



Noboribata 幟旗

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Nobori is often translated as *banner*. However, it is so much more than just that! The verb *noboru* (登る) literally means to raise up, to take to soaring heights. They are designed not only to be seen from far distances, but to carry the eye upward and in many cases be inspiring.

These *nobori* may be used to line the streets for festivals, or to simply advertise the opening of a new shop or a discount sale.



Nobori on display at a *nobori* store. Wording includes *SALE*, *Big Sale!*, *open*, *bento*, *udon*, and *ramen*. All are destined for use in front of shops.



“DYNAMIC!” proclaims this *noboribata*, featuring Leonardo DiCaprio’s image in the lower left.



Nobori on display for Boys Day along a roadway.



Banners on display in a soccer stadium. They state, “Kyoto Sanga F.C.–Ganbare!” Sanga F.C. is a soccer team based in Kyoto.

Do you remember “[ganbare!](#)” from last week’s blog? (Click on the word or image above for a refresher.)



Nobori were also used traditionally as battle standards, helping to identify combatants and camps. Here you can see the *nobori* fixed to the back of each rider.



Modern robo-warrior with *nobori* affixed to back.

The Making of a Noboribata

Nobori are such wonderfully dramatic pieces of art. What exactly goes into making them?



Traditionally the banners were hand dyed as custom orders to suit each customer's needs. In modern times they may still be special ordered, but now rolled out by huge ink jet printers.

The *noboribata* below are on display in front of a *pachinko parlor* advertising ¥1 and ¥5 games. They were printed by machine on a cloth surface treated to receive the printer ink.



I've prepared the clip below to give you an idea of how a banner is dyed using the *tsutsugaki* method of applying rice-paste resist. Just click on it to view.

If you're interested in finding out more about this process be sure to check out my web site at www.JohnMarshall.to, or consider signing up for my [summer studio classes](#) in Covelo, CA. *Tsutsugaki* is covered as part of the *katazome* rice paste resist course.



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The design is first applied using an ink that will later be washed away. This serves as a rough guide for the next step.

The paste is applied to the cloth with a cone. This method is called *tsutsugaki*.

Great skill is required in applying the paste to keep the lines smooth and flowing.

The fabric must be flipped over and the lines pasted to match those applied earlier. This will insure clean, crisp white lines no matter from which side the banner is viewed.

Strong bold colors are applied with a sure hand. Just as with the paste, the dyes must be applied to both sides.

After some time has passed, the paste is washed off with water. Notice how the top part of the banner has been left blank.

Now that the main body of the banner is complete, and a customer found, it is time to fill in the blank part at the top of the banner with the customer's name and crest.

The long awaited day has come! The beautiful nobori is put on display for all to see.

You may also be interested in watching an artist hand paint a dramatic, action-packed nobori depicting a dragon and a tiger, symbols of dynamic energy. Just click below.

