

# Washi Making Process



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## 1. Raw Materials of Washi

The typical raw materials are kozo, mitsumata, gampi and hemp. Paper /Parchment can be made from any plant which has fiber, but these four plants are the best. The idea of using these four raw materials is from the wisdom born in the 1500-year old Japanese parchment, washi, history.

## 2. Peeling the Bark

Kozo is harvested in winter, and the cut ends of Kozo are steamed over boiling water. Then, after cooling the steamed kozo with water, the bark is peeled off and dried. The bark at this stage is rough and called Kurokawa or Black Bark. Machine paper is made of the woody fiber, the inner part of the plants, while washi is made of the fiber of the bark.

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## 3. Soaking the Black Bark in Water

The black bark is soaked in water for one day. Then the black outer bark and joints will be removed. The remaining inner bark is dried in the sun. Now this bark is called white bark. The white bark is soaked in water again for five or six hours and rinsed in clean cold water. This is to soften the fiber in the bark, making it easy to boil, and to wash away sand, dirt or impurities in the bark.



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Architectural Parchment For Interiors

5 Tudor City Pl. #102, New York, NY 10017  
(P) 212-682-8505 (F) 212-682-6004  
www.precious-piece.com info@precious-piece.com  
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#### 4. Boiling the White Bark

The white bark is boiled for one or two hours. It used to be boiled in hot water with lye taken from the ash of burned grass and trees. Now soda ash or caustic potash soda is used instead. This is done to loosen the fiber, and to remove lignin which is determined to the paper.

#### 5. Removing Dirt

The boiled bark is washed again to remove lye. It is washed in a special hut called Kawagoya, or river hut, which has the cleanest running cold water. By soaking it in water, all remaining pieces of dirt and black joints are taken away. This is a necessary stage to get pure white bark for making strong and graceful washi.



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#### 6. Beating the Bark

The white bark is put on a beating board made of cherry trees and beaten with a heavy square stick. This is done to loosen the fibers. This stage is called Kokai or loosening fiber in the bark. This beaten bark will be elaborately washed in cold running water again to wash starch and dirt away perfectly. This process is called Kamidashi.

## 7. Neri

Viscose liquid is produced by boiling the bark of a plant called Noriutugi or pounding the root of the plant Tororoaoi. This viscous liquid substance is called Neri. Neri has a marvelous nature that keeps the paper material floating in the vat and on the bamboo framed screen a long time, and it also enables the piled wet paper to be separated easily sheet-by-sheet at the drying stage.



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## 8. Scooping the solution

There are two methods of making paper, Tame-zuki and Nagashi-zuki.

Tame-zuki is the method imported from ancient China. The solution of paper material is scooped in the vat with a wire-netted framed screen once, and while kept horizontal, the frame is shaken back and forth, left and right to mingle the fiber well.

Nagashi-zuki is an exclusive method developed in Japan about 1000 years ago, between the Nara period and the Heian period, following the discovery of Neri in almost the same period.

The solution of paper material is scooped with Sukiketa or a bamboo-netted framed screen and is shaken back and forth, left and right horizontally. This is repeated several times, but the number of times the paper is scooped depends on the thickness of the paper to be produced.



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## 9. Pressing the Wet Paper

The just scooped wet paper is piled up directly sheet-by-sheet on the Shitoita or wooden paper bed. The pile of wet paper is left as it is for one night in order to drain water. Then any remaining water is drained out of the wet paper by pressing little by little with a lever pole, putting two or three weights on the tip.



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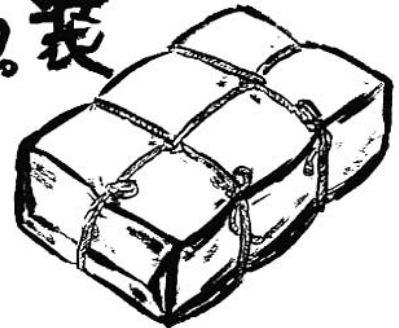
## 10. Drying

Even after being pressed, the paper is still wet; The paper at this stage is called Shito-gami or paper on the bed.

One-by-one this paper is peeled off by removing strands of grass that have already been placed between the papers.

Using a horse hair brush, each wet paper, which looks like a cloth, is put on a drying board made from the male ginkgo tree; The male ginkgo tree is the best suited because it produces a unique gloss and smoothness which is very important for wash.

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## 11. Wrapping

Both sides of each piece of dried paper are carefully checked. Any paper which has a scratch or dirt and dust on it is separated from the others. The well-examined paper is cut into standardized goods. This paper is wrapped and sold as perfect washi.

