Echizen Washi ~The Legend of Fukui's traditional craft~

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It's obvious to anyone, that even in a society filled with screens and technology, that without paper, we would not be where we are today. Echizen Washi has helped shape Fukui into the place it is today, and likewise it has left an influence on Japan.

Earlier this year I was able to visit the birthplace of paper in Fukui - Echizen Washi Sato. The village that brought the world Echizen Washi is in the mountains, so even though it was a hot summer day when I went, and the cicadas were chirping, it feels much cooler in the village than Fukui City. The people in the Echizen Washi village (Imadate) are very friendly, and most if not all their work is focused on paper making. While I observed how Echizen Washi was made, the older women in the village gladly chatted together and explained the process to me while they worked – cleaning and taking out any impurities from the fiber that would be used for paper. I could truly feel how important Echizen Washi was to them. Their ancestors’ ancestors must have also made paper, I wondered to myself.

There’s a legend that I heard about for the first time while I was at the village too. 1,500 years ago, if not more, a goddess suddenly appeared upstream from the village river. Because the village was in the mountains and surrounded by forest, the village people could not grow rice. After seeing this, the goddess took pity on them, and noticing that the village was blessed with fresh and clean water, decided to teach them the art of making paper. After teaching the villagers the art of making paper, the goddess mysteriously disappeared. The villagers, however, dedicated a shrine to her and called it “Okamoto Otaki Shrine”. I visited this shrine while I was in the village and was immensely impressed by its legend and unique architecture.

This legend is a treasure kept alive by the people, and even in the village itself there is another “living treasure” –Ichibe Iwano, a paper artisan who has become a National Living Treasure of Japan. I have never met anyone so passionate and proud about their artwork before. If you get a chance to visit the village, I definitely recommend making your own paper, visiting the shrine, and stopping to talk to Mr. Iwano too.
Hell! Fukui Friendship Ambassadors.  
It has been over four months since I came to Fukui in April. Fukui crossed the muggy rainy season, and it was summer.

On the weekend in early June, I went to Tojinbo, a famous tourist destination in Fukui prefecture, and wanted to go see the beauty of the Sea of Japan. Of course you had been to Tojinbo, but I think that the way people feel is different. Here I would like to introduce you to Tojinbo's journey that I experienced.

In general, there are two transportation modes of train and bus to go to Tojinbo from Fukui city. I heard that the scenery on the way is very beautiful. I decided to go by my own bicycle.

I headed north along the Kuzuryu River from Fukui city. In the green countryside, Seedlings are blown off by the breeze, There are blue sky and white clouds on the surface of the water, high mountains where clouds are far away, and occasionally the hawk spinning in the sky.

When I came to Mikuni Port, the fishing boat was quietly berthing in the harbor. When I climbed the slope further north along the coast, I could see Japan Sea. After a while passing through the mountain path, I finally saw the sign that "Welcome to Tojinbo" is written. For two hours of continuous bikeride, I finally arrived at Tojinbo.

When I walked to the beach with a bicycle set, there was a shopping area first. They sell mainly seaweed there. In addition to the Echizen Crab and the grilled squid, there were also many seafood unknown to the name. Please be careful when you shop here! Sea birds are aiming for your hand! Apparently, food is instantly robbed by seabirds and there is no choice but to give up.

Another 50 meters walk, you can see the scenery of Tojinbo. Tojinbo's attraction is where columnar rock formations (columnar joints) formed by erosion of intense waves are spreading for many years. There are only three such terrains all over the world. Sightseeing can climb up the cliff. The wind blown from the front, where the waves
rocked the rock like madly, and it was rolling up the wave splash where the foot was 2.30 m below.

Origin of Tojinbo's name, there is a fierce sad story like the wave that strikes this rock wall. (In general, the following old story is transmitted as the origin of Tojinbo)

During the Heian period, there were monks in Heisenji Temple of Okeutsu (mountains in the eastern part of Fukui Prefecture). There was a monk named "Tojinbo" in that. "Tojinbo" was a bad monk who struggles and does everything bad. Because "Tojinbo" repeatedly went wrong without permission, other monks were in trouble.

One day, the monks of Heisenji Temple consulted and started drinking on the rocks, watching "Tojinbo" on the beachfront. On that day the weather was nice and the scenery with a good view helped, alcohol started to drink, "Tojinbo" also started to sleep as soon as it got drunk. One of the monks who saw it pushed "Tojinbo" from the cliff into the sea. The priests came to this place for the purpose of pushing "Tojinbo" from the ocean. It was "Tojinbo" that I noticed, but it fell from the cliffs in a blink of an eye. Then the black cloud swirled in the sky that the sun was shining until then, heavy rain and thunder struck the ground, the earth trembled violently. It was a grudge of "Tojinbo".

Ever since, at that time severe wind blew, rough waves in the sea, thunderstorms headed to Heisenji Temple.

Fishermen who have been unable to ship every season at this time consulted with the elders Zuiun Clan in Fukui Tokoji temple to sink this sting. Zuiyun is "好図見性到心清、迷則平泉不太平。北海漫々風浪靜、東尋何敢礙舟行" (Why do you bother Heisenji Temple though you trained to train the spirit? I wrote a poem that "Sea of Japan seems to be calm in the beginning, why does" Tojinbo "disturb the navigation of the ship) and sunk into the sea. Then, it is said that the battle of "Tojinbo" that had been continuing every year ceased on this day. And this place became named Tojinbo.

The beauty of Tojinbo is not limited to cliffs. There is an island called Oshima. From the coast to the island there is a red vermillion bridge. Crossing the bridge, trees are deep forests. Outside the island are the blue Japan Sea and the rocky beach, the old trees that are likely to protrude into the sky, birds singing along with the sound of the waves, is exquisite view of the Echizen coast.

Tojinbo has a combination of exquisite views of sunshine, raging waves and cliffs. This superb view was as beautiful as I forgot my tiredness who ran 56km.
Have you discovered the charm of Tojinbo as I saw it?
Please come to Fukui to see a spectacular view of Tojinbo again.

【 Echizen Tojinbo Cliffs  painted by Liu 】

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