

## CHIYOGAMI

We Japanese have the custom to use cloth or paper when wrapping goods. This custom has existed for generations. Japanese believe that the most important thing of wrapping (and decorating) is to put your whole heart in it.

There are many sorts of beautiful papers called chiyogami in Japan. Chiyogami has been used for a very long time.

The original patterns used on these papers are crane, turtle, pine, bamboo, and plum blossoms (*ume*). These patterns are considered to be symbols of fortune and long-livety.

Some say that the origin of the word "chiyo" comes from "Chiyoda Castle" which stood in the center of old Edo or from a princess called Chiyohime, who loved this paper.

Chiyogami in its early days was used at the court in Kyoto, to write "sho" (calligraphy) or "waka" (classical Japanese poetry). As it was too expensive, only rich people could use this kind of paper. In the Edo period (from the 17th century to 19th century) it was mass-produced by print woodcut and became popular among ordinary people.

Today chiyogami is used for a variety of handicrafts, such as covers for small boxes or kimonos for paper dolls. It is not only charming but also supple and durable enough to endure being cut, folded and pasted.

I often make pendants and brooches for my friends. It is wonderful that a piece of chiyogami paper can transform itself into a lot of different things.

My favorite occupation is spending the whole day with touching chiyogami papers. I cherish the beautiful colors and patterns. I never get tired of chiyogami, no matter how many times I see it.

There is a traditional culture of paper in Japan. I want to enjoy this fantastic world and I do want to introduce the charm of chiyogami papers to people not only in Japan but throughout the world.