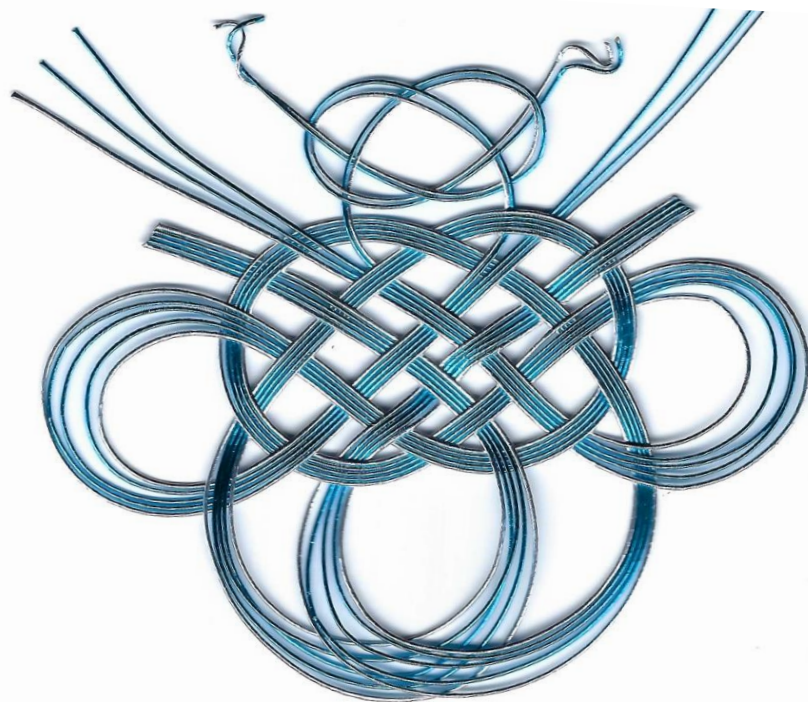


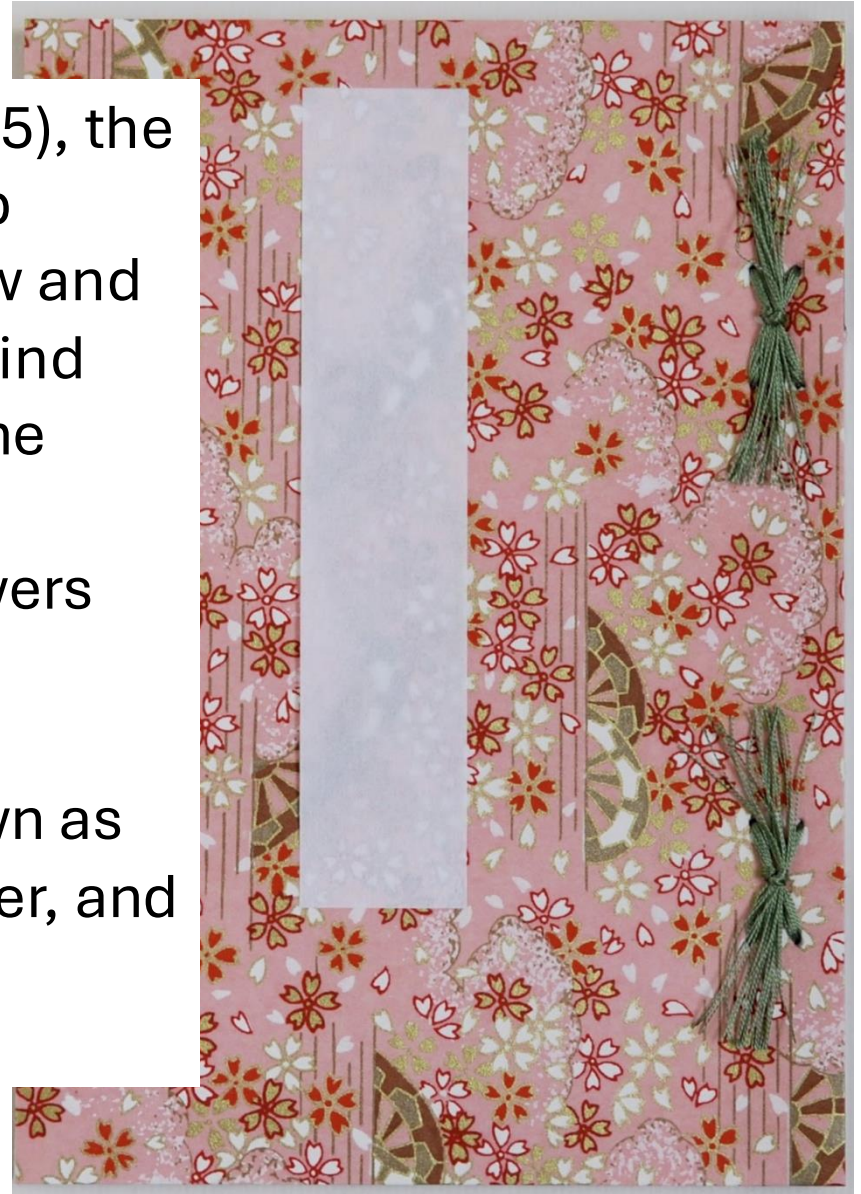
Mizuhiki



History of Mizuhiki

- Often used on gift-giving occasions, *Mizuhiki* is a dedicated art with roots dating back almost 1400 years. The first record was traced back to the *Asuka* period (538-710), when *Onono Imoko*, a politician and diplomat returned to Japan from the imperial dynasty of China, *Sui*, bringing with him imported goods and various gifts.
- Each item was adorned with **red and white hemp strings, symbolizing a “safe journey”**.
- The Japanese Imperial wholeheartedly embraced this concept and the tradition of red and white hemp strings continued for many gift-giving occasions long after.

During the Heian era (794-1185), the aristocrats began to dye hemp twines (kurenai) in blue, yellow and purple colors, and used it to bind books of songs and poems. The beauty of the bindery was compared to hundreds of flowers pulled and flowing down the Kamogawa River in Kyoto and colored kurenai became known as “Mizuhiki”: *Mizu* meaning water, and *hiki* meaning pull.



The modern style of *mizuhiki*, where *washi* is twisted and stiffened with glue, had developed by the time of the Muromachi period (1333–1568).

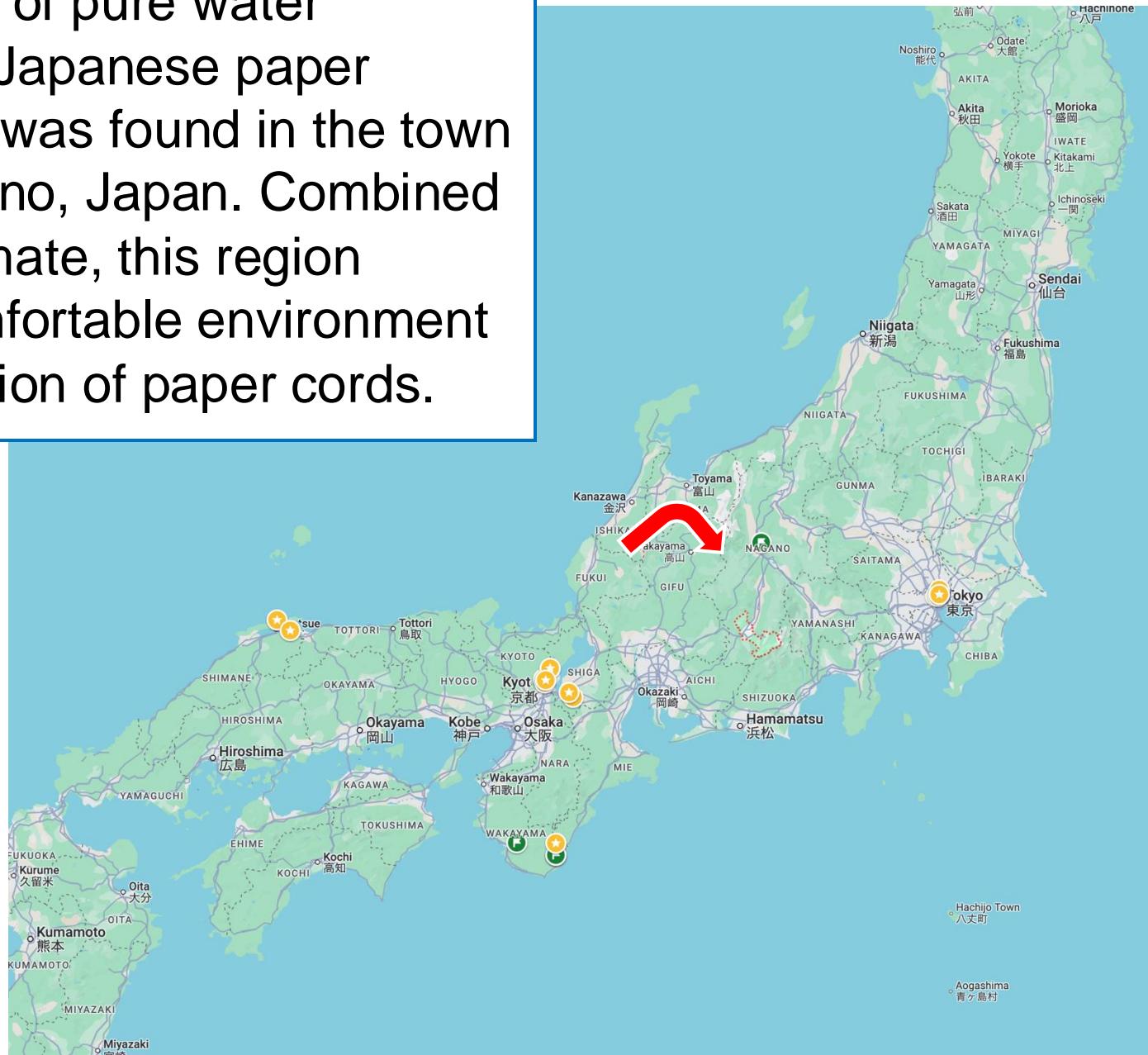


Samurai warriors
tied their hair
with mizuhiki cord.

This is still used
by sumo wrestlers
today.

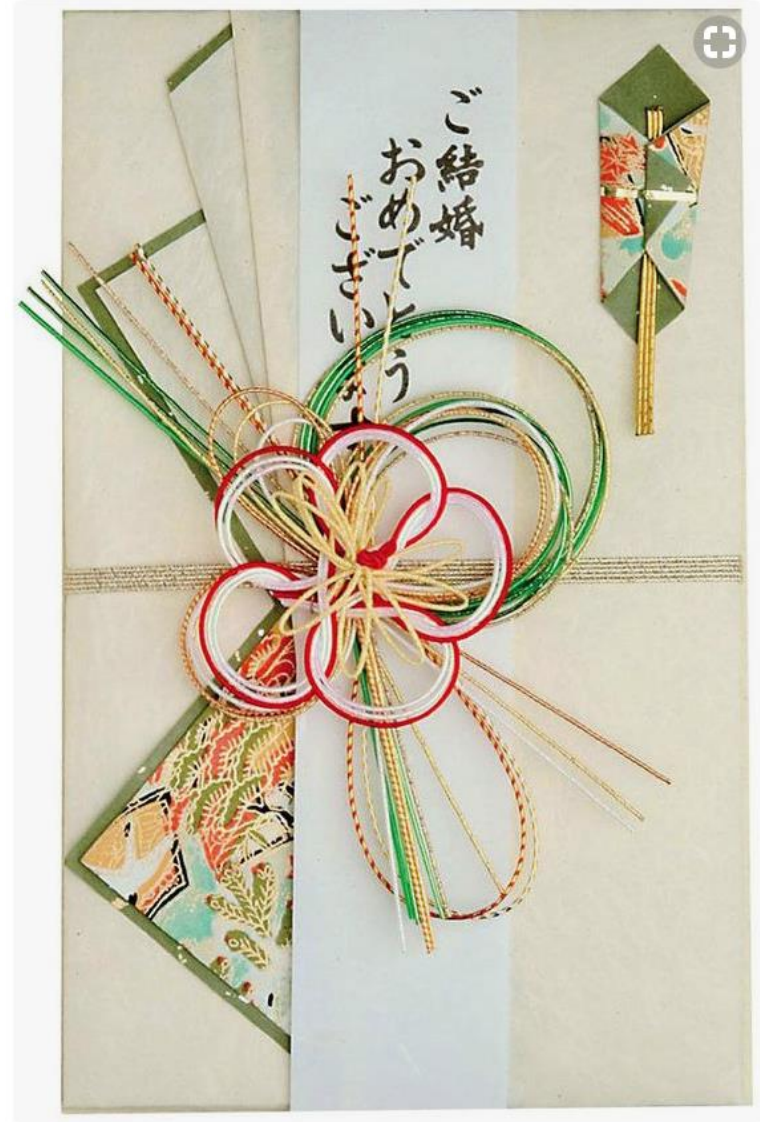


An abundance of pure water and *kozo* (the Japanese paper mulberry tree) was found in the town of Iida in Nagano, Japan. Combined with its dry climate, this region fostered a comfortable environment for the production of paper cords.



A folk song of the Edo period, *lida Ondo*, praises lida as the place best suited for tying knots of love between young men and women.

Today, 70% of Japan's mizuhiki materials come from lida, greatly helping to preserve this ancient craft.

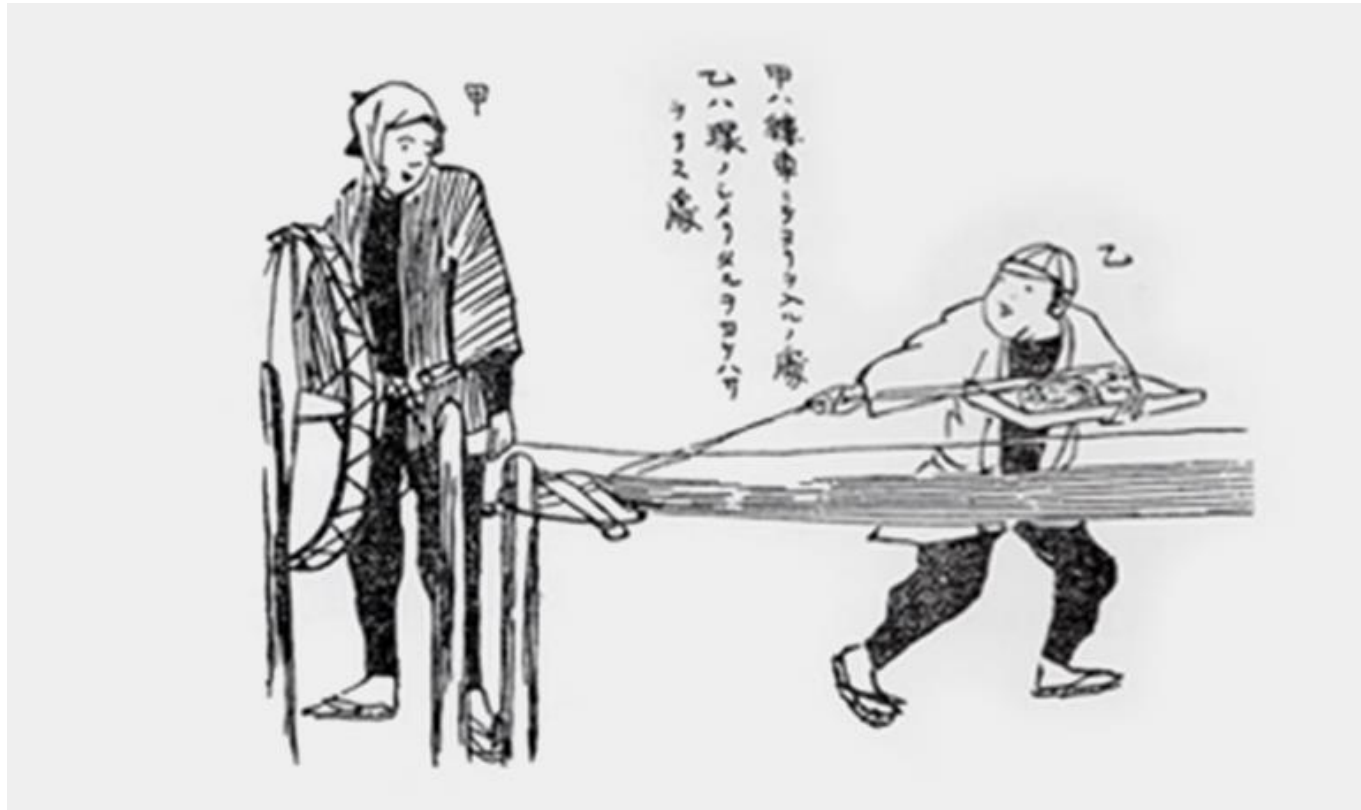





Around 1915, Tsuda Sokichi, hailing from Kanazawa City in Ishikawa Prefecture, innovated a three-dimensional approach to wrapping washi paper and devised a method for crafting figural Mizuhiki, such as cranes, turtles, pine, bamboo, and plum motifs. These adorned betrothal gifts and gold seals marked the inception of Sokichi's decorated Mizuhiki tradition.



Making mizuhiki cord





With the end of the samurai era
these skills were passed down
into the production of mizuhiki
(decorative paper cord)

2

[音楽]

MORE VIDEOS




Mizuhiki is made by taking a koyori (paper strings/yarn) made with washi (Japanese paper) that is coated with starch for strengthening and then wrapping it tightly with all kinds of colored fibers and film. It is then dried after treatment for shine and trimmed to about a meter's length. Even though the manufacturing process is all mechanized, the factories must still be maintained at the temperature of 40 degrees Celsius to make the Mizuhiki. There are barely any companies making Mizuhiki by hand nowadays; there is three companies that do the starch (nori) coating by hand and only the Nonomura Mizuhiki Store in Iida City hand dyes their Mizuhiki.



[MORE VIDEOS](#)

[音楽]



これがえっ食べに行って帰って来れないっ
ていうんですね

Pause (k)

mizuhiki traditions

According to Nagaura, Mizuhiki's roots extend back to Shinto rituals, where hemp and cotton threads — a symbol of holiness since ancient times — were initially used as offerings to the gods. Among the earliest recorded gifts presented to the goddess Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess, were “threads of hemp and cotton.”

niponica

にほにか

Discovering
Japan
no.

29

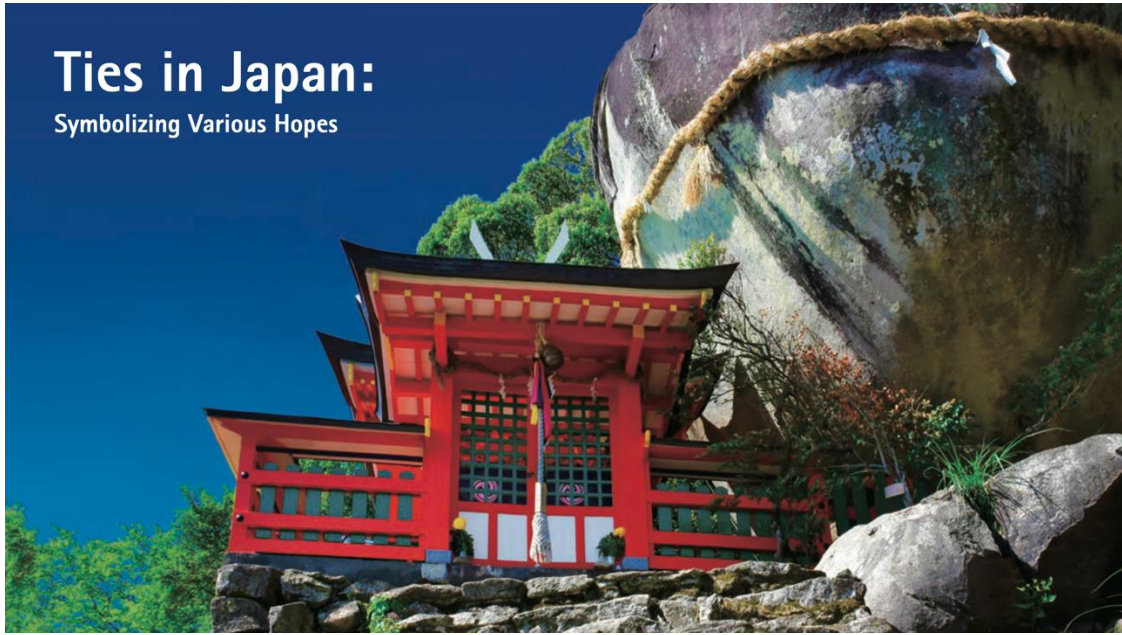


Special Feature

The Ties Binding the Heart of Japan

Ties in Japan:

Symbolizing Various Hopes





Tying together relationships

Weddings tie new relationships between groom and bride and their respective families. The white strings seen on the bride's bustline are tied with a tight *awajimusubi* which cannot unravel easily.



Tying together landscapes

Bamboo nodes are lined up and tied with black ropes with careful consideration paid to the balance and harmony with the surrounding landscape.



Forging bonds through heartfelt gifts

Strings called *mizuhiki*, created by twisting *washi* (Japanese traditional hand-made paper), are tied in the shape of auspicious plum blossoms to wrap betrothal monetary gifts.





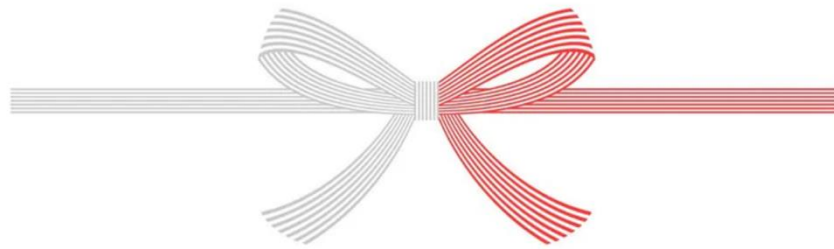
Mizuhiki Colour Theory

Traditionally in Mizuhiki culture, Mizuhiki cord colour holds different meanings and blessings. At the same time, from the scientific angle, colors can also influence perceptions and emotions in people.

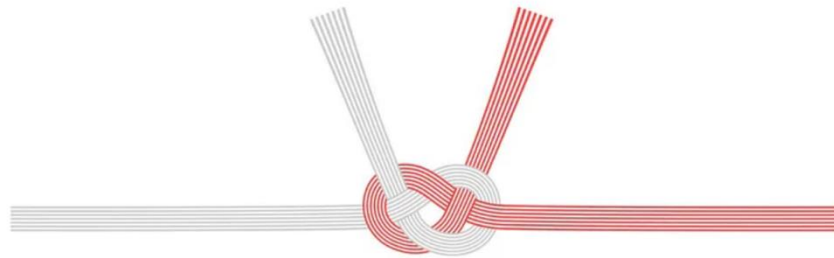
- Red - Better fortune/Ward of evil
- Pink - Love and relationships
- Yellow - Economic fortune
- Green - Health and vitality
- Blue - Academic/Career
- Purple - Longevity
- Gold - Confidence/Goal achievement
- Silver - Intuition/Peace

- Red, white, and gold are commonly used for auspicious events, while black and white are reserved for expressing condolences or during unfortunate circumstances.
- Odd numbers of strands should be used. For weddings, 2 sets of 5 strands are used, this is doubly auspicious.

- In general, there are two types of mizuhiki ties: "*musubi-kiri*" and "*chou-musubi*." Musubi-kiri only includes a single knot, as it is meant to convey the message that things will only occur once, so a single knot ensures the event will not be repeated. For example, it's common to see a musubi-kiri knot on a wedding present.
- In contrast, chou-musubi appears in a bow shape and can be undone via a string pull. This type of knot signifies that each time a particular event occurs, it should be joyful, no matter how many times it occurs. This type of knot applies to events like the birth of a child.



chou musubi



awabi musubi
abalone or good luck knot



musubi kiri

<https://japancrate.com/blogs/news/the-art-of-mizuhiki-exploring-the-elegance-of-japanese-knot-tying?srsId=AfmBOooF6ZvL9OuW37JYBE73npM-E5YtMPkr6DxaIk55zDtzBjNELiYB>



birthday

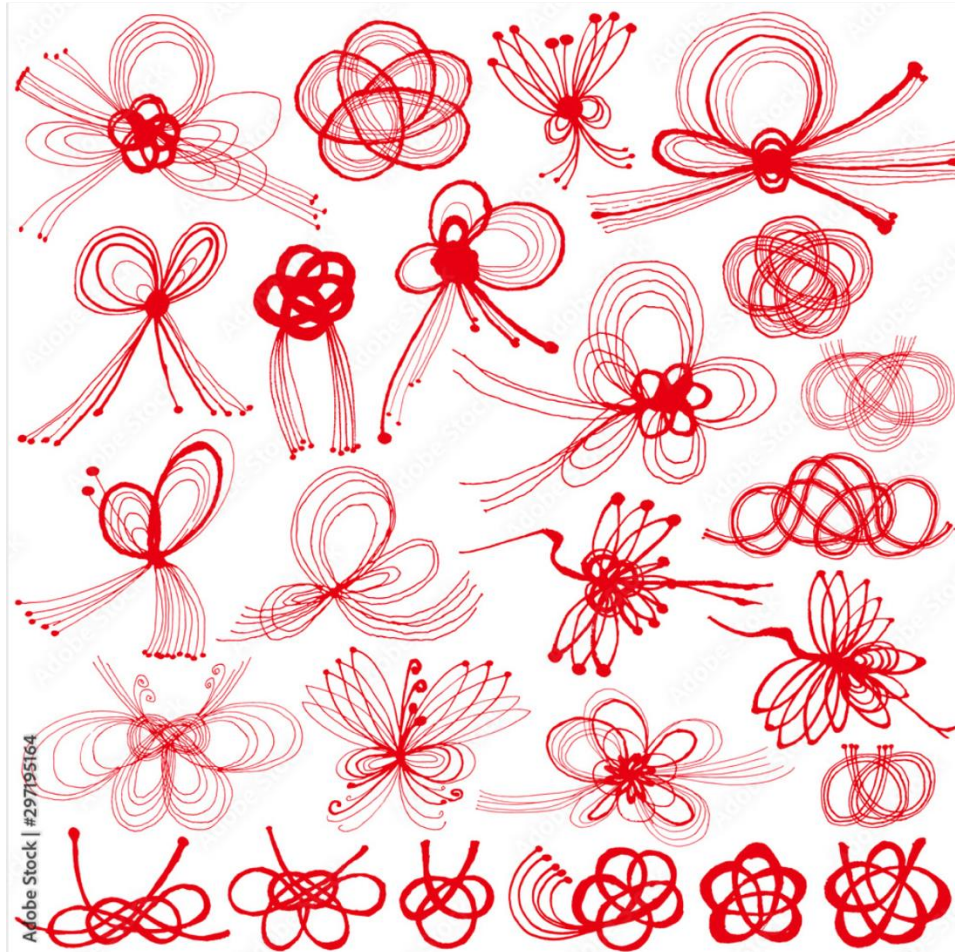


funeral



wedding

mizuhiki designs



Clamshell knot

Daki Musubi



Abalone Shell knot *Awabi Musubi*



Also known as the Josephine knot or good luck knot. A basic knot for many traditional Mizuhiki designs.

Karen Elaine Parsons

Plum Flower knot

Ume Musubi



The Japanese plum flower symbolizes beauty, nobility, and courage. This is because the plum flower continues to bloom while snow is still on the ground.

Karen Elaine Parsons

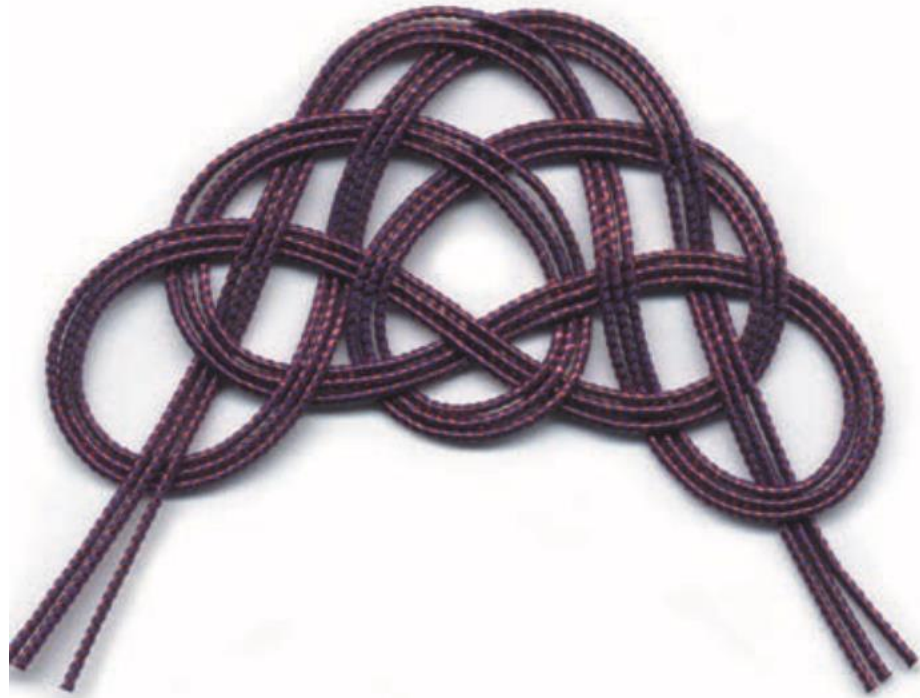
Turtle knot

Kame Musubi



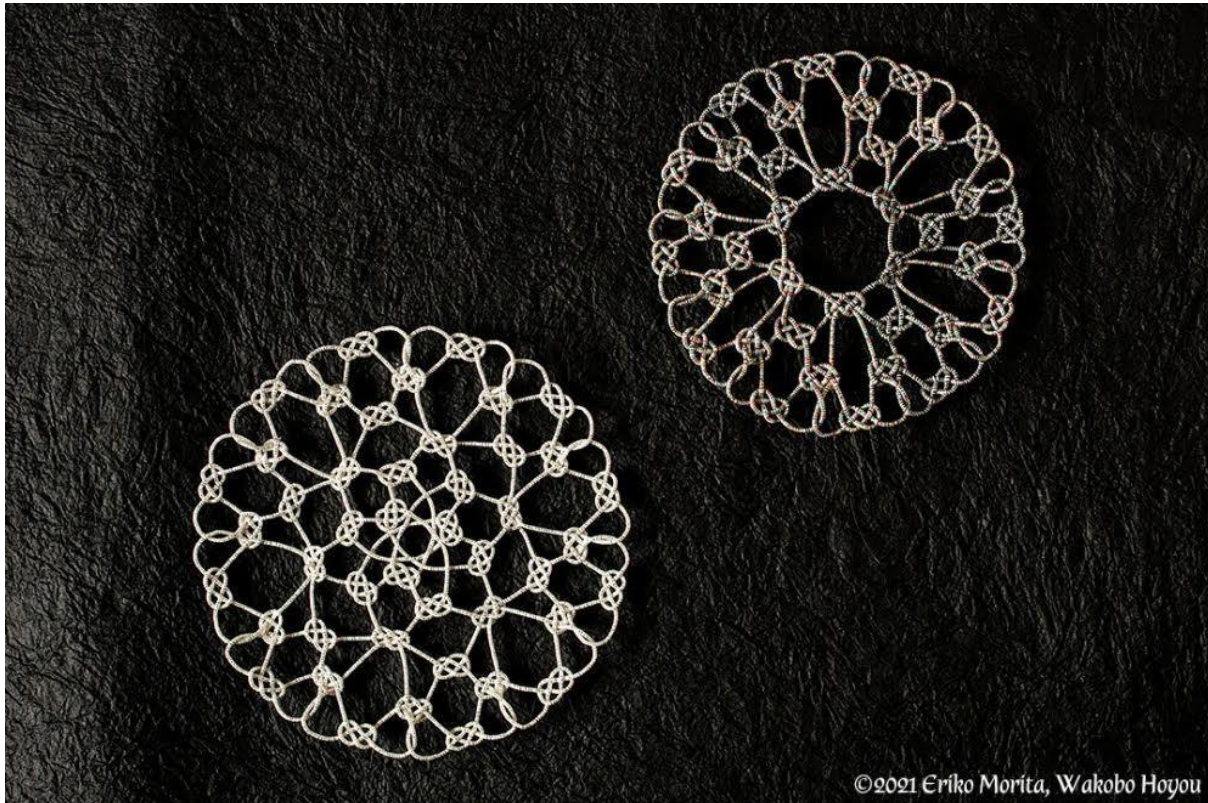
Pine Tree knot

Matsu Musubi



In Japan, the pine tree symbolizes youth and longevity because the leaves stay green during the whole year.

Karen Elaine Parsons



Eriko Morita was always attracted by patterns formed from the lines in [Japanese brush calligraphy](#), and even before she first encountered *mizuhiki*, she was fascinated by traditional patterns from around the world. Later, when she began learning *mizuhiki*, she noticed that the “abalone tie” resembled a traditional Celtic motif.

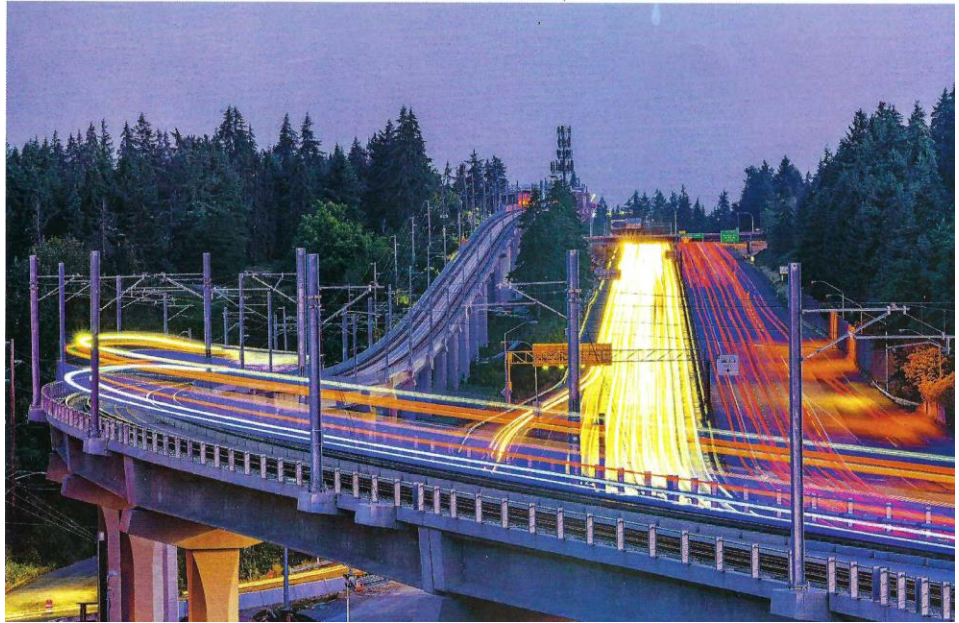


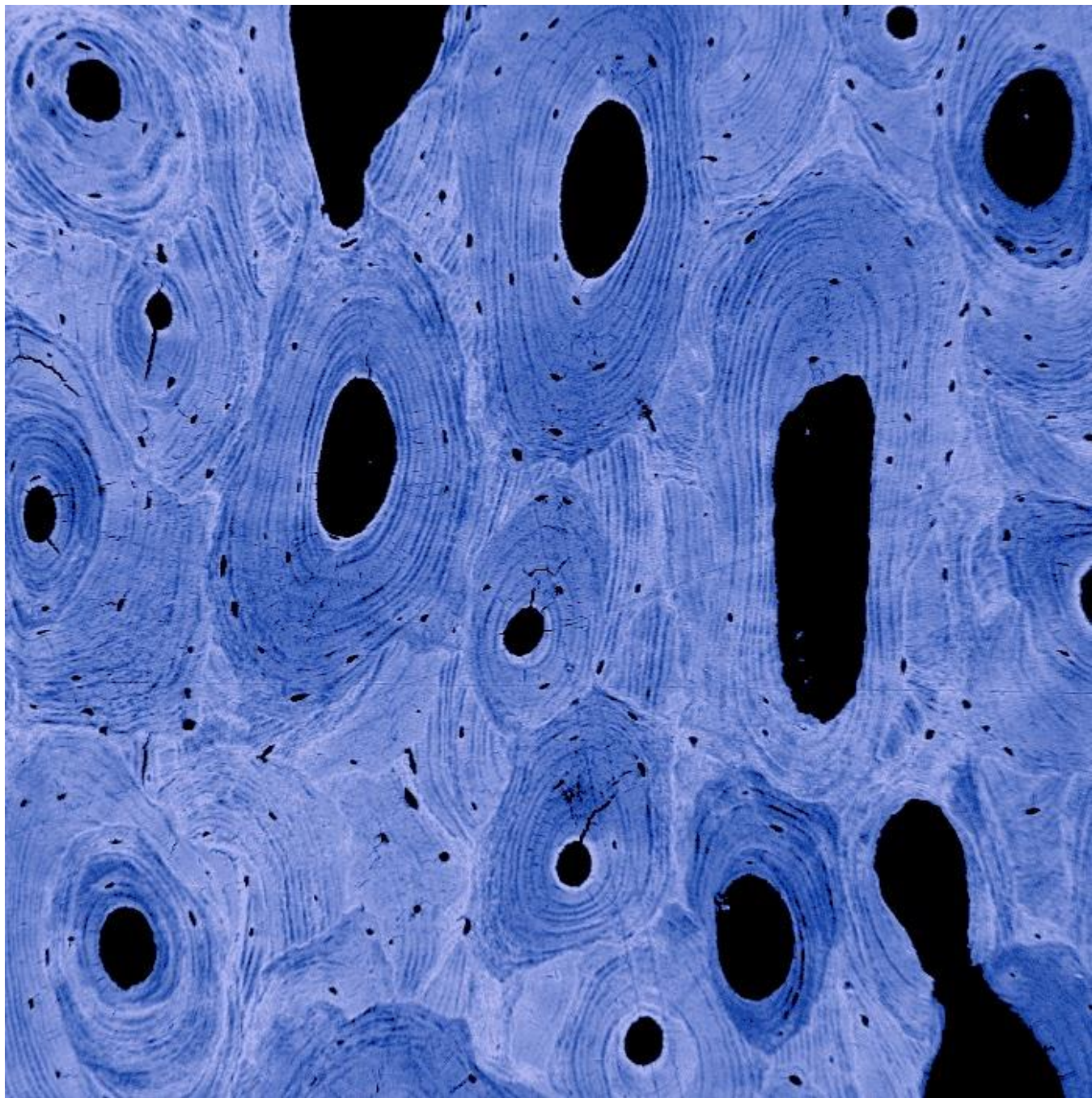
“When I looked deeper into traditional designs from other cultures, I discovered similar patterns not only in Celtic culture, but also in arabesque forms, Turkish designs, and art nouveau. Such designs, formed from a single strand, may have arrived in Japan via the Silk Road in ancient times”

Eriko Morita

Lamellar

made up of thin layers

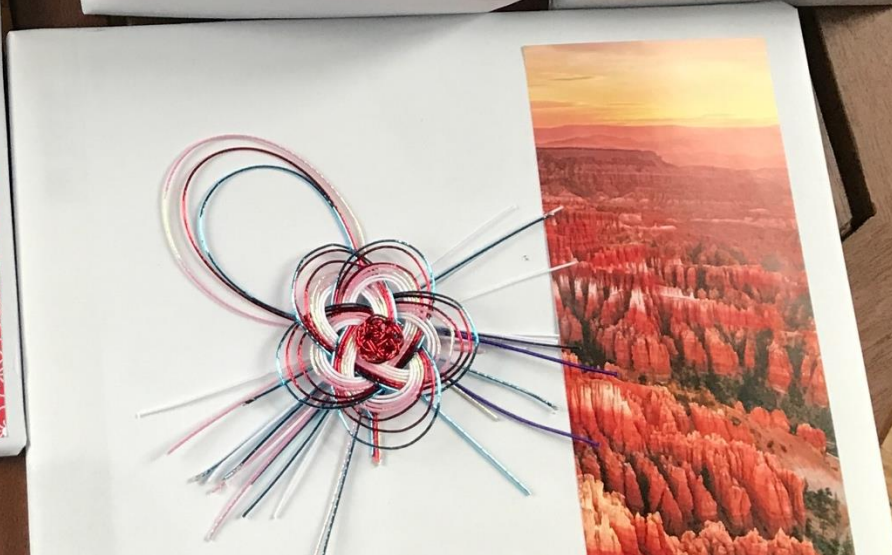
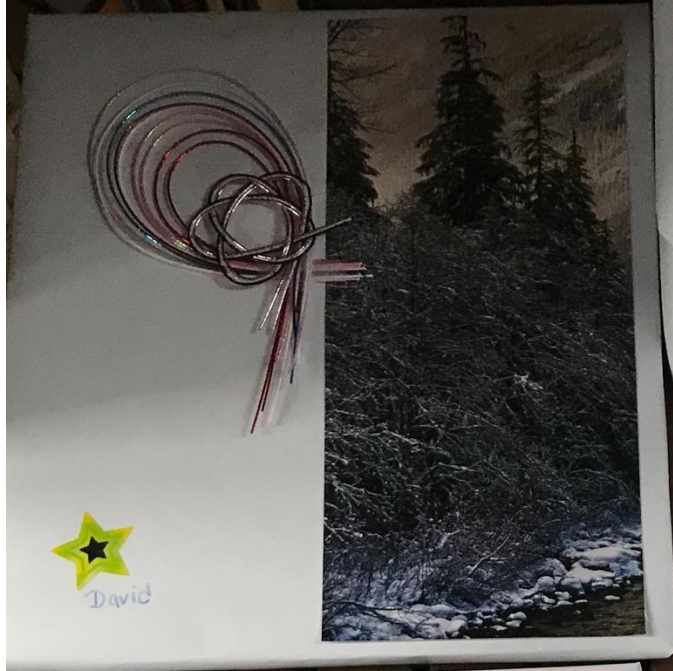






examples of mizuhiki









<https://www.gotokyo.org/en/new-and-now/new-and-trending/240122/topics.html#:~:text=Mizuhiki%20is%20a%20traditional%20decoration,colors%20has%20expanded%20over%20time.>



<https://www.gotokyo.org/en/new-and-now/new-and-trending/240122/topics.html#:~:text=Mizuhiki%20is%20a%20traditional%20decoration,colors%20has%20expanded%20over%20time.>









Momoyuo Nishimura











Takara Bune
(Fortune Ship)





Kakuko Ishii (Japan)

Japanese Paper Strings Musubu R, 2012

Washi paper and pigment

Courtesy of the artist

Kakuko Ishii's series of sculptural works made using *mizuhiki* bear the title, "Musubu," a word that means to link, tie, bind or connect. In these sculptures, which are typically red, white, black or gold (or a combination of these colors), she not only binds the cords into organic forms that connect art with nature, but she also links her contemporary artistic practice with traditional Japanese cultural practices. For many of her works, Ishii weaves the cords together to create structure and form, but once she has shaped the base, she typically allows the cords the freedom to spread dynamically into abstract shapes, as in this striking red form, which transitions from a tight "body" to a very loose, nest-like "head."





Mrs. Shimizu stands in front of a large Mizuhiki “Thousand Cranes” display that was created by members of the Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Temple and donated to Seattle’s Swedish Hospital. The work hangs in the Sun Room at the hospital.

1000 Mizuhiki Cranes given to 9-11 victims' families

By Yaeko Inaba
The North American Post

Haruko Shimizu, a master of *mizuhiki*, which is the ancient Japanese art form that uses a special cord, has achieved another goal. A thousand cranes made out of *mizuhiki* will be presented to the families of 9-11 victims this year.

Born in Firwood, near Fife, Shimizu went Hiroshima, Japan where her parents were from, at the age of 6 and later, she went to the girl's school where she learned about *mizuhiki* for the first time.

Just after WWII began Shimizu and her husband and children were incarcerated, later the family went back Hiroshima and in 1959, they moved to Seattle. Around those times, Shimizu restarted making *mizuhiki* and from 1984 she has taught this traditional art

form at places such as Nikkei Horizons, churches, and workshops.

"Peace is everything," said the 93-year-old lady in Japanese. Shimizu donated a thousand cranes to cancer patients at Swedish Medical Center, while taking care of her husband in 1992 and has given an equal number to the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Victims Memorial in 2000 and Nagasaki in 2006. "Regardless of any their religion or ethnicity, people long for peace."

Shimizu continued, "My dream has just came true" After the tragedy, she decided to donate a thousand cranes to mourning survivors.

Rev. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki, the head resident minister of New York Buddhist Church is the one who committed this gift. He visited Seattle in March and contacted persons in New York.

"I hope those cranes will be a symbol to never happen again," said Rev. Hoshu Y. Matsubayashi of Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Church. Shimizu and her friends at the church took several months to make a thousand cranes and in late May children from Dharma

school helped to finish up.

"This is from all people involved in making them," said Shimizu. A thousand cranes made in five colors, blue, pink, silver, purple and gold will be presented in a 9-11 commemoration ceremony this year.



Haruko Shimizu (third from right), Rev. Hoshu Y. Matsubayashi of Seattle Betsuin Buddhist Church and volunteers who made a *mizuhiki* thousand cranes.

Photo by Yaeko Inaba / The North American Post