

## Tools for Making Washi

Mino washi is renowned for its smooth, unblemished surface. Before the paper is made, impurities must be removed from the bast fibers in a process called *chiritori*. The fibers are placed in woven baskets and picked over by hand under running water and under plenty of natural light. Baskets for *chiritori* along with bamboo screens and frames for making paper are displayed along the back wall.

The fine bamboo screens (*su*) displayed on the wall were used to drain the pulp slurry, the key step in the papermaking process. Each screen is made of approximately 3,000 strands of split and shaved bamboo, bound with silk thread. The screen is clamped into a wooden frame called a deckle (*keta*). The deckle is made of Japanese cypress, which can stand up to repeated dunking in water without warping.

In front of the wall are different tools and machines to soften and separate the bast fibers of the *kozo* paper mulberry bark. Wooden mallets or long sticks were used to beat and separate the fibers by hand. In the early twentieth century, machines were introduced, using steam to power long blades to separate the fibers. When making Hon-minoshi there is a process wherein the bast fibers are beaten with a mallet (*kizuchi*) carved with a radial “chrysanthemum” pattern that prevents the fibers from sticking to the face of the mallet.