

# Paper making experience

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AIESEC St. Paul's University Local Committee Riho Ikeda

## My thoughts through carrying out the paper making experience

(From Riho Ikeda, the person in charge of this plan)

This time, three foreign students and our AIESEC St. Paul's University local committee members experienced paper making at the traditional Japanese paper studio, Takano-kobo in Higashichichibu-mura, Saitama Prefecture under the corporation of Sukiwa Co. Ltd. The purpose of this project is that experiencing Japanese traditional manufacturing through making Japanese paper from the beginning and understanding essential Japanese culture.

## The event summery

Under the corporation of Sukiwa Co. Ltd, a paper craftsman, Mr. Takano and the people at Takano-kobo, 7 AIESEC St. Paul's University local committee members and 3 foreign students (Bulgarian, Tunisian and German) experienced paper making.

We had a first contact with Sukiwa Co. Ltd. in last October and we asked them to cooperate with this event as part of experiencing Japanese culture for the foreign students that AIESEC is accepting.

We decided to hold this event in this time by matching foreign students' arrival in Japan.

### —Outline—

1. The process of paper making
2. Interview to the craftsman
3. Interview to the foreign students
4. Interview to the students at AIESEC St. Paul's University Local Committee
5. From the manager of this event

## 1. Process of paper making

Day 1

### 1. Scalping the paper mulberry tree

Strip the bark off from raw material tree.



### 2. Removing the dusts

Carefully remove the dusts of barks in clean water.



### 3. Drying the paper mulberry tree



### 4. Boil and pounding

Boiling with soda ash to make it soft and pounding by wooden stick to make it fibrous.



5. Cut in small pieces using naginata beater



Day 2

6. Make paper

Put the fibrous paper mulberry tree and "Neri"-the mucus of hibiscus roots into water and stir them well. "Neri" can make them well-mixed that enable "Nagashi-suki". Lay the paper one on top of another on "Shito".



## 7. Compressing

Using press machine to make "Shito" dehydrated.



## 8. Drying

Put paper on a heated iron plate one by one.



9. Finish!



Put decorations between the paper can make designed paper.



## 2. Interview of craftsman

The questions to Mr. Teizo Takano— a craftsman of paper-making

1. Have you ever taught paper-making to foreign people?

How did you feel after doing that?

I've been to Europe to advertise Washi (the traditional Japanese paper) by the help of subsidy of government. The primary school students there were interested in Origami, and it had a good reputation. Through that, I thought we could get a new business chance by spreading this culture. This is my impression of teaching foreign people.

2. What kind of thing that paper-making is for you?

For me, it is a challenging thing but not so much a purpose in life. Paper is same to artwork. User can find the differences of paper that whether it was made deliberately. I'd like trying hard every day because I want people to think that the paper I made is different from others, and better than others.

3. What do you think we have to do to maintain Japanese traditional techniques?

First, we have to let people know about the value of that. I think it is indispensable for the continuance to make people pay attention on it.

Also, there's a point that have to be improved on the division of labor in Japanese traditional techniques. That is, people on each process of paper-making should hold their prides that they are engaged in traditional techniques. For example, it is said that people who collect the paper stock do not know what it will becomes to. That will be the reason why people in each process still not find out the values of work. From today, I'd like to let people know the whole process of paper-making and protect our tradition together.

4. What do you think if the culture of Washi spread to the world?

I feel happy about that is known to the world and be recognized by registered in the UNESCO. But the culture of Washi is to decline because the number of craftsman is decreasing. The balance of supply and demand is broken, and now demand is well over supply. But I don't want to drop the quality. So I'd like to spread it as its original best quality. The real game starts from now!

—Thank you very much.

### 3. Interview to foreign students

Aref Zayani (Tunisia)

1. How was the experience of paper making?

It was really great experience to know the history of making paper in Japan before 1300 years. I am so appreciate of kindness of all people how work there.

2. What do you think of the traditional Japanese culture?

For my opinion in the Japanese culture, I can say only one word that's really interesting to promote for international level and especially I think Japanese paper is so cool!

3. What do you think after knowing craftsman's mind behind paper making?

I think about this point it's very good to be cooperative with those person's mind to encourage them for continuing this culture. And should like our organization in Japan improve those subject in the Japanese society.

It's very important to make this idea grow for the next generation and work more to make it succeed in the future.

4. Please tell us your impressions about whole process of paper making.

However, my impression for those two days was exalted, all the process from the first step to the end we make finish preparing because in my opinion, if you come from the other regions or any other countries to Japan for the first time it should be like that and you see something awesome like that. Because you don't know finally I can only say it very good impression.



سنة 1300 قبل اليابان في الورق صناعة ختاري لمعرفة حقا رائعة تجربة كانت 1.  
هناك يعملون كيف الناس جميع لطف من ذلك أقدر إنني

ل لغاية مما تع هو العمل هذا

ل لرسم الورق اخ تلاف مع العمل وك يفة الورق على الرسم تصاميم طريق عن سريع كان الوقت  
بأكمله العمل لإنهاء عليها

.... مميزات و ديدج، جدا خاص شيء لي بال نسبة كان لذلك

ل تعزيز لاهتمام جدا مثيره شئ حقا هذا فقط واحدة كلمة أقول أن هو اليابانية الثقافة في رأيي 2.  
جدا نادر هو ال تقل يدي الياباني الورق أع تقد وخاصة الدولي لمس توى

مواصلة على ل تشجيعهم الأشخاص تلك عقل صالح ل تكون جدا جيدة انها النقطة هذه في اع تقد 3.  
المجتمع في تخضع التي العريقة الثقافة هذه تحسن اليابان في منظم تنا لوان وأود ال ثقافة لهذه  
ال ياباني

ال مس تقل في تنجح لجعلها أكثر والعمل القادم لجيل تنمو ال فكرة هذه جعل جدا المهم من

والثقافة، هذه لعراقه الان بهار شدة في كنت فقد جدا جيد انطباع أنه فقط أقول أن أسد تطيع أخيرا 4.  
مطقة أي من سد تأتي كنت إذا رأيي في لأنه النهاية التي البداية من الورق صنع في المراحل جميع اتباع  
فقد حضارتهم اسد تكشاف والمصنع هذا مثل تزور أن يجب الأولى ل المرة اليابان إلى آخر ب لد أي أو أخرى  
النوع هذا من خاصة تجربة لي كانت التي والورق صنع ك يفة علي تعرفت

جزيب لاشكرا

الزياني عارف

Phillipp Charles (Germany)

1. How was the experience of paper making?

The experience was fun, interesting and hard. The most interesting part was making paper with decoration.

2. What do you think of traditional Japanese culture?

It is really interesting. I like the way of life like the bath and the room, and also, Japanese temples are very nice.

3. What do you think after knowing craftsman's mind behind paper making?

The situation in Japan is same in Germany. The old traditional jobs are dying and no one wants to do this. So maybe the government should make these jobs more attractive to young people.

4. Please tell us your impressions about whole process of paper making.

It is very hard work and not easy to learn and it takes a long time to finish the process. And it is important to save these jobs.

1. Wie war die Erfahrung des traditionellen „Papiermachens“ für dich?

Das war eine sehr interessante Erfahrung. Eine sehr alte und spannende Tradition, die auch mit viel harter Arbeit zusammenhängt.

2. Was war der interessanteste und spannendste Moment an diesem Wochenende?

Der interessanteste Moment an diesem Wochenende war die Herstellung des Papiers bzw. der Prozess der vorangeht, um letztendlich das fertige Papier in den Händen zu halten. Dazu sind sehr viele unterschiedliche Schritte notwendig, welche teilweise doch sehr viel Zeit in Anspruch nehmen und teilweise auch mit etwas Spaß verbunden sind. Das Dekorieren bzw. das individuelle Gestalten seines eigenen „Papiers“ war der lustigste und kreativste Teil an diesem Wochenende.

3. Wie denkst du über die traditionelle japanische Kultur?

Die japanische Kultur ist eine sehr alte und vor allem sehr interessante Kultur.

Dieses Wochenende war sehr traditionsreich. Wir erhielten einen kleinen Einblick in das alte Handwerk und in die japanische Kultur. Das traditionelle Hotel sowie der Besuch des alten Tempels und die anschließende Führung haben den Aufenthalt ideal abgerundet.

4. Wie siehst du die Zukunft dieses Handwerks mit all den Problemen der heutigen Zeit?

Immer mehr traditionelle Handwerksberufe stehen vor dem Aus. Das Selbe passiert auch in Europa. Es ist sehr bedauerlich das solche Berufe bzw. Fähigkeiten aussterben. Jedoch ist es die Aufgabe der Regierung, diese Berufe für junge Menschen attraktiver zu gestalten. Dadurch wollen mehr junge Menschen den Beruf erlernen und das Handwerk bleibt weiterhin bestehen. Nur so kann ein altes Handwerk überleben, durch eine gute Perspektive.

5. Wie ist dein Eindruck über dieses Wochenende und dem Prozess der Herstellung von Papier?

Zusammenfassend war dieses Wochenende sehr lehrreich bzgl. der japanischen Kultur und diesem alten Handwerk. Man hat einen Einblick in die Herstellung des Papiers erhalten und konnte dabei selbst Hand anlegen. Es war eine sehr interessante Aufgabe mit teilweise auch eine sehr anstrengenden Arbeitsschritten. Insgesamt hat es viel Spaß gemacht und ich bin froh an diesem Workshop teilgenommen zu haben.

#### 4. Interview to the students at AIESEC St. Paul's University Local Committee

AIESEC St. Paul's University Local Committee

1<sup>st</sup> grade Maasa Abe

This paper making experience made me know how Japanese traditional techniques were deep, and how I didn't know about them. I could understand every process of paper making deeply and why those process was important by experiencing not only with Japanese students, but also with foreign students. Every time the craftsman taught us the process of paper making in Japanese, it was so difficult to translate in English for foreign students, so I felt I was very sorry to them for the poor translation. The most enjoyable process for me and the foreign students was that the last, making paper by hands. Before the last process, we bent down and picked up small dust of wood and those kind of tiring works, so I was awed by the everyday hard work of the craftsman. I'm proud of the fact that paper making was recognized as an important cultural property in Japan. So I want many Japanese people to experience paper making and I want more foreign people to know about it. It was great experience for me to make Japanese traditional paper at Washi no Sato, in Higashi-chichibu. Thank you very much for giving us such a great opportunity.

AIESEC St. Paul's University Local Committee

2nd grade Riho Ikeda

I was so impressed that historical records which were written by Japanese paper are still handed down for thousands of years. I was surprised at the fact that things which are made by nature are stronger and last longer than artificial things, because I had the image that natural things rot early. However, now, many things are made artificially though natural things are high quality and last long. It is very difficult question, but I want to describe two answers. First, I think we tend to buy things by part of the surface of fashion. Second, I think we don't think about a real thing's value because we have little chance to see process making things.

Moreover, I took a chance to think about things familiar to me. Namely, people who think about things again may increase by people who experience papermaking such as this increasing.

Also, I was impressed with men of old's way of thinking that paper is made of woods. Usually, I felt men of old lived with nature while I don't any chance to feel nature. Therefore, I think people can think about the way of making paper from nature bark.

Then, I had a good impression of the word in the interview, Takano who is a papermaking artist. It is that making paper every day is a challenge. He said that he had to do his best to make a paper because a paper is damaged by some cutting corners. I knew that being perfect was difficult because Mr. Takano even said that. From a different point of view, we can say doing things by hands is limited. If we use machines or computers, we can make things. However, it connects to now customers that we don't know how to make things and dump anything after using it briefly. Therefore, I think today many cheap things are produced and destroyed because we don't have any chance to know the process of making. However, we should know people who make things hard. Finally, I took a chance of thinking about connection with making things by hand and nature as I never think in normal university life though this experience. I could think idea in a different point of view about the same problem because I got a view point I never had usually. After this, I want to make use of this learning though activity with foreign studied in AIESEC because there are global problems that traditional industry is declining.

AIESEC St. Paul's University Local Committee

2nd grade Ryosuke Iwata

Two days and one night was a short time for me, but I had a very good experience that we could learn Japanese culture with foreign trainees. However, I could realize that there are many Japanese cultures that Japanese people don't know while we experienced Japanese culture with them. This plan was for foreign people who don't know about Japanese culture get to know the traditional part of that. I could feel making things by hand in Japan was wonderful through this experience of paper-making.

There were many processes of the work to make Japanese paper. First, we barked a tree and removed its fiber. Second, we beaten and crushed the fiber by a stick and made it long. Finally, we made small pieces of it; at last, we could do paper-making. In this way, Japanese paper which spent time to make can use for 1000 years. After we finished making Japanese paper, the workman talked about this. I felt something like a romance to Japanese paper.

Even if foreign trainees couldn't understand Japanese language, I think this workman's thought of making Japanese paper has affected them.

AIIESEC St. Paul's University Local Committee

2nd grade Toru Tsunematsu

I had two changes of my feeling through experiencing paper-making. Those are feelings to things and traditional industry. About the things, I changed my sense of its value. Especially, personally speaking, I started to think they are valuable and important, because in this time, I saw the numerous processes of paper-making and the workman's hard feeling, technological strength with my own eyes. I got known that there are over ten hours and so much troubles to make only one paper.

Today, there are many things consumed wildly. In this, I could see the other side of making things and got a chance to look back on those values and my attitude on that. Also, I could know that traditional industry being in a serious position and had a sense of mission to protect and take over it. I have seen special editions which refer to reality of traditional industry on magazines or TV's documentaries. They were talking about the continued industrial development and that traditional industry can not success if not to be business. I became aware again about problems I knew as mere fact is happened now. I felt there are many problems, for example, there are few workmen compared with supply volume of material. And the worst problem I think is that there is no horizontal connection at each phase. Moreover, I felt a mission that I have to complain about paper-making appeal to young people to protect traditional industry because I experienced paper-making in fact.

From now on, I want to change my attitude to things and contribute to continued development of traditional industry as a person who understood the value and appeal about traditional industry though paper-making.

I'll thank for everyone.

AIIESEC St. Paul's University Local Committee

3rd grade Miyu Kawasuji

What answer do you prepare when being asked that "Please tell me about Japanese culture". Tea ceremony, flower arrangement, manga, animation, J-POP, etc. However, there are few people to answer "Japanese paper" at first. Then, as we become adults, there are few chances to touch Japanese paper and its existence become weaker in Japanese people. Actually, I also never touched Japanese paper for about over 10 years until I went to paper-making. However, paper balloons made by Japanese paper are useful when we introduce foreign people about Japanese people, I think.

In this time, the plan's name was the experience of "the experience of paper-making", but I felt we didn't only get the skill of paper-making. It seems that we were revealed

about what is culture through the experience of two days and one night. In the place where we did paper-making, I felt Japanese paper exists the same sight as the age when Japanese paper was often used. I not only did paper-making for two days, but also felt the nature in Chichibu and I got known that how to use Japanese paper when I saw the temple's necrology which was used Mr. Takano's Japanese paper; What was surprised to me was that the paper has been lasted for 1,000 years. I realized that was a real figure when Japanese paper was used in our lives.

Now, there is no Japanese traditional culture taken firm root Japanese lives. However, originally, culture was closer to the daily lives and made our identities. So, to know those day's figures in its process is to understand culture really.

I think it is more important than buying paper balloons to introduce our culture. I could think such things through the experience of paper-making.

## 5. From the manager of this event

Thanks for Sukiwa.inc we could make this event ,so I would like to talk “How I fell through this event “ from the point of a view a person responsible for this event. This event’s main point was that to make the member of AIESEC and a trainees themselves ’s deep understanding for Japanese culture. From this event I felt the difficulty of making foreign student known Japanese culture.

First of all, I realized Japanese ourselves did not understand enough the essence of Japanese culture, so I felt it’s impossible for making foreign people known it.

From this event’s main point, we can not achieve an initial purpose “make trainee’s deep understanding for Japanese culture” .But it was worthwhile experience for both the Japanese member of AIESEC and trainees.

Because I felt I could experience the real Japanese culture. Compared with some other cultural experience event focused on foreign tourists(sometimes it is not actual Japanese culture), this event was very good experience in the point that we could tough the real Japanese Kamisuki(paper-making).

Even if foreigner can’t understand the essence of this event, this event was very good chance to draw a gap between actual Japanese culture and foreign people’s “Japanese culture”.

Thanks for all Sukiwa,inc and paper studio TAKA ,and I want to try make like this “approach essence event” from now on.

AIESEC in Japan

St. Paul's University Local Committee Riho Ikeda