KIMONO

BETWEEN
TRADITION &
MODERNITY

Table of Contents

005 About the Exhibition

006 Chronology

009 History of the Kimono

014 Women's Kimono

017 The Different Types of Silk

023 Asa Fibers

028 Inclusions

031 Saga Nishiki

032 Painting & Dyeing Techniques

034 Tsutsugaki & Yuzen Dye Techniques

036 Katagami & Sarasa

039 Shibori

KIMONO EXHIBITION

BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

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THE JAPANESE KIMONO EXHIBITION – BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY
Atrium, SUAD Campus

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7-17 February 2024

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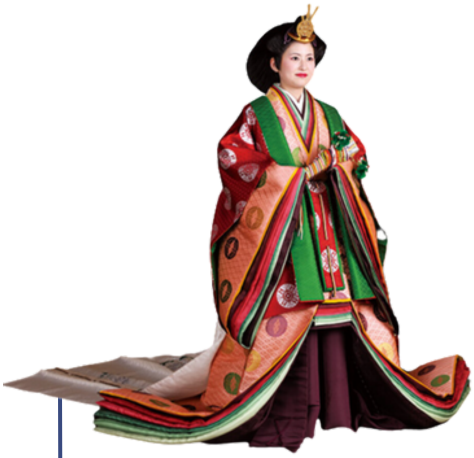
About the Exhibition

Japanese textile art, with its thousand-year history shaped by geographical isolation and regional diversity, flourishes in a multitude of creative traditions. Workshops on every island, in every region and even in every neighborhood, bear witness to the artistic uniqueness, style and techniques of each community. The Japanese take a keen interest in their traditional arts, illustrated by political preservation measures on a national and regional scale, materialized by the title of "Living National Treasure" awarded to renowned artists and craftsmen.

The exhibition aims to highlight various aspects of Japanese culture and art, with a particular focus on textile art, with the kimono as an emblematic example. The different regions of Japan are distinguished by their specialties, from fibers such as Okinawa's Bashofu and Kakegawa's Kuzufu, to design and decoration techniques such as Kanazawa's Kaga Yuzen and Kyoto's Nishijin-ori.

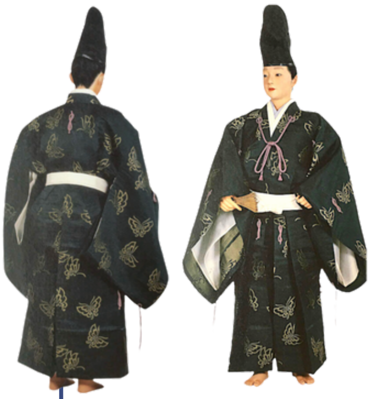
Structured around the kimono, this project explores three axes: an introduction to the history and types of kimono, a presentation of the components (materials, motifs, techniques), and an exhibition of exceptional kimonos from Kyoto and Osaka. By also exploring modern textile analysis and 3D imaging technologies applied to kimonos, the exhibition offers a contemporary perspective. Finally, it highlights local creativity with 18 kimonos designed in collaboration with students from the Fench Fashion Institute ESMOD Dubai

CHRONOLOGY



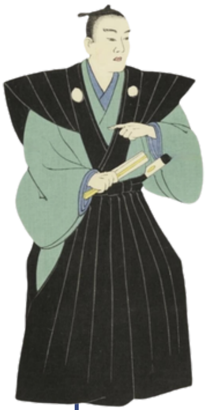
794-1185

Heian period. During this era, the last of the classical period of Japan, the Chinese influence in fashion decline slowly. The Hanfu, the Chinese court dress disappear. The Japanese nobility begin to codify heavily their outfit. One of the best example is the Junihitoe, meaning "twelves layers", a specific outfit worn by the women of the Imperial Court, composed of a various amount (mainly twelve) of layers of kimono-like dress, worn on top of each other



1185-1333

Kamakura period. During this era, there is several modification of the kimono, especially in the upper part of the society. Indeed, during the Kamakura period, the Samurai class rise and the Shogun take a powerful place. Under his influence, the woman kimono (named Kosode at the time) is less extravagant with only 5 layers instead of 12. The male kimono in the samurai class is inspired by the Heian period peasant outfit, the Hitatare. This kimono is decorated with brocade, it has a crossed collar and smaller sleeves with drawstrings sewn inside that allow the sleeves to be closed for a more practical use for hunting and fighting.



1336-1573

Muromachi period. After the fall of the Kamakura Shogun, a new clan rise, the Ashikaga through a short Imperial Restoration. The Shogun court settle down in Muromachi, near Kyoto, to keep an eye on the Imperial court. Because of this proximity, and with the influence of the Imperial court luxury, fashion is evolving. Thus, the male elite of the Shogunate start to wear more luxurious Hitatare and a second type of outfit, the Kataginu, a sleeveless two-pieces. Women of the Shogunate court, on the other hand, got rid of the multiple layers clothes and started to wear the Kosode, the ancestor of the actual kimono.

1573-1603

Azuchi-Momoyama period. Even if this is one of the shortest Japanese historical period, a lot of event led to an extreme evolution of fashion. After a long period of civil war, the country is united and merchants prosper. But the most important thing in the fashion industry of the time is the development of the weaving technics: crepes, damask, satin, and the multiplication of different kind of fabric. That way, craftsmen stopped importing textile directly from China. As a consequence, more artists and craftsmen tried to experiment new way of decorating kimono, leading to an expansion of dyers, painters and embroiderers everywhere in Japan.

1603-1868

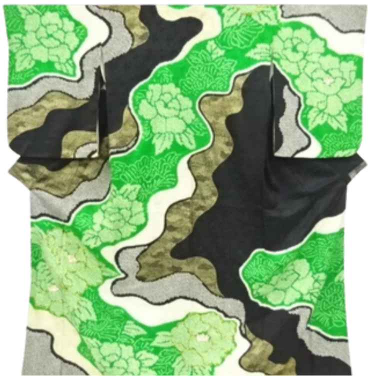
Edo period. Considered as the last traditional era of Japan before its modernization under the Western influence and collaboration. During the Edo period, the fashion industry dedicated to kimono highly developed. An important amount of new technics and ornementations are developed. The form of the Kosode slowly change toward something almost similar to the actual kimono. Especially for women's kimono. We can observe a variation of the sleeves length, with long sleeved kimono such as the Furisode and the Uchikake. Concerning the male counterpart, one of the most represented outfit is the Kamishimo, worn by the samurai class, composed of large shoulder sleeveless top and a skirt-like trouser.

1868-1912

Meiji period. In 1868 the American Navy force Japan to open its border leading to many political changes. The feudal order and the samurai class collapse. The power of the Emperor is restored and he decide to heavily modernize the country. Through this modernization several things change in the textile industry. First of all, Japan became quickly the N°1 exporter of silk and textile. Secondly, the Emperor ordered the Government Officials and the Military personnel to wear western clothes and uniforms. Thus, the male outfit shifted quickly from a traditional martial style toward a western style. Finally, the rest of the population kept wearing traditional kimono.

1912-1926

Taisho period. This era is in direct continuation of the Meiji period. Concerning the kimono fashion, the kimono's form is definitively fixed with its different shapes and functions. There are a few differences, nonetheless, mainly in the choice of pattern. For example, the warrior pattern, extremely present on young boy's kimono changed. The samurai character represented is replaced by modern weapons, such as tank and battleship. It is worth noting that the western influence is visible through the modernization of the means of productions, leading to more affordable kimonos, such as the Meisen style.



1926-1989

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1989-2019

Heisei period. After the economical crisis of 1989, the textile industry suffered greatly from the deflationary spiral. A lot of Japanese people chose the western style over the traditional kimono, except for some occasion, like ceremony, either religious or cultural ceremonies. But, at the same time, especially since the beginning of the XXIth century, the fashion industry took a new look upon the kimono and decided to modernize it. Thus, many creators, in West or in Japan, got inspired by the traditional kimono and tried to restyle it, such as Jotaro Saito, Issey Miyake or John Galliano.

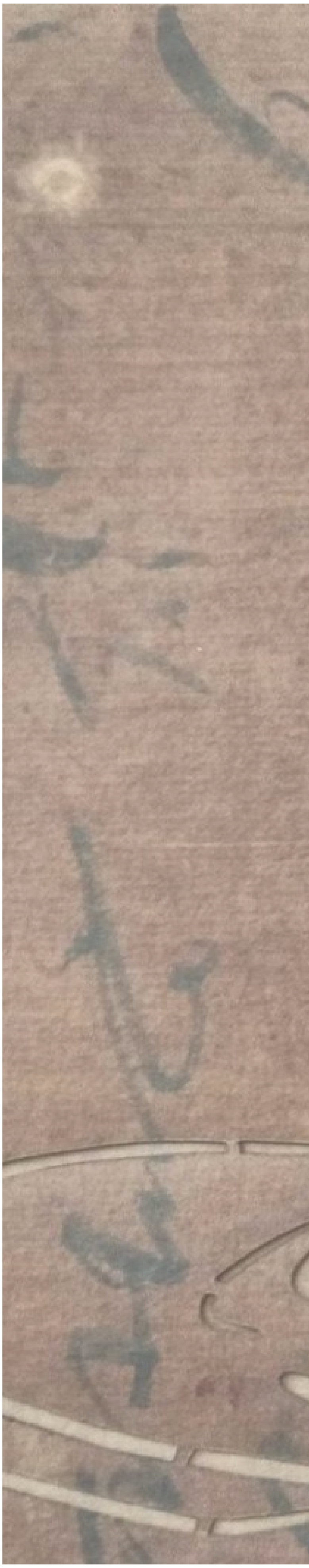
History of the Kimono

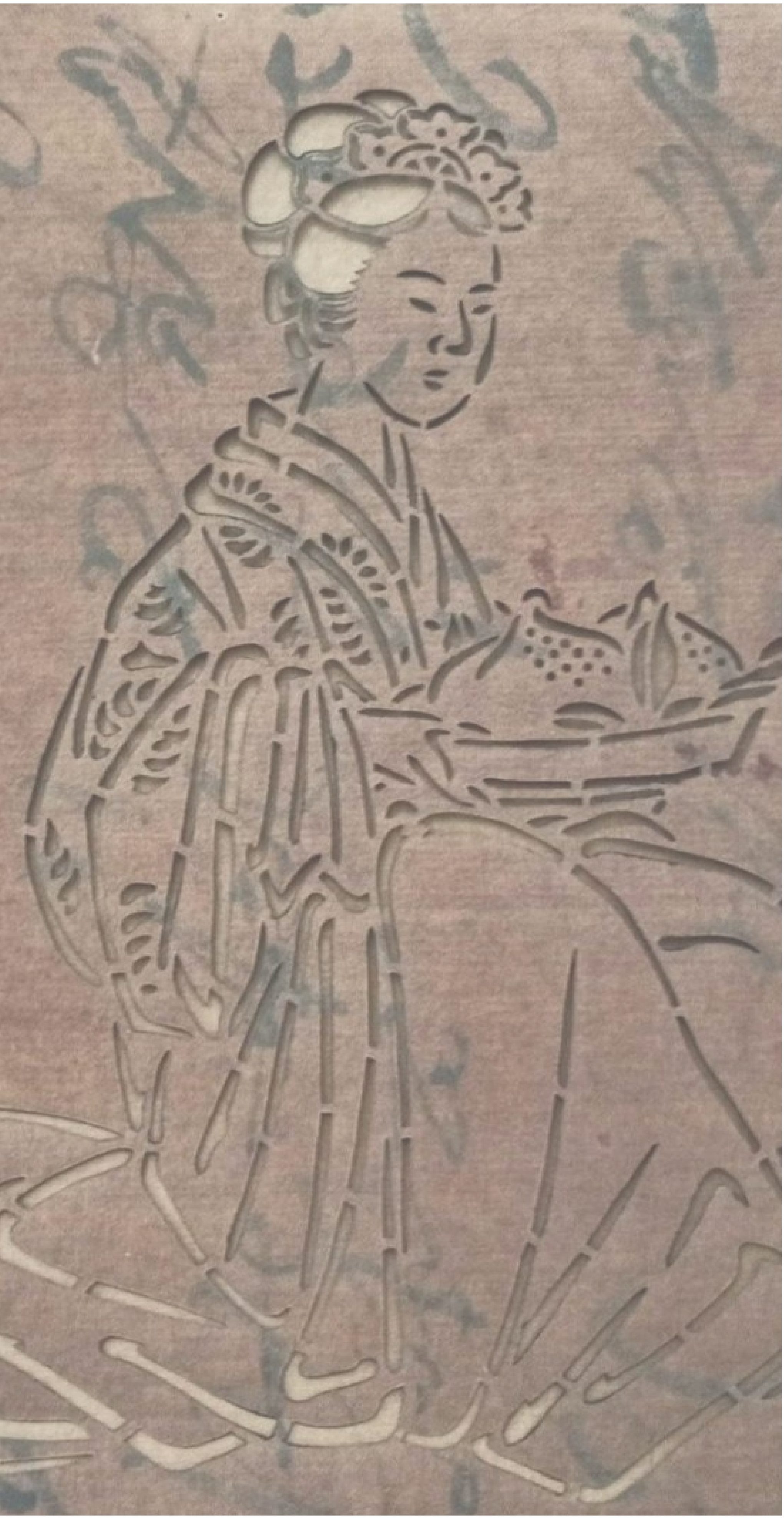
The word kimono is actually quite generic. It simply refers to clothing, to what you wear on your body. The term kimono is used to designate traditional Japanese clothing. It's therefore a relatively vague terminology, little understood outside Japan. There are, in fact, a multitude of terms designating the different types of traditional Japanese clothing, which we will need to define in the course of this study. The term kimono itself probably dates back to the 13th or 14th century, and is said to have been a term of use in trade between Japan and Portugal, and in the reports of Portuguese missionaries.

However, the kimono as a traditional Japanese garment is much older. Its original form can be traced back to the 8th century, with the influence of Chinese court dress. The latter flourished during the Heian period (794-1192) and took their first forms, the osode and kosode. These evolved progressively before settling into their most contemporary forms between the Momoyama (1573-1603) and Edo (1600-1868) periods.

Whatever its form (tomesode, furisode, uchikake, homongi, tsukesage, yukata...), the kimono most often follows the same structure. So the patterns are all very similar. The kimono is a T-shaped garment made from a single roll of fabric of the same size, so there's no waste or loss of material. It is most often made of silk, but there are also creations in cotton, ramie, synthetic, hemp, etc. A kimono is a means of expressing the creative craftsman's virtuosity, and there are many different weaves and weaves: satin, damask, taffeta and many others.

The kimono is a gendered garment, in the sense that the shape and decoration of the kimono and accompanying accessories differ according to the gender and age of the wearer. So, for example, whereas a woman's kimono will be brightly colored and highly decorated, a man's will be darkly colored and extremely soberly decorated.





Because of its status as a traditional garment, the wearing of the kimono is highly regulated by rules and fashions. The kimono as a garment cannot be treated without mentioning the role and importance of the accessories that accompany its wearing: obi belt, juban kimono undergarment, hakama pants...

The Japanese kimono has great historical significance as a traditional garment, but above all it has great artistic and aesthetic qualities. Indeed, the kimono is an ideal medium for the artistic creativity of craftsmen. Kimonos are painted, embroidered, dyed and sometimes even gold- and silver-plated.

Now that we've briefly defined what a Japanese kimono is, it may be necessary to go back in more detail to its origins. As mentioned earlier, the kimono is an emblematic Japanese garment. Its current form has not always been as it is. The earliest depictions of kimonolike court dress date back to the Nara period (710-794). Japan in the Nara period was in full development, and its Chinese neighbor, once again united under the Tang, was a major influence. Japan drew on its neighboring model to reform its system of political centralization. This Chinese influence had indirect repercussions on the arts, particularly graphics, and on the development of a codification of social status.

This led to changes in the form and content of the school uniform. The Japanese elite imported and drew inspiration from Chinese court dress. From the Heian period onwards, following the Nara period, the attire of the Japanese elite evolved.

The first model for Japanese school uniforms is the Chinese Hanfu. Hanfu comes in many variations. The most common is a long-sleeved tunic held up by a high-waisted skirt. This outfit is also quite similar to the Korean Hanbok. This combination of tunic and skirt is also found in Japan. This skirt, moreover, is probably the origin of the Hakama, in skirt or trouser form.

From this Chinese garb, the Japanese elite kept the Hakama, for certain situations (notably martial arts), and gradually modified the tunic. From this Chinese tunic model, Japanese craftsmen would elaborate the kimono and gradually codify it.

The origins of the Japanese kimono probably lie in a strong Chinese influence. However, while this inspiration was present from the outset, the Japanese soon sought to distinguish themselves from their neighbors. From then on, the kimono, or rather its ancestor, the kosode, became more complex, modified and transformed over time.

As explained above, Japanese costume has undergone numerous evolutions to reach its current form. Japan, at odds with China, sought to set itself apart. During the Heian period, the Japanese elite began to codify their clothing. As a result, the symbolism of clothing became increasingly complex. The choice of fabric, material, shape and color became significant.

As mentioned earlier, from the 8th to the 12th century, there was a separation between two types of clothing. Osode and Kosode. Although aesthetically very similar, they differ in one technical detail. The Kosode is a long tunic made from long strips of fabric of the same size, but with a narrow armhole and short sleeves for practicality. The Osode, on the other hand, features long, wide sleeves.

The Osode was seen more as a ceremonial garment, while the Kosode was preferred for its practicality. Gradually, a second distinction was created, that between men's and women's Kosode. Sleeves became longer for women, and decorative motifs were sometimes "gendered". This was particularly true in relation to men's martial activities.

Kosode and Osode will also change their status. Until then, they had been indoor garments, often worn under other layers outdoors. The Kosode fabric gradually thickened and developed for outdoor use, losing its "underwear" character. However, they are almost always worn with the hakama.

This gradually changed in subsequent periods. In the Kamakura period (1185-1333), the Osode became a ceremonial garment.

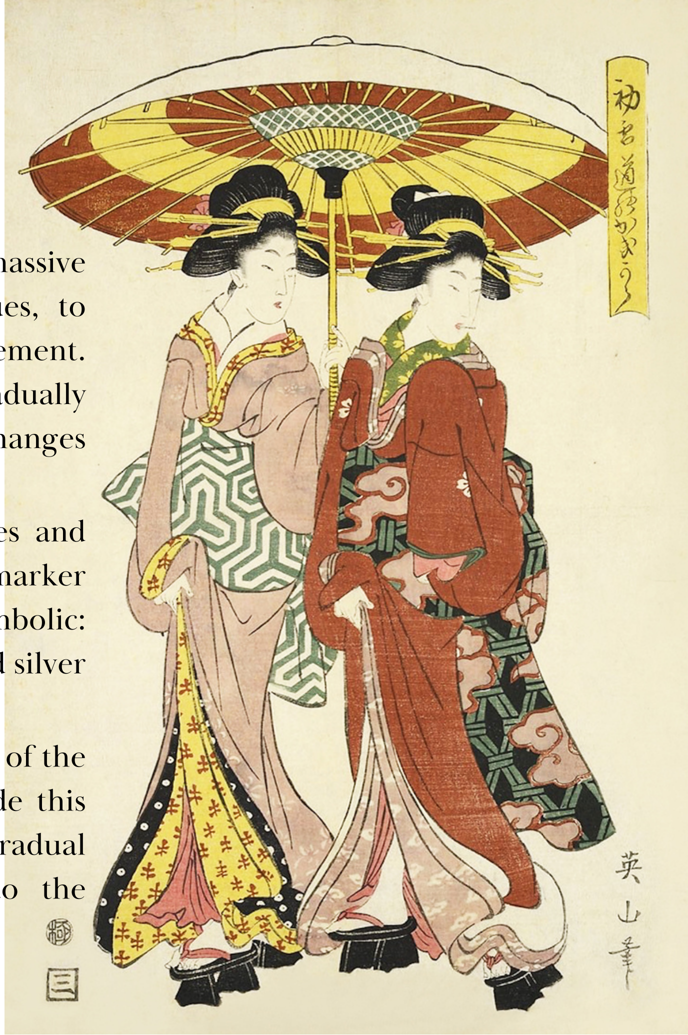
Men and women wore only the Kosode on a daily basis. Patterns and colors were increasingly developed.

During the Muromachi period (1336-1573), costume evolved even further. The Kosode became longer and thicker. As a result, Hakama pants were increasingly abandoned, except for men in martial contexts. The Kosode definitely became an outdoor costume.

The absence of Hakama, whether in the form of pants or a high skirt, led to the development, variation and codification of the "Obi" belt to close and hold the garment.

The Momoyama period that followed (1573-1600) saw Kosode and its port grow massively. The cloth trade led to the development of several types of fiber and several fashions. The male warrior elite chose to distinguish themselves with dark-colored, sparsely decorated garments. Women, on the other hand, turned to bright, elegant colors.

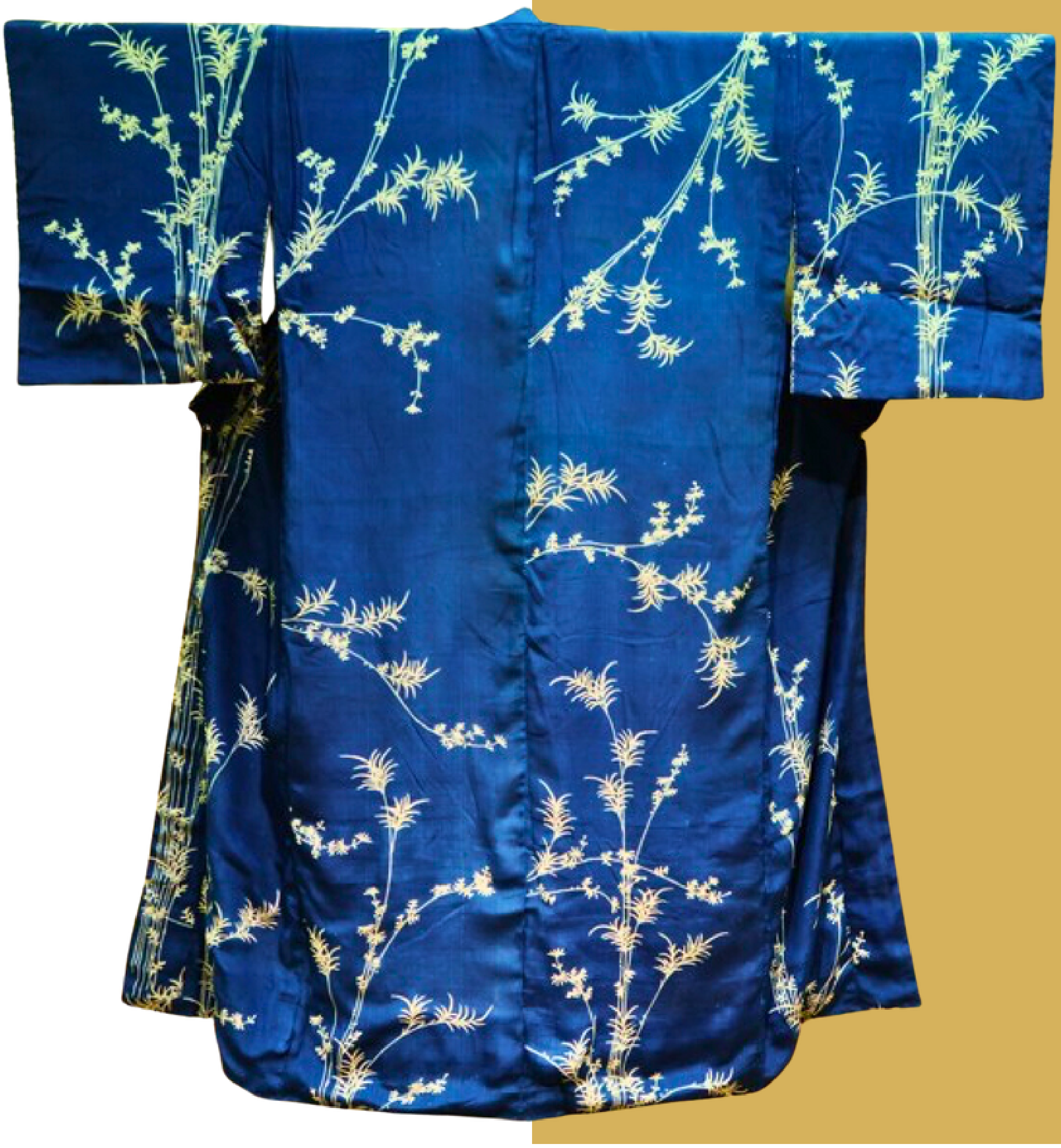
In response to this situation, the political elite imposes rules, silk is reserved for them, and so are certain colors.



This period and the next are also marked by the massive development of new weaving and dyeing techniques, to achieve the creation of textile pieces of extreme refinement. It was during this period that the term Kosode was gradually replaced by the word Kimono, in line with textile exchanges throughout the country.

Added to this was the multiplication of textile types and their richness. The Kimono became a veritable social marker of class and wealth, with every element becoming symbolic: material, decoration, shape, etc., even adding gold and silver to the most expensive pieces.

The Edo period was a golden age for the development of the Kimono in Japan, and it is this period that has made this emblematic garment what it is today, despite a gradual decline since the Meiji period (1868-1912) due to the influence of Western clothing.



Women's Kimono

Now we need to take a closer look at the women's Kimono. As explained earlier, the Kimono is a gendered garment and, as such, is not the same for every wearer.

Compared with men's clothing, women's kimonos have a number of distinctive features. Firstly, as mentioned above, the women's Kimono is distinguished by its length, bright colors, shape and rich, imposing decoration. However, it's not enough to define the women's kimono solely in opposition to its male counterpart. In fact, there is a wealth of different types of women's kimono to be explored in detail here.

The first thing to note is that most types of women's Kimono are distinguished by their uses. In other words, a specific type of Kimono corresponds to a particular situation. Kimonos can be classified according to their function and degree of formality.

The first is the Furisode. This is the most formal Kimono an unmarried woman can wear. Very often worn by young women for their 20th birthday party. The Furisode has very long sleeves (often between 100 and 130 cm long) and decorations all over the Kimono. The degree of formality here is associated with sleeve length, not decoration. This is the most formal and common Kimono worn by an unmarried girl.

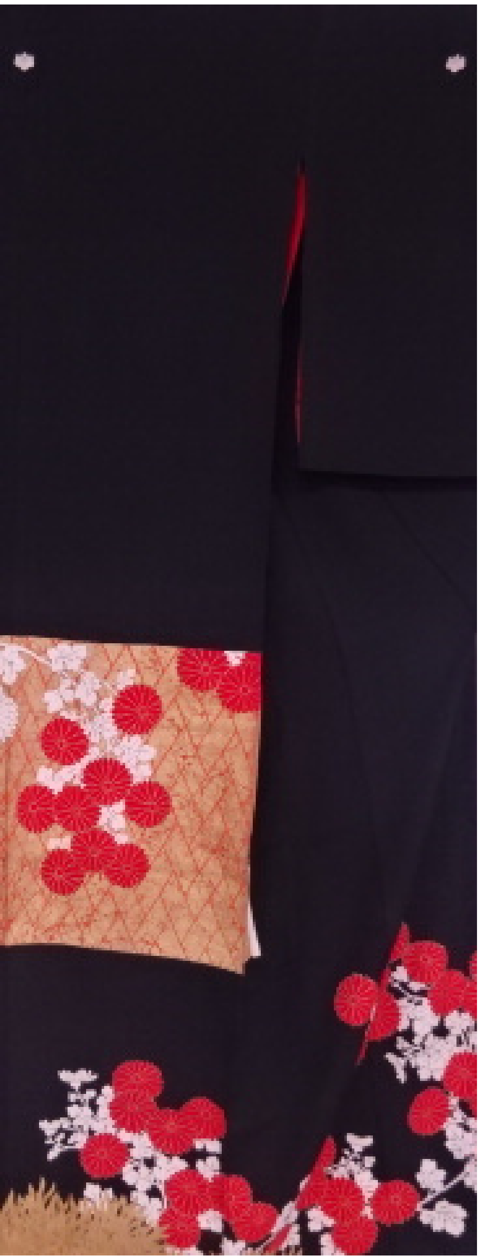
The other most representative categories of women's kimonos are those worn by married women. These include the Iromuji, a type of kimono with short sleeves, dyed from a white piece in a single bright color. These are monochrome kimonos considered chic and sophisticated, suitable for a ceremony.

One of the most representative Kimonos for women is the Tomesode. This is a type of kimono for married women. It is the most formal kimono a woman can wear. The decoration is only on the lower part of the kimono, like a painting. Tomesode comes in two types: Irotomesode, which is light pastel in color, and Kurotomesode, which is black.

The Kurotomesode is the most formal of all.

Next come two rather similar categories of women's Kimonos. The first, the Hōmongi, is a rather formal short-sleeved kimono for ceremonial wear. Its decoration starts at the shoulder and extends downwards. The motifs extend across the whole despite the seams. It has no Kamon and is less formal than the Tomesode. It is very close to the Tsukesage, a type of Kimono very similar to the Houmongi, but simpler and less formal. The decoration rises from the bottom to the shoulder without passing through the seams.

These are the main categories of women's Kimono. It should also be borne in mind that these broad categories are also supplemented by other, less common types of kimono.



The Different Types of Silk

The question of fiber choice in the creation of a Kimono is a prominent one. In fact, there are a multitude of fiber types in Japan, and the creation of a Kimono varies according to the fiber selected.

Although there are several main types of fiber used in Japanese textile production, it's worth noting that, when it comes to making a Kimono, silk is the fiber most often selected. Silk produces a textile that is supple, shiny, soft, very light and resistant, despite its fragility (particularly to humidity). It's a fiber much appreciated by the Japanese elite, but less present in the lower strata of Japanese society (at least until the Meiji era).

Silk is an animal fiber made from the cocoon of the silkworm. Silk has been known and exploited in China since the Yangshao period. Traces of silk in southern China date back to 3600 BC. Trade flourished under the Han between the 2nd century BCE and the 2nd century CE. Its trade and distribution reached India, Persia and the Roman Empire.

The development of domesticated silk culture in Japan is not very clear, due to a lack of sources. The start of silk cultivation in Japan is attributed to the passage of a Chinese merchant carrying silkworm eggs between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD.

From then on, Japanese sericulture soon expanded, first for local production and consumption, then gradually for international export.

Japanese sericulture developed rapidly over the centuries. In the 7th century, a decree ordered the population to plant mulberry trees, the main food of bombyx silkworms. From then on, silk production expanded and different types of silk weaving gradually took shape. Between the 6th and 12th centuries, silk cultivation in Japan expanded greatly, with several attempts to diversify silk types according to the species of worm producing it.

Craftsmen specialized and developed new ways of producing higher-quality silk, combined with research into new ways of using silk. Thus, from the 12th to the 19th century, craftsmen perfected numerous methods of weaving and decorating textiles. silk. The 19th century, with the transition from a Japan closed by the Sakoku policy to its forced opening in 1868, was marked by radical changes.

In this way, Japan moves from a model of artisanal production for domestic and local use to a model of modern, mass production for the export of luxury goods to wealthy foreign buyers.

The vast majority of Japanese silk production comes from the same species of silkworm, the bombyx. This classic category of silk accounts for around 90% of Japanese production. However, there are other types of silk production in the archipelago. These are often traditional local productions.

The first is Eri silk, which comes from India and is still produced in Japan. Eri silk is special in several respects. The worm that produces it is more active and "wild" than the Bombyx, requiring constant attention because of its tendency to go hunting if not fed regularly. It produces a white or brown silk cocoon, open at one end. As a result, it is spun directly into a reel. This is a coarser, rougher silk, with an appearance and texture similar to linen.

Yamamai silk is also available, from an insect that in France corresponds to the Saturnie du Chêne, a butterfly. In caterpillar form, the Yamamai produces a very special silk cocoon. This silk is much stronger and more resistant than conventional silk, and has a slight greenish tint. However, this Japanese silk has only been used to a very limited extent, as it does not retain dye, which has greatly limited its use.

Finally, Minomushi silk can also be found to some extent, corresponding to the Japanese name for the burcupine caterpillar and the silk it produces. Minomushi silk is a wild silk, as the insect that produces it has never been domesticated.

The cocoons are harvested from pine trees in the mountains. The particularity of this caterpillar is its ability to agglomerate any nearby element in its cocoon to strengthen it. This "hut" cocoon is thus reinforced by bark, leaves, twigs and sometimes other elements of fauna such as insect molts. This silk cocoon is then recovered, but neither boiled nor spun. It is simply cleaned and cut to be used in a form of "silk marquetry". A very rare and regional type of silk, often used on small surfaces and small pieces, such as bags, clutches, shoes or belts, or for marquetry of small decorative elements on a larger textile piece in bombyx silk. In this case, it is attached to the surface with fine stitching and animal glue.

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Bombyx silk, which accounts for the majority of Japanese silk cultivation, is processed in the same way as in China. The eggs, known as "seeds", are laid on mulberry trees, and the worms are fed regularly, with quantities increasing as they grow. They are reared in a warm, slightly humid atmosphere of 23°C (which is easy to find in Japan, hence the good development of silkworm cultivation in the archipelago). After four moults (around 32 days), the silkworm builds its cocoon. The cocoon is then recovered, plunged into boiling water to loosen the threads, which are then spun and braided into a mat, ready for use.

Japanese silk is renowned the world over for its luxury and quality. Indeed, when it opened in 1868, its production flooded the European market. By the Meiji period, silk production and export accounted for nearly 30% of the country's wealth. Production was standardized, as illustrated by the large Tomioka factory founded in 1872. This colossal production for Europe was largely captured by France, which became one of Japan's major trading partners. In the case of the Tomioka plant north of Tokyo (and the la rgest in the country), a French engineer was entrusted with the creation of the factory, the machines used for production coming from France and being modified in Japan to suit local production.

After the Second World War, Japanese silk production gradually declined in favor of other types of fiber production, such as cotton and plastic fibers. As a result, the focus shifted to more luxurious creations, as evidenced by the unrivalled richness and quality of Kyoto's Nishijin Ori.

Asa Fibers

Although silk and cotton are the most common textiles encountered in the study of Japanese Kimonos, other types of fibre must also be taken into account in the creation of these garments.

Other types of fibre can be found, such as wool, linen, hemp, ramie, or banana or mulberry fibre on rare occasions. It should be borne in mind that, very often, the use of these fibres is governed either by technical or environmental necessity, or by a manufacturing tradition linked to a strong sense of regionalism.

The aim here is not to provide a catalogue of all the fibres available in the archipelago for making a Kimono, but rather to offer an overview. These fibres, which are less commonly used to make a Kimono, are nevertheless present on a recurring basis, on a small scale, and it is therefore possible that our reader will one day come across one of them.

One of the most common fibres that can be used to make a Kimono is wool. This animal material has been used since ancient times. Fragments of woollen textiles have been found in the province of Aomori, in northern Japan. These fragments date from the Jomon period (approximately between 1500 BC and 400 BC). They appear to be woollen baskets and garments. Later on, wool was also used to make certain accessories for warrior outfits, although it never took the place of silk and cotton. More recently, some Kimonos have been made from wool. These thick, warm Kimonos are an everyday item, worn in autumn and winter because of their comfort and ability to insulate against the cold. These kimonos are rarely, if ever, worn in formal situations. These textiles are often dyed in dark colours, in many shades of green, brown, violet and red. There are a few cases in brighter colours. Their decoration is often simple and geometric, either woven or dyed. Most of the time, it's a question of playing with shades of colour or simple, repeated motifs.

After wool, linen is one of the materials, along with hemp, that are regularly used to make Kimonos in Japan. Linen and hemp have been used since the earliest times in Japan. They have been used since the Jomon period. Several archaeological digs in Kyushu have revealed the existence of fragments of textiles made from linen. These include clothes and baskets.

The use of linen, and later hemp, spread throughout Japan. Thus, apart from silk, hemp dominated the production of popular kimonos until the introduction of cotton and its gradual development.

It should be noted that although linen and hemp are two different fibres, they were often treated interchangeably because of their similar aspects and qualities. One type of textile made from hemp, Asa, is quite famous in Japan. This is a textile made from hemp to create very light, hard-wearing summer kimonos for hot, humid weather. It is often dyed with indigo. Patterns are sometimes created by dyeing the yarns in reserve or using stencils.

Another closely related fibre, ramie, is relevant to our study. Ramie is a plant fibre from the nettle family. It is particularly common in Asia, and especially in the clothing industry in Japan and Korea. It has a long history of use in clothing. Traditio n attributes the discovery of ramie fibre to the daughter of Emperor Sujin, 2000 years ago, during a visit to Noto, in the province of Ishikawa. Textiles made from ramie are quite similar to those made from linen or hemp. However, it should be noted that ramie is reputed to be much more resistant than linen or hemp, hence its use in the manufacture of outdoor clothing in particular.

The term for ramie is "Jofu". Notojofu is one of these, originating in Ishikawa, where the fibre was discovered. Notojofu is currently considered to be the best quality ramie textile in the whole of Japan. It became popular outside the region from the end of the Edo period, and the technique used to create it is now classified as a national cultural treasure.

This textile is used to make simple, hard-wearing, lightweight summer kimonos. It is often simply decorated using Kasuri techniques.

The work on this fibre is particularly interesting. Everything is done by hand. The plant is cut and the craftsman separates the fibres with his fingernail before twisting the threads into stronger ones before weaving. If it is decorated with Kasuri, as is usually the case, then each thread is dyed separately before weaving, the pattern then appearing thanks to the interplay of colours between the weft and warp threads.

There are several specific regional types of Jofu. For example, there is Miyako Jofu, woven on the island of Miyokojima in Okinawa. Or the Ojiyi-Chijimi Echigo-Jofu, made in Niigata province.

Finally, it is also possible to encounter another type of textile. Bashofu". This is made from 'Basho' banana fibre from Okinawa, the archipelago to the south of Japan. The best known is Kijoka no Bashofu. This textile comes from Ogimi in Okinawa. It is soft, light and strong. Commonly known as "dragonfly's wing", it is light and does not stick to the skin in humid climates. It is made from banana fibres. The craftsman loosens them by hand using a knife. The strongest fibres are used to make threads and the softest for dyeing.

The fibre is then immersed in boiling water with a solution of wood ash to soften it. The fibre is then worked with a bamboo comb to separate the threads. These threads are then spun together into a ball before being used for weaving, where they are twisted together to make a strong thread. The threads are then dyed in bright colours before being assembled.

Another rare plant fibre is Shinafu. Shinafu is a fibre made from Linden. It is a plant material that is difficult to exploit.

Its use is particularly ancient. Archaeological evidence of bark fibre production dates back to the Jomon period (around 14,000 to 300 BC). It is therefore possible that Shinafu originated in this period.

The first written mention of Shinafu production da tes from the 8th century, during the Heian period, in Chinese chronicles. Shinafu is one of the three oldest vegetable fibres used in Japan, along with Bashofu and Kuzufu.

Its production has greatly diminished over the years with the development of other fibres that are easier to use. There are still two production centres, one in Niigata prefecture and the other in Yamagata prefecture.

Finally, and just as rare, is Kuzufu, a fibre made from the Japanese shaggy vine. This invasive plant is harvested for its stems and roots, both for its medicinal properties and for textile manufacture.

Kuzu fibres are obtained after a long process. Kuzu is harvested in summer, between June and August, then boiled, fermented, washed in the river, dried, the fibre extracted and then spun before being woven.

Kuzufu is another very old fibre, found in China as far back as the Neolithic period. Production intensified under the Zhong dynasties before gradually disappearing under the Tang. In Japan, production dates back to the Kofun period in the 3rd century AD. Its production boomed during the Edo period, particularly as part of textile production for the samurai.

Production today is minimal, but there are still a few production centres in Japan, notably in Shizuoka.

Inclusions

The most richly decorated Kimonos also have what we might call "inclusions". In fact, some pieces, particularly women's Kimonos or Kabuki, Kagura and Kyogen theatre costumes, receive a special decoration.

These types of inclusions are rather rare, but we can distinguish several categories. The first, and most common, is the inclusion of precious metals. This practice goes back a long way, and many Kimonos of this type can be found in large collections. For example, in the centre of this exhibition you will find several kimonos from the Kagura and No theatres, covered in gold thread.

There are two main types of precious metal inclusions on Japanese Kimonos. Gold and silver. The first is called Kinsai. This is a complex method involving silk thread and 24- carat gold. There are several forms, depending on the desired effect.

The first is the inclusion of a gold thread (actually made up of several twisted gold threads) in the weave. This is a special technique because the thread tends to become damaged and unravel over time due to its rigidity. This technique is used less and less these days.

The second technique involves wrapping a gold thread around a silk thread and integrating it into the surface of the textile like embroidery. This gold embroidery adds volume and richness to a kimono. If you look at this embroidery with a magnifying glass, you can see that the thread is held in place by very fine, regular ligatures made from red or orange silk thread.

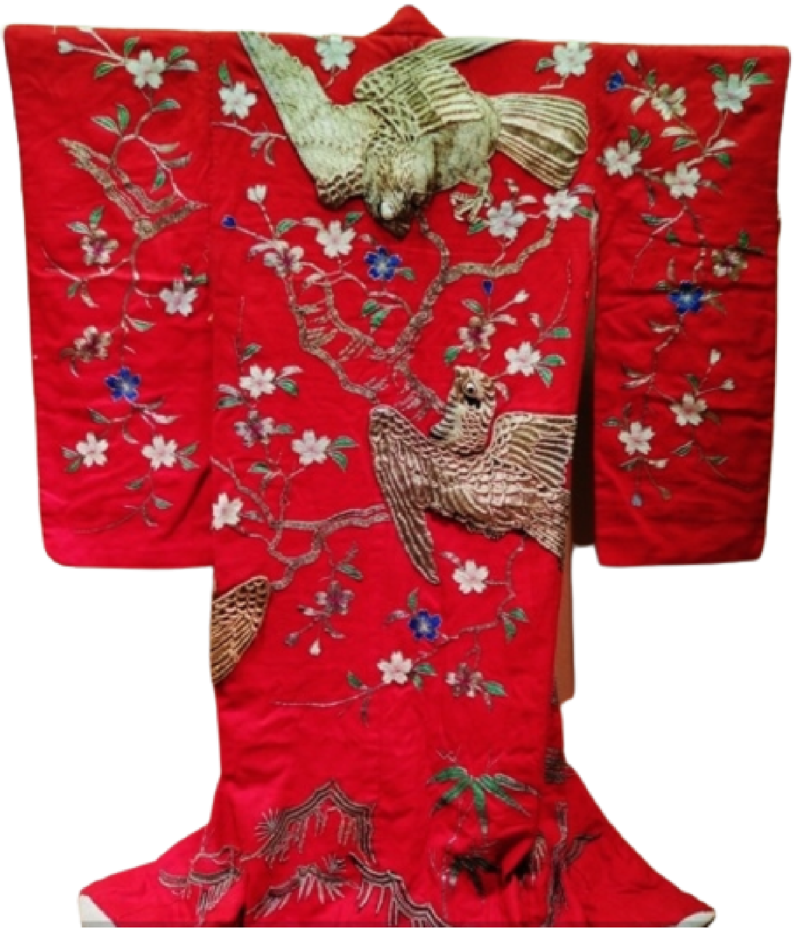
There is also a simpler method, based on plating gold leaf onto a silk thread or directly onto part of the Kimono. This technique is often used to complement a Yuzen decoration.

The Ginsai technique is used for the inclusion of silver threads. Very similar to Kinsai, it works according to the same principles.

The vast majority, however, are silver plated. Like Kinsai, this very expensive technique is used less frequently because of the difficulty of working with silver and its oxidation with time and humidity. As a result, it is rarer to find Kimonos decorated with Ginsai. What's more, the oldest pieces are usually damaged.

It should be noted that in rare cases, platinum is used instead of gold or silver, but this technique is more suited to contemporary pieces.

Finally, another type of inclusion is sometimes found in Kimonos. In some rare cases, it is possible to find mother-of-pearl inlays, called Raden, on textiles. This type of inlay can be found on some Kimono items, such as obis belts (in rare cases). But it can also be found on huge Kimonos depicting Kabuki, Kagura or Kyogen scenes, often combining Kinsai and mother-of-pearl in high-relief decoration.



Saga Nishiki

It may also be worth mentioning the unique technique of Saga Nishiki. This technique originated in Saga and is used to create brocade. The weft is made from dyed silk thread, while the warp is made from washi paper covered in gold, silver, lacquer or other precious material.

This is a very difficult and expensive technique. First, the craftsman places the washi paper on a support, covers it with glue and then with gold leaf, silver leaf or another precious material. Once the paper is dry, it is rolled up and the craftsman makes dozens of cuts along its length to create threads of paper. These threads of paper are resistant to tension.

Installed on a loom, the washi paper is used as a substitute for silk as warp threads. The craftsman then begins to weave, crossing silk and paper threads at regular intervals in a plain or twill weave. The craftsman passes the silk thread through a shuttle and alternates between the threads.

This is a very long and complex silk brocade technique. An experienced craftsman can spend several hours, around 2 or 3, to make just one centimetre of weave!

Painting & Dyeing Techniques

Among the various techniques for decorating a kimono, the first is silk painting, a technique that has been used in Asia since the 5th century BC. The technique is fairly simple, and there are several variations. The most classic, Sumi-e, is painted directly onto a silk support using black Indian ink. This technique is rarely used on kimonos. In fact, the taste for colourful hues in Japanese textile art has led craftsmen to develop other techniques, such as painting with wax or a piping bag.

In addition to painting and inclusions, one of the most common techniques used to make a kimono is dyeing. There are a multitude of dyeing techniques in Japan, with different variations depending on the region. One of the best known is the Aizome technique.

Aizome is one of Japan's oldest traditional dyeing techniques. It is an indigo dye. To make an aizome-dyed textile, follow these steps:

1) During the summer, the craftsman harvests the indigo leaves. The leaves are then coarsely crushed and stored in sacks for 3 months, where they begin to decompose.

2) After three months of decomposition, the crushed leaves become compost, which is placed in a vat with a catalyst to initiate the fermentation process. This is usually wheat flour and water. The mixture then begins to ferment. The artisan must monitor and stir the vat daily to ensure that the density of the mixture remains optimal. The vat is kept at a temperature of between 36°C and 37°C

3) The craftsman then dips the non-woven yarns or a complete piece into a vat. The shade of colour depends on the number of dye baths, the fermentation of the vat, the duration of the dye bath and the drying time.

In most cases, Aizome dyes are combined with other dyeing or decorating techniques to make the result more complex and create more grandiose designs.

These are generally dyeing techniques such as Kasuri, Shibori, etc.

There are also other techniques such as Suminagashi. This dyeing technique has its origins in traditional Japanese papermaking. Suminagashi is a textile and paper dyeing technique designed to imitate marble and its veins. It translates as "ink floating on water". It is a difficult and unstable technique. The craftsman places coloured inks in a bath of water, and the design is then created using a brush and breath to mix the inks and give it a marbled appearance. The entire textile is then immersed in the dye bath.

Tsutsugaki & Yuzen Dye Techniques

Other decorative techniques found in Japan include the following:

Tsutsugaki or Tsustsugakizome is a dyeing technique of Chinese origin that travelled through Korea and the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa) before arriving in Japan. The oldest sources mention the use of this technique in Okinawa since the 1560s, and it is said to have been passed on by fishermen and itinerant traders.

Tsutsugaki is a fairly simple technique of resistant resist dyeing using glue. The glue is placed in a paper tube similar to a pastry bag.

The pattern is first created using Murasaki Tsuyukusa flower juice, also known as Commeline, mixed with glue made from a paste of glutinous rice and rice bran. This glue can also be coloured.

The drawing is then done either with a stencil or freehand. In fact, it's often both. The glue creates a reserve. The textile is then dyed with a brush, for both the background and the design. The glue is then removed and the process repeated as many times as necessary to complete the design in shape and colour.

This kimono decoration technique has a strong regional flavour. Variations can be found all over Japan, with Okinawa being the most prominent. There,

This kimono decoration technique has a strong regional flavour. Variations can be found all over Japan, with Okinawa being the most prominent. There, you'll find the well-known Ryukyu bingata, a traditional resist-dyeing technique originating in Okinawa (Ryukyu Islands). The motifs are brightly coloured: red, yellow, blue and green. The craftsman uses starch applied either with a stencil or freehand with a kind of piping bag (tsutsugaki). Kimonos made using this technique are usually decorated with auspicious Chinese motifs.

Yuzen is a highly decorative dyeing technique developed in the 17th century by Miyazaki Yuzen, a manufacturer of luxury fans. Similar in principle to Tsutsugaki, Yuzen is much richer and more luxurious. It was particularly popular in its early days, as it was a clever way of getting round certain "sumptuary rules" laid down by the Shogun a few years earlier.

In practical terms, Yuzen is practised as follows:

1) The craftsman makes a preparatory drawing on very thin, almost transparent washi paper, which he uses as a support for the design he then makes on the silk of the kimono.

2) The outlines of the design are drawn with commeline ink on the entire textile.

3) Then a glutinous rice paste, made from rice bran and starch, is applied following the outline using a piping bag.

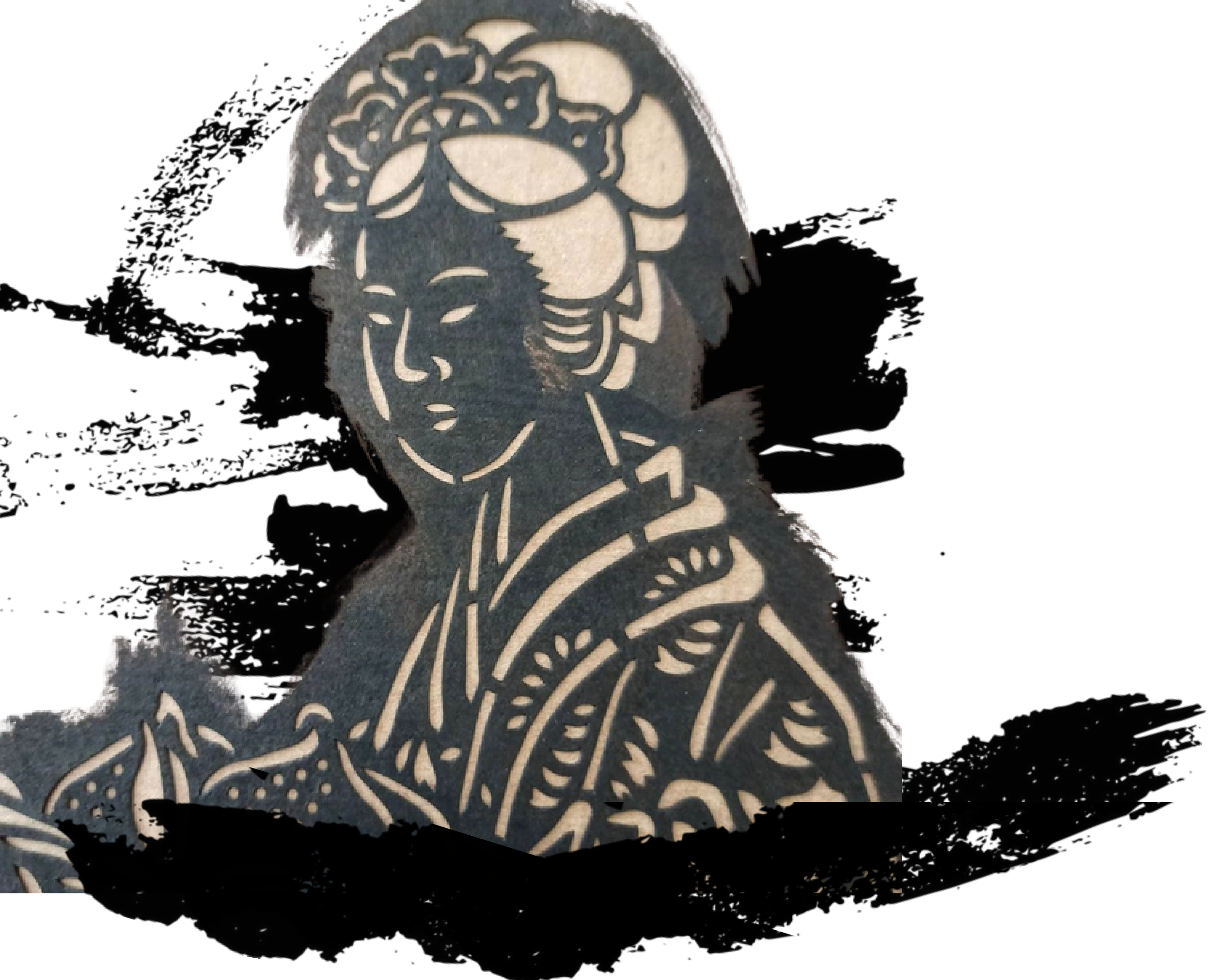
4) A mordant is then applied from a liquid called Gojiru, a liquid made from beans, to fix the dye to the textile.

5) The dye is then brushed into the spaces created, like a partition. Here the craftsman can also create shading and numerous shades of colour by playing with the brushstrokes and density of the dyes.

6) Once the motifs and background have been filled in and dyed, the textile is immersed in a steam bath at 80°C to fix the dye

7) Finally, the textile is washed in water to remove the sticky rice paste, then immersed again in a steam bath to relax the fibres.

The Yuzen technique has evolved over time, depending on the region and the workshop, and has been improved to make production easier, thanks to better dyeing processes that have made it possible to use more varied and brighter colours. To make it easier to decorate a kimono using Yuzen, it is quite common to combine it with the use of stencils to create the motifs.



Katagami & Sarasa

Another very common practice in Japanese textile decoration is the use of stencils. Stencils are used in several techniques, often as a complement to one another.

The technique that corresponds to the use of stencils is called Katazome, and the stencils are called Katagami.

This technique is fairly simple but relatively time-consuming. The craftsman starts with a roll of textile and applies stencils to it several times. These stencils are made from washi paper, or bark, which is made solid and waterproof after undergoing a treatment called Kakishibu, a soaking in persimmon juice.

This paper is then used to receive an ink drawing, which is then cut out with a blade.

The stencil thus created is placed on the textile and receives a layer of glutinous rice paste to form a reserve. The craftsman repeats this process over the entire piece, by stamping. The glue in the reserve is then heated and the textile is dipped several times in a dye bath before having to dry for several months. Katazome textiles are generally made in a single colour for the background and remain white for the pattern.

However, it is possible to have several colours by multiplying the number of stencils and successive phases of glue application and dyeing. If this is the case, stencils can be superimposed to create complex scenes. The number of stencils for a single scene can sometimes be twenty or more!

In the same way, there is also a similar technique called Sarasa. An interesting detail about Sarasa is that it is not a Japanese creation. In fact, it was originally imported from either Persia or India, and arrived in Japan via Portuguese merchants between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries.

Sarasa is actually a cotton chintz printed in bright colors with rich geometric or animal decoration. These richly decorated and colorful cotton textiles quickly became popular with the samurai class and merchant groups.

However, these chintz were extremely expensive, so it was more common to buy them and use them to create small objects such as accessories rather than kimonos.

The situation changed towards the end of the 17th century when Japanese craftsmen decided to copy this technique and adapt it at a lower cost. They adapted the Katazome stencil technique by also adding stamping techniques and colouring the textile with paint. They also imitated the themes of the Indian and Persian chintz, using the same geometric, animal and plant motifs. On average, the craftsman would use around thirty stencils to make a Sarasa textile, but in some rare cases this could rise to over 300 successive stencils for exceptional pieces!

Shibori

Among the dyeing techniques most commonly used in Japan are those known in the West as "Tie & Dye". In practical terms, this is a reserve dyeing technique using .

What sets Japan apart is the colossal number of 'Tie & Dye' techniques that craftsmen have developed over time in each region. There are dozens of variations of these techniques across the archipelago, some of which are classified as National Cultural Treasures.

In Japan, these techniques are known as shibori. In Japanese, shibori means "to fold, to tie". The textile is folded, twisted and tied with bindings and then dyed (either with dye baths, often indigo, or, more rarely, with pins dipped in the dye and then stuck into the fabric to dye by capillary action). Shibori is used to create unique patterns by playing with dyed and undyed areas on a textile. These techniques have been used since the 8th century. There are several styles of shibori, often based on regional styles.

The best known is Kanoko Shibori. Kanoko is a term used to describe the spots on the fur of a young fawn. In this technique, the craftsman takes a textile and makes ligatures by tying pieces of fabric together with a thread or elastic. He repeats the process as many times as necessary before dyeing. Then, after drying, he unties each knot and loosens the textile to reveal the pattern created from the reserves. Each binding creates a small white square in reserve. Assembling these small squares creates a larger pattern.

There are many forms of Shibori. Here is a selection of the main techniques.

1) Arashi Shibori: Here the artist wraps a textile diagonally around a pole, then ties and dyes it. This creates long diagonal patterns that look like rain. This type of pattern is known as "storm rain".

2) Arimatsu Narumi Shibori: Ligature dyeing from the city of Nagoya in Aichi prefecture. It has been dyed with indigo since the Edo period. Here, the pattern is printed before being tied with several knots.

3) Kumo Shibori: Here the artist carries out the dyeing process by folding and knotting. He then folds the fabric evenly and finely and binds it with ligatures. The textile is then dyed. This technique requires great skill and precision, and produces regular patterns similar to a spider's web.

4) Itajime Shibori: Here the fabric is folded and wedged between two pieces of wood held together by ropes, then dipped in a dye bath to create regular geometric patterns.

5) Mame Shibori: A geometric pattern of dots, the name "Mame" comes from a play on words between peas/beans and solid/healthy. It symbolises the hope of staying healthy. Craftsmen create lines of tiny ligatures to create small dots in the textile once it has been dyed. Nowadays, this pattern is no longer produced using shibori, but rather using stencils or printing.

6) Miura Shibori: This involves creating a section of fabric using a curved needle. These sections are then held together by a thread wrapped twice around them. There are no knots here, as the fabric is held together only by the tension, which makes it easy to make and unmake sections while creating a simple, regular pattern by dyeing the piece. This is a very common and often used technique.

7) Mokume Shibori: A single thread is used to gather the fabric by pulling. This technique is repeated several times with each thread, in parallel lines. The thread must be very tight to hold the whole piece together, and the artist often uses a wooden dowel to tighten it. Each thread is then stretched and dyed to create a kind of grain pattern. This pattern is called mokume and means "wood grain".

Finally, Tsujigahana is a very special technique. Its name means "Flowers at the crossroads". It is a very rare and extremely expensive technique.

There is very little information about its origins. The technique developed between the Muromachi and Momoyama periods, throughout the 16th century. It was used until the end of the Edo period, when it gradually disappeared, leading to the technique being forgotten.

Tsujigahana-decorated kimonos are of refined luxury, and there was nothing more luxurious in the 16th century. These kimonos were reserved for the elite of Japanese society. It was customary for women who owned kimonos in Tsujigahana to donate them to Buddhist temples, which, in return, would celebrate the woman's funeral and pray for the salvation of her soul.

The monks would then treasure these kimonos and carefully dismantle them to recycle whole sections of richly decorated textiles for re-use. These pieces of kimono were most often reassembled as altar fronts or temple decorations.

This situation changed in the 19th century when these Buddhist temples lost the support and funding of the Japanese state. Faced with economic difficulties, some temples were forced to sell their textiles. The textiles then joined private and public collections.

It was against this backdrop that a major artist in the history of the kimono, Itchiku Kubota (1917-2003), came into the picture. Kubota discovered Tsujigahana during his apprenticeship and began to study this lost technique by searching for textile samples in temples and collections.

After several years of experimentation, he developed his own technique, Ichiku Tsujigahana. This is in fact a Shibori technique combining a Shibori binding technique, Nuishime Shibori, with ink painting on a silk weave.

Nuishime Shibori is a very fine, stitch-resistant binding technique using a small wooden pillar that acts as a tensioner for the thread sewn into the textile to maintain high tension before dyeing.

For even greater richness, the craftsman often adds embroidery and gold thread, as well as stencilled motifs.