

Transforming Kibiso (Choshi) Silk Yarns

Degumming is the simple process of removing one of the natural proteins (sericin, or the “gum”) from raw silk fiber, exposing the fibroin which is lustrous and soft.

In case of kibiso (also called choshi) yarns which are from the outer layer of silk cocoons where about last 1 % of entire filament on a cocoon (approximately 1000 meters) finishes to protect its surface with extra strong sericin (gum) which hardens when dry.

To remove sericin entirely or selectively yields interesting result especially when planned artistically. Weigh the kibiso/choshi yarn by a gram scale, weigh soda ash in 8 to 10% of the silk weight and dissolve it in 40 times of the weight of silk in water and soak the yarn and slowly bring it to boil. Turn down the heat and keep it at slow simmer for 30 minutes, turning and stirring the yarns in the water. If you need more liquid volume, then measure soda ash 2 or 2.5 to 1000 in water, i.e. 100gram kibiso/choshi : 8 to 10 grams soda ash; 4 liters of water OR 100 gram yarn in 6 liters of water and 12 to 15 grams of soda ash. The heating procedure is the same. You may need to fine tune the time and the amount of soda ash depending on how much you want to degum (remove sericin). After degumming, rinse thoroughly in first warm water and later in cold water. If you wish you can add a teaspoon of vinegar in rinse water to neutralize and rinse well with plain water.

If you resist the yarn by binding a skein of kibiso/choshi yarn similar to ikat weaving, and perform degumming, it will result in matt (sericin) and shiny and fluffy (fibroin) textures. If they are dyed, it will achieve different colors between raw and degummed areas, or a contrast in shade emerges.