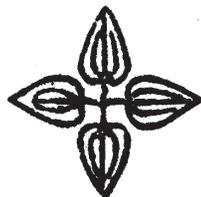


NIPPON HAND WEAVES
IN 'KUSAKIZOME' DYES



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BY

AKIRA YAMAZAKI

HANDBOOK OF JAPANESE WEAVES
IN NATURAL PLANT DYES

1959

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PREFACE

I have prepared this volume as a sister edition to the previous "Nippon Colours: The Japanese Art Kusaki-zome." In the earlier volume I introduced an hundred varieties of colors produced through natural plant dyes; for the present volume, I have selected twenty-six sample hand-woven fabrics utilizing the various plant-dye yarn.

In the old days, each weaver had at hand a collection of striped fabric samples which served as his text-book, often including sample bits from his own woven fabrics. I recall with nostalgia my mother's collection of such sample bits, which seems to symbolize the deep attachment of the old-time weavers for their craft.

The history of weaving on hand-loom goes back to ancient days; and as I mentioned in the introduction to the preceding volume, weaving by the Nara period (645-792) had already incorporated outside influences and been developed to a high point. By the middle ages, hand-weaving had reached a peak of rich maturity; but the advent of modern chemical dyes in mid-Meiji era unfortunately caused a gradual decline of both weaving and dyeing crafts until eventually the handloom became an unwanted relic of the past.

The experienced craftsmen discarded their craft, and much of the old tradition thus came to be lost. Wooden handlooms became firewood in the hearths, and old craftsmen came to be ashamed of their former profession. This was the situation as it existed in 1929.

It was about that time that I became interested in the revival of the hand-weaving craft, together with the resuscitation of the old Kusaki-zome or art of plant-dyes. For thirty years hence, I have applied myself to the attainment of this aim, although at times my efforts seemed fruitless.

In selecting the sample fabrics for this little collection, I renewed afresh my pledge, which I hope is not merely a nostalgia for lost things, but a positive creation of the "new" through a dedicated study of the old.

For a part of the actual results, I refer you to the samples in this volume of hand-woven fabrics. Needless to say, they still fall far short of perfection, but nonetheless I feel that in presenting these samples, I am transmitting the wealth of the past and making it a part of our own enjoyment today, and also leaving for posterity a "striped-fabric textbook" like those used by our fathers.

These weaves are the products of the hopes and joys of our fathers. It is with the sentiment of collecting an anthology of their "poems" that I have selected these sample weaves; and the work has been a constant joy.

Early autumn, 1959.

Akira Yamazaki

INTRODUCTION

Kusaki-zome

All of the sample pieces in this volume are dyed with natural plant dyes following ancient traditional processes.....a craft that the author has named Kusaki-zome. Dye sources used number twenty-six including Ai, Murasaki-gusa, Benibana, Akane, Suoh and others.

The deep natural beauty of the colors produced by these natural plant dyes combine with rusticity of hand-spun, hand-woven texture of the fabrics to create a quiet subdued charm entirely unique.

Ji-bata

Ji-bata, also known as Izari-bata, is a type of hand loom at which the weaver sits flat on the ground or floor with his legs thrust out before him, named consequently "ground-loom" (ji-bata) or "cripple's loom" (izari-bata). It is also known unkindly as Kojiki-bata or "beggar's loom". The Ji-bata loom that we are currently utilizing at our institute is perhaps more than two hundred years old; the weaver at this loom is Tsuna Sato, an old woman over 70 years of age with 55 years of experience behind her.

In this loom, the loom has the property of being molded around the weaver and secondary to him. The yarn moves without restriction creating a weave in which even the edges are even and beautiful.

Yarn

All the yarn utilized in the sample fabrics are hand-spun.....Mawata-tsumugi spun from mawata (floss silk), Te-tsumugi yarn reeled directly from the cocoon, Tama-ito (dupion silk) reeled from tamayu (dupion cocoon), Kinw-ito of twisted strands of fine silk. Also hand-spun white silk from Tensan cocoon and hand-spun pale beige silk from Sakusan cocoon, as well as cotton yarn spun according to old handcraft methods have been produced and used in the sample weaves.

Tama-ito

Tama-ito (dupion silk yarn) is yarn spun directly off the Tama-mayu (dupion cocoon). The Tama-mayu is known also as Futatsu-mayu, and unlike ordinary cocoon is created by a pair of silkworms. Being thicker and more spherical than the ordinary cocoon, it is called Tama (Ball) cocoon. The unevenness of the silk was once regarded as the Tama-mayu's defect, but today the texture caused by this unevenness is regarded highly, and the thread's durability is also extolled. In the sample pieces shown in this volume, a large number utilize this Tama-ito, on the consideration that it is of special worth.

Names Applied to Weaves

Because the majority of weaves included in this collection are traditional stripe and check patterns, the names of such weaves are taken from the appellations as they exist among the people. Ishizuri, Kuzushi, Yoroke, Yose-jima and such are names applied in view of the method of production in each case. Hachijo, Ryukyu, Tamba, Tohzan and such take their names from the region or country in which the weave was first created. Benkei, Hetagasuri and the like are popular humorous appellations.

Order of Presentation

The order of presentation of the samples posed a difficult problem; a general chronological order in approximate order of development was finally settled on, starting from patternless solid-color weaves to striped patterns to squares and checks, horizontal stripes, variation weaves, and finally the Kasuri or mottled yarn patterns and twilled weaves.

Reproduction of Weaves

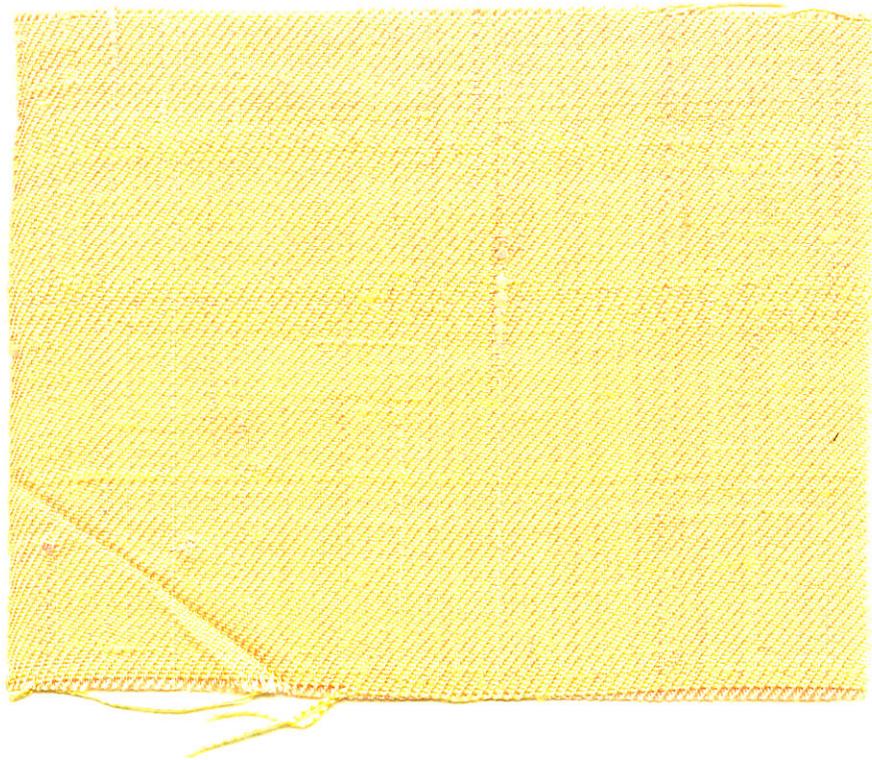
All of the sample fabric pieces in this volume were specially woven for the collection, and needless to say, may be again reproduced. However all the dyes utilize natural plant sources; the yarn used also are of natural sources, so that in reproduction slight changes in shade of color and texture of yarn are naturally to be expected.

In this unavoidable variation is to be found the peculiar charm of such handcraft fabrics. Moreover, the hue of Kusakizome natural plant dyes may change slightly with the passing of time due to natural chemical processes, adding to its unique beauty. Such a change can hardly be considered as a "fading" of the original color.

About the Book Binding

The paper used in this book is special hand-made paper called "Getsumei" paper, in double texture. The inside cover is also of same Getsumei paper dyed with Yamaurushi bark. The frontispiece picture shows a Ji-bata handloom; the creator of the woodblock picture is Unichi Hiratsuka, noted woodblock artist.

The cover material is hand-woven Tsumugi cotton in indigo Mansuji check pattern. The title lettering is gold-foil. The box cover material is hand-woven fabric in indigo Muji pattern. The illustrations show plant dye sources. Among them, tsuki-kusa was formerly used for indigo dye in the Surizome dye process. Wata (cotton) and Asa (flax) are yarn sources. These illustrations were drawn by Seiji Yamazaki.



26. Oni-aya

Also called Ara-aya (rough twill), perhaps because of the rough texture of the fabric. The texture of this twilled Tsumugi yarn fabric has a rustic charm. The name Oni-aya (Demon twill) may be due to the name's suggestion of bold strength. Dyes used are Benibana or Akane, and Kuchinashi, the two colors in the weave producing the golden "Oh-ni" color. Both dyes are processed in a solution of Ubai acid.

(Note) Oh-ni is the color of the sun's rays, formerly used as crown prince color.

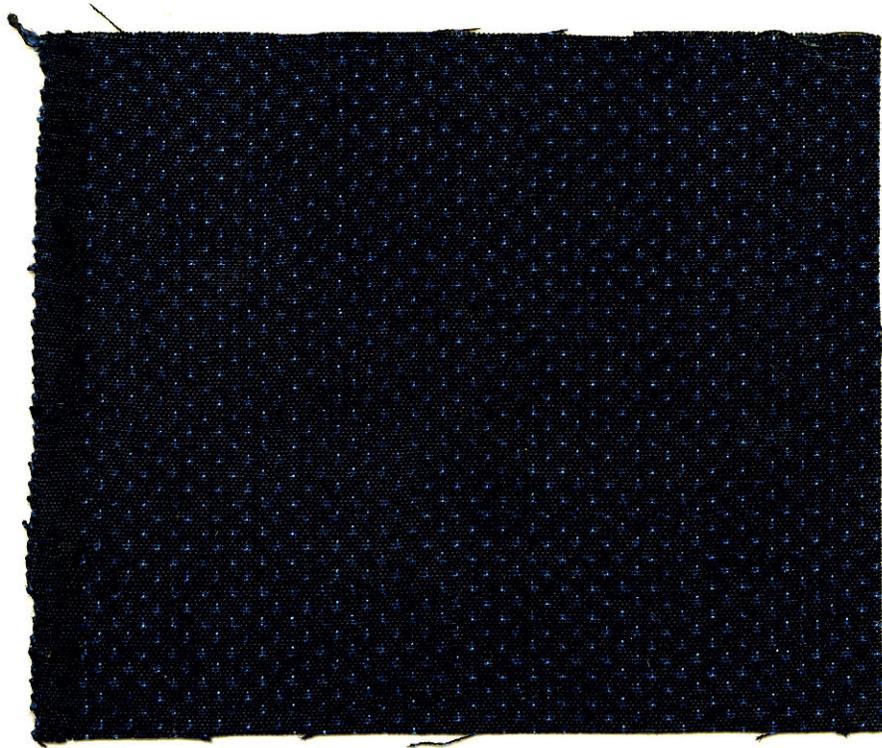


あかね
AKANE

鬼綾(おにあや)とも、荒綾(あらあや)とも俗称する。あらっぽい綾織といふのであらうか。兎に角、紬糸を綾に織った地質は素朴で、趣深いものである。案外、この鬼には強いといふ意もあるか。染色は紅花又は茜(あかね)と山梔子(くちなし)の二品で、交叉して「黄丹」(おうに)の色相となつてゐる。発色は共に烏梅(うばい)の酸である。織手、宮沢かねを。

(黄丹は日暉の色、太子の服色であった。)

二十六、おにあや(鬼綾)



25. Satsuma-gasuri

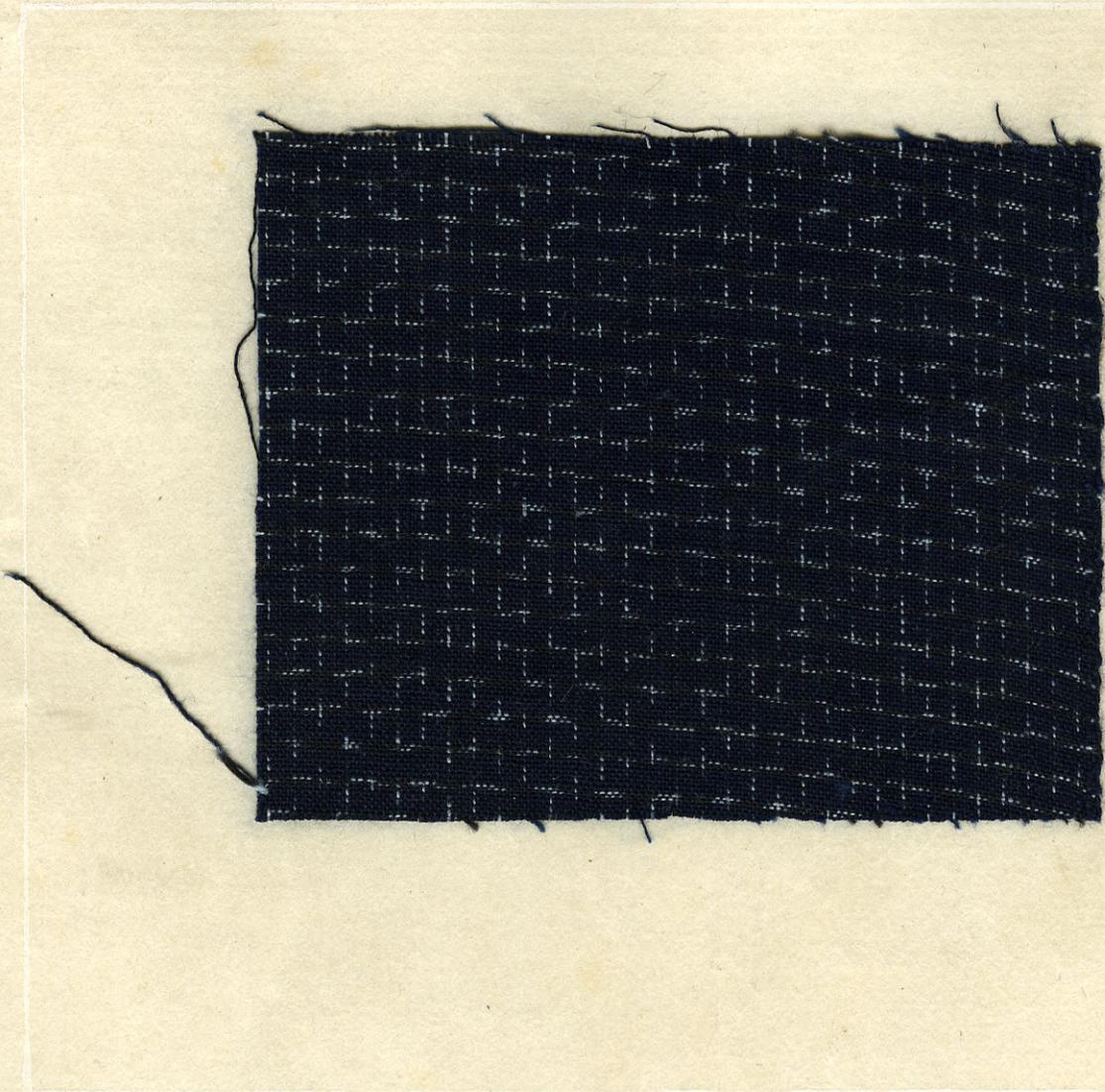
This is one of the so-called "jo-te" Kasuri patterns showing a minute pattern called "Ka-gasuri," which originated in Oshima of Ryukyu and was transmitted to Satsuma in Kyushu. The manner of weaving is similar to that of the Oshima-tsumigi. Dye used is Sukumo-Ai produced in Awa (Shikoku), in light and dark shades. The weave shown is the work of Getsume institute member in Satsuma, Haruaki Togo, who has also created a Kikko pattern in Kon and Suoh dyes.

This weave was awarded the Silver Award at the International Fair in Brussels in 1958.



つきぐさ
TUKIGUSA

二十五、さつまがすり（薩摩紆）
これは紆の上手（じょうて）の作品、所謂「蚊がすり」の細い柄、琉球大島に母体を得て薩摩本土に発達したものである。
織り方は大島紆と同機の手織。染色は阿州産のスクモ藍で、その濃淡を染めている。
薩摩の月明会員、東郷治秋の制作、外に紺と蘇芳で亀甲を織出した柄もあった。
一九五八年。ブラッセル万国博で銀賞に入選している。



24. Yatara-gasuri

Further variations led to the Kasuri weave, with Kasuri (mottled yarn) eventually used in both warp and woof in a single fabric, producing the "Tate-yoko-gasuri" or vertical-and-horizontal Kasuri.

The sample piece is an early form of this Kasuri pattern. There is as unevenness that reveals that the kasuri yarn in the warp is tied into place more or less at random.

The same may be said of the woof kasuri. Hence its name of Yatara-gasuri ("random" kasuri) or Heta-gasuri ("clumsy" kasuri).

A slightly light shade of Ai-zome is used. The yarn is cotton hand-spun according to an old method.



やしや

YASHA

機織は更に変化を求めて「飛白」(かすり)が生まれる。立紵、横紵が織られ、やがて「縦横飛白」(たてよこがすり)が出て来る。
これは、その元始型とでもいふべきもの。相当小さいしぼりをやったものだが、ほとんど出まかせに機に掛け、横も平気で織っている。「へたがすり」とも言ふ。下手が織ったといふのでもあらうか。
藍をやや薄くして織つてある。材糸は古来の手法による手つむぎの綿糸である。

二十四、やたらがすり(やたら紵)



23. Yoro-ke-jima

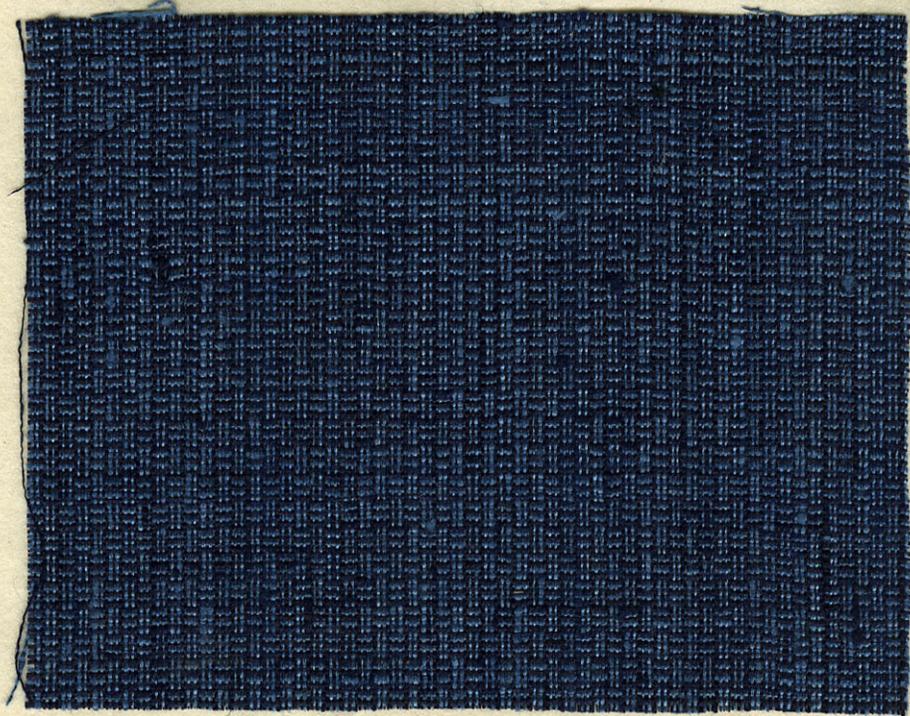
In the Yoro-ke-jima stripe pattern, a strand of Kasuri (mottled yarn) is placed on either side of a pair of warp-threads, creating a mottled-stripe effect. The E-gasuri weave probably derived its initial start from the technique seen in this Yoro-ke-jima.

The black of the warp-thread is of Aizome dye, the yellow of Zakuro dye. The woof utilizes yarn of deep indigo dye. The yarn is cotton, hand-spun in a special ancient method.



ざくろ
ZAKURO

二十三、よろけじま (瞻眼縞)
よろけ縞は、縦糸二本の両側に置く糸を飛白 (かすり) にしたもので、一種のかすり柄である。どんなところから思いついた工作かと、ほゞえましい。こゝから絵紺 (えがすり) も出て来たのであらう。
縦の黒糸は藍染、黄糸はざくろ (石榴皮) で染めている。横糸の染めは藍の深いもの。
この材糸は古法による手紡のもめんである。



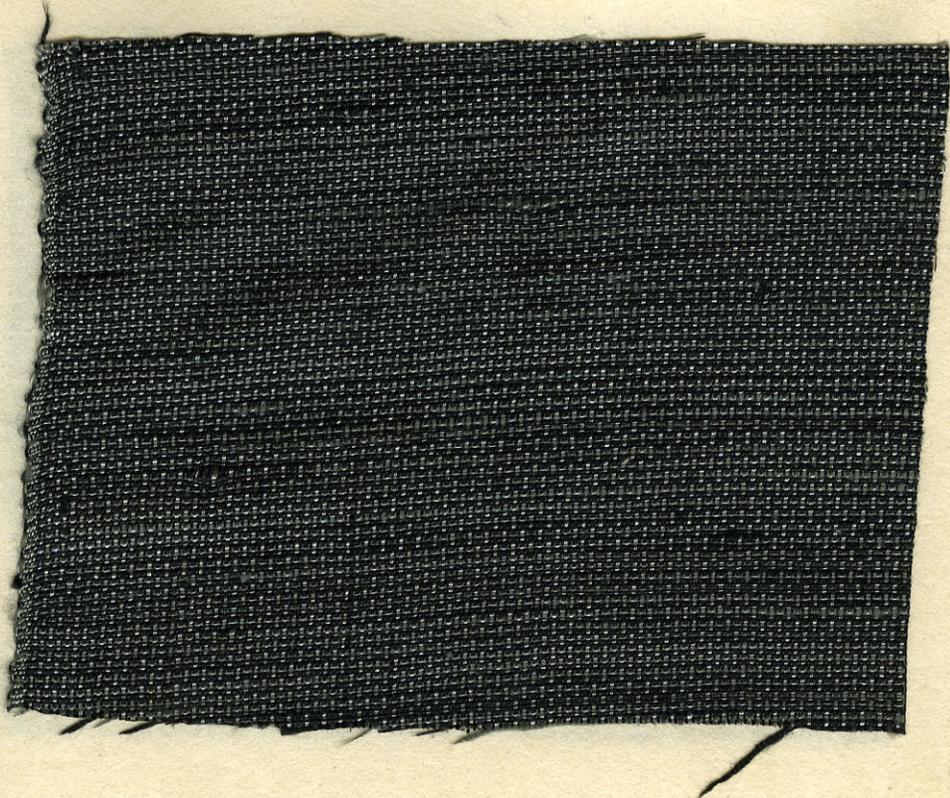
22. Ni-kuzushi

This pattern utilizes the afore-mentioned "kirikae" technique, with two warp-threads each in alternating colors. Both the warp and woof threads are Tsumugi yarn, in other words is a Moro tsumugi weave. The colors are indigo and blue. Because of the yarn's organic cohesiveness, the fabric is extremely durable, and the color takes on a deep gloss. This is used as necktie material, but should prove suitable for suiting also.



あいだま
AIDAMA

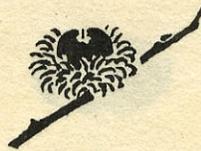
これは、二本づつ、上下の糸を切替えて織ったもので、即ち「ニくずし」である。糸は立横共糸で、もろつむぎだ。この染色は藍と浅黄の二色。全く有機的の結合をするのでとても強靱、底深い色彩でもある。ネクタイ地にも利用されているが、服地としての将来もあらう。



21. Ichi-kuzushi

The desire for novelty in weaves calls for technical experimentation. The Kuzushi pattern utilizes the "kirikae" technique in which the warp threads are cut at both top and bottom instead of looped, and tied to the neighboring yarn of a different color, producing a stripe pattern. When a pair of single threads is alternated, the Ichi-kuzushi pattern is created. A pair of two threads alternated make the Ni-Kuzushi pattern, three the San-kuzushi, and so on. The four thread pattern produces a square.

In the sample piece, grey of Kunugi or Ume dye and black-over-indigo are utilized. Yarn are Tama-ito and Tsumugi.



くぬぎ
KUNUGI

織はやうやく、変化を求める。そこに技法が考究されて行く。
くずし柄は、切替(きりかへ)——立糸の上、下を切り別けて、隣の糸と継いで、縞立したもの、即ち一本づつ替えたのを「一くずし」といふ。二くずし、三くずし、四くずし、八くずしなどある。四くずしで、四角形のものになる。
この染色は、櫟(くぬぎ)染の鼠と、藍下黒とである。糸は、玉糸と紬。