

Final Report —Activity Report—

Title. Activity of a Bingata Workshop at Nontomi Studio.

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Since the significant aims of my project in Okinawa were to study the design and methods of dyeing, as well as weaving to create textile art, this Bingata workshop was implemented with the collaboration of Professor Misa Ogura at Nontomi Studio. Professor Ogura is an artist and former lecturer in Bingata dyeing at Okinawa Prefectural University of Arts. She and her husband, Professor Nobuyuki Ogura, have established their own Bingata dyeing studio on the first floor of their house in Nanjo-city, Okinawa.

Among the varieties of traditional weaving techniques, Bingata is the only dyeing method of Okinawa. This technique was first practiced in the 15th century when it was used for the production of the garments for royalty and nobles of the Ryukyu Kingdom. It is assumed to have had an influence from the Chinese, Indian, and Javanese dyeing processes. The character of Bingata dyeing is one of vivid colors with a diversity of patterns inspired by nature, such as fish, water, and flowers that are created using pigments or plant dyes. It is separated into two techniques, stencil dyeing, and glue resist dyeing using a rice-paste.

The process in the workshop was instigated by designing a pattern for which I derived inspiration from the ikat weaving patterns of Kume Island, which I had previously visited, mixed with those of Isan. I chose the popular patterns of bird and water from Kumejima Tsumugi which I combined with the flower and water patterns of Isan Mudmee. The pattern was drawn on a stencil paper and cut to expose where the paste would be applied. After mixing the rice-paste, it was brushed on to the stencil paper, with a mesh frame on top and the silk fabric on the bottom. It was left to dry for around 6 hours and painted with a foundation paste made from seaweed.



Photo 1: Designing pattern and cutting.



Photo 2: Brushing the rice-paste.

The next stage was preparing the dyeing pigment which was mixed with water, 50% alcohol and soy bean milk as a binder. There are 5 basic colors in Bingata dyeing namely; yellow, light blue, navy blue, orange and red. A small amount of liquid, made from seaweed, was added to the dye color before applying it to the fabric, in order to stop the color running. Three layers of color were applied to the fabric. The intensity of the mixing of the soy bean milk and water was increased across layers 1 to 3. The first layer was as a background while the second layer added brightness. The third layer provided shading as a

highlight on the pattern. Afterwards, the finished fabric was left to dry and exposed to sunlight for about 20 minutes to fix the colors.



Photo 3: Dyeing colours.

The two final stages were steaming and washing. The dry fabric was rolled in paper and put in the steaming tool for approximately 20 minutes. The fabric was then soaked in water for minutes before being washed in running water. Finally, the fabric was left to indoors using a dry dryer.



Photo 4: Steaming and Washing.



Photo 5: Finished work.

In summary, this workshop led me to understand the sophisticated techniques of Bingata dyeing. It is a unique process using natural materials from the local area such as rice-paste, mineral powder colors, seaweed, and soy bean. This product presents the local wisdom and culture in Okinawa. It made me realize that each area has its own unique wisdom and culture, which is difficult to imitate.