

Oshima Tsumugi to be left in the future

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I was blessed with the opportunity to conduct research on the theme of the formation of the pattern of Oshima Tsumugi (Tatsugo pattern) and the transitions of the pattern in 2019 as a visiting researcher at the International Center for Island Studies, Kagoshima University.

I have re-read the materials I collected to date and searched for the name of Oshima Tsumugi and read books in places such as libraries on the island, libraries in Kagoshima University, and in used bookstores. I felt that there were very few books on the origin and history of the Oshima Tsumugi pattern.

For three years beginning in September 2007, I had the opportunity to publish essays on the dyeing and weaving culture of Oshima Tsumugi and Amami in the *Nankai Nichinichi Shinbun*. From that time onwards, I was occasionally consulted on the remodeling of old Tsumugi, and the Oshima Tsumugi including various stories, such as an “Oshima Tsumugi woven by their mother when she was young,” and “What their grandmother did when she was still alive.” As I looked at these, compared the patterns, and estimated the production period of each, I began to sense a joy in learning the living history of the Oshima Tsumugi; obtaining a knowledge and gathering information that could not be learned from written works. Furthermore, at every opportunity, I began to emphasize the importance of preserving the old Oshima Tsumugi in the local area.

I recently had the opportunity to meet two people who had old Oshima Tsumugi. The first person had a men’s haori with a pattern that I had never seen before. The pattern was very fine, the round shapes were very visible, and it was clearly different from the pattern of men’s items that I have usually seen. I became very excited over the pattern, quickly looking up the name. As I compared it with old scrap samples from the second volume of the *Naze City Magazine*, I found that this pattern was called the “Koyo Chirashi.” The second person had a kimono with a “Hakkina Tobi” pattern, where stars and round shapes were neatly scattered on a black background, then surrounded by small diamonds, circles, squares, and other shapes. It was a pattern that gave the impression of the shapes copied from the nature of Amami itself. I had seen this pattern in scraps and materials, but this was the first time I had seen a kimono with the Hakkina Tobi pattern itself.

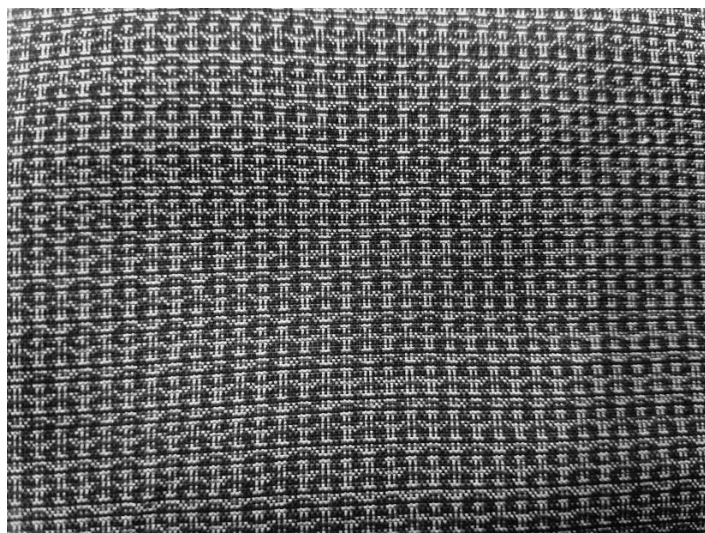
The haori and kimono I encountered this time were excellent, and once again I felt the appeal of the Oshima Tsumugi. The beauty of the motif represented by the fine kasuri is comparable to that of textiles worldwide. The ancestors of this technique utilized their knowledge, time, and effort; sought constant improvement, and poured their passion into creating an ever-superior Oshima Tsumugi until reaching the shape of today’s Oshima Tsumugi. These techniques were passed down verbally from the Meiji to the early Showa era. Therefore, there are very few fabrics that have been recorded in line with the occurrence of

patterns and technological reforms in dyeing and weaving compared to the heyday of that time.

There is no definitive evidence to date, but the previously mentioned “Koyo Chirashi” and “Hakkina Tobi” patterns are thought to have been from the Taisho era, considering the materials and the stories heard from their respective owners. Comparing and analyzing their respective stories, when Oshima Tsumugi with similar patterns emerge in the future, will allow for the identification of the production period and location, and we can be closer to a confirmation.

Precious clothing from the Meiji to Showa era is being secretly discarded today, but this is the last period of time for elucidating the history of Oshima Tsumugi. Oshima Tsumugi is a silk fabric, so it becomes more easily damaged with age. Fabrics that are so damaged that they become unwearable are thought to have no value and are often thrown away. However, no matter how damaged it is or even if it is scraps, there is no harm in seeing the pattern, and adhesive interlining from dressmaking can be placed in weak spots to preserve it carefully, like a document. We should shed light on precious old textiles and share information on these as island properties to explore our own roots.

It is necessary to trace the history of Oshima Tsumugi through the old cloths that we will encounter in the future in place of the ancestors who could not leave records of these fabrics at the time. It would be ideal to build a dyeing and weaving museum that houses the important materials collected in this way to pass this information on to the next generation. I believe that this will lead to honoring and being grateful for the efforts of the ancestors who created the Oshima Tsumugi with detailed kasuri patterns that emerged from nowhere, as well as the abundant nature of the area. This is truly learning from the past, and this will also be an opportunity for new things to emerge from these efforts.



Koyo Chirashi. There are 72 round patterns along the sides.