them into futon covers, accessory cases and *furoshiki* cloths.



The Japanese society of 150 years ago generated almost no household waste. Tools and clothes that we now discard were repaired and reused over and over, sometimes being reshaped or repurposed along the way. It was all part of a belief that it is a shame to throw away things that can still be used — a belief expressed by the term “*mottainai*.”

The Kenyan environmental activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai has spoken of being impressed by the term when he learned about it during a visit to Japan in 2005 for an event related to the Kyoto Protocol. Maathai thought the word included not only the viewpoint of recycling and reuse but also of respect for nature and things, and he believed “*mottainai*” should be made a universal term.

So how did this unique word take root in Japan? To find out, we talked to Yuko Tanaka, a researcher on the culture and lifestyles of the Edo Period (the 17th to late 19th centuries). The interview was at the International House of Japan in Tokyo's Roppongi area, which was built in 1955 to facilitate cultural exchange with a donation from the Rockefeller Foundation and is located on land where a feudal lord's mansion stood until the 19th

century. Its very rare architecture was jointly created by three leading architects: Kunio Maekawa, Junzo Sakakura and Junzo Yoshimura. The building was almost demolished around 2004 due to deterioration and financial difficulties, but after intervention by various stakeholders was renovated and remains lovingly used. You could say the building itself provides a snapshot of Japan's *mottainai* spirit.

“Before industrialization, it was natural that everything in our daily lives would be used and reused. That's because the resources available were limited, and because people thought about how to achieve a balance between resources and production within the natural cycle of a year,” Tanaka explained.

Using kimono as an example, Tanaka outlined the recycling customs of the Edo Period. “When you wear a kimono, the most important thing is to take care of it. For example, the kimono I am wearing today was my mother's, and the parts of the fabric that had become old I have re-dyed with new stripes. The obi is more than 70 years old, and so I believe that there are no longer any specialists with the skills to repair the fraying. But back a long time ago, when people used to wear kimono on a daily basis, they were ca-

pable of unstitching the pieces of fabric, washing them separately and then restitching them at home. Eventually, kimonos that couldn't be used anymore were either repurposed as secondhand clothes or remade into children's kimonos, futon covers or *furoshiki* cloths for carrying things. And in the very end, the final ragged cloth was burned in a *kamado* stove to ash. And then there was a specialist ‘ash shop’ where you could take the ash, which could be used in dyeing or fertilizer.”

Before World War II, Tanaka explained, there were many specialized repair shops and recyclers like the ash shops. “For tools such as pots, clogs and pipes, there were craftsmen who specialized in repairing broken parts, in addition to the craftsmen who actually made them. And paper was handmade using plant fiber. There were even craftsman who broke down old paper and reused the fibers. So instead of just repeating the flow of resources from production to consumption, as we do today, there was a circular system that turned waste products into something usable.”

So is it possible to restore the circular economy that existed during the Edo Period in contemporary society? Tanaka believes it would require strong will from all of us.

“Now that we depend so much on imports, there is a limit to how much we can address sustainability issues on a country or regional basis. In the past, we relied solely on the resources available in a particular region, but since the time of colonization, when people began seizing resources from other nations, mankind has deviated from the cycles of production that had supported them for hundreds of years. We have continued to seek more and more energy and resources. Nowadays it is easy to become dispirited or worried that these changes are irreversible. But still, there are things we can do as consumers, like not buy so many things and instead use each and every one of our tools more thoroughly. It is important to demonstrate the intention to continue using something. I think, as well, these days we can repurpose old kimono fabric into contemporary dresses without being overly hamstrung by tradition. This is the kind of wisdom that will lay the foundation for the society of the future.”

3 Ash 【灰】

Old cloth that could no longer be used was burned to ash in a *kamado* stove. Until 100 years ago, every house had a *kamado*, so most small garbage, including food scraps, was burned.



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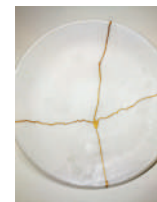


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COVER PHOTO



“*Kintsugi*,” is the art of repairing broken ceramics while imbuing them with new aesthetic value. Pottery or porcelain shards are glued together with *urushi* lacquer. Rather than hide the cracks, they are accentuated with gold or other metal powders.

COURTESY: KINTSUGI STUDIO RIUM

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Okisato Nagata is the planning director and CEO of Timeless LLC and representative of Kintsugi Workshop Rium. Nagata handles a range of reconstruction and planning work as needed, from traditional crafts to cutting-edge technology.

COURTESY: KINTSUGI STUDIO RIUM

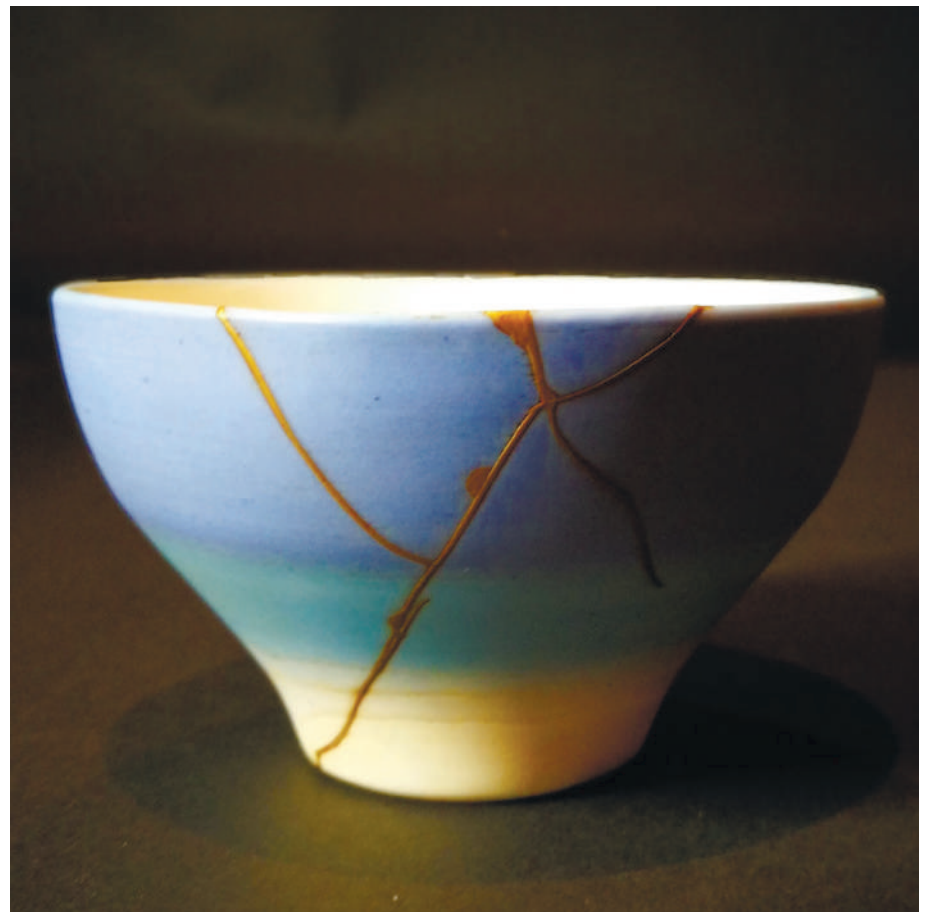


Feature **MOTTAINAI**

KINTSUGI

Kintsugi, the art of fixing ceramics with lacquer

By KOHEI HARUGUCHI



The development of new types of urushi has meant that *kintsugi* can now be used to repair not only traditional ceramics, but glass too. The repair is completed with the application of gold powder along the joint.
COURTESY: KINTSUGI STUDIO RIUM

When a ceramic bowl or vessel breaks, what if you could not only repair it, but imbue it with new aesthetic value? *Kintsugi*, which has a history of more than 400 years in Japan, is a technique of repairing damaged ceramics by which the broken pieces are glued together using lacquer and then decorated with metal powder such as gold. In recent years, it has been gaining attention as a traditional Japanese craft that marries restoration and decoration.

Kintsugi first emerged around the 16th century. As Japan's tea ceremony culture spread, it developed as a method of repairing expensive utensils. "With *kintsugi*, you are not only repairing broken objects, but also refining them, highlighting through decoration the cracks that were created by chance," explained Okisato Nagata, who founded *Kintsugi Workshop Rium* in 2016. "I think *kintsugi* is an expression of Japanese culture's ability to appreciate 'wounds,' to see broken things as having value and finding beauty in a randomly created fracture."

To repair something with *kintsugi*, the cracks are first coated with a plant resin called *urushi* (lacquer), then bonded together using a glue made from *urushi*, flour and water. The object is dried in humid air for about one month, then polished and re-coated with *urushi* several times. Finally, gold powder is applied over the crack and a thin coat of *urushi* is applied. While *Rium* employs three full-time craftspeople focused solely on these

tasks, in recent years, other businesses have started recommending the use of more time-efficient synthetic adhesives.

The reason for this shift is a general decline in Japan's *urushi* industry. Most *urushi* used in Japan these days is imported from China, with less than 5% made domestically. Yet the history of lacquer in Japan is ancient — grave goods made with *urushi* have been excavated from 9,000-year-old sites. *Urushi*, which can be used in many ways, including as paint, adhesive and waterproofing, has long been loved as a material suitable for daily goods such as bowls and dishes. In order to stem the decline in domestic production, the Agency for Cultural Affairs has since 2015 encouraged the use of domestic *urushi* where possible when repairing buildings of national major cultural properties such as temples and shrines.

"Since the Agency for Cultural Affairs' request, demand for *urushi* has risen considerably," Nagata said. "But on the other hand, the number of people capable of *urushi kaki*, the technique of actually collecting natural *urushi*, has decreased, and now only a few remain. Because only a small amount of *urushi* is used in *kintsugi*, you could say it plays a role in spreading *urushi* culture without overburdening its producers."

Nagata explained that since *kintsugi* requires considerable skill, the number of craftspeople specializing in it has declined significantly.

"I set up the *kintsugi* workshop be-



With *kintsugi*, even if you have lost a piece of a broken bowl or dish, you can still repair it by filling the gap with lacquer and letting it harden. COURTESY: KINTSUGI STUDIO RIUM

cause I felt that to achieve a sustainable life you need to do more than just make and use things. You need to be able to 'continue to use' things," Nagata said. "With recent new technological developments, a type of *urushi* that works with glass has been achieved, making it pos-

sible to repair expensive wine glasses as well as ceramics. Tableware brands exist all over the world. *Kintsugi*, the unique Japanese culture of making beautiful repairs and then continuing to use an object even after it has been damaged, is something I want to take to the world."

● Summary

壊れた器を洗練させる
伝統工芸「金継ぎ」

壊れた器を修復し、新たな美的価値を付与する。日本で四百年以上の歴史を持つ「金継ぎ」は、器の破損部分を漆で接着し、金粉で装飾して仕上げる修復技法だ。修復と装飾が一体化した日本特有の伝統工芸として、近年再び注目を集めるようになってきている。「壊れた器を修理するだけでなく、偶然できた割れ目

に美しい装飾を施し洗練させる技法が金継ぎです。欠損した形状の偶然性にも美的価値を見出す日本の精神文化が金継ぎにはあると思います。2016年に金継ぎ専門の工房「リウム」を創業した永田宙郷氏はそう語る。「これからのサステナブルな暮らしには、『つくる』と『使う』以外に、『使い続ける』という第3の選択肢が

改めて必要になると感じます。最近ではガラス用の漆剤も開発され、陶磁器以外に高価なワイングラスなども修復することが可能になっています。食器のブランドは世界中に存在しますが、美しく修復して使い続けるという金継ぎのような日本固有の文化をこれからもアピールしていきたいですね。



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[Top] Although most waterwheels are located outside, the Baba Mills wheel is inside to extend its life. [Bottom] The incense is made from natural Japanese cedar needles and the leaves of *tabunoki* (bay) trees, with no artificial scents or colors added. It is popular both for religious use and as a relaxing aromatherapy product.



In the Fukuoka Prefecture city of Yame, a thriving forestry industry produces *sugi* cedar lumber for construction, and for over a century, local workshops have been turning the discarded cedar needles into a kind of incense called *senko*. Used widely in Buddhist countries, *senko* is made by kneading wood powder with water, molding it into sticks, and drying them. In Japan, where Buddhism has long been practiced, smoke rising from *senko* lit as an offering at graves and family altars is a familiar sight.

Senko production in Yame peaked between 1900 and 1970, when over 40 incense workshops operated in the city. Water wheels powered the pulverization of wood in that era, and many mills remain in the districts where workshops were clustered. However, with the influx of cheap imported wood powder in the late 1970s, the local *senko* industry steadily declined, and today only four workshops remain. Of those, only Baba Mill, run by Takeru Baba, still produces traditional *senko* using natural energy.

Ever since Baba Mill was founded in 1918, wooden water wheels have provided energy, but the huge wheels, measuring 5½ meters across, have a life span of only around 25 years. Many waterwheels were lost with the rise of electric-powered workshops and the general decline of the industry, but Baba resisted the trend. In 2008, after three years of work, he finished building a new waterwheel. “The remote mountain districts of Yame have no tourism resources,” he said. “By showing people how we’ve been making *senko* all these years using only the natural energy from water wheels, I wanted to teach the younger generation about Yame’s tradition of craftsmanship.”

Baba makes his incense exclusively from the needles of cedars grown in Yame



Forest covers 60% of Yame, once home to a thriving industry that made incense from branches discarded by the lumber industry.

and the leaves of a type of bay tree called *tabunoki*. To collect the cedar needles, he bundles branches left in the mountains after lumber companies fell trees, transports them back to his warehouse and lets them dry there for two to three months. He then pounds the needles into a powder using energy from the water wheel. Because the water wheel must be adjusted according to the level of the river, its use requires a constant engagement with the natural world. But while *senko* production is extremely labor-intensive, Baba says more and more tourists are taking an interest in the traditional mill, and tour groups have even begun stopping by the workshop. In recent years, he says, his incense has also become popular among foreign customers as a completely natural aromatherapy product.

“These days, most *senko* on the market is made with artificial fragrance, so people don’t have a chance to experience natural scents,” he reflected. “As I walk through the mountains each day, I encounter many aromas. Eventually, I’d like to try making *senko* that brings people seasonal smells like loquat in spring and fragrant olive in fall.”



Incense made from 100% natural ingredients produced in Yame.

Feature **MOTTAINAI**

INCENSE

Crafting incense from discarded cedar needles

By KOHEI HARUGUCHI

Takeru Baba runs his family business, Baba Mill, which has been making incense since 1918. Since 2008, he has been using natural energy from a waterwheel he built himself to pound ingredients the traditional way.

PHOTOS: KOICHIRO FUJIMOTO

● Summary

廃棄される杉の葉から生まれた線香

福岡県八女市。林業が盛んなこの地域で、製材時に破棄される杉の葉を原料とする線香づくりが100年以上前から行われてきた。最盛期は明治末期から昭和中期、当時は40軒以上の線香工場があり、製粉作業には水車が主な動力として用いられ、地域内にはたくさんの水車場があったという。しかし安価な輸入粉が増えたことで徐々

に線香産業は衰退。そんな中、いまま自然エネルギーを用いた伝統的な線香づくりに取り組んでいるのが馬場猛氏の率いる「馬場水車場」だ。

「馬場水車場」は1918年の創業以来、木製水車による線香づくりを続けてきた。水車は川の水量に応じて調整が必要のため、水車を稼働させる間は常に自然と向き合

わなければならない。膨大な作業を要する線香づくりだが、伝統的な水車場の景色に関心を持った観光客が徐々に増え、団体のツアー客も訪れるようになったという。「八女の山奥は観光資源がない地域。水車を利用して線香をつくってきた八女の文化をいまの若い人たちに伝えていきたい」と馬場氏は語る。



日本語全文はこちら



Not-for-profit organizes beach cleanups, citizen science/art, sailing

SEGO Initiative creates connections in Kanagawa

By LOUISE GEORGE KITTAKA CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Serendipity flows like a current through Alana Bonzi's life, gently leading the environmentalist and educator to places and people where she feels at home. Her love for nature and a desire to create connections within her community are reflected in the SEGO Initiative, the not-for-profit she founded with her husband, Michel, in the coastal Kanagawa city of Fujisawa.

Like many who came to Japan in the 1990s, Bonzi initially arrived on the JET Programme. She was accompanied by Michel, her fiancé at the time, who taught French privately while Bonzi was working as an English teacher. Hoping to be assigned to a warmer area of Japan and in close proximity to nature, the couple were delighted to find themselves in the city of Izumi in Kagoshima, which is known for hosting more than 10,000 cranes each winter.

"We got married while we were in Izumi but had to travel to Osaka for the required interviews with our respective embassies — it was a little bit more complicated with two foreigners," Bonzi recalled with a smile. "One thing led to another, and we found our path here in Japan."

Loving where you live

The next step on their Japanese journey led to Fujisawa when Bonzi started a new position lecturing on corporate social responsibility (CSR) at Keio University in 2001. They subsequently opened their own language school and purchased a house. "We put down roots and wanted to give something back. There was a foreign community there, and we wanted to connect them with the local Japanese community," she explained.

In the spirit of "love where you live," the couple came up with the Fujisawa Beach Cleaning Project. Since the principle of cleaning a beach needs little explanation, Bonzi says it was an ideal way to bring people of various backgrounds and ages together for cleanups twice a year, in the spring and the autumn.

With her academic background in CSR, as well as practical experience gleaned

from her work in government and a short-term assignment as the interim director of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Bonzi pondered how to take her business acumen and apply it to these volunteer activities.

The encouragement of corporate sponsors of the Fujisawa Beach Clean was a very important factor behind the decision to take the next step. "In Fujisawa, you can go surfing in the morning and then take the train to work. So, how do you bring that engagement from the corporate office back to this local area?" she said.

A culture of connections

The SEGO Initiative was launched as a not-for-profit in 2014. Bonzi and her husband wanted a name that worked in both English and French, with the English version standing for sustainable/social, environment/education, global/grassroots and outdoors/outcome.

Eight years on, the couple are still at the heart of the organization, managing the activities while continuing their day jobs and relying on the efforts of volunteers for support. Bonzi likens this to concentric circles, with an inner circle of a handful of people with whom they bounce around ideas, then widening to include larger groups as their initiatives develop and take shape.

"There are teams of staff from corporate supporters and their families, students, members of the local community and sometimes dedicated groups — foster children, for example. For our pre-COVID beach cleanups, there were usually more than 500 volunteers who joined annually," she said. For the past two years, SEGO has encouraged "Together Apart" cleanups as a socially distanced alternative, with volunteers working in their local areas at their own pace.

The three pillars of SEGO

Over the years SEGO's activities have evolved to encompass three key pillars: volunteering through the cleanup activities, public education via citizen science and art, and reconnecting to the marine

environment via sailing.

The citizen science aspect includes contributing information about the prevalence of plastic waste to a database run by the Ocean Conservancy, a nonprofit environmental advocacy group headquartered in the United States. SEGO is one of its official partners in Tokyo. Plastic waste from the ocean has also been utilized as a medium for art installations by four artists. These were initially displayed on the beach during SEGO's 2019 fall cleanup and were later exhibited at an indoor space in Fujisawa.

Sailing, the third and final pillar, ties in with Michel's role as the Japan representative of Tiwal, a French manufacturer of small dinghies. "We wanted to see how we could incorporate this into what we were doing and make the ocean accessible. You can actually go out onto the water and understand your place in this beautiful and fragile marine environment," Bonzi explained. "We are all about making connections — hearts, minds and nature."

Looking toward new horizons

SEGO's newest project is the #CreateWaves campaign, which is slated to kick off this spring on Earth Day, April 22. The overall goal is to help people cooperate and facilitate creative community-based solutions through a variety of activities, including further Together Apart cleanups, educational webinars, art and film, and hands-on volunteer opportunities.

Looking ahead, Bonzi would love to see SEGO branch out from beach activities to encompass organic farming while continuing to serve as a platform for new ideas. She is also very open to connecting with interested individuals and groups to explore diverse ways to connect and grow.

Asked what she enjoys most about liv-

Alana Bonzi

Co-founder and Representative
Co-Director of the SEGO Initiative

URL: www.segoinitiative.org

Birthplace: Trinidad

Years in Japan: 26



Alana Bonzi would love to see SEGO branch out from beach activities to encompass organic farming. PHOTO: SEGO INITIATIVE

ing in Japan, Bonzi paused to think for a moment before answering. "It is really hard to pick out one thing, since I have been here a long time, but I guess it is a sense of place, a sense of balance that you find. And there is always something new for us to discover — we still don't know everything about Japan, even after being here so long," she said.

Lecturer, teacher, project founder

Alana Bonzi was born in the Caribbean island nation of Trinidad and later moved to Canada, becoming a naturalized Canadian citizen. She holds multiple degrees, including a B.A. with honors in modern languages (1987) and a B.Ed./M.A. in teaching (1995), all from the University of Toronto, along with an MBA from Canada's McGill University campus in Japan (2003). She first arrived in Japan in 1995 to teach English in Kagoshima Prefecture, before moving with her husband, Michel, to Fujisawa, Kanagawa Prefecture, six years later. Bonzi continued to pursue an academic career and has been lecturing at Keio University since 2002. She combines this with her role as representative co-director of the not-for-profit SEGO Initiative, which she founded with Michel in 2014 following the success of their Fujisawa Beach Clean project, along with running their French-language school. Having both been raised in coastal areas, in their spare time the couple enjoy relaxing near the beach or taking drives around their area.

● Summary

海岸清掃・市民科学/アート・セーリングで地元をつなぐ

神奈川県藤沢市の非営利法人「SEGO Initiative」には設立者の一人、アラナ・ボンジさんの自然に対する愛情と地元につながりを作りたいという願いが反映されている。ボンジさんはJETプログラムを通じ1995年来日。2001年に慶応大学にて、会社の社会的責任(CSR)の講師に就任したのを機に藤沢市に定住を決めた。外国人コミュニティを地域と結び付けたいという思いと「地元愛」の精神から、海岸清掃プロジェクトを立案・運営。CSRの学識に加え、

在日カナダ商工会議所・臨時役員への短期登用などの経歴を持つボンジさんは、自身のビジネスの才覚をボランティア活動に応用する手段を模索し始め、2014年にSEGOを立ち上げた。同社の活動は清掃ボランティア、市民科学/アートをういた社会啓発、セーリングを通じた海洋環境の再認識が3本柱。今後はSEGOを新しいアイデアのプラットフォームとして機能させつつ、有機農業にも取り組みたいという。

Brand New
Miso Potage Soup, from KYOTO

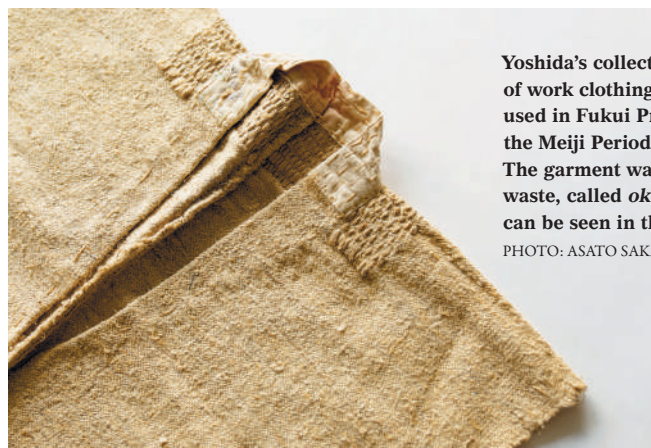



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Yoshida's collection includes this item of work clothing, said to have been used in Fukui Prefecture at the end of the Meiji Period (early 20th century). The garment was woven using hemp waste, called *okuso*. Hand stitching can be seen in the collar.

PHOTO: ASATO SAKAMOTO



Feature **MOTTAINAI**

FABRIC

Japanese fabric: Repeatedly reborn

By ARINA TSUKADA



Around the late 19th to early 20th centuries, *asehajiki* were worn under kimono to repel perspiration. Used paper with ink writing was spun into filaments and knitted to make an undergarment. Because it is spun from *washi* made of plant fiber, the material is strong and durable.

PHOTO: ASATO SAKAMOTO

● **Summary**
 何度も再生を繰り返す日本の布文化

1枚の衣服を小さなボロ切れになるまで使い続ける。戦前まではそれが日本の当たり前だった。都市部には多くの古着商が存在し、破れた服はほつれを直し、刺繍を施すなどして再利用されたという。

古い衣服や布をコレクションしてきた近世麻布研究所・所長で美術家の吉田真一郎に話を聞いた。「古くから日

本では大麻や苧麻などの植物から糸を紡ぎ、布に仕上げていく文化がありました。しかし、それらは相当の手間と時間を要するもの。庶民にとって布はとても貴重だったため、ぼろぼろになった布を縫い合わせ、多い時には100種類以上の布を1枚に仕立てるような風習もありました。吉田のコレクションには、文字の書かれた使用済

みの和紙を裂いて細く糸状に紡ぎ、亀甲状に編み込んだ「紙の下着」や、大麻の屑を利用して織られた仕事着などがある。「その作り手の多くは当時の農村部にいた女性たちです。小さなボロ布を前に試行錯誤を重ねるなど、そうした生活者の知恵が詰まった衣服は、いまでも目を引く美しさがあります。」

An item of clothing was worn for so long that only rags and tatters remained — this was the norm in Japan until around 100 to 150 years ago. There were many secondhand clothing merchants in cities and towns. Stained, torn and frayed garments were mended or embroidered and reused, and used clothing was transported all over Japan on trading ships, along with sake and processed goods.

Why was clothing so treasured? Since ancient times, Japan had a culture of spinning thread and making fabric from plants such as hemp and ramie. Because these processes took a great deal of time and labor, most common people had a small number of garments that they wore over and over in rotation throughout the year.

“In preindustrial times, all clothes were made with natural materials, so nearly all were recycled. It seems that until around the Edo Period there was hardly any waste, since items that were no longer usable could be burned as fuel for keeping warm.”

So says Shinichiro Yoshida, artist and director of the Early Modern Asafu (Hemp Cloth) Laboratory, whose fascination with ancient handcrafted cloth has led him to acquire an extensive collection of old clothing and fabric.

Yoshida said: “For ordinary people, fabric was a precious commodity, so there was a tradition of sewing together small pieces of worn and tattered fabric to create a sort of patchwork. In some cases over 100 types of fabric were made into a single garment, or scraps of precious silk were sewn together to make bedding. This clothing, permeated with the wisdom and ingenuity of people meeting the needs of daily life, is amazingly beautiful even today.”

In the 16th and 17th centuries in Japan, cotton cultivation became more widespread and cotton production flourished. But in Tohoku and other cold regions that were not suited to cotton cultivation, unique cultures of clothing reuse developed. Representative examples include *Nanbu saki-ori*, a traditional craft of southern Aomori Prefecture in which old, worn fabric is torn into thin strips that are woven to create garments and household



Nanbu saki-ori is a traditional craft in which old, worn fabric is torn into thin strips and reborn as woven cloth.

COURTESY: TOHOKU STANDARD

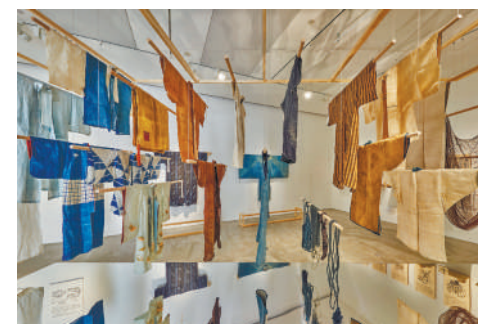
items. Another example is clothing made from used *washi* paper. One item in Yoshida's collection is an undergarment made from used paper with written text, torn up and spun into filaments that are then knitted in a tortoiseshell pattern. It seems that wearing this garment under a kimono in summer served to keep perspiration off of the kimono.

“In 1994, the exhibition ‘Riches from Rags,’ which was based on my collection, was held at the San Francisco Craft Folk Art Museum,” Yoshida said. “It focused on the theme of sustainability and featured *boro nuno*,” old cloth and garments that have been mended and patched. “I still receive questions from people from overseas who’ve seen the exhibition catalogue. They often ask me who made the items, but in most cases the makers were (anonymous) women living in rural areas. I think repeated trial and error in working with small *boro* cloth remnants led to the development of various ideas and the cultivation of a rich store of wisdom and techniques.”

That wisdom has been handed down to the present. The project *Around*, created by design director Reiko Takimoto and flower designer Mikako Ichimura, remakes disassembled old clothing into dresses and other Western-style garments, and suggests styles of wearing the clothing that are suited to modern lifestyles. It may be that many ideas for using a single piece of cloth with care and respect are lying dormant in people's lives today.

Shinichiro Yoshida, director of the Early Modern Asafu (Hemp Cloth) Laboratory, continues his research on traditional cloth and is currently studying natural Japanese fabric, with a focus on Edo Period hemp and ramie fiber and thread.

PHOTO: KEISUKE NAGOSHI



The exhibition “Clothing, Food & Plants, Housing” at Gyre Gallery in Omotesando, Tokyo. Produced by culinary expert Yuri Nomura and The Little Shop of Flowers proprietor Yukari Iki, the exhibition was inspired by the collection of Shinichiro Yoshida.

COURTESY: THE EXHIBITION “CLOTHING, FOOD & PLANTS, HOUSING”



日本語全文はこちら

Roundtable



This article was published on Feb. 21 in The Japan Times



The Dai-ichi Life Insurance group this year marked the 120th anniversary of its foundation. The group began as Dai-ichi Mutual Life Insurance Co., Japan's first mutual life insurance company, which is now the Dai-ichi Life Insurance Co., the core company. Today the Dai-ichi Life Insurance group, with assets totaling ¥63 trillion (\$550 billion), is one of Japan's leading institutional investors, and positions ESG (environmental, social and governance) investing as a key pillar of its asset management.

Asked what the key was for the group's survival for more than a century, Seiji Inagaki, who concurrently serves as president of Dai-ichi Life Holdings Inc. and the Dai-ichi Life Insurance Co., quoted the group's founder: "Consider whether people will be pleased with what we do or find it unnecessary. Business is what we do for the sake of people."

Dai-ichi Life Insurance "is a company the founder created to provide households with stability of living," Inagaki said. "Ways of asset management have changed in response to changing needs, but the company has kept asking if it is doing what it's expected to do as an asset owner and if it is making people happy."

There are wide-ranging social issues, but the group gives particular priority to measures to address climate change. In 2020, the Japanese government pledged to make Japan carbon neutral by 2050, which put the country on a path to decarbonization.

The Dai-ichi Life Insurance group is both an operating company and an institutional investor. As an operating company, it announced it will switch all power sources at the Dai-ichi Life Insurance Co.'s 1,300 offices in Japan to entirely renewable sources by the end of 2024. As an institutional investor, the group joined

excellent skills, so I think we can achieve the targets. As half our customers are women, we have some apprehensions about the risk that we may not be tolerated if we don't have diversity in our management team."

The Dai-ichi Life Insurance Co.'s basic policy for ESG investing has three key goals. The first is to build asset portfolios that can both generate investment returns and help solve social issues. This calls for taking ESG factors into account in policies and processes for managing all assets and ensuring that investment decisions take such factors as climate change risk into consideration. The second is to practice investing and lending that can help solve social issues. Improving quality of life, mitigating impacts of climate change and revitalizing regional economies and local communities are priority areas selected for this goal. ESG-themed investments totaled about ¥940 billion, including ¥360 billion in SDG bonds, by the end of August 2021, with the largest portion, about ¥390 billion, invested in solutions to problems related to climate change. The group aims to increase the cumulative total of investments to above ¥1.1 trillion by the end of March 2024.

The third is to carry out stewardship activity aimed at encouraging investees to engage in ESG efforts. For this goal, the group aims to provide information and offer solutions according to given ESG issues, encourage disclosure of information related to climate change and participate in collaborative engagement groups and initiatives in Japan and overseas. Inagaki said the environment for information disclosure has improved from a decade ago, thanks in part to the progress in efforts to create international rules.

A particular characteristic of a life insurer as an institutional investor is that it can make long-term investments. Life insurers tend to have long asset management periods, as the periods from the receipt of premium until the payment of insurance money average about two decades. They can, for example, think about and support returns from a long-term perspective without having to bother about short-term numbers, even for issues that are difficult for Japanese companies to tackle, such as energy transition,

according to Inagaki.

Dai-ichi Life Holdings is a member of the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, an initiative under which over 160 financial institutions from different countries aim to achieve net zero emissions for their investment portfolios, and Inagaki became the first Asian to be added to the 20 leaders comprising the Principals Group, which leads the overall management of GFANZ. He volunteered to serve as a principal because he has a sense of crisis about the current situation, in which the work to design climate change countermeasures and information disclosure rules is led by Europeans and Americans. "We Japanese have the responsibility to represent Asians and express views of Asians," Inagaki said. In order to smoothly shift business models that were effective during the period of rapid economic growth into ones suitable for a carbon neutral world, Inagaki believes, it is essential for each country to have a framework tailored to the situation specific to it so that such side effects as wealth gaps, energy price rises and job losses can be avoided. "It is important for Japan to show the flag. We will actively step onto the international stage" as a Japanese asset owner, Inagaki said.



Seiji Inagaki, representative director and president of Dai-ichi Life Holdings Inc. PHOTO: KOUTAROU WASHIZAKI



Dai-ichi Life Insurance supports corporate ESG activity

By TOMOKO KAICHI CONTRIBUTING WRITER

the Net-Zero Asset Owner Alliance, an international initiative in which members seek to make their portfolios carbon neutral by 2050, becoming the first Asian member of the alliance. The group is committed to an interim target of reducing by 2025 greenhouse gas emissions of its portfolios of listed stocks, publicly offered corporate bonds and real estate properties by 25% from the level at the end of March 2020. As cooperation of investee companies is essential for the achievement of this target, the group supports their initiatives and efforts to transform behaviors by stepping up dialogue to encourage their decarbonization efforts and offering transitional finance in which financial assistance is provided to encourage technological innovation and infrastructure investment.

"The biggest challenge for Japanese businesses is to find ways to change the existing business models," Inagaki said.

"Japan has the level of technology that can enable adjustments necessary for achieving carbon neutral. I want companies to have the courage to face the challenge. Financial institutions, including us, are here to cheer them and support them."

The Dai-ichi Life Insurance group was early to begin efforts to ensure diversity in workplaces. Soon after the war, it began to increase hiring of women, who currently represent over 90 percent of its employees. Women have come to represent over 30% of those targeted for positions at the level of section chief, but their representation remains far smaller at the levels of general manager or higher. The group thus aims to raise the ratios of women to 30% in positions of a department or section heads by April 2024 and 30% of the executive officers by 2030. "You need role models if you want to promote more women," Inagaki said. "We now have more female executives with

● Summary

企業の ESG 活動を長期支援。国際ルール作りにも積極参加

創業120年の第一生命グループは、日本有数の機関投資家として ESG (環境・社会・企業統治) 投資を資産運用の柱と位置付ける。幅広い社会課題の中でも重視するのが気候変動対応だ。第一生命グループは「ネットゼロ・アセット・オーナー・アライアンス (NZAOA)」にアジアから初めて加盟。中間目標として

25年に、上場株式・公募社債・不動産ポートフォリオの温室効果ガス排出量の19年度末比25%削減にコミットする。第一生命 HD社長の稲垣精二は「日本にはカーボンニュートラルに向けアジャストできるだけの技術力がある。企業の挑戦を応援したい」と覚悟を示す。

世界160超の金融機関による「グラスゴー・ファイナンシャル・アライアンス・フォー・ネットゼロ (GFANZ)」にもアジア初の企業として加入した。「日本が旗を見せていくことが大切」と稲垣。カーボンニュートラル移行には各国の事情に配慮した枠組みが不可欠として、アジアの意見を発信する。



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Feature **MOTTAINAI****PAPER****Saving Japanese paper with vegetable scraps**

By KOHEI HARUGUCHI



Food Paper is a stationery brand by Igarashi Seishi that uses paper made from vegetable and fruit scraps. Popular products in the lineup include bags that can be used to store vegetables. The paper has a unique texture that is different to both Western and Japanese paper.

COURTESY: IGRASHI SEISHI



Fukui Prefecture-based Igarashi Seishi uses traditional techniques dating back a century to make a wide range of Japanese paper, or *washi*, products, from large-sized sheets to small items. Recently the company has received many orders for from well-known artists for especially strong *washi* that can be used in making artworks.

Making Japanese paper, or *washi*, has a history dating back over 1,400 years. Theories about its origins vary, but the Fukui Prefecture city of Echizen, known for Echizen *washi*, is thought to have been making it the longest. One of the city's oldest extant paper-makers is Igarashi Seishi, which was founded in 1919. We spoke to Masami Igarashi, the company's craftsperson.

The main raw material for Japanese paper is the inner bark from plants such as the paper mulberry bush, *kōzo*; the Oriental paper bush, *mitsumata*; and *ganpi* shrubs. First the bark is boiled, rinsed and cleaned to remove small impurities. Then the resulting fibers are beaten into small pieces and mixed with water and a starchy material called *neri* from the roots of sunset hibiscus plants (*tororo aoi*). In a process called *kamisuki* (paper straining), the mixture is scooped onto a framed screen and sloshed around evenly as the water drains, leaving a smooth layer of fine fibers. After pressure is applied to remove further moisture, the fibers are dried to make *washi*.

Traditionally, the main uses of Japanese

paper were in wallpaper and *fusuma*, the wood-and-paper dividers used in traditional rooms. But since demand for Japanese-style rooms has declined, *washi*'s main products nowadays are small items such as wrapping paper for sweets or business cards, in addition to special orders for high-strength paper from visual artists overseas. On top of decreased demand, the *washi* industry faces challenges such as a lack of skilled younger craftspeople to carry on the work.

"As the number of businesses making Japanese paper declines, so too do those making the specialist frames and tools. And as more offices have gone paperless, this decline has extended not just to Japanese paper, but across the paper industry in general," Igarashi said. "In addition, the production of raw materials such as mulberry and sunset hibiscus has continued to decline, putting the viability of the entire Japanese paper industry at risk."

In these trying circumstances, Igarashi Seishi has developed an intriguing new product: Food Paper, made using fibers

from vegetable and fruit scraps. Its inventor was Igarashi's son. "My second son, Yuto, had this project he continued for five years from fourth grade of elementary school in which he made paper using common foods," Igarashi said. "He'd try boiled bamboo shoots or banana peel and then report on his findings." In the midst of dealing with shortages of raw materials, the company decided to collaborate with a designer to commercialize the idea.

The raw materials used in Food Paper are vegetable and fruit scraps that would normally be discarded. Since the color and texture changes depending on the ingredients used, the company has been able to create a range of novel products such as stationery and accessories. "We're using the kinds of food scraps that are usually discarded in large quantities. We also add in seasonal ingredients to our lineup, as we like the idea of the products giving people a sense of the season," Igarashi said.

Since paper is made from plants, it dissolves in water. In the Edo Period, there were businesses that recycled paper — collecting used paper, breaking it down to

its fibers and then remaking it as toilet paper. Also, when paper is made into a product it is cut to shape, and the off-cuts can be reused as raw material. The entire process is sustainable; even the fibers removed as impurities are usable in special paper products. And now with Food Paper, this ecologically responsible industry can even help with food recycling — and that might just help it survive the present age.



Food Paper products were developed through a process of experimentation using vegetables that could be harvested in local fields.

Summary

廃棄される野菜からつくる和紙FOOD PAPER

福井県越前市は、「越前和紙」として全国的に有名な和紙の産地として知られる。1919年創業、100年以上の歴史をもつ五十嵐製紙は現在もこの地で和紙をつくり続けている。工芸士の五十嵐匡美氏に話を聞いた。「和紙の製紙会社は年々減少し、ペーパーレス化などの影響も伴って製紙市場全体が縮小しているのが現状で

す。加えて原料となる植物の生産量も減少し続け、和紙の生産自体が危ぶまれています。

こうした状況のなか、従来の和紙の原料の代わりに、廃棄される野菜や果物の繊維を用いたブランド「Food Paper」が誕生した。発案者は五十嵐の息子で、元は自由研究から生まれたアイデアだった。現在は文具や小物

など多様なプロダクトに展開されている。

和紙はすべて植物が原料で、水にさらすだけで溶けるほか、製品の切れ端は原料として再利用が可能など、すべての生産過程がサステナブルだ。廃棄食品を使ったFood Paperは、そうした和紙の歴史の最先端をいく現代にふさわしいプロダクトだ。



日本語全文はこちらから

Times Capsule



This article was published on Feb. 7 in The Japan Times

BRAND HISTORY & ARCHIVE



YAYOI KUSAMA

Sunday, May 22, 1994: THE JAPAN TIMES

ARTS

CIRCLING IN FOR A LANDING

Kusama celebrates wheel of birth, death

By the time Yayoi Kusama's "The Obsessive Compulsive" was unveiled at the recent "Yayoi Kusama: A Retrospective" at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, the artist had already been celebrated by the world's art community for decades. Her "Infinity Net" series, which she began in 1958, is a prime example of her unique style. Kusama's work is characterized by her use of polka dots and nets, which she has used to create a wide range of art, from paintings to sculptures to installations. Her work has been exhibited in major museums and galleries around the world, and she has received numerous awards and honors. Kusama's art is a reflection of her personal experiences and her desire to create a sense of infinity and connection with the world. Her work is a testament to her resilience and her ability to overcome adversity. Kusama's art is a celebration of life and a reminder of the power of the human spirit.



YAYOI KUSAMA stands before her work "Pisces's Door," 1964. (AP/Wide World)

ISAMU NOGUCHI

Saturday, Aug. 9, 1921: THE JAPAN TIMES

Summary

海外で高く評価された
ビジュアルアーティスト達

戦後日本では、政治的・思想的に激動の時代であった1960年代や1970年代に多くのビジュアルアーティストが誕生している。アートの世界でも、海外の専門家に評価されることが成功へのきっかけになるのは、日本の映画と同じだ。

ジャパンタイムズでは、紙面を通して日本人アーティストの作品や人物を紹介。海外での認知向上に貢献している。

Boy Sculptor's Work Praised



YOSHITOMO NARA

Friday, July 20, 2012: THE JAPAN TIMES

Visual artists flourished overseas in turmoil of '60s, '70s

Postwar Japan saw a flourishing of visual artists, starting with the ideological and political upheavals of the '60s and '70s. Not unlike Japan's film masters, many of Japan's most well-known artists found fame by first attracting the interest of overseas connoisseurs.

"Refreshing & Drinkable"

9

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JAPAN GREAT BEER AWARDS 2022 BRONZE



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* HUGE is the operating company of QUAYS and NUMBER NINE BREWERY



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