

Uetsu Shinafu

Yamagata Niigata **Textiles/Weaving**

In Japan, ever since the Jomon and Yayoi periods, people have made thread from fiber derived from plants and trees that grow naturally in the mountains such as Japanese linden, mulberry, elm, wisteria, kudzu, and ramie, and used this thread to weave fabric and make clothing and ornaments for private home use.

Thanks to developments in spinning technology during the Meiji period, cotton products became more common and many regions ceased producing these traditional textiles, but in this locale, it was still used for casual wear and clothing for doing agricultural work. It was also in circulation as fishing nets, filtering fabric, sheets, and storage bags. Afterwards, the development of Japan's economy and the modernization of lifestyles resulted in a sudden drop in demand, and while it barely remained in production for personal use, but since the late-Showa (1970s-80s) period, there has been an increased use of traditional crafts for regional revitalization activities as well as heightened demand for simple crafts, which has resulted in gradual expansion of production activities.

Feature

The bast fiber taken from the bark of the Japanese linden, *Tilia maximowicziana*, and *Tilia nozircicola* grown in the mountainous region of Uetsu is made into threads, and woven into fabric.

It was used for clothing and ornaments since the Jomon and Yayoi periods, and today, the tradition continues in places like the Sekigawa region of Tsuruoka City, Yamagata, and Sampoku-machi, Iwafune-gun, Niigata. Since the raw materials are fiber from tree bark, the texture is rough, yet this rough texture possesses a characteristic stable texture, and it is made into kimono obi, as well as bags, hats, and other daily necessities.

How to make

The Japanese linden, *Tilia maximowicziana*, and *Tilia nozircicola* used are deciduous trees that are all part of the *Tilia* family of flowering plants.

These trees grow naturally in the mountainous areas along the Japan Sea side and Tohoku region, and depending on the region, they are called by many names including mada, manta, mouda, and moad. The thread is made by spinning and twisting the fibers taken from the bast fiber of the trees, and these threads are woven on hand looms or treadle looms. Processing of the bark fiber cannot be mechanized, and must be done by hand even today.