

## **Mino Washi—A Versatile Material**

Mino washi has long been valued for its durability and absence of impurities. Using high-quality natural materials and techniques that thoroughly intertwine the bast fibers, washi from Mino retains its strength and beauty for generations. The oldest known extant paper in Japan is from Mino. It was used for a family register dating from 702. As Buddhism spread throughout Japan in the eighth century, Mino washi was used to copy sutras and for government records.

During the Edo period (1603–1867), Mino washi was used by the Tokugawa shogunate for legal tender and in the production of high-quality goods for shogunate officials and court nobles such as paper for sliding screens and hand-painted Gifu lanterns. The demand for Mino washi increased significantly over the course of the Edo period, and Mino's paper merchants flourished.

Mino washi is still used for lanterns and shoji sliding screens and has found new markets overseas. In 2005, the Kyoto State Guest House ordered 5,000 sheets of Hon-minoshi for use on shoji screens and lighting fixtures. Hon-minoshi is sold to museums around the world for the conservation of artworks, books, and documents. The paper is lightweight but strong, does not yellow with age, and is not acidic, which means it will not damage the artifacts being conserved and repaired.

Mino washi was also used to make the paper certificates given to athletes at the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It took the washi makers of Mino almost a year to produce the 17,600 sheets ordered for the games.