

OBON 2015

Returning personal items to their families.
個人の遺留品をご遺族の元へ



EVERYONE HAS A FAMILY
誰でも一人一人に家族がいます

Seventy Years — 1945 - 2015

For the past several years OBON 2015 planned to participate in the ceremony that recognizes the end of the war between Japan and America. Our hope was centered on highlighting the peace and reconciliation between families of these two nations.

To our utter surprise, after numerous conversations with Japanese-American organizations, the American government, politicians and businessmen we learned there is no such ceremony or occasion between the two nations.

OBON 2015 is working to organize some event between the people of America and Japan that acknowledges the 70th anniversary of the end of the destructive war and pledges peace and reconciliation for the future through strong family connections.

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Thank you for your Support

OBON 2015 apologizes for this late newsletter. We have been in Japan on business, but took the opportunity to return back to Japan four flags that had been sent to OBON 2015.



Soldier's name: Mr. Toshio Shimoda. Returned to his brothers and relatives in Aomori prefecture.



Soldier's name: Mr. Yoshiharu Aoyama
Returned to his nephew in Aichi prefecture.



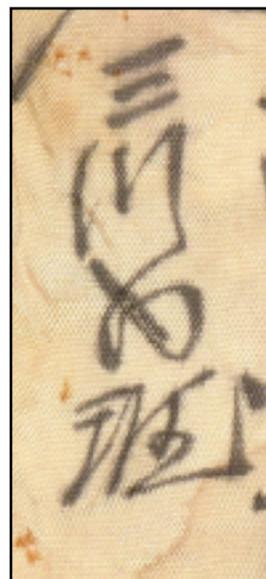
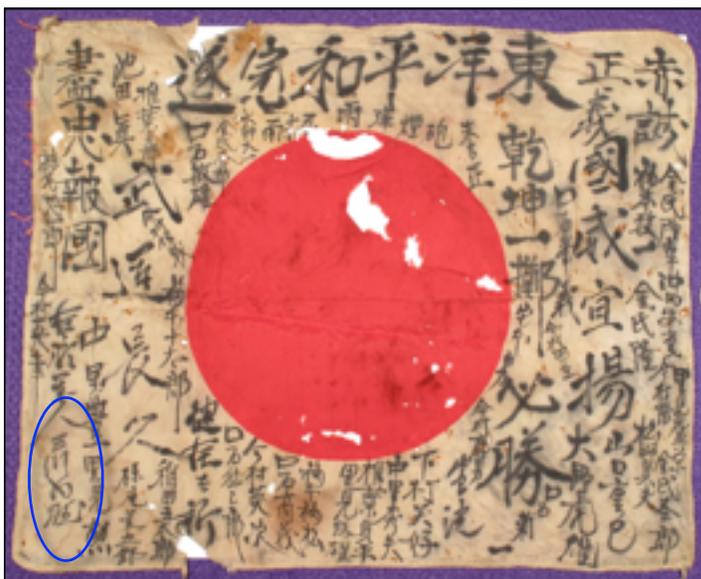
Soldier's name: Unknown. Returned to the community of **Mikawachi** in Nagasaki prefecture.



Soldier's name: Mr. Akiyoshi Ito
Returned to his wife in Mie prefecture.

“MIKAWACHI”

O BON 2015 received a very unusual flag several months ago. It was tiny, measuring approximately the size of a standard sheet of paper. It seemed impossible for us to be able to trace this flag back to its home, especially since it lacked a specific soldier’s name.



“Mikawachi”

However the flag contained the name “Mikawachi” which gave our scholars something to pursue. With nearly forty signatures inscribed on the flag we hoped our scholars could find at least one person who would remember this item.

In the following months we learned that “Mikawachi” was a tiny village in the Nagasaki Prefecture, located approximately 20 miles outside the city of Sasebo.

Eventually we connected via telephone with one citizen from the village. As news of the existence of this flag spread around the town we were informed that many of the names were known within this community and that they would very much appreciate having this item returned to them. Upon hearing of our visit to Japan the citizens of Mikawachi invited O BON 2015 to personally return the flag.

To our surprise we found this particular village happened to be a famous enclave of porcelain artisans. They became famous hundreds of years ago for their pure white wares, which are achieved by crushing special rock into a powder, mixing this into clay and then firing this material at temperatures reaching 2,100°F.



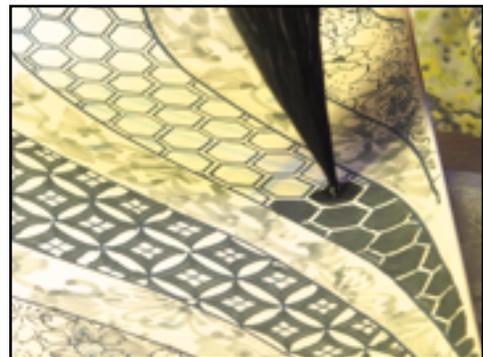
MIKAWACHI



Mikawachi fills a narrow valley at the foot of several hills. Their modern kilns are gas-fired, but a few 60 foot tall brick chimneys remain from the era of wood-fired kilns.



The enormous porcelain kilns had interior dimensions of 14 feet by 9 feet, with a ceiling nine feet high (photo above) They averaged one firing every six weeks.



All work continues to be done by hand. These techniques have been passed down from father to son for the past 15 generations.



The porcelain artisans of Mikawachi are proud of their outstanding quality. This small but famous village has produced pieces of art acquired by museums for their permanent collections. But, a higher honor was achieved three generations ago when a piece of their porcelain was received by the Emperor's son.



MIKAWACHI



This unusual flag arrived in Mikawachi on January 8th and was received in the Community Center with a great deal of interest. Ninety year old Mr. Imamura (above) identified practically every name, including his two elder brothers. Three other local artisans (left) were very pleased to see their father's signatures.



The local media from Nagasaki and Sasebo were very interested in this story. Two television stations and two newspapers sent crews to cover the return.



The Yosegaki Hinomaru was immediately framed and will be kept in the the local community center. Adorned with names of so many local families this flag instantly become a community heirloom.



The Mikawachi Community Center is adorned with enormous porcelain panels that illustrate the porcelain manufacturing process as it was first done by their ancestors in the early 1600's.

For a Video go to [YouTube](#), search **OBON 2015** and then search **"A Yosegaki Hinomaru Returns to Mikawachi"** (Length 2:28)

The Scholar's Corner

This exceptional flag came to **OBON 2015** from Hattiesburg, Mississippi. We were surprised to see a square-shaped flag, which is exceptionally unusual. The lack of any obvious first and last name would clearly make this a challenge that only our scholars could resolve.

The mention of a police station "Hachiya" was easily traced to the city of Fukuoka. However, the station no longer exists, replaced by a station with the name Toyomae.

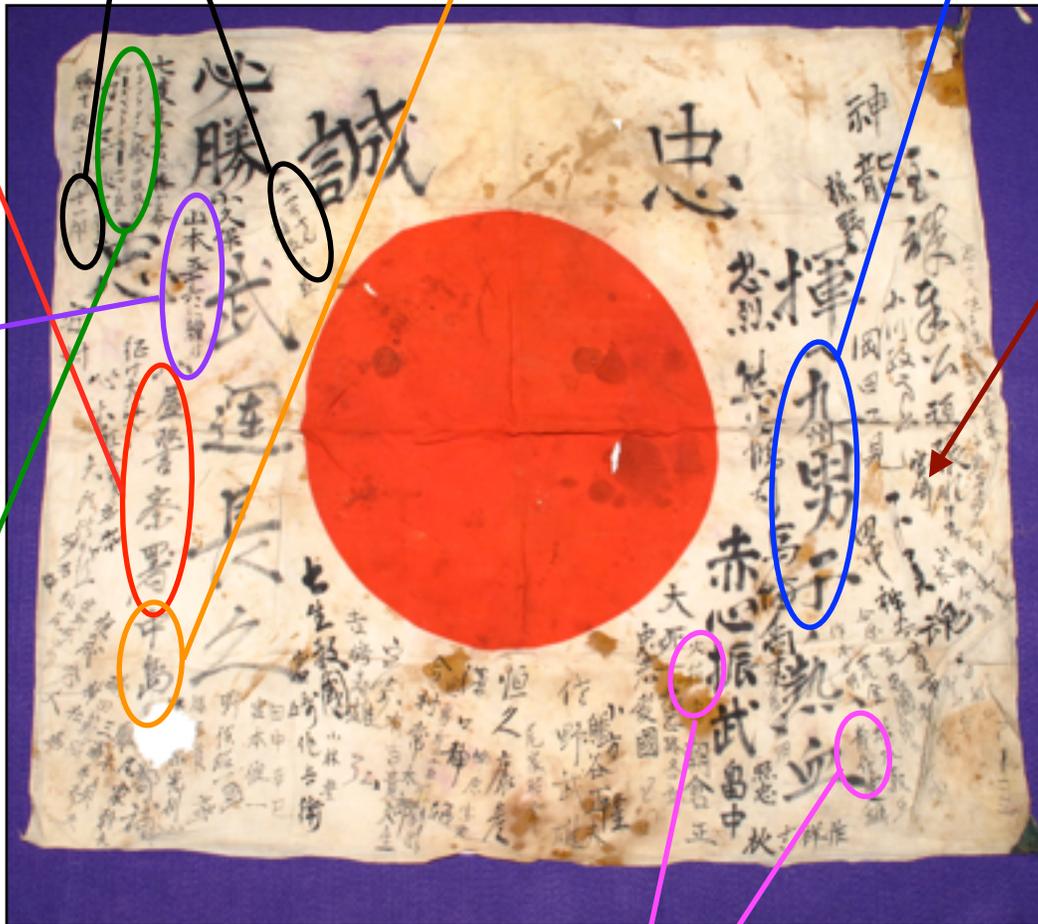
The mention of "Kyushuu-man" gave the scholars confidence this flag originated on the island of Kyushu.

Here the scholars see what they think is a first name...but not sure whether the name is "Shin-ichiro" or "Aki-ichiro"

The name "Nakajima" is being searched now within the police department archives. He possibly created this flag and was possibly a policeman.

The mention to "Follow Isoroku Yamamoto" suggests this flag was created prior to April 1943.

The reference to Churchill and Roosevelt, and about making them cry strongly suggests the flag was created between December 1941 and Spring of 1942.



The flag came to OBON 2015 from the family of a pilot who flew in the U.S. Army Air Corps, 43rd Bomb Group of the 65th Bomb Squadron.

He had exchanged it for a souvenir rifle which he thought would be too difficult to carry home.

The family wrote:
"We, as his family, wish to have the flag returned to the Japanese Soldier's family, so that they may have some part of him with them. We hope that this will bring some healing and peace to the family."

Here OBON 2015 scholars see a last name they had rarely encountered. It appears to be the name "Aosa" and "Hibako". Archived records allowed the scholars to trace this name back to the city of Fukuoka, and it appears to be grouped in the vicinity of the neighborhood of the former Hachiya police department. Further research will hopefully reveal a family member.

Contact OBON 2015

OBON 2015 needs your support. Please.

OBON 2015 is an affiliate of Astoria Visual Arts,
a 501(C)3 non-profit organization.
Please send your tax-deductible contributions to:

AVA/OBON 2015
P.O. Box 1004
Astoria, Oregon 97103

Your contributions will help us reach more families
and return more personal items.

If you have a flag, or know someone who does, please contact OBON 2015. We will gladly answer any questions and fully explain our process. It will give us great pleasure to research the flag in your possession and return it to its proper family.

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