

Tango Futamata Paper

The Futamata area, located in the former province of Tango (present-day northern Kyoto Prefecture), was once a major producer of *washi* (Japanese paper). It had an abundant water supply and good conditions for cultivating the necessary raw materials. Estimates suggest that by the end of the nineteenth century, over 200 households in the Futamata area were making paper. Many of these were farmers who had taken up papermaking as a side occupation during the winter months. However, the introduction of mass-produced Western-style paper led to a dramatic decline in demand for *washi*, and today Tanaka Paper Manufacturing Factory is the only traditional papermaking business in Futamata that remains.

Tanaka Paper Manufacturing Factory makes many different styles of *washi*, suitable for calligraphy, printing, and crafts. They also produce a remarkably thin filter paper, which is used in the *urushi* (lacquer) refinement process. Their paper is also used for art conservation for nationally recognized cultural properties. The Tanaka family harvests their own paper mulberry in fields near the factory, and the bark is processed by traditional methods on-site. Depending on the season, you may find paper mulberry growing, being steamed, or hanging to dry. The neighboring Oe Washi Museum offers more information and exhibits on *washi* production and uses.