CHAPTER 2: THE DEVELOPMENT OF KIMONO IN JAPANESE CIVILIZATION

2.1 Introduction

Looking back to the time of human began to clothe them; we find that irrespective of geographical distinctions of the west the first form of decoration was leaf. Narrow bands of cloth later came to be woven, followed by wider widths.[1]

Clothing in any society is a reflection of the standard of living and quality of life, as well as the structure of society. In addition, changes in clothing styles reflects from the both the occupational class structure and the new distinction wealth[2] in every civilization throughout the world.

For instance, the Japanese costume (kimono) developed from one piece of cloth. Undergoing early influence first from Korea and then Dynasty Tang of China, it assumed Japanese characteristics during the classic Heian Period (794-1185)[3] and has since been refined through the shifting trends of history to the form we know today.[4] Japan has been heavily influenced by China (Chinese)[5] in the past, so this is perhaps not surprising. In both traditions the narrow fabric is used length and there is very little cutting to shape the

---

[1] Motoko Ito and Aiko Inoue; (translated by Patricia Massy), *Kimono*, Osaka: Hoisukha Publishing, 1986, p.1.
[2] John Whitney Hall et. al., *The Cambridge History of Japan, Vol. 4, Early Modern Japan*, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989-1999, p. 689.
[3] Heian Period (794-1185), as Japan draw away from continental influence, clothing began to develop along unique Japanese lines. Clothing became simpler in cut layers, more elaborate in its layers, more voluminous. In the early years of the period, clothing was in transitional style from Chinese to Japanese style.
[4] Motoko Ito and Aiko Inoue, (translated by Patricia Massy), *Kimono*, p. 1.
[5] Chinese influence changes occurred in the social and religious structure of Japan between the 6th and 7th century. Sign of these changes were especially apparent in the arts and architecture. All over the country, Chinese culture affected local tradition. Even the costumes worn during official ceremonies adapted from Chinese ceremonial clothes. Refer to: *Civilization of Asia*, Bath, Avon: Cherrytree Book, 1990, p. 64.

garments.[6]

Combining the various part of kimono skillfully is an exercise in design. This is the joy of wearing kimono. It is not only the older generation that finds pleasure in this unique aspect of the Japanese costume but we could find the spirit of kimono culture in the eyes of young wearers as well.

Among the various types of kimono and materials, there are those that derive from ancient times and have become refined and perfected with the passing ages. Dyeing, weaving, and sewing were not the work of some individuals' artist as were paintings, sculpture or tea ceremony objects. Textiles grew among the common people, passing from the hands of one artisan to another. Through the fires of war, overcoming famines, these art forms have been bequeathed to us today.

While preserving the national costume of Japan and at the same time taking advantages of new artificial materials, Japanese have kept the kimono as a very important part of modern life and civilization.[7]

---

[6] Naomi Tarrant, *The Development of Costume*, Edinburgh: National Museum of Scotland in conjunction with Routledge, 1994, p. 38.

[7] Motoko Ito and Aiko Inoue, (translated by Patricia Massy), *Kimono*, p. 1.

2.2 Definition of Kimono

The literal meaning of kimono is a "thing", *mono*, "to wear," *ki* (*ru*). If we keep this in mind and ask how does a person who wears a kimono "become," we can better understand the meaning of this attire that embodies in a variety of ways the heart of the Japanese and their culture. [8]

Kimono is a loose-fitting, robe-like garment, which comprises the traditional Japanese dress. It is word folded over in front, and has wide sleeves. It may serve as either an outer or an under garment and is usually worn unlined in the summer, lined in the spring and autumn and padded in the winter. A variety of materials, ranging from the finest silk brocade to cotton, are used, depending on the reason and occasion for which the kimono is intended. This type of garment was originally introduced from China during the Nara period (710-794)[9], but is used today primarily in Japan.[10]

There are more different kinds of kimono for women than for men, and more women wear kimono than men do. The generation of women who grew up before the war sewed kimono for the entire family. To clean good-quality kimono they would take apart all the sections and sew the pieces together again after washing. Caring for kimono took a lot of work, but women after marriage wore their good-quality kimono for their lifetime and even

---

[8] Dorothy Perkins, *Encyclopedia of Japan: Japanese History and Culture, from Abacus to Zori*, New York: Facts on File, 1991, p. 176.

[9] During the Nara Period (710-794), intensive assimilation of continental culture continued. The oldest-surviving Japanese textiles were brought to Japan along the Silk Road through China and Korea from remote areas as far as the Middle East. Refer to: David Levinson, Karen Christensen (eds), *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002, p. 118.

[10] Hugo Munsternberg, *Dictionary of Chinese and Japanese Art*, New York: Hacker Art Books, 1981, p.152-3.

handed them down to their daughters.[11]

Women's kimono- women wear different formal kimono for festive occasions and for mourning. The wedding costume is particularly dazzling, consisting of a long outer robe (*uchikake)*, generally white, though red is also common. It is lavishly decorated embroidery and brocade depicting auspicious symbol like the crane and tortoise. Two layers of white robes *(kakeshita*) are worn underneath. The bride also has her hair done in the style known as *bunkin shimada* and wears a white hood called *tsuno-kakushi* (literally "horn covering").

Many women's kimono for festive occasions is made black or dark silk crepe (*chirimen*). Called *edozuma* or *tomesode*, this type of kimono has the family crest, and in addition, a design on the front and hem. Young unmarried women wear *furisode*; kimono with sleeves as long as 1 meter (3.3 ft) and an overall design that usually runs diagonally from the shoulder down to the hem. Usually a special *obi* of double width but folded one, known as *maru obi*, is worn with *edozuma* and *furisode* kimono. For funerals, a plain black *montsuki* kimono and white under kimono are worn with a black *obi* and black accessories.

Formal or semiformal kimono may have no design, a small overall print, or a free design (*tsukesage*). On more formal occasions a black *montsuki haori* jacket of the type worn at funerals may be added, or an *ebaori* jacket, which has a dyed, woven, embroidered, or painted design.

For men's kimono- the ceremonial kimono for men is made of black *habutae* silk, the sole decoration being the family crest (*mon*) in white that are appears on the back, on

[11] Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1999, p. 123.

both front panels, and on each sleeves; this and other garments with crests are called *montsuki*. Over the kimono is worn a *haori* (jacket) and *hakama* (pleated trousers or skirt). For less formal wear, the kimono and *haori* may be made of wool.

For summer, either a lightweight cotton kimono *(yukata)* or linen knee-length shorts or upper garment *(jimbei)* are worn at home. In winter, a cotton-quilted robe called *tanzen*, often stripe, may be worn at home over a kimono. Today, very few men wear kimono in public except for those who perform some sort of traditional art.[12]

Today most women wear kimono mainly for social and ceremonial events or when performing certain traditional arts. Children and young men and women may wear kimono for such occasions as *New Year*[13] the *Shichigosan* Festival[14], Coming of Age Day[15], graduations, tea ceremony (*chanoyu*)[16] and weddings.

---

[12] *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, Tokyo: Kodansha, 1983, p. 209-10.

[13] Traditionally, *New Year's* preparations have included ritual house cleaning, the clearing up of all debts, and new kimono for each child in the family, and the hanging of special decorations. Refer to: Hideo Haga, (translated by Don Kenny), *Japanese Festivals*, Osaka: Hoikusha, 1979, p. 2.

[14] *Shichigosan* Festival is observed on November 15; on that day boys and girls are taken to shrines to give thanks for their healthy growth so far to pray for their good future. The name of the festival derives from the children's ages and the stages in their growth. Odd numbers are considered auspicious in Japan. The custom of *Shichigosan* became popular during the Edo period, particularly in Edo stressed certain of the years. Through there are variations according to loyalty; in general 3 and 5 boys and 3 and 7 years girls are taken, dressed in their best kimono, by their parents to the shrine of their local deity (*ujigami*). Refer to: *Pictorial Encyclopedia of Japanese Life and Events*, Tokyo: Gakken Co. Ltd, 1993, p. 82.

[15] *Coming of Age Day*, celebrated on January 15. It has been declared a national holiday. It is held in honor of all those who reached their 20th birthday during the previous year. Throughout Japan, young people in their best clothes, many of them in the traditional kimono and visiting their neighborhood shrines to make offerings for a successful adult life. In Tokyo, the new adults visit Meiji Shrine for this purpose. Refer to: Hideo Haga, (translated by Don Kenny), *Japanese Festivals*, p. 11.

[16] Tea ceremony (*chanoyu*) is the etiquette surrounding meetings for the drinking of tea. It is also called The Way of Tea. It is said to have been brought from China in the Nara period, but it was in the Kamakura period that the powered green tea used in the ceremony was recommended by Buddhist monks to people as medicine. Tea drinking became naturalized during the Muromachi period, and turned into an accomplishment of refined elegance. The procedure was simplified by Murata Juko (1422-1502) and made into a supreme art by Sen no Rikyo (1522-1592). Refer to: *Pictorial Encyclopedia and Japanese Culture: The Soul and Heritage of Japan*, Tokyo: Gakken Co. Ltd, 1987, p. 129.

Although kimono is an artistically and technically one of the most wonderful national costumes in the world, the kimono radiates its true beauty only when worn, and it is at the moment it is put on that the wearer begins to feel fortunate.

2.3 Types of Kimono

The traditional Japanese dress is the kimono, a term that has come to wear any kind of Japanese clothing but specifically refers to an ankle-length garment held in place by the sash like "*obi*" and hang long, loose sleeves. Through kimono styles have often changed over the centuries, the basic form has survived from the earliest times to the present. Kimono, have only there sizes: those for men, for women and for children.[17]
(Refer: Picture 1, Picture 2 and Picture 3).

Differences between men's and women's kimono include the length, much longer (the excess folded over and held by the obi), the sleeves being fuller, longer and at the way of folding one side of the garment were often being different. While men's kimono tends to somber in pattern and color, women's are extremely colorful. It takes an expert but it is possible to tell a woman's age and social status from her kimono. Another difference is that mainly kimonoed women one sees on the street. Men in kimono, except for those wearing the informal "*yukata*" / "*tazen*"(summer and winter) robes around the house, are rare, indeed, are seldom seen expect at such formal occasions as weddings, funerals and *New Year's* holidays.[18]

---

[17] Ian Inkster and Fumihiko Satofuka (eds), *Culture and Technology in Modern Japan*, New York: St Martin's Press, 2000, p. 137.
[18] Donald Richie, *Introducing Japan*, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1994, p. 71.

Picture 1: Men's Kimono and Traditional Clothing

1 ki-nagashi: men's casual kimono style
2 awase: lined kimono
3 kaku-obi: stiff sash or waistband for men
4 furoshiki: square wrapping-cloth
5 setta: type of *zori* with leather soles
6 hitoe: unlined kimono for warm weather
7 kasuri: kimono with patterns woven in
8 heko-obi: simple *obi* worn by men
9 geta: wooden clogs
10 mon-tsuki: formal kimono with a family crest
11 mon: family crest
12 haori: outer coat worn over kimono
13 himo: pair of braided cords for tying *haori*
14 hakusen: ceremonial white folding fan
15 hakama: skirt-trousers, like culottes
16 shokunin-sugata: artisan's apparal
17 hara-maki: woolen waistband for men
18 momohiki: tight-fitting trousers for laborers
19 jika-tabi: split-toed shoes, shaped like *tabi*
20 hanten: short garment worn over kimono
21 tanzen: padded kimono for cold weather
22 jimbe: thin, summer half-kimono
23 chan-chan-ko: sleeveless, padded short-coat

Adapted from: Daniel Sosnoski, (ed.), *Introduction to Japanese Culture*, Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1996, p. 89.

Picture 2: Women's Kimono in Various Styles

1 **fukura-suzume:** special way of tying an *obi*
2 **furi-sode:** young woman's long-sleeved kimono
3 **nuki-emon:** pulled-back collar
4 **otaiko:** drum-shaped *obi* knot
5 **homon-gi:** semi-formal kimono
6 **han-eri:** replaceable neckband or collar
7 **obi-age:** band of silk to keep *obi* tied in place
8 **obi-dome:** sash clip made of ivory, wood, etc.
9 **obi:** sash for a kimono
10 **ohashori:** tuck at the waist to adjust a kimono
11 **tabi:** Japanese socks, with split toes
12 **kohaze:** metal clasps or hooks on *tabi*
13 **hakkake:** kimono lining
14 **hanao:** toe thongs on footwear
15 **zori:** sandal-like footwear worn with *tabi*
16 **hakoseko:** decorative brocade wallet
17 **obi-jime:** cord used to hold *obi* in place
18 **pokkuri:** young woman's lacquered clogs
19 **e-baori:** short overgarment for women
20 **michi-yuki:** traveling coat worn over kimono

Adapted from: Daniel Sosnoski, (ed.), *Introduction to Japanese Culture*, Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1996, p. 87.

Picture 3: Kimono Accessories, *Yukata*, and Children's Kimono

1 **kara-kasa:** oil-paper umbrella
2 **ashida:** high, wooden clogs for rainy days
3 **tsuma-kawa:** toe covering for *ashida*
4 **kappo-gi:** apron with sleeves
5 **nenneko:** short coat for a pregnant woman
6 **kintaro:** baby's pinafore
7 **yukata:** informal cotton kimono
8 **kata-age:** tuck at shoulder to adjust children's sleeve
9 **sanjaku:** unsewn *obi* of soft cloth
10 **okumi:** outer front panel of a kimono
11 **uchiwa:** round, non-folding fan
12 **tsuma:** bottom corner of a kimono
13 **hada-juban:** cotton kimono underwear
14 **koshi-himo:** waist-cord for adjusting a kimono
15 **date-maki:** narrow sash worn over underclothes
16 **suso-yoke:** underskirt worn with *hada-juban*
17 **naga-juban:** long undergarment for kimono
18 **mushi-boshi:** airing of kimono
19 **tato-gami:** thick paper for wrapping kimono
20 **tammono:** woven kimono cloth

Adapted from: Daniel Sosnoski, (ed.), *Introduction to Japanese Culture*, Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1996, p. 88.

There are many types and styles of kimono which are worn depending of the formality of the occasion, the age of the wearer, their marital status, time of day, and time of season. In addition to colors and styles, the way kimonos are worn differs between whether it is single or married woman. All of these factors come into play when deciding what kimono is appropriate to wear and how to wear it. Those conventions dictating which kimono is appropriate developed over the Edo period[19] and those rulers are still observed today when kimonos are worn.

The most formal kimono is *kuro tomesode* which is dyed black with decorative motif from the *obi* to the hem. Family crest are either stenciled or embroidered on it. Married women wear *kuro tomesode*. It is lined with white silk either *rinzu* (raised pattern) or plain. Next in formality is the *iro tomesode*, which is similar in style except that is colored rather than black.

If a single person who went to festive occasion, they needed to put on *furisode*, literally swinging sleeves. *Furisode* are usually very colorful in order to attract the eye of young men. The long flowing sleeves if the *furisode* are also supposed to beckon men toward them. There are varying sleeve lengths: *oburisode* (the longest), *chuburisode* (medium), and *kofurisode* (the shortest). There are black *furisode* which used to worn on very formal occasions for single women. The *furisode* was developed during the Edo period and was said to have come from the *kabuki* actors and courtesan of the pleasure quarters.

During visiting or attending semiformal occasions, a person needs to wear *homongi*

[19] During the Edo period (1603-1868), the urban population exhibited a passion for fresh textiles designs. Refer to: David Levinson. Karen Christensen (eds), *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia*. p. 119.

imono, literally visiting wear. It is somewhat less formal and usually has lining that is lifferent than the material on the outside. It is decorated with full patterns. Sleeves length aries according to marital status. One must be careful when choosing the appropriate *omongi* because your kimono should not outshine that of the host you are visiting.

There are the very special occasion kimonos such as the pure white *shiromuku*, vedding kimono. The purity of the white silk symbolically represents the bride's acceptance of her cloth being dyed into color that her husband sees fit, i.e. fitting into her new situation. Also seen at weddings are the elaborate *uchikake* robes which are worn over *kakeshita* kimono. The *uchikake* was the outer robe worn by the court ladies and the samurai ladies prior to the Muromachi period.

Te he robes was worn off the shoulders during the heat of summer months and was bound together by a *kakeshita obi*. Usually *uchikake* can be determined by the red or white silk lining at hem which is heavy padded with cotton to hold the hem down. There are kimonos for times of mourning called *mofuku* which are black with family crest and no decorative motives. The body is dressed in a kimono and the right side is wrapped over the left, opposite of the usual left side over the right.

Kimono is also classified according to the type of materials, dyeing, patterns and the regions where they come from as well. The *tsumugi* which is spun silk kimono *Tsumugi* was the silk used after the best grades were sold. Usually stripes, checks and *kasuri* (thread resist dyeing) are the patterns used for most *tsumugi* kimono. Another style of *tsumugi* is the *Kihachijo*; this type was produces on *Kihachijo* island near Edo (Tokyo). It is dyed in yellows, brown and blacks usually in striped or check patterns.

Other kimono types are *iro muji* which are single-colored figured silks which have risen, repeating patterns woven-in such as *mon rinzu*; these can be worn on formal on informal occasion by women of either marital status. When a crest is stenciled or embroidered it is a formal kimono.

Tsukeage kimono are dyed in a specific way from the hemline front and back to the top if the shoulders of the back and top of the sleeves. *Komon* kimono are patterned kimono made by stencil dyeing, the fabric is usually figured silks, spun silks or crepe. Another kimono type is called *omeshi*, which originally was the term that describe the type of kimono worn by court ladies, later this the name was used for a certain type of heavy silk crepe in which the silk thread is resist dyed and woven together.

Although wool had to be imported, it was a material used in both winter and summer kimono. The one advantage to wool was that it did not require the kimono to be taken apart to be cleaned.

Katabira were unlined summer *kosode* or kimono made of silk. They were as luxuriously decorated as lined *kosode*. Many of us are familiar with the next type of kimono, called the *yukata*. The *yukata* is an unlined cotton summer kimono usually decorated in medium sized patterns. It is usually worn at hot spring spas. It can also be worn by men at summer festivals. *Yukata* are unlined and no under kimono is worn. *Geta* (wooden platform shoes) are usually worn with them as opposed to *tabi* (split toed socks) and *zori* (sandal type shoes) worn with other kimono. Another summer kimono is the *jofu*, which is high quality hand woven linen.

Kimono for children were called *miyamiri-ji*, are purchased for a child but worn for the first time (when the child in 30 days old) by the grandmother carrying the baby in her arms. The *ubuji* or *miyamiri-ji* is ties over the shoulders of the grandmother and draped down across the baby. Then baby and grandmother, along with the child's parents set off for the temple to have the body painted and embroidered on the back of the kimono with auspicious symbolic designs appropriate to the sex of the child. *Miyamiri-ji* for girls are pastel colors with designs such as flowers, cranes and pine tree symbols. Boys symbol include jumping *koi* (fish), samurai, dragon and eagles, etc.[20]

[20] *http://www.japaneselifestyle.com.au/fashion/kimono.html*

Table 1:

Kimono: Time, Place and Occasion

The following table summarizes which kimono are the appropriate ones for different occasions.

Formality	Occasion	Kimono
Ceremonial	When social status is emphasized: official function, wedding ceremony, funeral	Black *tomesode*, *uchikake*, mourning
Formal	Wedding, formal reception, formal party	Colored *tomesode*, *furisode*, crested *iro muji*, crested Edo *komon*, *tsukesage hōmongi*
Visiting	Visiting, school entrance or graduation ceremony, party, large meeting or gathering	Edo *komon* (without crests), *tsukesage komon*, *iro muji* (without crests), tie-dye *komon*, *omeshi*, *tsumugi*
In town	Shopping, meeting friends, traveling	*Komon*, *omeshi*, *tsumugi*
Everyday	At home	*Tsumugi*, wool, *yukata*

Adapted from: NorioYamanaka, *The Book of Kimono*, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1982, p. 56.

Picture 4: Fashion of Kimono

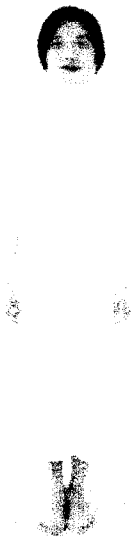
kuro tomesode

iro tomesode

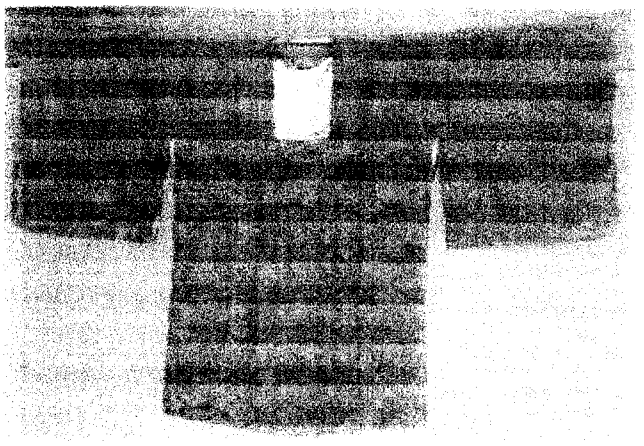
komon

tsukesage

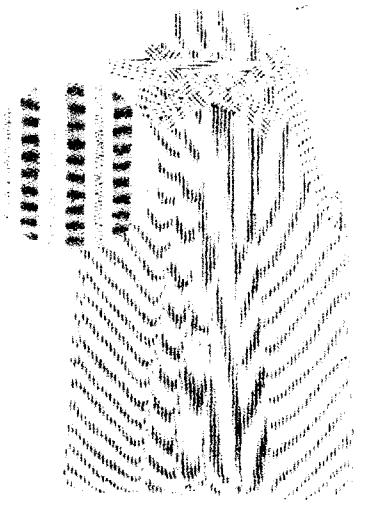
iro muji



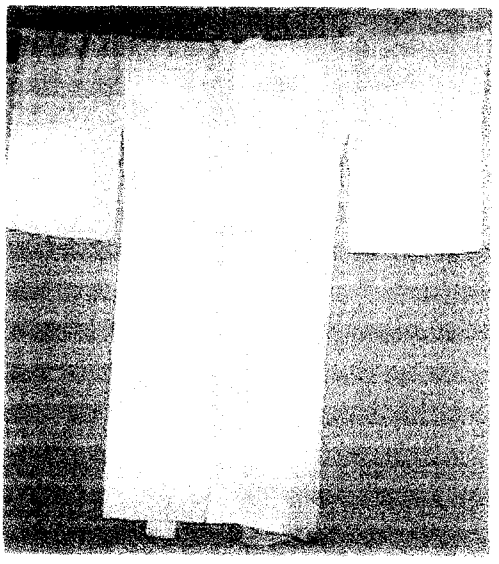
hadajuban



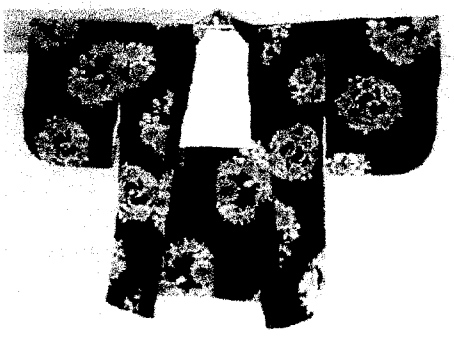
michiyuki



hakama



juban



haori

Adapted from: *http://www.japaneselifestyle.com.au/fashion/kimono.html*

2.4 Development of Kimono

Kimono fashions have developed over the centuries in response to varied influences. Today modern innovations are making the wearing of kimono at home and away from home an attractive and practical alternative to western garments. These are included, along with a discussion and the meaning kimono culture can have for wearers and admirers throughout the world civilization.

Whether for women or men, all kimonos are cut and sewn essentially from a single pattern, but a number of variations must be considered, depending on the occasion. For women, there are formal kimono, *obi* and accessories, and the lightweight summer *yukata*; for men, the *yukata* and the ceremonial ensemble of kimono, *haori* coat and *hakama* skirt.

This is important to understand the role of the kimono in Japanese culture, as is the idea of the West as a *suru bunka*, a "culture that does" things and Japan as a *naru bunka*, a "culture" in which things "become." Western culture has had as its basis that absolute principles of Christianity and its goals are calculated and deliberate. Useful goals are not unknown in modern Japan, which is the result of a cultural development very different from that of the West, but historically of much greater importance was the establishment of a vibrant relationship with nature. It is a culture that prizes love, admire beauty, respect courtesy and foster harmony, example Japanese most proud national wear- The Kimono.

Houses were built to harmonize with land and climate, and the same is true of Japanese dress. Since prehistoric times, the Japanese style of dress has been essentially two-piece with a sash or cord tied at the waist. At any early stage there were separate upper

and lower garments, but over time the kimono became single garment with wide sleeves and of an ample length and size to make it airy and comfortable for summer wear. To keep warm in winter, it was only necessary to put on more layers of kimono.[21]

2.41 Background of Kimono Development

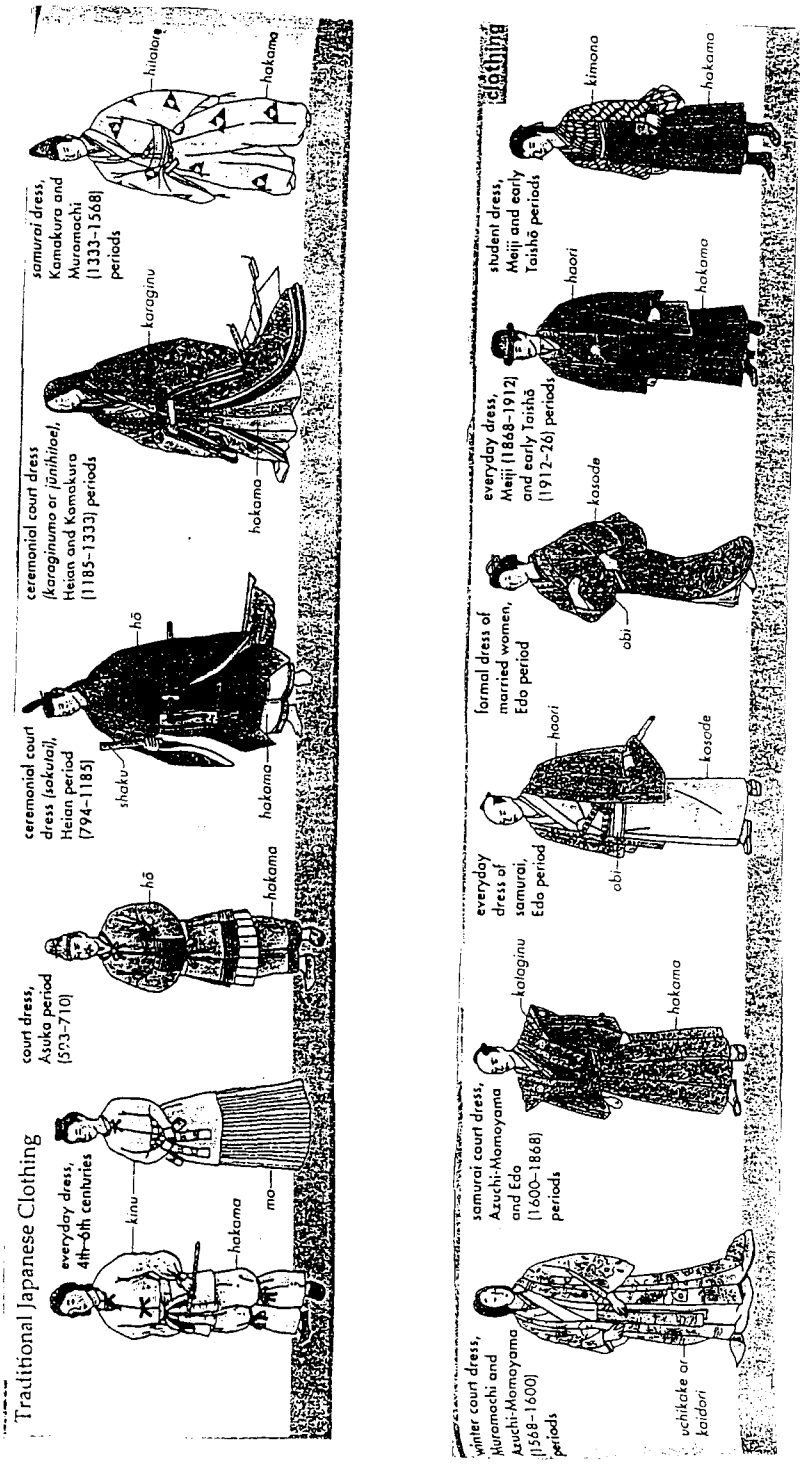
The word kimono simply means things to wear. The kimono has had a long history and development throughout the ages in Japan and the kimono has changed over time to reflect the society and culture of that period. Tracing the origins of Japanese dress from the ancient days until the present is largely a matter of conjecture but distinct of kimono development have been recognized. The word kimono is usually used in the narrow sense to refer to the traditional Japanese wrap-around garment with rectangular sleeves used by both men and women, which are made of vertical panels of cloth, stitched together and are bound with a sash (*obi*).

In the sense the word does not include the half-length jacket (*haori*) or the full-length under robe (*juban*). It is occasionally used in the broad sense as a term for clothing or for the native dress in general as opposed to Western-style clothing (*yōfuku*). The kimono took its present form in the 19th century after undergoing many changes in the preceding 2,000 years. The early primitive people wore a costume called *kantō-i* or *kesa koromo*, a type of clothing common to both East and West. Gradually, customs and influences from abroad brought a change in style.[22] (Refer: Picture 5)

---

[21] Norio Yamanaka, *The Book of Kimono*, Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1982, p. 7.
[22] Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, *Japan: It's Land, People and Culture*, Tokyo: Printing Bureau, Ministry of Finance, 1958, p. 903.

Picture 5: Development of Kimono



Adapted from: *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993, p. 210-11.

Ancient clothing (to A.D. 794) - The type of clothing worn during the *Jōmon* period (ca. 10,000 B.C. - ca. 300 B.C.) is unknown although jewelry from that period has been found. People probably used fur and bark to cover themselves. With the Yayoi period (ca. 300 B.C. – ca. 300 A.D.) came the rise of sericulture (silkworms breeding) and weaving techniques. The Chinese chronicle *Wei Zhi (Wei Chih)* describes the early Japanese as wearing sheets of cloth woven from flax or silk. The *Haniwa* clay figurines from 4th and 5th century tombs show men in *kinu*, long, belted upper garments, with straight sleeves tied at the wrists and elbows. As a lower garment man wore *hakama*, loose trousers tied below the knees. Women wore *kinu*, similar to the men's, and pleated wrap-skirts (*mo*). The material was generally vegetable fiber, such as *asa* (*bast fiber*), although aristocrats sometimes wore silk.

Influenced by the importation of Buddhism and the Chinese government system, Prince Shōtoku (574-622)[23] followed the practice of the Sui court (589-618), establishing rules of dress for aristocrats and court officials that influenced from Han dynasty (23-220) fashion. The Taihō Code and Yōrō (718; effective 757) reformed clothing styles, following the system used in Tang dynasty in China (618-907). Garments were divided into three categories: ceremonial dress, court dress, and working clothes.[24]

The predecessor of the kimono is the *kosode* ("small sleeves"), which was worn as an undergarment from about the Nara period (710-794).[25] Until the 7th or 8th centuries the clothing was in 2 pieces due to Korean and Chinese influence while during the 7th to 8th

[23] Prince Shōtoku (574-622), established the first dress code in Japan and, following a China model, fixed twelve court ranks distinguished by the color of their headgear. Refer to: David Levinson, Karen Christensen (eds), *Encyclopedia of Modern Japan*, p. 118.
[24] *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, Tokyo: Kodansha, 1993, p. 210.
[25] *Kodansha, Encyclopedia of Japan*, p. 209.

centuries the kimono in its present form was worn an undergarment.[26]

During the 7th to 9th centuries there was a strong Chinese influence on Japanese clothes but this influence disappeared with the development of an individual type of clothing. Today only a few women wear Chinese dress. Heian period (794-1185) as Japan drew away from continental influence clothing became simpler in cut but more elaborate in layers.[27]

For formal occasions the male aristocrat's layered outfit (*sokutai*) included loose trousers stiffened by divided skirts (*ōguchi*), worn underneath, and many layers long, loose upper garments (*hō*). For less formal court wear and in leisure, men wore the *hō* over *sashinuki* (laced pantaloons secured at the ankle, with *ōguchi* underneath. For everyday wear courtiers replaced the *hō* with the shorter *nōshi* mantles. When hunting, they wore *kariginu*, bast-fiber mantles with loose sleeves that could be laced tight at the wrist. This became the formal dress of warrior leader.

At the same time, during the Heian period (794-1185) the custom of elaborate layers of colored kimono robes became popular with Japanese women. *Jun-hitoe*, twelve unlined robes were frequently worn with the sleeve edges and collars showing the shades of each kimono. Persons from the royal court sometimes worn up to 16 kimono layers.[28]

In the 9th century a unique type of dress called *hō* and *naoshi*, a kind of coat and pantaloon for men of the nobility and *jūni-hitoe* and *hakama* (ceremonial robe and skirt) for

---

[26] Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, *Japan: Its Land, People and Culture*, p. 903.
[27] Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, *Japan: Its Land, People and Culture*, p. 906.
[28] *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, p. 330-1.

court ladies were designed. The common people were *kosode* which had shorter sleeves. The *kosode* became the common wear for all classes of people from around the 13th century. Men wore it with the *hakama*; a kind of skirt and women wore it with a narrow cord or sash tied around the waist.[29]

The formal costume of the Heian lady-in-waiting was the *karaginumo*, often referred to after the 16th century as the 12-layered garment (*jūnihitoe*). Its most important element was the *uchiki*; the layer of lined robes (5, 10, or more) also called *kasane-uchiki* or *kasane* (layers). Great consideration was given to the combination of colors in the layers of *uchiki*. Each layer was longer than the one over it, so that the edge of each color showed, creating a striking effect.

For everyday, occasion's women wore a simplified version (*kouchiki*) or else a loose upper garment with trousers. For travel the head was covered either by a straw hat (*ichi-megasa*) with a veil made of strips of clothe (*mishitare-ginu*) or by an unlined garment (*kinukazuki*). Ordinary women wore simpler clothes, including short, sleeves robes (*tenashi*).[30]

Kamakura (1185-1333)[31] and Muromachi (1333-1568) Period[32]- With the establishment of the Kamakura shogunate and the decline of the prestige and power of the

[29] Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, *Japan: Its Land, People and Culture*, p. 903.
[30] *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, p. 210.
[31] Kamakura period (1192-1333), as the military class came to power, the ruling class adapted a more practical and restrained style of clothing based on warrior garments. *Hitatare*, a tailored suit with a broad-sleeved cloak and *hakama* trousers became the standard for men's clothing. Family crest often appeared as dyed motifs on fabrics. *Kosode*, an undergarment, became an outer garment. Refer to: David Levinson, Karen Christensen (eds), *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia*, p. 119.
[32] Muromachi period (1336-1573), the *kosode* continued evolving and became the common dress for almost all classes of women. As it came to be worn alone with *hakama*, its full-length flat surface provided larger continuous spaces for two-dimensional decoration and encourages new designs with striking colors and patterns. Refer to: David Levinson, Karen Christensen (eds), *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia*, p. 119.

imperial court, a new style of life emerged. With the rising influence of the military class and warriors, people had no patience or need for elaborate kimono. Practically prevailed and during this period the *kosode* meaning small sleeves was introduced into the kimono.

The elegant sensitivity of the courtier gave way to the simple, dynamic life of the military man, serious, strong, and ready for battle. Changes in clothing reflect the shift of leadership. The stiffened garments of the military aristocracy replaced the soft, luxurious silk characteristic of the Heian court. Both lacquer and vegetable starch were used to give body to the materials.

In men's clothing, only the highest officials, including the shogun, wore the formal *sokutai* left over from the Heian period. The informal hunting jacket (*karigunu*) became the standard uniform of the samurai, along with similar cloak, the *suikan*, made of stiffened silk, *gauze*, bast fiber.

For everyday wear, matched cloth combinations were the norm. The upper garment, called a *hitatare*, had a broad collar, which was crossed in front of the body, a style that became the basic form in later centuries. Its broad sleeves, made by sewing two widths of cloth together, had, like then *karigunu*, cords at the cuffs for tightening.

Originally the *hitatare* was worn by the working classes, but the Kamakura period, it was adopted by the warriors in service of the shogunate, and by the Muromachi period it had become the formal dress. Later it rose to the role of ceremonial dress when worn in combination with trailing, pleated trousers (*nagabakama*). One distinguishing characteristic of the *hitatare* style is that the upper garment is worn tucked into trousers rather than belted

over them.[33]

In the 13th century special clothing called *suhō* and *hitatare* bearing the family crest were made for the ruling samurai class to show their rank. [34]

Two variations of the *hitatare* were common: the *daimon*, or *hitatare* with large crests dyed on the sleeves and center back, and the *suō*, a broad-sleeved upper garment generally made of bast fibers. When this was worn with long pleated trousers of the same material and pattern, the combination was called *kamishimo*. Another variation on the *hitatare* that become fashionable in the Muromachi period was the *chōken*, made a little longer and woven out of silk gauze.

In women's clothing at the beginning of *uchiki* robes and *hakama* skirt-trousers was worn as the formal outfit. Later the small-sleeved undergarment, the kosode, worn with hakama, replaced these. The *kosode* sleeves differed from the *uchiki* is being only wrist length and in being sewn up at the outer edge to form a pocket. In the Muromachi period an extra jacket called *uchikake* or *kaidori* with very small sleeves was worn on top of the *kosode* to complete the formal dress of upper-class women. After the 17th century, this *uchikake* gained popularity as formal wear among commoners as well, and today it is worn as part of the bridal outfit.

Among the various ways of draping the *kosode*, the style known as *koshmaki-*

---

[33] *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, p. 210.
[34] Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, *Japan: Its Land, People and Culture*, p. 903.

slipping the upper portion off the shoulders and wrapping it around the waist, leaving the under kimono showing- became the most common summer style for the ladies of the samurai class after the middle of the Muromachi period. Another style involved wearing a *hakuginu* mantle over the *kosode* and leaving off the pleated skirt-trousers.

Azuchi-Momoyama Period (1568-1600) - In the latter part of the 16th century, the powerful generals Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, great patrons of the arts, encouraged a wave of bold, decorative brilliance. This found echoes, in clothing, which grew more luxurious. New contact with the West through the Portuguese and trade with China influenced styles and techniques.

The samurai continued to wear a combination of matched upper and lower garments. The upper garment, however, was without sleeves and resembled a broad-shouldered was (*kataginu*). Like its forerunner, the *suō* combination with long *hakama*, this is called *kamishimo*. Gradually the material was made stiffer and the flare of the shoulders was increased through his use of whalebone. This combination of top with trailing pleated trousers (*nagabakama*) continued as formal wear for samurai throughout the following Edo period.

In addition the samurai sometimes wore robes called *dōbuku*. Others had worn these since the Muromachi period by warriors-turned-priest and at funerals and Buddhist ceremonies. Later the *dōbuku* was widely adopted by both samurai and commoners for daily wear, usually over a *kosode* or *hitatare*. Similarly, men of all classes could wear the jittoku traveling jacket, though in the Edo period it became the standard outfit for doctors and Confucian scholars.

Women continue to wear *kosode* with an *uchikake* cloak for warmth in the winter and it the summer they folded down the upper part of the *kosode*, wrapping it around their waists for coolness. [35]

With the dawn of Momoyama period (1573-1603)[36] in the latter part of the 16th century great progress was made in weaving and dyeing and men and women's kimono became bright and gay; the sleeves of the *kosode* became as long as 40-50 cm and the corners were rounded. The *kamishomo* was designed as the formal were of the samurai in the 17th century.

Silk was worn by the upper class only and commoners used rough linen of plain weave and design but with the import of cotton seeds at the end of the 17th century, cotton was grown and used.

During Edo Period (1600-1868) - The 250 years of Tokugawa government was a period of peace, tranquility and growing prosperity.[37] In 1615, military leader Tokugawa moved the capital of Japan from Kyoto, where the emperor resided to Edo, the present day Tokyo. Confucianism was adopted and hierarchy became the guiding principle where citizens were ranked based on their class. People began to define their status by their kimono clothing. During this time the greatest artistic accomplishments were made with the kimono. However, after 1853, the US Navy sailed to Tokyo and the beginning of Japan's

[35] *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, p. 332.
[36] Momoyama period (1573-1603) was generally characterized by its bold extremes of taste initiated by dynamic social changes and economic growth. Costumes of this period displayed flamboyant designs. *Tsujigahana* dyeing, a method of exquisite surface decoration produced by a combination of stitched tie-dyeing, hand painting, and embroidery, was popular. Surviving cloaks (*dofuku*) decorated with *tsujigahana* worn by military leaders' exhibit their extravagant taste. Refer to: David Levinson, Karen Christensen (eds), *Encyclopedia of Modern Asia*, p. 119.
[37] *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, p. 332.

commercial industry was opened to the Western world. Although Japanese people continue to wear the kimono for another hundred years, the beginning of the end of this practice was near.[38]

The wealthy and growing merchant community (*Chōnin*) supported new forms of artistic expression. The *Kabuki Theater*[39] (Refer: Picture 6) and the entertainment quarters led the fashion in clothing and hairstyle. Industry prospered during the peaceful years of the Tokugawa feudal age (17^{th}-19^{th} centuries). Beautiful kimono with sleeves as long as 43-60 cm, called *furisode* became the fashion. This is still worn today by brides and young girls.

Kimono was made much longer than the height of the wearer and *obi* was from 12-30 cm in width. The long trailing kimono with its beautiful soft lines and wide *obi* looked very graceful but was first created for the court women of the Tokugawa Shogunate to make their hips look beautiful but was adopted by other women as well later. *Habutae* (flat silk) and *chirimen* (heavy crepe) suitable for kimono were produced about this time. The sleeves of men's kimono also became long and fashionable men even wore *furisode*.[40]

During the period the *kosode* was the basic garment for both men and women and was worn by the military as well as the merchant class. With Azuchi- Momoyama-period advances in dyeing techniques, the *kosode* had become more brilliantly decorated. This

---

[38] Liza Crihfield Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, p. 384.
[39] Kabuki is a popular form of stage entertainment which was developed during the Edo period. It originated in the performance of dancing and light drama (kabuki- *odori*) enacted by a woman, okuni, and her group in Kyoto at the beginning of the 17^{th} century. The costumes of kabuki played most attractive aspects. The patterns and colors for each role are set to the extent that a character can easily be recognized by his costume. Example, the "red" princess roles all were basically red robes with a fan-shaped silver tiara in their hair. Refer to: Yasuji Toita and Chiaki Yoshida; (translated by Don Kenny), *Kabuki*, Japan: Hoikusha, 1979, p.114-6.
[40] Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, *Japan: Its Land, People and Culture*, p. 903.

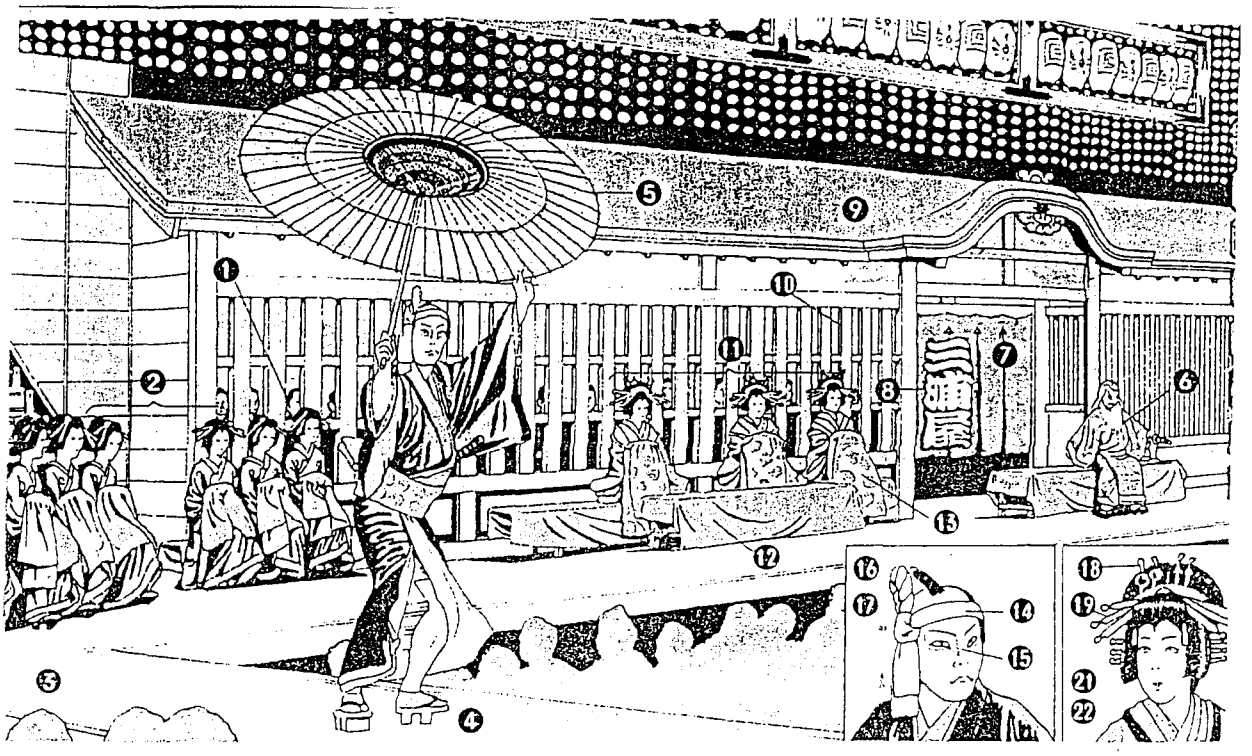
tendency accelerated during the Edo period, particularly with the development of Yüzen dyeing and Tie-Dyeing patterns. The vertical length of the sleeves was increased, though the horizontal length hands. The overall decorative patterns were replaced by designs that emphasized the shoulder and hem or divided the garment into sections with contrasting patterns.

In the 18th century *kosode* were often decorated around the hips or hem or diagonally from shoulder to opposite hem, a style called *edozuma*. In the latter half of the period, however, the lavishness of the bourgeoisies was curtailed by frequent government regulations restricting the types, colors, and materials of clothing worn by commoners. Under these circumstances, the people turned to more subtle avenues of expression and to cultivating a new sense of beauty. Plain overall patterns such as stripes, checks, and dots executed in quiet colors became popular. These were balanced by growing elaborateness in hairstyle and generous use of exquisitely worked accessories.

The development of the *obi*, sash tied around the waist to hold the *kosode* in place, was closely connected with styles in textiles design. During the Edo period the *obi* changed from a narrow band to a stiff belt approximately 30 cm (1 ft) wide and 4 meters (13 ft) long. Decorated with rich embroidery or woven, raised designs, it was tied in a variety of decorative ways either in front or back of the body.

Over the *kosode* the Edo man often wore a *haori* jacket. Its straight collar folded to the outside and two short strings tied to the front panels could be knotted at the chest. A short jacket variation on this was the *kawahoribaori*. The *jimbaori* was a sleeveless coat worn by generals in camp. Firemen wore a *kajibaori* or fire-coat made of leather or wool.

Picture 6: Kabuki Performance



1 hayashi-kata: Japanese classical arts musicians
2 shinzo: attendant for a high-ranking courtesan
3 hana-michi: aisle-stage used for dramatic entrances
4 mie: dramatic pose assumed by kabuki actors
5 ja-no-me gasa: oil-paper umbrella used in kabuki
6 Ikyu: the villain in the kabuki play *Sukeroku*
7 noren: curtain hung over the entrance to a shop
8 yago: name of a shop, also used for kabuki actors
9 yukaku: the part of a city dedicated to brothels
10 koshi: latticework window
11 tayu: top-rank courtesan, also called an *oiran*
12 shogi: a bench
13 kakae-obi: kimono sash, tied in front
14 hachi-maki: headband
15 kuma-dori: makeup that exaggerates kabuki actor's expressions
16 Sukeroku: the leading role in the kabuki play of the same name
17 tachi-yaku: actor who performs male roles
18 kanzashi: long, ornamental hairpin
19 kogai: flat, ornamental hairpin
20 tate-hyogo: special hairstyle worn only by courtesans
21 Agemaki: name of the tayu loved by Sukeroku
22 oyama: actor who performs female roles

Adapted from: Daniel Sosnoski, (ed.), *Introduction to Japanese Culture*, Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1996, p. 31.

The *hifu* coat, generally worn by old men and doctors, was very similar to the *haori*, except that it had a stand-up collar. Other coats included the short *hanten* and the *happi*, worn by workmen and decorated with the name of a shop or a crest. It was not until the Meiji period (1868-1912) that women began to wear *haori*. [41]

At the beginning of the 19th century kimono with designs from the waist down called *susomoyō* for women and *noshime* for men were designed. The wives of the merchant class added a black satin collar to enhance the makeup of this period of painting their faces white, blackening their teeth and painting their lips very red. This fashion of adding a black collar remained until the 1920s.

Haori were first designed in the 19th century and until the 19th century were worn only by men. At first, it came down almost to the ankle but was shortened in the middle of the 19th century. Today, hip-length *haori* is in style among women.

Until 1868, distinction was made in type of clothing worn according to class. Men of the upper class only wore clothes for the nobility and samurai while workmen of the aristocracy wore an *uchikake* (over-gown) over their *kosode*.[42]

In an attempt of simplification, the Tokugawa shogunate reformed clothing regulations for the military class toward the close of the period. Eliminating the cumbersome trailing *nagabakama*, the standard uniform became a combination of *kosode*, ankle-length *hakama*, and *haori*. The daimyo of some domains went further and adopted a

---

[41] *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, p. 332.
[42] Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, *Japan: Its Land, People and Culture*, p. 903.

combination of narrow-sleeved upper shirt and narrow-legged pants called *momohiki* as their military uniform, because they felt it would facilitate training in Western-style fighting.

There were not the only garments inspired by the West. A number of early Edo-period fashions appeared in response to contact with the Portuguese. In imitation of 16th century European fashion, the *karusan*, a type of *hakama* that was puffed at the hips and tight over the lower leg, enjoyed brief popularity. From the Portuguese large cape came the Japanese *kappa* raincoat. The *juban* kimono worn under the *kosode* derived its name from the Portuguese word for underwear: *gibão*. The undergarment was later employed as an outer garment worn for work or for festivals.[43]

Prior to the 15th century there was no Western influence in Japan, the only interchange of culture being in China. At the beginning of the 17th century when trade with Holland and Portugal started caps and trousers were introduced. Western customs and manners were adopted with the opening of intercourse with Europe and America after 1860. [44]

The history of kimono does not end with the Meiji period, but it is only natural to devote the greatest attention to the earlier periods, for it can be said that kimono styles, and to a lesser extent, obi styles, became standardized in the late Edo and Meiji periods.[45] Great changes appeared after 1868 when Western customs were introduced. The first to adopt Western attire were the upper class that began to wear shoes and derbies around 1875.

---

[43] *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, p. 332-3.
[44] Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, *Japan: Its Land, People and Culture*, p. 903.
[45] Norio Yamanaka, *The Book of Kimono*, p. 40.

Around 1890 there was a confused mixture of Western and kimono styles. Mantles and invernesses were worn over the kimono about 1900 and Western type of clothing became common. Kimono and Western clothes were worn with better discrimination after 1930. In the years since then, as the Japanese increasingly took to western clothes, fashion designers looked more and more to the West for their inspiration.[46]

After the Meiji restoration of 1868 the Japanese slowly changed over to Western clothing, a more revolutionary development than the adoption of Chinese styles in the 6th century. The process began with the government decree that civil servants like soldiers, police, and postmen should wear Western dress. The styles were established to provide the appropriate material. Soon students were also wearing Western uniforms.

During the Meiji period (1868-1912), women began working outside their homes and required different clothing to accommodate their work. The Japanese people developed techniques to complete with the machines woven cloth available from the West. Cloth from other parts of the world even brought to make the kimono and the clothing. During the Taisho period (1912-1926), Tokyo suffered a devastating earthquake, which leveled most of the homes. Many of the old kimonos were lost at this time. By World War I, almost all men dressed in trousers, shirt, and jackets.

Women were slower in adopting Western styles, partly because they did not participate extensively in the modernization of the society. The aristocracy, however, sported imported Western gowns and accessories at the European-styles balls held at the *Rokumeikan* from 1883 to 1889. For most women, the influence of the West began with

[46] Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, *Japan: Its Land, People and Culture*, p. 904.

accessories: ribbons, ankle-boots, parasols, and shawls. Only after World War I did professional and educated women with progressive attitudes begin to adapt Western clothing as their daily wear. Schools for Western-style sewing appeared, yet it was not until after World War II that the habit of wearing Western clothing became the norm of all classes. [47]

At first, they were only by people of the upper class and officials of high rank for whom the fashion of English nobles was imported. Although government officials and school teacher also began wearing Western clothes it was not till after 1900 that ordinary people and school children began to wear them and only after 1930 the students in even remote districts adopted Western apparel.

High school girls changed over to Western uniforms and housewives began to wear simple summer dresses around 1920 but it was not till after 1930 that dresses became general among women.

The growing need for simple clothes that would not hamper movement, wartime shortages and experiences caused many to make the changes to Western dress. However in winter some still cling to kimono for the heating system in homes is inadequate.[48]

During the Shōwa period (1868-1989) new style of dress has become popular among women in general[49]; the Japanese government curtailed silk production by taxing it to support the military build up. Kimono designs became less complex and material was

---

[47] *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, p. 333.
[48] Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, *Japan: Its Land, People and Culture*, p. 905.
[49] *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, p. 209.

conserved. Although World War II left the Japanese very shabby, they have now regained their prewar standard, spending 12% of their income on clothes. Both Japanese kimono and Western clothes were worn.

After World War II, as Japan's economy gradually recovered, kimono became even more affordable and was produced in greater qualities. And at the same time influence of the women of the U.S. Forces and the flood of books, magazines and movies with the latest fashion trends from abroad helped to improve the Western dress styles of the young women. Western fashions are not only copied now but styles suited to the Japanese are being designed. Europe and America fashion ideas affected the kimono designs and motifs, but their shape remained the same. Kimono and *obi* colors changed with the reason and with the age and status of the wearer.

The Japanese clothing nowadays consists of the *kimono, haori, nagajuban, obi, hadagi, koshimaki, fundoshi, obiage, obijime, koshihimo and tobi.* Western clothes are more practical for work, but the kimono is more suited for Japanese style of houses and for this reason, it cannot altogether be given up. This dual mode presents problems that must be solved.

The kimono is cut the same style for men, women and children; they only difference being in the way it is sewn and in the color and pattern of the material used. For instance, red is used only for women and girls' kimono and never for men, even baby boys because there is a definite change in the 4 season of the year in Japan, thin cotton is used in summer while lined or padded kimono called *wataire* is worn in winter.

The wearing of kimono reached a nadir during the first two decades of the postwar period.[50] However, the art of the kimono has undergone extensive re-invention in the 20th centuries especially in the mid 1980's and 1990's. Japanese brand designers like Yamamoto, Kawakubo and Miyake have often plates with the design of the kimono in their global fashion lines, but just as importantly some of Japan's renowned designers have also experimented in kimono design. A number of top designers now have a summer line of *yukata*, *obi* and *geta*.

In another interesting development, a number of overseas Japanese designers have made their reputations with assorted sculpted designers that use kimono and *obi* fabric in unexpected textural juxtapositions with satin, tuille, wool, cotton and linen. While the fundamental art of kimono remains remarkably consistent, even this traditional garment is not beyond the playful interventions of contemporary fashion trends.[51]

Today most Japanese women wear their traditional kimono only on special occasions, such as festivals, weddings and a *furosode* kimono is worn for the girl's Coming of Age ceremony on her 19th birthday. Men wear traditional clothing even more rarely. Both men and women at resort and for summer festivals wear the cotton summer kimono or *yukata*.

Nowadays, although there are relatively few women- and almost no men- who prefer the kimono for everyday wear, many are beginning to rediscover the subtle beauty and attractiveness of Japan's national costume. Japanese have developed a costume or fashion

---

[50] Norio Yamanaka, *The Book of Kimono*, p. 40.
[51] Sandra Buckley, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Japanese Culture*, London: Routledge, 2002, p. 255.

culture and an aesthetic tradition that are admired throughout the world today.

2.5 Conclusion

Even we lived in a modern and civilize world, the question "why people wear clothes?" is still a hotly debated topic. Clothing affords a good deal more than protection. It is a wonderful way of expressing individual artistic taste and culture such as kimono. It can also give comfort through identity. It strengthens cultural affiliations and allows an acceptable form of rebellion from parental control.

Kimono fashions have evolved over the centuries in response to varied influences. Today modern innovations are making the wearing of kimono at home attractive and practical alternative to western garments. From dazzling kimono to passive kimono designs and quite colors for everyday wear, the fascinating aspects of the kimono are that it always seems so correct.

Textiles carefully crafted by traditional and modern methods- many now world famous- contributes to this sense of correctness, as does the widely admired sense of color and design or no less importance is the way the kimono is worn.

From the writer's point of view, while Japan's indigenous clothing traditions have developed considering since ancient times, the styles, colors and forms of the kimono worn today became standardized over a century ago. By late in the Edo period (1600-1868) an independent sense of style- one marked by ostentation and pretension-had developed in Japan's emerging merchant class. After the isolation of Edo period, foreign products and

ideas began to enter Japan again. The flow of things western was like a flood, and western clothes made an almost immediate impact on the traditional Japan style of dress even after the disastrous World War II. The Japanese sought to imitate and develop a western life-style; the preferences for western clothes became very strong even we could see obviously in the 21st century.

There are very few Japanese worn kimonos nowadays because of many understandable reasons. The kimonos are not worn totally but they are commonly only seen on some Japanese festive holidays or certain important unique days for example, *Shicigosan* Festival and Coming of Age Day. One of the main reason kimonos been less apparent for the last few decades because kimonos are costly. Another reason is if worn in public they become dirty quickly and hard to clean because most of the materials made from silk. This is not to say the Japanese or the people around the globe do not admire the kimono.

But today, it would seem, the majority of Japanese regard the kimono as a most proud costume to be worn not only as a national costume but a costume that open the eyes of modern world civilization throughout the whole nation of the world about their Japanese identity. One result of this process was the emergences of a remarkable variety of kimono style, each with its own symbolic and aesthetic pedigree- a diversity still seen today.[52]

[52] *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, p. 782.