

## A Traditional craft, Glass Hand Ball, a ball in a glass bottle

We succeed in making our town's traditional craft work, which was born gorgeous and delicate in nature. It is a ball (Temari) made of thread in a round shaped bottle.

The origin of Temari comes from a girl's toy, which her Grandmother made with threads after they wove cloth for a Kimono. Eventually, this craft work became a popular leisure time activity for castles maids. This developed into a competition in terms of the techniques and complexity to make such a beautiful ball.

Seeing Temari through a round shaped glass symbolizes the wish for a peaceful and well-rounded family. "Being able to see inside clearly" is a homonym to "seems to have good relationship" in Japanese. 'Naka yoku mieru'. Thus, glass hand balls were to become special gifts given at both wedding gifts.

Little is known about why and when this craft began in the town. The oldest ones were in Nagano area. The present owner's grandmother had brought two of them as wedding gifts.

We investigated the origin of the glass hand ball. It is likely that it began around 1840, at the end of Edo era. In those days, planting cotton was popular and people could get the cotton threads for Temari easily. Besides, sewing lessons using cotton cloth were widespread many areas of Japan during this period.

Such glass hand balls require both a special bottle and special technique to make properly. It is believed that only advanced disciples were masters of such skills. Over time, it has become increasingly difficult to teach this craft work in sewing lessons to girls. Private lessons were replaced by public school educations, which did not encourage this craft work. The late Mrs. Hiro Aoki was the last person who succeeded in learning the original skill from her teacher. In December 1974 of the next year when she died, we established an association, 'Hozon-kai', so as to continue the teaching and development of this traditional hand craft work method.

These techniques are now available to the masses should they have desired to learn how to make a glass hand ball. The association holds a workshop once a month. Also, Junior high school student's could partake in handcraft classes as part of their non-compulsory studies at school.

Moreover, such efforts were accepted and it was specified as the Shiga traditional handicraft in March, 2011 based on regulation of the 4<sup>th</sup> article of a Shiga traditional handicraft specification outline.



Echigawa bin-zaiku Temari  
(Aisho Town of Shiga Prefecture)

'Echigawa' users kanji-characters, which includes 'Love' and 'Knowledge' in its name. Although we exist in a rapidly developing and busy materially driven world, there is, and should always be, a place for remembering the concepts of love and knowledge. They are without question, even today, necessary for our meaningful lives. A glass hand ball is the very symbol of people's love.

The designs of ball were officially registered in June 1997. Aisho is town of tradition and craft work, and we hope that this old tradition is still well known all over Japan.

(Translated by Kazue Komiyama and Scott Rodger)