
KUMANOFUDE

Artisans

熊野筆伝統工芸士

2024

Colophon

KUMANOFUDE Business Cooperativen

Cooperation

KUMANOFUDE Traditional Craftspersons' Association

KUMANOFUDE Master Association

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KUMANOFUDE Artisans, the pride of Kumano

Kumanocho, Akigun, Hiroshima prefecture is a well-known brush production area, boasting the highest production volume in Japan. About 10% of the residents in Kumanocho (Kumano Town) work in brush related industries. Brushes are closely connected with the lives of Kumano residents. There are brush material traders, brush manufacturing companies, brush distributors, people writing with brushes, people drawing with brushes, and *Fudeshi* (Brush makers). *Fudeshi* at the highest professional level are Traditional Craftspersons.

Brush-related work continues from the generation to generation brush making traditions. Traditional skills would disappear if they were not handed from one generation to the next. For preserving and passing on these skills, the KUMANOFUDE Business Cooperative has committed itself to the certification of Traditional Craftspersons and nurturing future generations. We published this booklet with expectations of nurturing successors in future generations by passing on the skills and thoughts of the Traditional Craftspersons.

She hopes to create peace with Japanese brushes that supported people's lives after the wars.



Usui Shinko

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
December 11, 1981

Shinko's Present

Shinko quickly but carefully sorts raw material hair with the remaining animal skins and says, "The right brush is found for every hair at the stage of natural hair."

The quality of a brush depends on the initial preparation work for making a brush including *Senmo*,* which is a process to sort hair by length and texture. Shinko is skilled at making goat hair brushes. Her representative

work, *Bokutoryu*, released in 1950, is a favorite of professional calligraphers as the brush is soft, and the thin hair absorbs the ink and allows brushstrokes to adjust the right amount of ink. Proficient skills are required to make *Bokutoryu* using fine, thin hair that is often removed and discarded by an inexperienced *Fudeshi* during the process to remove the hair facing wrong direction and damaged. Even though only a limited number of calligraphers can skillfully use *Bokutoryu* due to its extremely soft texture, the brush has a strong following.

Shinko's Past

Finishing middle school, Shinko began working at a studio excelling in goat hair brushes. She learned how to handle hair. As trainees at that time had no way to learn other than observing and imitating skilled professionals, she had some difficulties. Shinko supported herself making brushes during the postwar period when people in Japan had extreme supply shortages.

The KUMANOFUDE was certified by the government as Traditional Crafts in 1975, and Shinko had sufficient experience and technique but could not take the certification exam because she was a woman. Despite the adverse circumstances, she became the first woman certified as Traditional Craftsperson in 1981.

“I might have been competitive when I was younger,” she smilingly says.

Shinko has step by step created a foothold in the brush making environment with her ability to facilitate other women entering the male-centered *Fudeshi* world.



Shinko's Future

Since certified as Traditional Craftsperson, Shinko has committed herself to activities for disseminating the benefits of KUMANOFUDE. Visiting various countries to include the United Kingdom, the United States, and France for promotion activities, she felt the breadth of the world.

“I hope that people around the world are linked not only

by information from communication equipment but also by their moving hands to write letters or draw pictures so as to create harmony,” Shinko says.



Her words carry considerable weight for the generation that experienced the war. Shinko has made a variety of proposals such as planting flowers and introducing English signs on the premises of *Fudenosato Kobo*, which has activities and events in Kumano, and establishing an educational system for nurturing future generation successors.

“Decades of effort are required to do something well,” she says.

Shinko supports the future of brush making by continuing grassroots activities while making high-quality brushes.



The heart of KUMANOFUDE lies in the traditional calligraphy brushes. Crafted from select hairs, brushes deliver “Exceptional writing performance”



Aratani Jyosyu

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
February 25, 1994

Jyosyu's Present

Jyosyu focuses on making brushes by being carefully in tune with a calligrapher's writing style. He starts with attentive listening to the calligrapher or brush wholesaler with the order from the calligrapher about the desired writing style and strokes. A brush with a strong resilience slightly under the brush tip has been recently growing in demand. To precisely address customer demand, Jyosyu undertakes brush making from the

hair preparation process at his studio by rarely using *Sokumo*,* which is already prepared and bundled hair. He came to better understand brush quality as he worked, resulting in further enhancing the quality of his brush, although the quantity of brushes he makes has decreased. Jyosyu repeatedly runs a brush tip on the base of his thumb to check and remove the hair facing wrong direction and damaged.

“I am confirming the writing feel. It takes around thirty

years to make a brush with perfect writing feel,” he smilingly says.

Jyosyu’s Past

Jyosyu has been involved in brush making since he was a child when he helped his father, a *Fudeshi*. He began to work at the studio in his home after finishing junior high school. When he was young, he thrived on late hours and would sometimes fall asleep at his work in the studio. When he fell asleep, he felt his father’s whack from a comb, one of the brush making tools. Instructions from his father or from a brush wholesaler did not always convince him what to do, but Jyosyu obediently followed their instructions and gradually mastered the skills and began to enjoy brush making.

Jyosyu was certified as Traditional Craftsperson in his fifties. Several years after certification, he became sensitive to making a brush that matched the user’s writing style. For a long time he served as the chairman of the KUMANOFUDE Traditional Craftspersons’ Association. That meant he often appeared in the media to promote KUMANOFUDE.



Jyosyu’s Future

Jyosyu is an instructor at the calligraphy brush making technique training workshop for nurturing successors. Although makeup and paint brushes are also important, he thinks KUMANOFUDE are based on calligraphy brushes. He strongly hopes that the attractiveness of calligraphy and calligraphy brushes will be widely disseminated and that Kumano Town will continue to evolve as



a brush production area.

Jyosyu has taught brush making to many apprentices, but only a small number of those apprentices could become full-fledged *Fudeshi*. Whether or not someone can succeed as a *Fudeshi* is revealed only after a decade of training in the craftsperson world. Only those loving the work can continue to do it and do it well. Jyosyu can give the important core skills he gained through his long years of experience to the apprentices he recognizes as his successors. He does hope that apprentices in the training workshop become full-fledged *Fudeshi*.



He faces the brush without compromise and keeps pursuing the best workmanship.



Niimoto Seiken

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
February 25, 1994

Seiken's Present

"Brush making is a battle against myself and my life. I have consistently made efforts to improve my skills. I think I can achieve a satisfactory brush every time I complete a brush," Seiken says with a soft smile.

Once beginning his work, Seiken's expression changes to seriousness. He always does his best in brush making without compromising. He replays one by one the

processes he followed during the day in his mind in bed every night. If he finds even one less than ideal process among the 73 processes, he cannot help but go back to the studio at four in the morning to correct the brush and make it perfect.

Seiken makes each brush for a specific individual when he gets an order from a brush wholesaler or calligrapher. He has earned high trust for his superb skill in achieving the same comfortable writing feel even when the natural

hair have changed.

Seiken's Past

While dedicating himself to brush making, he had an opportunity to work at something else. After finishing junior high school, Seiken continued brush making training for a decade on the recommendation of his father, a *Fudeshi*. He married young, and after marriage, he began working in a private company to support his family. He continued there for 17 years and then returned to Kumano Town after his father's death and started work again as a *Fudeshi*. Three years later, he was able to make a superb mass-produced brush but could not yet achieve a brush meeting calligrapher demands. With tears of frustration in his eyes, he told the brush wholesaler, his client, that he would leave brush making. The wholesaler suggested Seiken to learn under a *Fudeshi* in Sendai. What Seiken relearned from the master in Sendai was techniques and strategies he had learned from his father, giving him a chance to review his father's teachings.



Seiken's Future

Seiken continued to send his brushes to the master in Sendai to have his brushes evaluated for two years after he returned to Kumano Town from Sendai.

“When the master said that my brush was satisfactory, I was so happy,” Seiken says.

Seiken's next challenge is nurturing successors. He takes apprentices and provides guidance to young *Fudeshi* at

the calligraphy brush making technique training workshop hosted by KUMANOFUDE Business Cooperative, but it takes longer to nurture *Fudeshi* skilled at making a satisfactory brush for calligraphers. When he advises a young *Fudeshi*, for example, to shorten a bit of a brush part, Seiken is asked why, but explaining is difficult as his advice is based on his experience and intuition.



“So was I, when learning brush making. Some are expected to naturally understand the reasons for my advice when they reach the next higher level. I want to nurture such *Fudeshi* into full-fledged craftspersons,” Seiken says.

His challenge will continue.



What and how to pass on to the next generation in a brush-crafter family line over generations.



Sanemori Tokuzen

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
February 25, 2000

Tokuzen's Present

"The quality of a brush is understood only after using it. I hope you first use a brush to know what kind matches your needs, so then you can select the right brush for yourself," Tokuzen says.

He has tried for 20 years to recreate the inherent writing feeling of a brush using various measures in *Senmo* and *Kegumi*,* when the natural hair gradually became

more difficult to get. Enjoying golf, fishing, baseball and softball, Tokuzen has a wide range of interests and gets absorbed in something he is interested in, which contributes to his disciplined brush making.

Remembering his father's words, "*Fudeshi* learning calligraphy tend to make a brush matching his own preference," Tokuzen has been eager to make brushes appropriate for those using the brush.

He makes all brush sizes from small to exceptionally large. As only a few brush makers can make large brushes, he often gets orders for large. He frequently appears in the media as the chairman of KUMANOFUDE Traditional Craftspersons' Association and makes efforts to promote his craft and Kumano Town.

Tokuzen's Past

Tokuzen was born into a brush making family with a studio inherited from his grandfather. His grandfather would often hold Tokuzen in his lap. When his grandfather fell and died, Tokuzen felt that inheriting a family business was his future. He decided to become a *Fudeshi*. Although he thought his eventual future was as a *Fudeshi*, he loved making things and got a job at a major automotive manufacturer after finishing a machinery course at his high school. Tokuzen worked in engine development and made efforts towards high-quality products by suggesting improvements for some of the processes.



He left his automotive job after three years and became a brush maker. His father placed importance on learning by observing and corrected him only when he was wrong. Tokuzen had to grope for better skills required for brush making. The custom then was only one Traditional Craftsperson in a family. Tokuzen could not be certified as Traditional Craftsperson until two years after his father's death.

Tokuzen's Future

One of Tokuzen's sons became a *Fudeshi* after graduating



from his university and has earned certification as Traditional Craftsperson due to the change allowing more than one member of a family to have certification.

Tokuzen places expectations on his son and says, "I am looking forward to seeing his challenges. He has some ways of thinking differently from me, but I hope he tries things. I want to watch over his growth without interfering by following my father's approach to teaching."

Increasing the number of brush users is important for continuing and maintaining brush making tradition. Tokuzen thinks that grassroots activities that increase opportunities for children to become familiar with brushes are required so that many people become interested in calligraphy.

Children participating in the brush making experience program often say, "I keep this brush as my treasure," or "I will keep this brush without using it." On such an occasion, he tells them, "A brush is a writing tool and the true value of the brush is understood only after using it. So please use it."



He is specialized in goat hair, which his master was great at. Brush-craftmanship with Karate skills, which he has been training, waking up at 3 am.



Nanbu Touei

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
February 25, 2000

Touei's Present

Touei is known for goat hair brushes with a gentle writing feeling. Orders to his studio are mostly for goat hair brushes. The brush tip is a vital part of the goat hair brush. He purposefully works in the process to remove downward-pointing or worn hair. Since he was young, Touei has continued a daily routine of practicing *Karate Kata* for three hours from three o'clock every morning to keep up his strength for making brushes even in his

eighties.

He can break eight to ten roof tiles with his hand, and he enjoys playing tennis. The master of the studio where he learned brush making is also dedicated to goat hair brushes and advised him to use finger strength in karate training for *Kemomi*.^{*} Deft kneading in *Kemomi* is unique to Touei. He also researches other than traditional brush making using boar hair or dyeing white goat hair brown using onion skin.

Touei's Past

“Friends in my childhood did part-time brush making work after school,” Touei says.

Touei is the third generation in his family-operated brush making studio and grew up closely watching brush making. He got a job at a manufacturing company after working as an apprentice under a Traditional Crafts-person for a several years. Touei had a reputation for being second to none in cutting a thick iron plate at the manufacturing company because he so decisively cuts the plate. He left the manufacturing job when he was in his thirties and returned to the world of brush making when an acquaintance offered him a job. Thanks to his childhood experiences, he easily returned to brush making. Continuing training for ten or so years, he became skilled at making quality brushes and is highly evaluated by calligraphers and brush wholesalers.



Touei's Future

“What is required of me is a goat hair brush. I want to continue carefully making high-quality goat hair brushes meeting calligrapher expectations,” Touei says.

Although new materials and new methods for brush making have emerged with advances in scientific technology, Touei places absolute trust in the traditional techniques inherited and cultivated over time by many craftspersons.

The market share of KUMANOFUDE has been main-

tained thanks to brush manufacturing companies enabling mass production using a division of labor system. However, only individuals able to execute all processes of brush making themselves can be certified as Traditional Craftsperson.



“Taking new apprentices now and in the future is difficult for me, but I want to support young *Fudeshi* and their efforts to become a Traditional Craftsperson. I hope all of Kumano flourishes,” he says with expectations.



She found a skill that would last a lifetime after raising her children and works hard to hear that “this is the best brush ever.”



Kagawa Suikou

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
February 25, 2007



Suikou's Present

Suikou's representative work is *Ryokufu*, which was released in commemoration of her certification as Traditional Craftsperson. Suikou is skilled at handling goat hair. *Ryokufu*, made of soft goat hair, is combined with a bit of Sambar deer bristles to absorb sufficient ink. *Ryokufu* has sufficient resilience. Consequently, *Ryokufu* is easy to handle and popular. Not a few devotees use this brush for ink brush painting. Besides regular products,

Suikou has tried to make new types of brushes by mixing boar hair into *Amao* (horse tail hair) or specialty brushes using peacock, ostrich, or swan feathers in response calligrapher demands. After a decade of training, Suikou acquired the techniques necessary to make the desired brushes, finding enjoyment in her brush making work.

“The more effort I make, the more favorable reaction I can get from users. Making brushes is rewarding,” she says and devotes herself to the work.

Suikou's Past

Suikou's mother was a *Fudeshi* and as a child, she helped her mother's work. As she liked making things, Suikou studied at a dressmaking school and became a dressmaker. After marriage and children, she sought work she could do while raising the children. She got a job at a brush manufacturing company when she was 35 and continues working at the same company. Initially she worked as directed and developed and accumulated skills in combining different types of hair and reproducing the appearance and writing feel of her brushes.

The messages surrounding her at work were, "Factory workers in the company can engage only in a part of brush making processes, so it is difficult to become a Traditional Craftsperson," but she could acquire certification due partly to the policy of the company to nurture a *Fudeshi*.

Suikou improved her skills from a sense of responsibility as Traditional Craftsperson.

As her father had said, "No one can steal skills you learned with your hands."

Suikou was able to develop her brush making career.



Suikou's Future

Suikou instructs young *Fudeshi* and continues making brushes every day. In addition to two female *Fudeshi*, a male *Fudeshi* has recently joined the company.

"I enjoy working and want to continue and take care of my health and stay physically sharp so I can continue. I want to nurture the young until they become full-fledged brush makers," says Suikou.

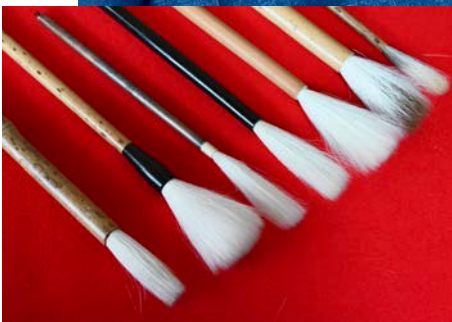
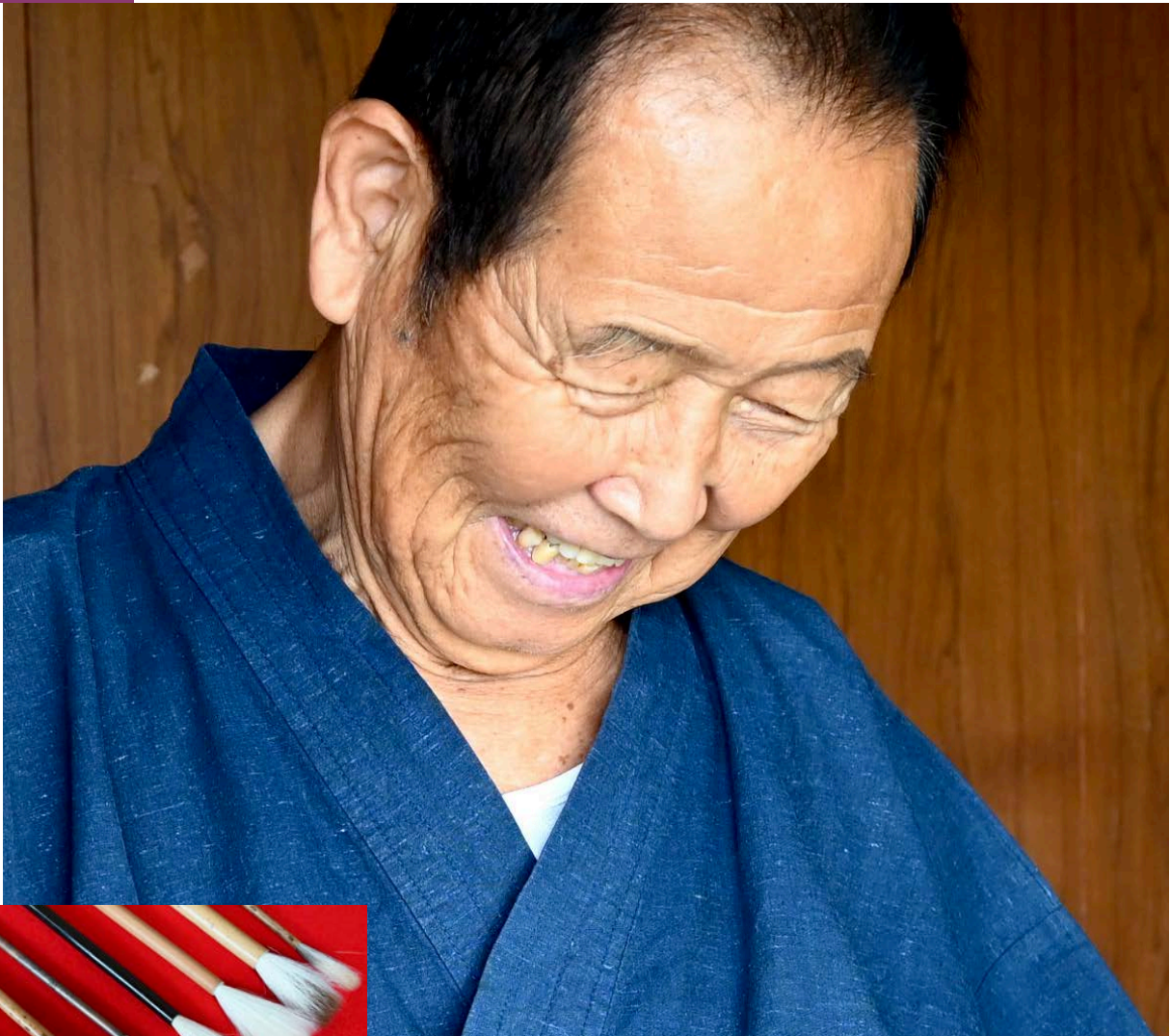


In Kumano Town, calligraphy class starts for first graders in elementary school and all fourth graders experience brush making. A brush has been a familiar item for Suikou.

"Although the population of the town has decreased and the number of *Fudeshi* is also decreasing, I want to maintain the culture centering on KUMANOFUDE forever by managing to achieve a proper balance," she says hopefully.



From a 60-year-old trainee to a Traditional Craftsperson. His mission is to promote the charm of KUMANOFUDE.



Kotorida Koyu

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
February 25, 2007

Koyu's Present

"The core of brush making is *Senmo*," Koyu says.

Koyu stands out as being strongly built. After finishing junior high school, he dedicated himself to Sumo and Judo training and participated in a national Sumo tournament. Koyu says he can take advantage of his experience in person-to-person sports in brush making.

As a good brush cannot be made from hair in poor condition, developing an eye for selecting better hair is essential for growth as a *Fudeshi*. Koyu's ideal brush has the writing feel of a weasel-hair brush that is easy for calligraphy beginners and professionals to handle. He believes that making such a brush requires imagination and creativity in the combination of hair and handles.

"I keep in mind that I make the right brush for a user by considering the user's feelings based on their requests,

such as a little thinner, harder, or softer brush,” he says as he manages a delicate task.

Koyu's Past

Koyu's father went to Manchuria during the war. He was detained and died in Siberia. His mother raised three children while making brushes in her family business. Koyu was the oldest son and took the lead in helping with domestic chores and brush making. Although he is a well-built athlete, he has committed himself every day to delicate basic processes such as *Kemomi* and *Kushinuki** since he was in junior high school.

Koyu began working at a major automobile manufacturer at age 21 and resigned at age 55 for his dream of becoming a *Fudeshi*. He got a part-time job at a brush manufacturing company and was promoted to a full-time position two years later after being recognized as a steady worker. He restarted brush making for the first time in a few decades. His hands remembered the knack for brush making he had learned. Koyu observed and simulated the techniques of the company representative he respected. Hating to not get what he wanted, he made extra effort and was certified as Traditional Craftsperson at age 68.



Koyu's Future

Koyu deeply loves his hometown, Kumano, and says, “I want to do everything to contribute to the town.”

He believes that making KUMANOFUDE better known



is an important mission of the Traditional Craftsperson. He meets many celebrities in political and business circles and hands them his business card to promote KUMANOFUDE. He became aware of the global situation while abroad with the company representative to purchase and promote the culture of brushes with associates of *Fudeshi* in various countries. Koyu places high hopes on the development of artificial hair in view of the shortage of natural hair. He suggests looking for methods in line with the times and not following what he calls the traditions connected with common sense.

“It is too late to develop artificial hair when natural hair cannot be obtained. We should act by looking ahead,” he says.

He believes now is the time to change for the future.



**Kushinuki*: process to make hair easily align using a comb to untangle material hair and remove the fluff unusable for a brush

From Kawajiri Town to Kumano Town.
Things that he found outwhile making
brushes across different production areas.



Minato Gosetsu

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
February 25, 2008

Gosetsu's Present

Gosetsu carefully makes brushes by sticking to the basics and avoiding shoddy work.

“When the initial process, *Kemomi*, is not satisfactorily executed, a brush does not absorb sufficient ink,” he says.

Gosetsu always combs a hair bundle after *Kemomi* and

before trimming the bundle to make a brush with a beautiful shape formed from the minimum necessary hair. Otherwise, hair remain entangled, making it necessary to adjust the brush shape by changing the amount of hair, and that affects the writing feeling. After twenty or so years making brushes, he realized this fact while observing his father's work, also a *Fudshi*. After further training when Gosetsu was in his forties, he began to see himself as a full-fledged *Fudeshi*, but he got a complaint from a customer and admonished himself not to do

careless work. He carefully works and realizes that each process of brush making has its respective meaning.

Gosetsu's Past

Gosetsu was born and raised in Kawajiri Town, another brush production area in Hiroshima prefecture. After finishing junior high school, he started brush making under his father with his brother who had already started brush making training. Gosetsu struggled to learn by observing his father's work, but he was often in tears and could not relax or play outside. He hit a turning point after a decade. Invited by a brush manufacturing company in Kumano, he moved to Kumano. His brother began working for the same company. As brushes were in high demand at that time, Gosetsu had various tasks including travelling outside Japan to purchase natural hair and instructing factory staff. At the same time, he continued to learn by observing the work of his father in his hometown and realized the importance of each process in making brushes. Supported by his company, he was certified as Traditional Craftsperson in his fifties.



Gosetsu's Future

"I grew up and was raised in a brush making world, so brush making is a treasure for me. I want to continue to make brushes that meet both my expectations and customers' expectations," Gosetsu says.

He achieved beyond his expectations to include becoming certified as Traditional Craftsperson. Many *Fudeshi* in Kawajiri go to the other brush production areas for

training, while *Fudeshi* in Kumano take apprentices from each other and teach each other skills. He hopes that Kumano, the town where he grew up, will have more *Fudeshi* and flourish.



Some apprentices he has instructed had a good aptitude for making brushes, but it takes a decade just to acquire the skill to sort natural hair. The *Kegumi* skill for balancing the amount and length of hair can be acquired only by accumulating experience.

"Whether you can become independent or not depends on you. The preference is that those capable of instructing others instruct," Gosetsu says and puts his hopes in the next generation.



He pursued a Traditional Craftsperson career that headmired cool. Evolving proposals not to change the tradition.



Katahira Yutetsu

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
February 25, 2013

Yutetsu's Present

Yutetsu is skilled at making *Kengo* brushes* made by blending more than ten types of hair. The desired brush can be made only by understanding the characteristics of each hair type and understanding change in resilience when blending hair. He believes that the value of a brush depends on its ability to express brushstrokes corresponding to the styles of calligraphy--*Kaisho*, *Gyosho*, and *Sosho*, or modern poems--and cannot be expressed by a

price.

Yutetsu makes a brush used by a high student in a calligraphy class by blending hair so as to be easily handled by beginners. Yutetsu had failed in blending brush hair in the past and having to discard a brush without being able to remedy the problem, but currently he has no such failures.

Yutetsu finds his job rewarding and says, "The most ex-

citing process is designing the hair blend and making a brush closer to my ideal brush.”

Yutetsu’s Past

Yutetsu liked making things and worked as an automobile technician. As his mother had a job related to brush making, he was offered work in sales by the president of a brush wholesaler. Then he was reminded of a Traditional Craftsperson he had previously met.

When he was in elementary school, he knew that a Traditional Craftsperson in his hometown preserved the traditional industry that was well known in Japan and thought, “How cool! I want to become a Traditional Craftsperson in the future.”

The job offer reminded him of his old dream, and he stepped into the world of brush making. He had trouble at the beginning because he was not skillful with his fingers, but he needed only a short time to learn the brush making processes. Yutetsu feels that what is important in brush making is intuition rather than hand dexterity.



Yutetsu’s Future

Yutetsu sometimes tries to write with a brush. His father is an assistant instructor of calligraphy.

As a brush user exists near him, he is aware of and pursues making “a brush capable of providing satisfactory brushwork and expressing ideal brushstrokes.”



Securing successors is often pointed out as an issue in traditional crafts, but Yutetsu feels that developing markets is necessary first for KUMANOFUDE. Securing markets and profit will lead to successor candidates. For this purpose, he proposes how to sell and demonstrate brushes by approaching end users, which facilitates *Fudeshi* thinking and persistence in making brushes known.

Yutetsu says, “Continuing to change is required to preserve and pass on traditional crafts in an unchanged state.”

The letter ‘yu’ in his pseudonym means “out-of-the-box,” representing his thinking.



He hopes to create new values in suitable ways to show its pure quality and challenges the very nature of the brush.



Sanemori Tokuo

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
February 25, 2013

Tokuo's Present

"Regardless of whether mass-produced or customized, a brush is equally evaluated by a user," Tokuo says.

Keeping this concept in mind, Tokuo makes brushes by checking the model at hand to prevent inconsistent brush quality and repeatedly confirms the core strength and writing feeling. He has made various sized brushes from a delicate small brush to an extremely large brush

to hold in both hands.

Calligraphers are often unfamiliar with hair types, so he asks them about their calligraphy style and letters and devises brush specifications by considering their feelings and requirements. Tokuo focuses not only on writing feeling but also on the appearance and coordinates of a handle, *Daruma** and *Kotsu*.*

"I imagine the brush as one step ahead of a task, the

brush as a tool beyond a tool,” he says as he creates beautiful brushes able to excite users just by picking them up.

Tokuo’s Past

The Sanemori family has a time-honored brush making studio established by Tokuo’s great-grandfather, Sirou, in 1907. Familiar with brush making from childhood, Tokuo grew up aware of becoming a successor. He took a calligraphy class near his college when he was a student to understand calligraphy for making brushes. Getting acquainted with a famous calligrapher through the class was a major turning point. Tokuo began brush making training by asking for requests from the calligrapher. His expanded network gave him opportunities to meet various types of calligraphers with different styles and different preferences for brushes, leading him to focus on making brushes tailored to users. Tokuo thought about working at a private company but decided to train for making brushes when he was young. He began working in the Sanemori studio immediately after finishing college and was certified as Traditional Craftsperson in his thirties.



Tokuo’s Future

A brush made by pursuing a writing feeling has a natural functional beauty and attractiveness. Tokuo began devising ways to showcase brushes through exchanges with calligraphers and through promotion activities connected to KUMANOFUDE.

He proposed in-store display ideas and renovated a por-

tion of his house into a gallery to always display various types of brushes achieving both a writing feeling and appearance. Japanese miscellaneous goods such as umbrellas and bamboo baskets for ornamental purposes are popular outside Japan. Brushes also have potential as luxury interior items, which Tokuo considered as he created ways of showcasing.



“I devote a great deal of time and care into making a brush, which is one of a kind, and that is why I want to make the brush look better. Showing children the beauty of brush making will lead to a prosperous future for KUMANOFUDE,” he says.



Possibilities of new materials brought with technological innovation. Flexibility to discover the future of the brush.



Teragauchi Yusui

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
February 25, 2013

Yusui's Present

Good at making goat hair brushes, Yusui can make any kind of brush on request. A *Kengo* brush made by blending several types of hair requires the *Nerimaze* process to blend hair by wetting and thinly spreading hair flat and repeatedly folding the hair. In this process, he spreads the hair alternating from both sides so as to be evenly blended is his unique style. Yusui adjusts hair blending and layout so that a brush has moderate resilience and

flexibility, and brush hair can be opened or closed according to brushstrokes. As a shortage of natural hair is a major issue in the brush making industry, he has also used hair removed at the process of removing poor quality hair for parts other than a brush tip as much as he could.

“Some hair is inappropriate for a brush tip but has sufficient quality for the part near the brush base. I want to appreciate and use all the natural hair we can get with-

out wasting anything,” Yasui says.

Yusui’s Past

Finishing an electrical course in his high school, Yusui became an electrical worker. His uncle, who had established a brush manufacturing company, offered him a job making brushes when Yusui was 24.

“Unlike electrical work that is completed by satisfying the electrical standard, making better and better brushes is required in brush making,” he says.

Yusui began in the studio at eight in the morning and worked until past midnight every day during the training period. He learned brush making from his uncle. As calligraphy brushes were high in demand at that time, the more brushes he made, the more he sold. They were selling like hot cakes. When the company launched production of makeup brushes in anticipation of reduction in demand for calligraphy brushes, he was involved in the development of makeup brushes. Yusui retired ten years after being certified as Traditional Craftsperson but works part-time now and sometimes works at home. He is dedicated to making calligraphy brushes.



Yusui’s Future

“Each brush is made from different natural hair. That is why I can keep trying to make a new brush all my life. Very exciting,” Yusui says smilingly.

As the demand for brushes as a writing tool is decreas-

ing, he as Traditional Craftsperson actively engages in welcoming educational trips and offering a brush making experience to make the attractiveness of KUMANO-FUDE widely known and to pass on the culture.



Facing the shortage of natural hair, he expects the emergence of artificial hair achieving the writing feeling equivalent to natural hair through technical innovation. Even though he wants to pass on the skills to work with high-quality hair--weasel and goat hair--an opportunity to have such hair is difficult in the current situation. Yusui suggests that the brush producing district may need to work together in research and development for the future.



Thorough verifications of typefaces of his calligrapher clients. Ideal brushes that are created theoretically.



Okubo Jyunkei

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
February 25, 2018

Jyunkei's Present

Surrounded by radio sounds from a smartphone on a stand, Jyunkei makes brushes. Since he was young, he liked to disassemble and reassemble a vacuum-tube radio and a disposable camera to understand their mechanisms.

When Jyunkei gets a request from a calligrapher for making part of a brush little longer or a little thicker, he

first thoroughly researches the calligrapher's work and writing style through the internet to understand why the calligrapher made such a request, what kind of brushstrokes the calligrapher desires, or what types of hair should be blended at what ratio to achieve the desired brushstrokes. He has made brushes he could confidently provide by theoretically understanding the minute details of each brush. He participates in demonstrations and incorporates comments from users into his brushes.

Jyunkei's Past

After finishing high school, Jyunkei learned to make small brushes for around a year from his father who was a Traditional Craftsperson and skilled at handling weasel hair. Then Jyunkei joined a brush manufacturing company where he learned skills by observing the professionals around him. As he liked to make things, he learned to make various types of brushes including goat hair brushes and *Kengo* brushes at a high pace by making extra effort and repeatedly making trial models.

Getting accustomed to the work, Jyunkei conducted research to make marketable brushes by buying or borrowing brushes from other brush producing districts or brushes made by other companies. He worked for forty years for the brush manufacturing company but left after being certified as Traditional Craftsperson and started his own studio several years ago. He makes brushes and pursues his research by disassemble and reproducing a paper-covered brush that had been a major brush until the Edo era and making a brush with a handle from the stem of a Jerusalem artichoke in his studio at his home.



Jyunkei's Future

Jyunkei came to think of a brush as a tool as the foundation of the traditional culture while associating with Traditional Craftspersons in various fields at Traditional Craftspersons' Associations across Japan. Excellent brushes are essential for painting lacquer crafts, ceramics, or dyed goods. To pass on a diversity of traditional

crafts to future generations, Jyunkei hopes that the national government and administration approach hair exporters to secure natural hair because shortages are a serious issue in the brush making industry.



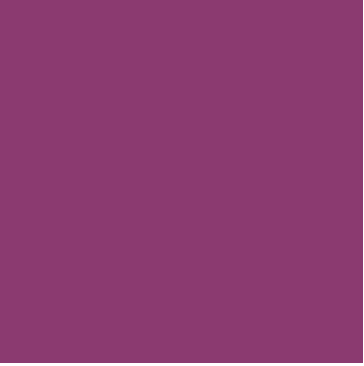
Securing successors is a major issue for passing on brush making culture. Jyunkei instructed young workers at the company. Some of them were cut out for brush making but others were not. Only a few people can reach a certain level. He expects the government to proactively make efforts to secure natural hair for helping young *Fudeshi* engage in training with peace of mind.





Nakagawa Seiho

Certified as Traditional Craftsperson on
December 11, 1981





2024
