

Papers for Fish printing



Traditional “rice” papers

The traditional paper used for gyotaku is “rice “ paper. A more proper name might be handmade or oriental paper, because rice paper is not made of rice. One early type of paper was made from the inner bark fibers of the rice paper plant, (*Tetrapanax papyifer*), a tree native to Taiwan. These sheets of “rice paper” were brought to Europe, along with other Asian crafts, along trade and exploration

routes. Europeans mistakenly thought that they were actually made from rice and the name has carried over to present time. Fine handmade papers from Asia, collectively known as “washi”, are made primarily of the inner bark of three plants; kozo (*Broussonetia papyrifera*, the paper mulberry), gampi (*Wikstroemia diplomorpha*), and mitsumata (*Edgeworthia chrysantha*). Each has different qualities., although most “rice paper” on the market today is made from kozo-paper mulberry. It tends to be smooth, white or off white, and slightly translucent. The fiber used for these papers comes from the inner bark of the plants. These long fibers, when intertwined, give these papers their great wet strength and flexibility that make them excellent for receiving the gyotaku image.

Although Japanese “washi” is traditional, there are a great many papers available today, not only from Japan, but also Thailand, China, the Philippines, India, and Nepal. . The very common kozo fiber may also be blended with fibers from other plants, or with sulphite (wood pulp) from which our Western papers are made. Another fiber which is lovely for gyotaku is the lokta (*Daphne papyracea*) from Nepal, which grows at high elevations.

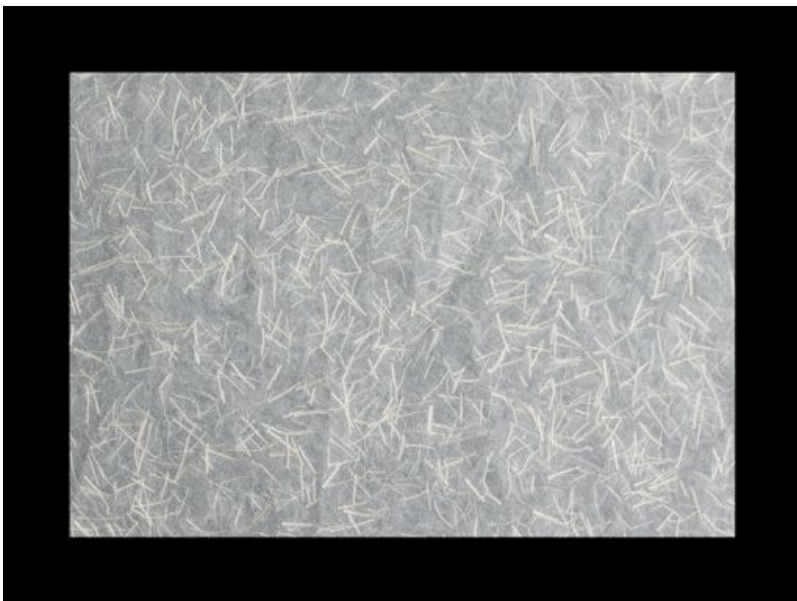
Many contemporary “rice” papers are dyed, or have images printed on them , or have inclusions of flowers or plants parts. Often these special features of a paper will act to serve as a background or create an interesting effect for the gyotaku. One word of caution: the dyes used in many papers are not lightfast, and fade easily under direct sunlight. Many art supply, college bookstores, craft and and paper stores sell rice paper, and they can also be ordered through specialty companies listed in the supply source. Prices will vary with manufacturer/ maker, although the papers from Thailand are a good value. The kozo, chiri, and unryu papers tend to be quite reasonable.

The following papers work well for gyotaku.



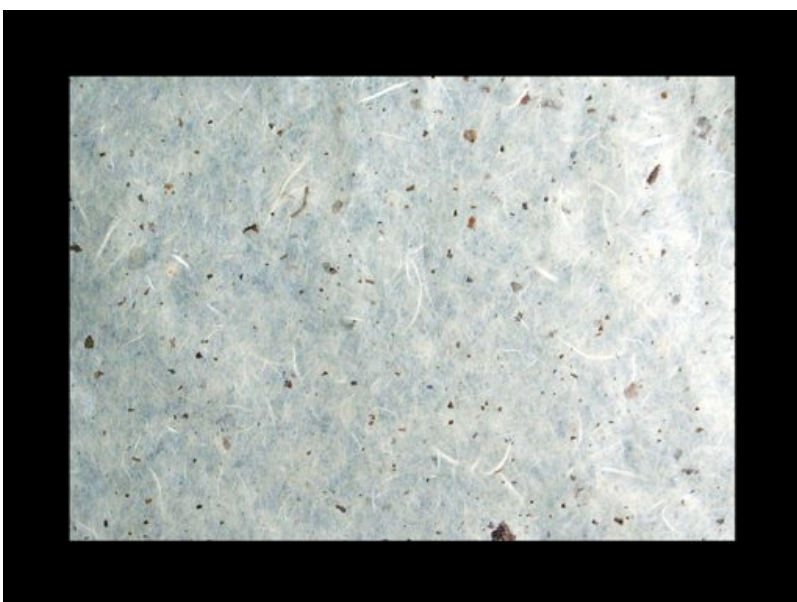
Unryu

Unryu, made of kozo, or kozo and sulphite, has many variations. Meaning “cloud dragon paper” in Japanese, it contains long strands of fiber that create texture and contrast. There are many makers and weights of unryu paper. Popular “Thai unryu” is available in many colors and weights. Be cautious, however, when using a colored paper, as the dyes are often not lightfast.



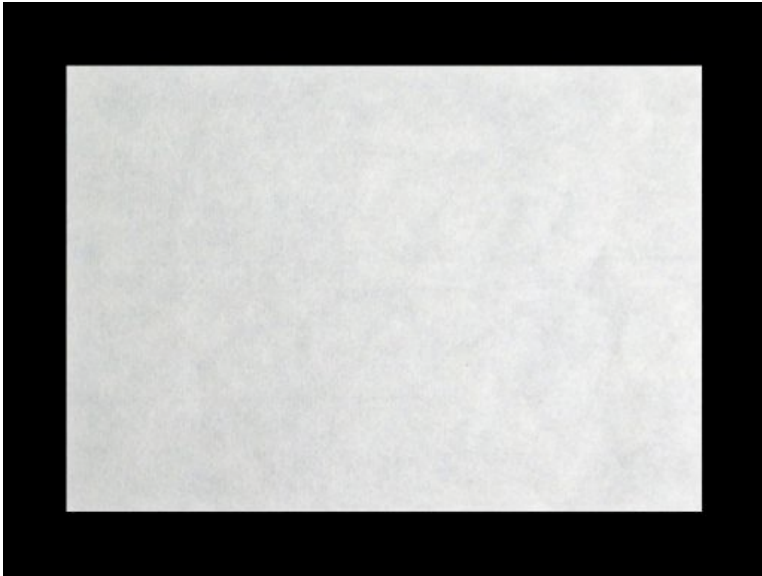
Kinwashi

This is a lovely white or cream colored translucent paper machine made from manila fibers. There are straw-like fibers on one side; the other side is smooth. Kinwashi takes ink very well and can be used in collage work because it tears easily. Available in both individual sheets and roll.



Chiri

Identified by its tan color and dark specks of bark, chiri is made of a combination of kozo and sulphite pulp. Depending on the maker, there may be a few to many bark inclusions in the paper. Good for gyotaku, especially for bottom fish as it resembles a sandy substrate. Available in both individual sheets and roll.



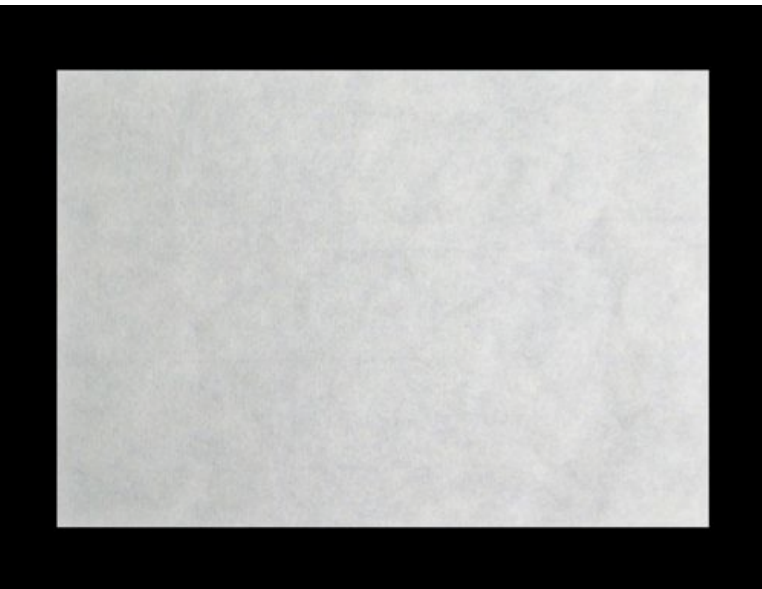
Hosho

Hosho is a very popular Japanese paper. Made of sulphite pulp, this very white paper is soft and extremely receptive to ink. It may be lightly sized, and folds well over the fish. It is heavier than other oriental papers and the fish cannot be seen through it during the printing process. Hosho may tear when wet.



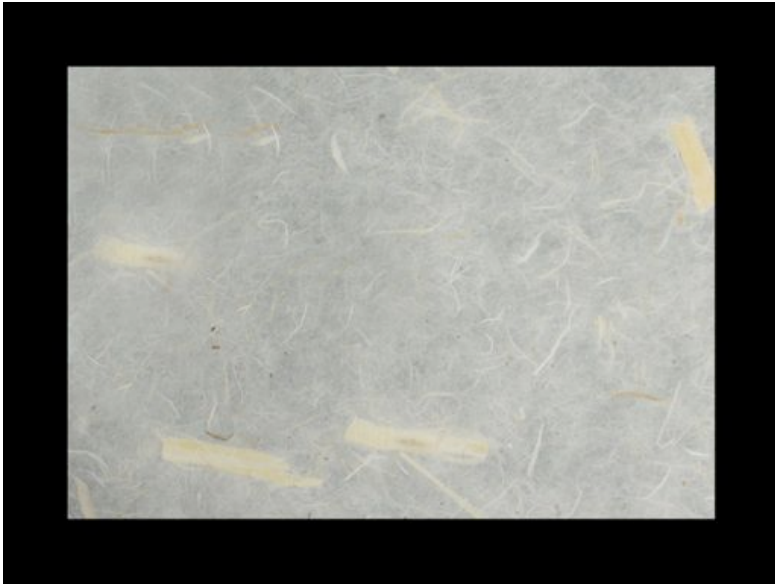
Kozo

Kozo is made from the bark fiber of the paper mulberry, or kozo tree. The fibers are both long and flexible, making it very suitable for gyotaku. It can be found in most art stores, and is sold in both roll and individual sheet. Specific features will vary with the maker. Kozo may also be colored, although it is best to ensure the colorfast qualities of any paper before printing.



Mulberry

Mulberry paper is handmade in Japan from a mixture of kozo fiber and sulphite pulp. Its name comes from the paper mulberry from which the kozo fiber is taken. It has a translucent quality and is flexible and possesses great wet strength. Mulberry is sold by the sheet, in pads, and in rolls.



Kozo unryu chiri

As the name implies, this Thailand made paper has the several distinctive features. It is made from the fibers of the kozo tree, and has strands of fibers (unryu) and bark chips (chiri) throughout. The kozo fibers give it good wet strength, and this is one of my favorite papers for gyotaku. It is somewhat translucent and takes the ink very well, however, some of the larger fiber inclusions may interfere with fish features.



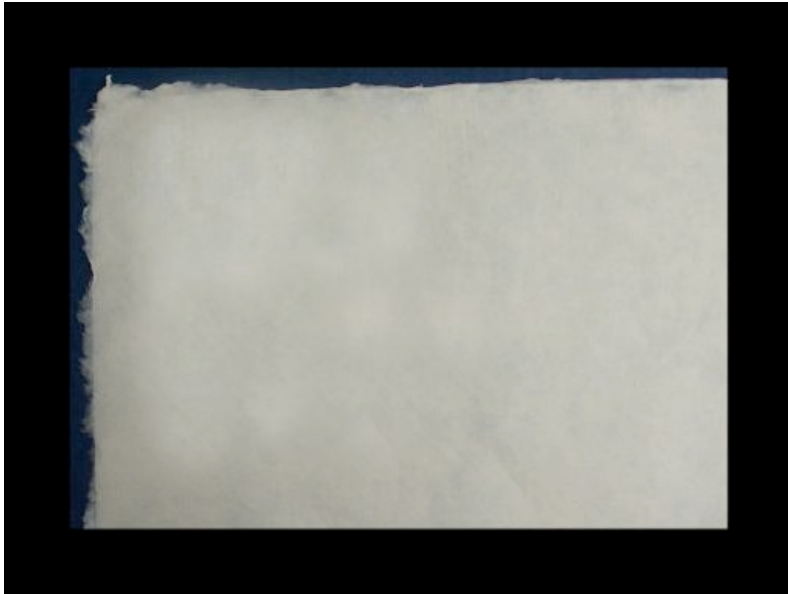
Okawara

This is a classic Japanese paper and is made from a combination of kozo fiber and sulphite pulp. It has a visible laid line pattern, is both soft and supple, and folds easily around the body of the fish. It is made in sheets up to six feet long and has a dark cream color.



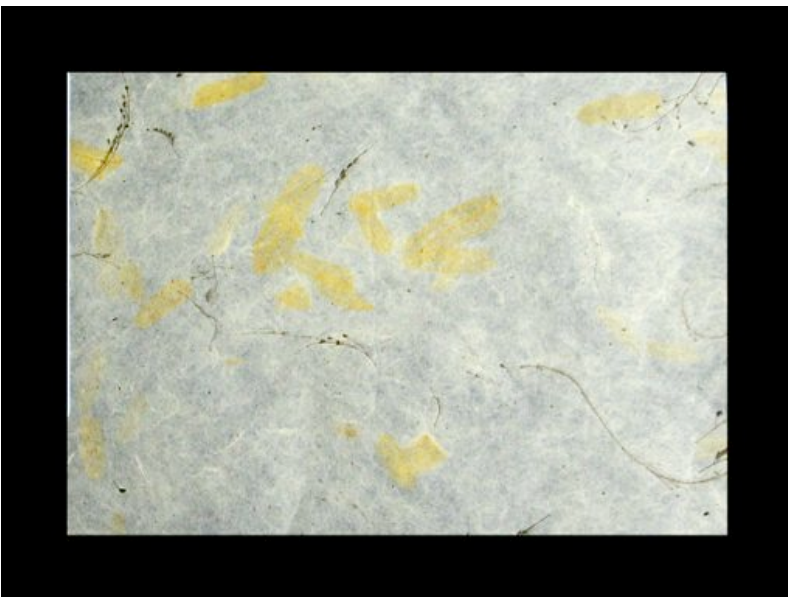
Lokta Natural

This paper from Nepal is a wonderful for gyotaku. Relatively new in the US market, lokta, sometimes called Daphne paper, is made from a plant that grows at elevations of 6500-9500' in the Himalyas. It has been made into paper for over 1200 years. The fibers are long, and strong. The paper is silky to the touch and takes a good impression because it molds to the fish. It is similar in texture to the Japanese mitsumata fiber. Lokta does tend to stretch so wet mounting is recommended.



Kitikata

Kitikata has a delicate laid pattern, a natural off-white color, and four deckled edges. Handmade in Japan from gampi, it has great wet strength, takes ink well and does not tear when stretched around the fish. Its smooth surface picks up the details of the fish body with precision.



Tamarind

Delicate leaves from the Tamarind tree are dyed and scattered along with bits of field grass against a lighter background. This machine-made, mulberry-based paper from Thailand is made in many pastel shades, has good wet strength, and takes ink well. Some printers may not enjoy the numerous inclusion of leaves.



Seikishu

This is a classic Japanese paper made of a combination of kozo and sulphite. It is thin and wispy, but has a great wet strength, with a pronounced laid pattern. It is so thin that the fish is visible through it during the printing process, and is a good choice for the gyotaku artist. However, colors will not be as intense as in a heavier paper.