

Bishu as a Textile Production Center

It is said that the region name “Bishu” (尾州) originated from Owari-no-kuni (尾張国), the name of an ancient administrative division mentioned in a book written in the late seventh century, when Japan was ruled based on the legal codes called rituryo. Bishu denotes the region mainly covering the northwestern part of Aichi Prefecture, and Hashima and Kakamigahara Cities in Gifu Prefecture. The Kiso River bordering Ichinomiya City in Aichi Prefecture and flowing into Ise Bay, and the fertile Nobi Plain formed along the river have contributed to the prosperity of the region's textile industry by providing favorable soil for mulberry fields (necessary as sources of feed for silkworms producing silk fiber) and cotton fields, and soft river water suitable for dyeing and finishing textiles. Making good use of this favorable environment, the textile industry in the region has adapted to changing social situations, switching its main material from linen through silk to cotton during its history. Since the early Showa Era (around the mid-1920s to the 1930s), the production of worsted and woolen textiles has flourished in the region. Renowned as a leading production center for worsted and woolen textiles in the world, together with the Biella area in Italy, Bishu currently accounts for about 70% of the worsted and woolen textile production in Japan, and enjoys the status as the country's largest worsted and woolen textile production center both in name and reality. Since Japan entered the Heisei era in 1989, the region has further grown into a comprehensive textile production center, manufacturing not only worsted and woolen textiles as its main products but also textiles and knitting that mix wool with cotton, linen, silk, and high-class synthetic fibers. With an integrated production system in charge of the entire production process from thread production through dyeing and weaving to finishing, the Bishu textile industry produces a wide variety of high-quality, tasteful material even in small lots.



Japan Worsted & Woollen Weavers Association

The Japan Worsted & Woollen Weavers Association (JWWA), founded in November 1954, is a nationwide umbrella association mainly comprising local worsted and woolen weavers' associations or cooperatives around Japan, which textile manufacturers based in Bishu, a leading production center for worsted and woolen textiles in the country, also belong to.

- Name: Japan Worsted & Woollen Weavers Association (JWWA)
 - Founded: November 26, 1954
 - Legal basis: Act on the Organization of SME Associations
 - Activity scope: Nationwide
 - Tasks:
 1. To disseminate information
 2. To conduct surveys and research
 3. To give members guidance on improving management and technologies
 4. To create new demand
 5. To foster human resources
 6. Other
- Representative: Chief Director Takao Hayakawa, President Hayazen Textile Co., Ltd.



Five Bishu-based Worsted and Woolen Weavers' Associations or Cooperatives

★Bisai area / Bisai Woolen Industry Association

Covering the western Owari area centered around Ichinomiya City, this cooperative has a larger membership compared with other cooperatives in the Bishu region. To support members, the cooperative conducts a questionnaire survey concerning market conditions every month, compiles the data, and reports the amount of orders received and other survey results for members' use. Moreover, Ichinomiya City is home to the Tanabata Festival, which is counted among Japan's three great Tanabata festivals. Since the textile industry is deeply rooted in the local communities, the name of the Tanabata Festival in Ichinomiya City is capped with the term “Festival for Gratitude to Textiles.”

★Bihoku area / Bihoku Woolen Industry Association

The Bihoku Textile Network, comprising many unique companies along the Kiso River, is enthusiastically involved in various activities, such as tackling the challenge of constructing a website-based product distribution system, and developing new materials through industry-academia cooperation, with the aim of becoming an organization with vitality that can sensibly grasp and flexibly respond to changing trends. In particular, the B2B/B2C website B.T Net, launched by nine member textile manufacturers on May 21, 2010, is aimed at offering Bishu-made material to a wider range of people.

★Tsushima area / Tsushima Woolen Fabrics Industrial Association

Since Harukichi Kataoka in Tsushima succeeded in producing pure worsted and woolen textiles in 1905, the Tsushima area has developed as a production center for fabric for formal wear. The area is currently home to many companies with the ability to handle various projects for men's and women's apparel fabrics and to meet all kinds of needs using their vast experience and great expertise. The association also has a large percentage of specialist companies involved in commissioned weaving work. These companies boast an organizational structure comprising expert artisan teams that are up to the challenge of meeting difficult orders. Furthermore, the association conducts various activities to maintain weaving machines, which can be thought to be as important as life itself to artisans, including meetings for training, and demonstrating repair work.

★Nagoya area / Nagoya Woolen Industry Cooperative

This organization mainly consists of major companies supplying high-quality materials to the market. Taking advantage of its location in the downtown area, which attracts many consumers, the organization focuses on providing members with information useful for developing their business activities, including information about fashion trends and business trends in the textile industry. The organization has members dealing with not only dress fabrics but also interior materials, interlining, and the like.

★Gifu area / Gifu Prefecture Woolen Industry Cooperative

The area is home to many companies that are experts in natural composite materials for women's clothing, targeting the domestic market for high-quality women's clothing appealing to career women and housewives. Team GIFU, formed by young members, participates in exhibitions. The Textile Material Center, founded by this organization, exhibits valuable samples of fabrics produced by companies from various production centers around Japan, and has a collection of 100,000 items. The center, designed to help apparel designers and textile manufacturers plan and develop their products, offers them consultation concerning materials. In addition, the organization devotes its efforts to fostering human resources by accepting dressmaking college students as trainees and offering them plant tours, lectures on materials, and the like. Selling member companies' fabrics in stock is another of the organization's activities.

