

Tango Futamata Paper

Tango Futamata Paper is Japanese paper (*washi*) that is produced in the Futamata area, part of the former province of Tango. Papermaking techniques were introduced to the region around the end of the twelfth century, Futamata eventually developed into a major washi producer, with many farmers taking up papermaking as a side occupation during winter months. The region became known for its exceptionally strong *oni* (ogre) shoji paper, named in reference to the legendary ogres that are said to live in the surrounding Oe Mountains. Demand for *washi* waned starting in the early twentieth century, and today there is only one papermaking business operating in Futamata.

Tanaka Paper Manufacturing Factory is a family business whose paper is completely handmade by traditional methods, beginning with the cultivation of paper mulberry plants. Although *washi* can be produced from *mitsumata* (oriental paperbush) and *gampi* (a Thymelaeaceae family shrub), the Tanaka family uses *kozo* (paper mulberry). The Futamata climate produces short *kozo* fibers, which yields a very strong and refined product. The company produces calligraphy paper and a variety of colored and textured *washi*. Additionally, the Tanaka family has perfected a technique to make extremely thin paper for filtering impurities from lacquer, another traditional product of the region. Their paper is also used in art conservation for nationally recognized cultural properties.

The Oe Washi Museum, which is adjacent to Tanaka Paper Manufacturing Factory, has a gift shop and various displays on papermaking techniques and *washi* art. Groups of 10 or more may make a reservation for a papermaking workshop.