

REIHO



Fujiyoshida City News

WINTER 2019

GREETINGS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DESK

Happy New Year from all of us here at the International Affairs Desk! 2018 was a memorable year that kept us busy year round! We celebrated 40 years of sister city relations with Chamonix Mont-Blanc, sending a delegation to the French alps in May and in November welcoming an extremely talented artist from Chamonix to produce some beautiful installments to commemorate our lasting friendship. Aside from our annual events and programs like our Children's Winter Party and Annual Middle School Delegation, we also spearheaded some new programs like a High School exchange program with our US sister city of Colorado Springs, CO, making use of new funding made possible by proceeds from the *furusato nozei* hometown tax donation program. Outside of our office, Fujiyoshida continues to thrive, making leaps in revamping the textile industry, stimulating the tourism industry, and investing in innovative solutions to the nationwide *akiya* abandoned building epidemic. There have been other exciting developments as the city was designated as an official host city for not only the 2020 Tokyo Olympics but also for the 2019 Rugby World Cup. The city will be hosting the French

National rugby teams for pre-tournament training in preparation for both major sporting events. For all of us at the International Affairs Desk, this year will - as always - be about lending a hand in various capacities to the city's larger initiatives while also connecting with our friends from around the world and assisting the international community who calls Fujiyoshida home. Thank you as always for your readership. We look forward to bringing you news of our beautiful city at the base of Mt. Fuji.



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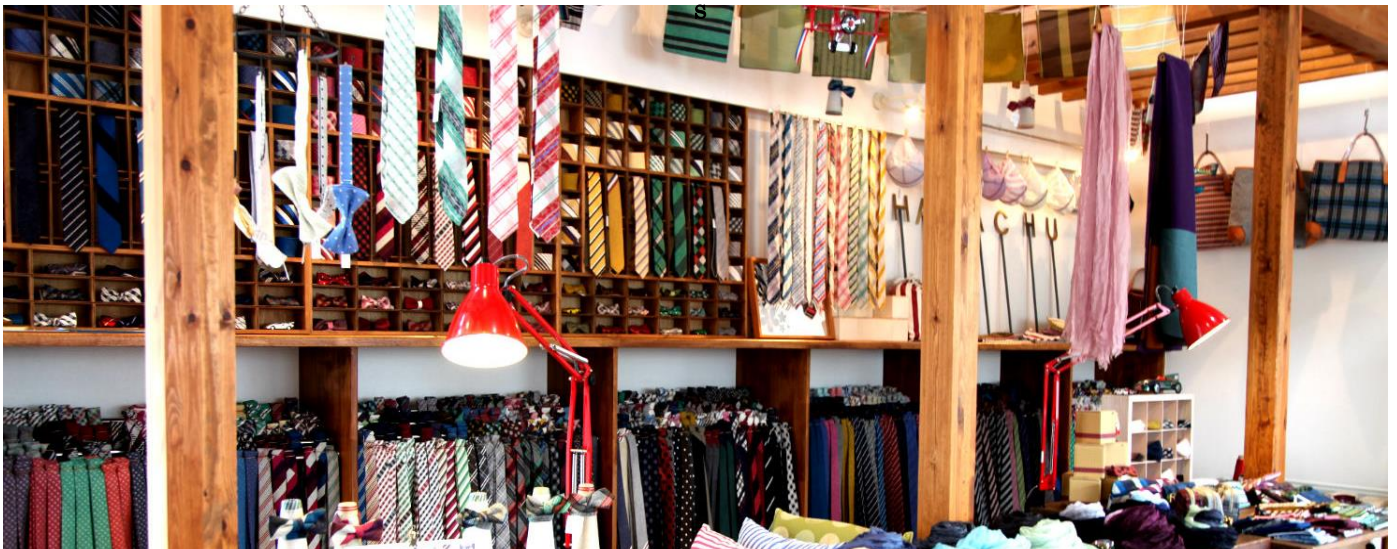
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WINTER HEADS UP FOR LOCAL RESIDENTS

- ◆ Income taxes must be filed between February 18, 2019 and March 15, 2019. Tax season essentials have been posted on the official English website: en.city.fujiyoshida.yamanashi.jp
- ◆ The flu is going around. Make sure you're taking the necessary precautions to avoid exposure! Flu shots (*infuruenza-wakuchin-sesshu*) for several strains are also widely available at several of the small clinics around town.
- ◆ Kerosene (*to-yu*) heaters are a cost-effective alternative to electric and gas heating! Refillable kerosene cans can be purchased at any home improvement store and kerosene can be pumped at any of our local gas stations.



TEXTILE TOWN



Fujiyoshida City boasts an incredibly vibrant history of textile production dating back more than 1000 years. The recent rebranding of several local factories seeks to revitalize an industry that dwindled in recent years due to foreign competition. After years of outsourced mass production of textiles, which left the industry vulnerable to foreign competitors, local factories have decided to reclaim their role as artisans, creating their own original products designed and produced locally

This edition of the Reiho Fuji explores the history of the local textile industry and the development of “Hatajirushi” – a branding project intended to consolidate the work of several local textile factories, each with their own unique products, under one umbrella. This project is a public-private partnership between the local governments of Fujiyoshida City and Nishikatsura Town, and Textile Production Cooperatives and supporting local businesses.



HISTORY of “*Gunnai Orimono*”



HEIAN PERIOD (794-1185)

Yamanashi textiles made their earliest known appearance in documents from 1000 years ago during the Heian Era. The sentence “Kai (the original name for Yamanashi) is to supply fabric” can be found in the “*Engishiki*” a text from the Heian Era that detailed the laws and customs of the time. Regions with a history of production extending back as far as 1000 years are rare even in a country like Japan with a comparatively long history. Fujiyoshida City and neighboring Nishikatsura Town are part of the larger “*Gunnai*” region, and textiles produced in this area are widely known as “*Gunnai Orimono*” (Gunnai textiles) or “*Kaiki*” (Kai silk).

EDO PERIOD (1600-1868)

Throughout the Edo Period, laws were passed prohibiting extravagance of any form, permitting samurai and townspeople to wear clothing made only with approved materials and colors. However, “*edokko*” (Tokyoites) would express their personal style by using luxurious materials in the hidden lining of their clothing. Flashy colors and elegant fabrics that were otherwise prohibited were used as lining and allowed individuals a sense of luxury.

This is where Gunnai textiles make their debut! Due both to the quality of color and fabric that was very much to the stylish taste of “*edokko*,” and the region’s proximity to Edo (present day Tokyo), Gunnai textiles came to be highly favored and widely used. Kai silk was commonly used as the lining of “*haori*” (traditional formal coats).

During this period, the Gunnai region, acclaimed throughout the Edo region for its superior weaving technology, was thought to be the epicenter of textile production. It was even said that Kyoto textiles could not compare to Gunnai textiles. From their appearance in the classic works of notable cultural and literary figures of the time such as Natsume Soseki, Chikamatsu Monzaemon, Ihara Saikaku, it is apparent that Gunnai textiles and Kai silk were once common household names.

MEIJI PERIOD (1868-1912)

Kai silk which was widely produced from the Edo Period through the beginning of the Showa Period is known for being particularly light, soft and luminous. Because Kai silk production does not utilize the typical technique of twisting thread to increase density, interwoven threads are characteristically thin, with 42 denier vertical strands, and 52 denier horizontal strands. The horizontal strands were woven in at a density of 200 to 280 strands per 3.03 centimeters, requiring incredible skill. The young woman in the poem “*Futatsu no Kobako (Two Small Boxes)*” by female poet Misuzu Kaneko, is depicted as having treasured her kai silk and kept it safe in her treasure chest.



SHOWA PERIOD (1926-1989)

From the outset of the Showa Period and the start of the war, regional manufacturing began to struggle. Roughly 9,300 of the looms used in textile production were seized for use as metal during the war, rendering local textile manufacturers unable to continue production. Wartime items such as military parachutes continued to be made, but the production of goods for profit rapidly declined.

Following the war, when production could resume freely, this region began producing large volumes of fabric. This period was known as the *"Gatcha-man"* era, named this way by playing on *"gatcha"* the sound that a loom makes and *"man"* the counter for quantities of 10,000 in Japanese, meaning that one stroke of the loom would guarantee the sale of 10,000 yen's worth. The mass textile production that occurred during this time led to a labor shortage and necessitated the hiring of large numbers of women known as *"ori-hime."* The new use of synthetic fibers also yielded more durable materials than previously.

As textile makers saw more and more success, so too did local drinking establishments. Silk shops lined the eastern side of Honcho Street earning this area the name *"Kinuyamachi"* (Silk shop town). On any day of the month with a 1 or a 6, this area would transform into a marketplace where merchants from all over the country would come to negotiate sales, and in the evening would enjoy the nightlife of the bustling *"Nishiura"* area.

Additionally, the local specialty food of this area *"Yoshida-no-udon"* a characteristically thick, chewy variety of the Japanese staple udon noodle, became popular during this time. It came about as a result of the large numbers of working women, leaving the men to cook. The toughness, for which the noodles are famous, is rooted in its origins as a dish traditionally made by the hands of local menfolk.

Approaching the end of the Showa Era, cheap foreign textiles became widely circulated. Though the Yamanashi textile industry had tried to modernize little by little, many were unable to keep up with the competition, consequently leading to many of the local textile manufacturers going out of business.

It was against this backdrop that the Yamanashi textile industry took its hardest blow, one that caused irreparable damage. Due to trade friction with exports to the United States, the country attempted to revise manufacturing practices, and enacted a widespread buy up of unused looms. During this period, a staggering 40% of the looms once used by the Yamanashi textile industry were destroyed and the sound of looms at work disappeared one by one.

THE BIRTH OF A NEW FACTORY BRAND



Those who were most aware of the impending decline of the industry were the second and third generation factory owners. Knowing that regions capable of producing high density, complex textiles with remarkably thin threads are few and far between, they resolved to rely on traditional techniques long cultivated in the region and continue collaborating with luxury brands, but were also boldly determined to market their own unique brand that they take so much pride in

The people who work in the factories are skilled artisans but the expertise of countless others is involved in leveraging their masterful technique. Their combined efforts to develop new products and designs, and to market and connect with their clientele more effectively, led to a notable rise in popularity. The products that you see lining the shelves in stores today are the product of the collaborative efforts of everyone from the skilled artisans, weavers, the workers at every stage of production, designers from outside of the prefecture, the Yamanashi Industrial Technology Center, students of Tokyo Zokei University, and the government, all the way to the supporters and fans of the products themselves. The factories in this region continue to produce beloved, quality textiles at the base of Mt. Fuji.

◆ FACTORY SHOP EVENT ◆

February 17, 2019 (Saturday) 11:00~17:00

Orikyo/富士吉田織物協同組合
2-5-1 KAMIYOSHIDA
FUJIYOSHIDA, YAMANASHI
TEL 0555-22-2164

HADACHU ORIMONO/羽田忠織物
3-7-26 KAMIKURECHI
FUJIYOSHIDA, YAMANASHI
TEL 0555-22-4584

kichijitsu/光織物
1-4-13 MATSUYAMA
FUJIYOSHIDA, YAMANASHI
TEL 0555-22-1384

WATANABE TEXTILE/渡邊織物
5-7-18 FUJIMI
FUJIYOSHIDA, YAMANASHI
TEL 0555-22-4240

TORAW/渡小織物(WATASHŌ ORIMONO)
5-5-52 FUJIMI
FUJIYOSHIDA, YAMANASHI
TEL 0555-22-1885

kai's/前田源商店(MAEDAGEN SHŌTEN)
2-25-24 SHIMOYOSHIDA
FUJIYOSHIDA, YAMANASHI
TEL 0555-23-2231

舟久保織物(FUNAKUBO ORIMONO)
2-20-18 KOASUMI
FUJIYOSHIDA, YAMANASHI
TEL 0555-22-2684

TENJIN factory
7-29-2 SHIMOYOSHIDA
FUJIYOSHIDA, YAMANASHI
TEL 0555-22-1860

田辺織物(TANABE ORIMONO)
4-6-45 FUJIMI
FUJIYOSHIDA, YAMANASHI
TEL 0555-22-0039

丸幸産業(MARUKŌ SANGYŌ)
2222-1 KAMIKURECHI
FUJIYOSHIDA, YAMANASHI
TEL 0555-23-5562

榎田商店/榎田商店(MAKITA SHŌTEN)
1717 ONUMA
NISHIKATSURA, MINAMI-TSURU-GUN
TEL 0555-25-3113

MUTŌ/武藤
113 KURAMI
NISHIKATSURA, MINAMI-TSURU-GUN
電話 0555-25-2814 FAX 0555-25-2859

FESTIVAL FEATURE “Aizen”

A ‘VIVA VOCE’ ADVENTURE BROUGHT TO YOU BY JEAN CHANG



The sound of cannon fire rips through the air of an otherwise routine Monday morning. My students suddenly become a bundle of whispered excitement: an event in town has just started. Seeing my puzzled expression they try to explain to me that “Aizenjizousontaisai” (referred to by locals as simply “Aizen” or “Aizensai”) has just started.

As all-knowing as Google might be, there was no way I was going to be able to find anything to help me understand that mouthful. All I was able to glean from their excited explanation was that ①it was a festival, ②it was very close by, and ③they were very excited about going after school.

After returning to the staffroom, I plead with the other teachers to get the scoop on who, what, when, where, and why?

WHO: Fujiyoshida residents, it’s a local event

WHAT: Aizenjizousontaisai, a temple festival

WHEN: noon of Feb 13 – noon of Feb 14

WHERE: the Aizenjizou temple

WHY: It’s said that during this period is when the eyes of the Aizenjizou statue open, indicating that he is listening to your prayers

Well, my curiosity was peaked and I made my way to Ogino. Following the streamers flapping in the wind, and a group of people heading down what looked like a small alley between some residential buildings, my nostrils were soon filled with the smell of that quintessential festival fare, noodles frying on a hot plate, yakisoba! I knew I was in the right area!

I found myself winding down narrow streets filled with festival stalls selling everything from inexpensive kids’ toys such as character balloons, plastic figurines and masks, to yaki (grilled)-anything you can think of, and sweet candied fruits on a stick.

Following the rows of stalls, I was eventually led to the heart of the festival, the Aizenjizouson Temple, where many elderly residents had gathered.

After several minutes of observation, I was able to observe the following procedure:

1. Stand in front of the statue
2. Make monetary offering
3. Take a pinch of the pinkish powder
4. Sprinkle into the smoldering bowl
5. Pray

When finished, one of the temple staff handed me a handful of white dumplings wrapped in paper.

It took me no more than a half hour to go through the small festival. Then again, after speaking with my students and teachers, I’ve come to the conclusion it was mostly due to the fact that I went rather early. Those who attended the event at night were met with bigger crowds. The wait time to get near the statue itself was over half an hour.

I really enjoyed my mini “viva voce” adventure. I was able to go for a walk in the brisk February air, experience a small local event, and to come away with some delicious loot.

This article was originally printed in an earlier edition of the Reiho Fuji and has since been edited

J A N U A R Y						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

F E B R U A R Y						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28		

National Public Holidays

JAN 1 (TUE) NEW YEARS DAY

The first day of the new year is called 元旦 (*gantan*) and is a day when people traditionally celebrate several 'firsts' of the year including their first shrine visit "hatsumode" or their first sunrise "hatsuhinode"

2019 is the year of the boar according to the Chinese zodiac and will mark the end of the Heisei Era as the Emperor descends from the throne in May of this year.

JAN 14 (MON) COMING OF AGE DAY

成人の日 (*seijin-no-hi*) is a rite of passage and celebration of adulthood for those who turn 20 in the coming year. A "seijin-shiki" or Coming of Age Ceremony is held on this day. Traditional dress is customary, particularly for young women who don themselves in beautiful long-sleeve kimonos. Five-hundred and fifty new adults celebrated at the Seijin-shiki Ceremony at Fujiyoshida Civic Center where they received words of encouragement from the mayor as their proud family members looked on.

FEB 11 (MON) NATIONAL FOUNDATION DAY

建国記念の日 (*kenkoku-kinen-no-hi*) celebrates the mythological foundation of Japan and the accession of its first emperor, Emperor Jimmu on Feb 11, 660 BC (New Year's Day according to the lunisolar calendar)



+ IN CASE OF EMERGENCY



FIRE DEPT 消防 (*shobo*)

for fires and medical emergencies

 **119**



POLICE DEPT 警察 (*keisatsu*)

for traffic accidents, crime and safety concerns

 **110**