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KIMONO
WOMAN
BODY
MIND

考え 着物

NATIONAL COLLEGE
OF ART & DESIGN

FACULTY OF DESIGN
DEPARTMENT OF FASHION & TEXTILES

KIMONO
WOMAN
BODY
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BY

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WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO KAZUYO DOBASHI FOR TAKING
THE TIME OUT TO WRITE TO ME WITH INFORMATION
OVER THE PAST NINE MONTHS.

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INTRODUCTION

> "The kimono proclaims itself the national costume of Japan and is duly recognized as such throughout the world. Yet today the kimono is said to be dying, to be utterly too cumbersome for modern life, to be as elegantly anachronistic as the conservative old ladies or geisha who wear it. Kimono is the garment men discarded a century ago in the name of modernity and efficiency but in which women continue to enfold themselves for formal and official occasions. Kimono is the soft silk robe requiring a corsetlike obi that modern young ladies are allegedly unable to tolerate. . . . Beautiful but impractical is the modern rational consensus on kimono . . . . some people regard kimono as cut from the fabric of feudal oppression and revile it for the same reasons that traditionalists revere it - the cultural (not to mention physical) restraints it places on women. Love it or loathe it, the kimono evokes strong opinions."
>
> (Dalby, 1993, p 3)

The kimono is a cultural reminder of Japan's feudalistic past in a modern society more at home with Sony walkmans and designer jeans. That the garment has survived as a form of clothing, in this the twentieth century is a subject of wonderment. My first sighting of the kimono was in Japan's Narita airport at the age of twelve, on the way to Australia. Even at that age, it seemed strange to me, to see some women in such restrictive costumes, when others were wearing Western style clothing. Subsequent stop-off trips in Japan have revealed less and less women wearing kimono, and yet it is still considered the national costume of Japan. The kimono is not yet obsolete in Japan today, however, it is now predominantly a formal garment, only worn several times a year on special occasions. It is a garment with a restrictive nature, both physically and psychologically, and yet it is still worn by twentieth century women.

In the first chapter: Kimono, I will outline the structure of the kimono ensemble and its basic elements. The age and marital status of the wearer affects the form of the kimono ensemble, and how it is worn. Formality also has a part to play in choosing the correct kimono ensemble to wear on a certain occasion. Next under discussion will be the origins of the kimono and how it has developed and evolved, since its early ancestors arrived from mainland China, in the seventh century. Significant to the history of the kimono (in fact, to the history of Japan in general) is the arrival in Japan of Commodore Perry in 1868, ending over two centuries of isolation from the rest of the world, and introducing, among other things, the concept of Western style clothing. Rounding off this chapter will be a discussion of the effect Westernisation has had on the kimono.

In the second chapter: Body, I will discuss the physical effects that wearing the kimono has

on the body. First in the discussion will be an outline of the structure of the Japanese body when compared with the Western body-shape. Is the Japanese body-type suited to the kimono, or is there in fact, no body-type perfectly suited to wearing such a garment? How was this Japanese body-type suited to the Western garments of the *Meiji* era(1868-1912)? The Japanese body-shape is, however, undergoing an enormous transition, due to changes in diet and environment from traditional Japanese styles to those that are Western in orientation. How does this change in body-form affect the wearing of the kimono? What physical constraints does the kimono put on the body? Is the kimono a practical or functional garment to wear in the twentieth century?

Chapter three: Mind, follows the discussion of the restrictive nature of the kimono, but this time in relation to the personalities of Japanese women. I will first, briefly, outline how Japanese women live, and their general personality traits. Has the kimono influenced the personalities of Japanese women, by restricting them psychologically as well as physically, or are there other factors at play? How will the increasing Westernisation of Japan and the marginalisation of the kimono, affect the lives and personalities of Japanese women today?

着物

KIMONO

着物

KIMONO

The Kimono is the national dress of Japan; it's style can be traced back to Chinese costumes from the seventh century. The term kimono, however, is a relatively new one, which only dates back to the *Meiji* era (1868-1912). Kimono literally means 'thing to wear' (*ki* - wear, *mono* - thing). Thus, the word kimono can be used to describe a variety of different items of traditional Japanese clothing. The word, kimono, is generally not used in this broad context, however, but narrowed down to mean the particular style of garment that has become the national dress of Japan. So, although the term kimono covers a wide range of garments of different styles and functions, that are worn by distinctive age groups, and for varying occasions, we tend to associate the kimono more specifically with the costumes worn by the women depicted in Japanese wood block prints (see **plate one**). The word does not conjure up images of traditional Japanese work wear, for example, or appropiate male wear. How, and when did these inconsistencies in the meaning of the term kimono occur?

Before the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1868, marking the termination of two centuries of isolation from the rest of the world, the Japanese only had knowledge of their own traditional type of clothing. They knew nothing of the coats, shirts, trousers, skirts and blouses worn in the West. Different types of traditional Japanese costume could only be compared with other items of Japanese clothing. The Japanese did not possess a benchmark outside their own culture against which to compare their own clothing. They had no need of a word to describe their overall clothing because no comparison could be made with clothing of other cultures.

With the introduction of Western clothing into Japan, the Japanese not only had to invent terms to describe this new form of clothing, but they also had to invent terms to describe their own traditional clothing in the context of clothing from the West. Western clothing became known as *yofuku*, (*yo* - Western, *fuku* - clothing) and in contrast to this, Japanese clothing became known as *wafuku*, (*wa* - Japanese). According to Liza Dalby, it was due to: ". . . this shift of perspective, and no doubt in answer to the Western query as to what those long-sleeved front-wrapping garments were called, Japanese said *kimono*, 'things to wear'." (Dalby, 1993, p 61).

Before the introduction of the term kimono, the different styles of Japanese costume were named by descriptions of their changing shape relating to the status and age of the wearer. Thus, a *furisode* was a long, swinging - sleeved garment for unmarried girls, and a *tomesode*, a garment with truncated sleeves, was for married women. The *kosode* was a short sleeved garment, but the

UKIYO-E PRINT OF WOMEN IN KIMONO.
SHUNCHO ; CHERRY BLOSSOM VIEWING AT ASUKAYAMA.

PLATE 1

sleeves were only short in comparison to other Japanese garments. Now, all the above garments would be considered kimono, although the terms would still be used to clarify the type of kimono being described, for example the *furisode* kimono or the *tomesode* kimono. The term *kosode* kimono, however, is rarely used today because when compared to Western sleeves, the sleeve of this kimono can no longer be considered short.

For the purpose of this thesis, the term kimono will refer to the basic kimono shape as outlined in **diagram one**. A kimono is rarely worn alone, without an *obi* and various other accessories. When refering therefore, to the whole outfit, including the kimono, I will use the phrase kimono ensemble (see **diagram two**); when distinctions must be made about the type of kimono being discussed, I will name the type of kimono under discussion, such as *furisode* kimono; when discussing traditional Japanese clothing in general, I will use the term *wafuku*.

KIMONO STRUCTURE

One fundamental difference between *yofuku* and *wafuku* is the method by which garments are purchased. Generally, in the West, we go into a clothes shop of ready-made clothes and choose something we like. We try it on and if it fits, we buy it. Kimono shops have a different procedure. They display examples of made-up kimono, but the rest of the display consists of bolts of fabric in different colours and patterns. Since the style and shape of the kimono is unchanging, (unless a girl is getting married, for example) a woman shopping for a kimono only has to choose the colour and pattern. The customer purchases a *tan* of cloth (enough to make one adult kimono) which is then made up according to her measurements, either by the shop or a kimono specialist. **Plate two** shows the interior of a traditional kimono shop.

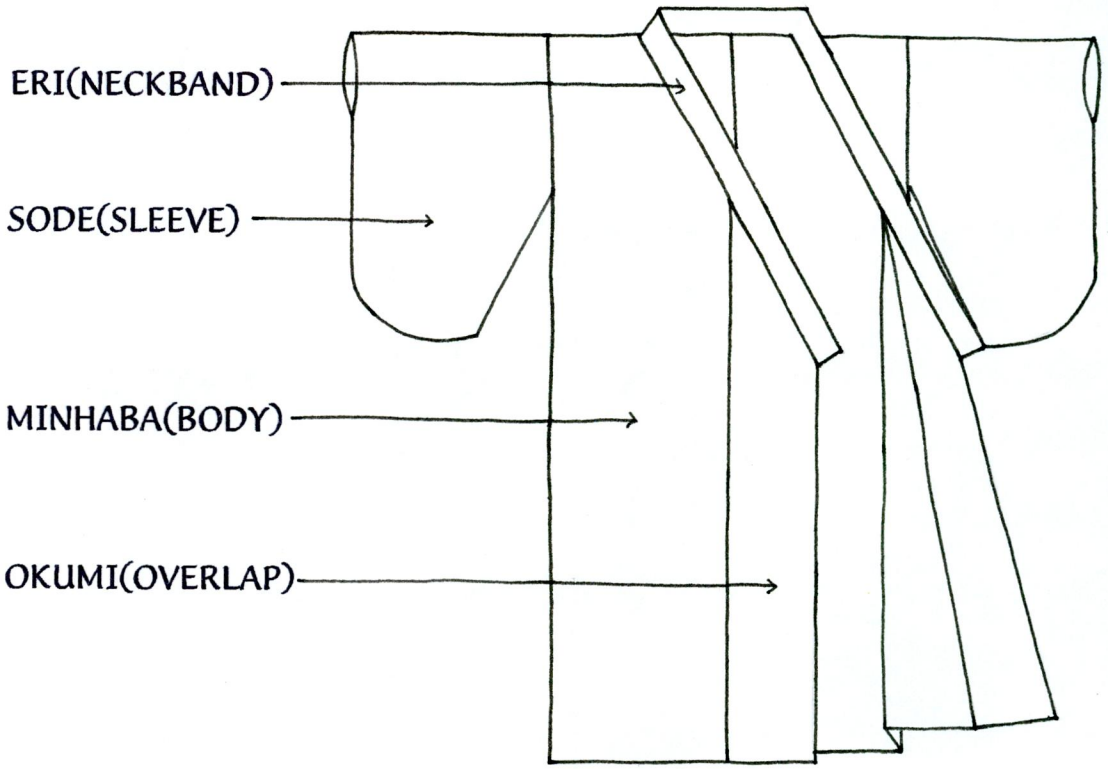
In the West, a size 8 dress will use less fabric than a size 18. A kimono always has one *tan* of fabric in it, regardless of the size and shape of the owner. There is an arguement as to whether or not the kimono is, in fact, a free size garment:

> "Traditional Japanese clothes have 'water nature'. The kimono adjusts itself to your body whether you have a fat stomach or are very skinny. The same size clothing fits everyone by adjusting the cloth that wraps around your waist."
>
> (Katsuhiro Serizawa, of the Kyoto Zen Centre, quoted in Koren, 1984, p 51)

This quote would suggest that the kimono is a free size garment, but Liza Dalby disagrees with this.

BASIC KIMONO SHAPE

FRONT



BACK

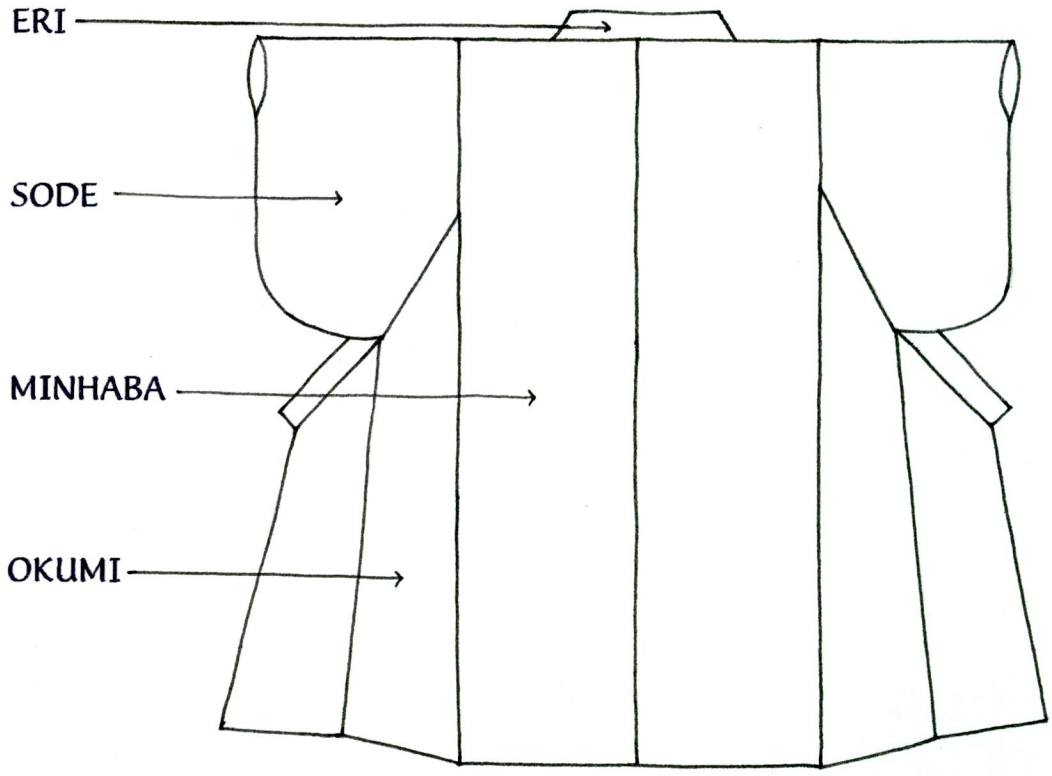


DIAGRAM 1

KIMONO/OBI ENSEMBLE

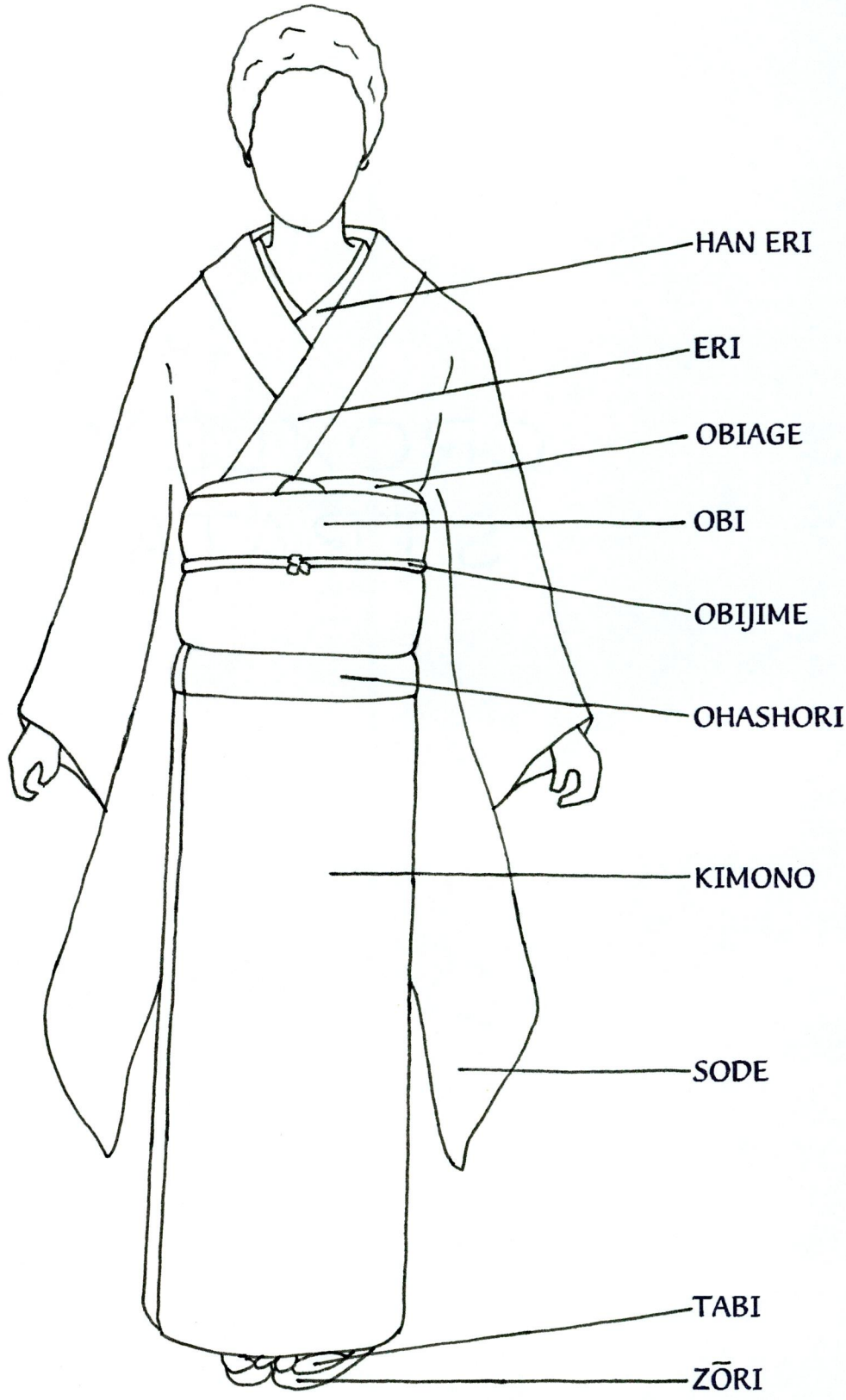


DIAGRAM 2

KAZUYO DOBASHI'S KIMONO SHOP IN TOKYO.

PLATE 2

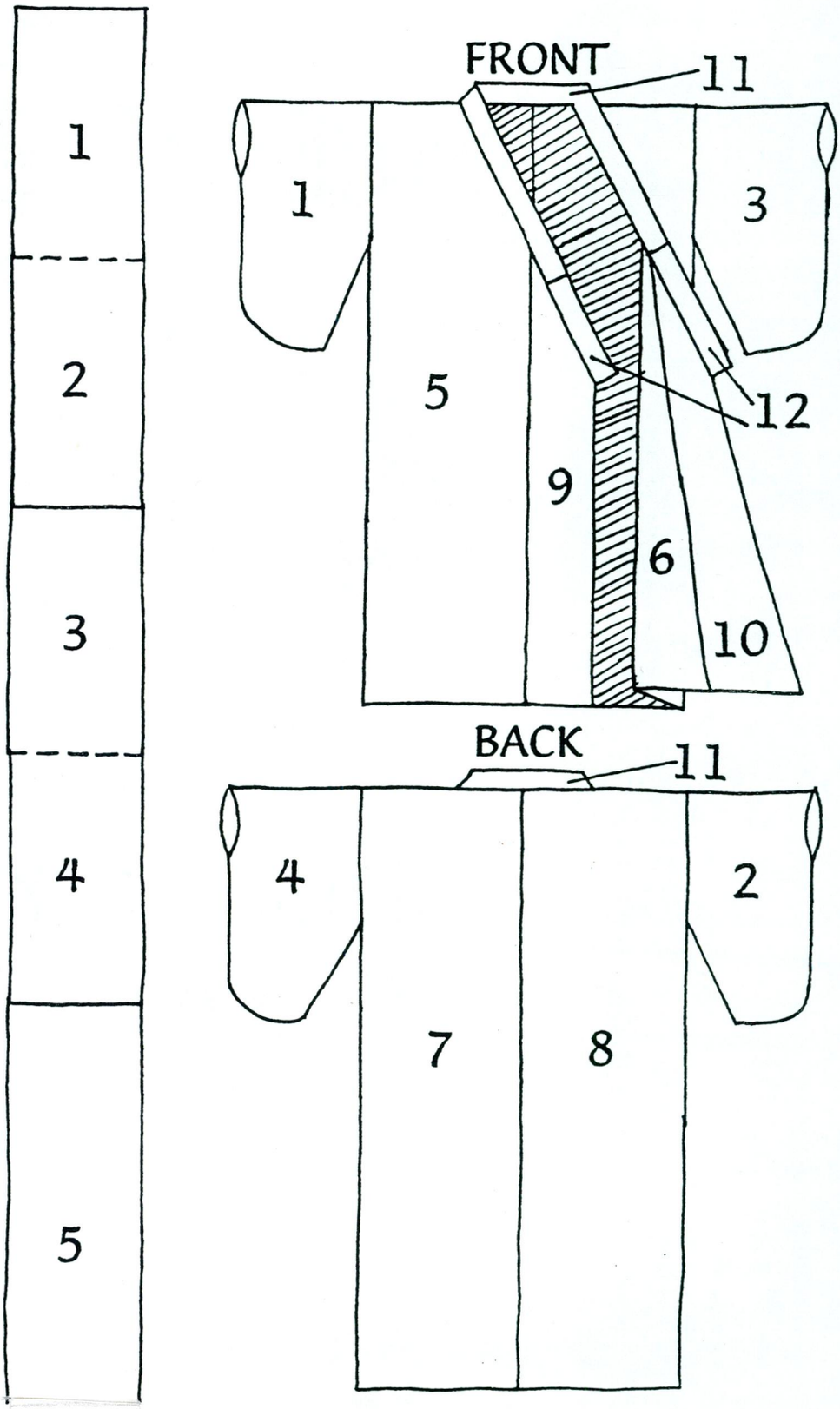
According to her, the size of the finished garment will depend on the size and shape of the owner, but regardless of size, it is always made using one *tan* of fabric. If the person is small, large seam allowances are sewn into the kimono, but these are not cut off, as they would be in the West; they are left on the inside of the garment, so that they can be let out if necessary (for example, during pregnancy). If the kimono is too long, to cut the hem of the garment to size would ruin the flow of the pattern around the hem, so the extra length of fabric is folded around the waist and held in place by the *obi*. I would suggest that the kimono is free size, in so far as it always requires the same amount of fabric, however, once made up it can no longer be considered a free size garment but a custom fitted one.

The kimono has economical features: the pieces of a kimono are generally geometric (except for the sleeve corners) and so when the pattern is laid out on a *tan* of fabric (see **diagram three**), there is no waste material, as there inevitably is when cutting out a Western style garment; the kimono is also economical because the size and shape of the garment can be altered as the wearer grows, because the extra fabric has not been cut off.

The kimono ensemble is comprised of many different items: the kimono garment itself, the *obi*, *tabi* socks, *zori* shoes and various other accessories. **Diagram two** outlines the complete kimono ensemble, which may be described as follows: the kimono is the basic front-wrapping, full length garment, of the kimono ensemble, and it is always wrapped left side over right (the kimono in the diagram has long swinging sleeves - *furisode*); a second kimono is worn underneath and this is called the *naga-juban,* and it has a detachable collar called the *han-eri* ; while the rest of the *naga-juban* may be coloured and patterned, the *han-eri* is conventionally white with no pattern, as this collar is the only visible element of the undergarments; the extra fabric length of the kimono is drawn up so that the hemline just covers the heels, and is held in place with two waist ties and an undersash, this fold of fabric being called the *ohashori*; the *obi* is a wide sash of fabric, wound around the waist, covering most of the *ohashori,* and variously tied at the back, with its main function being to hold the kimono in place, (*obi* fabric is usually heavy brocade with embroidery and gilding, and normally in contrast with the fabric of the kimono); the *obijime* is a braided silk cord that ties around the centre of the *obi* to hold it in place, and its colour usually contrasts with the *obi* itself; the *obiage* (bustle sash) is a scarf length rectangle of thin silk fabric which holds the *obi- bustle* in place at the back, and is knotted at the front and tucked under the top of the *obi*, so only a small portion is

LAYOUT OF KIMONO ON ONE TAN OF CLOTH

(ONE TAN = 14 Inches X 12·5 Yards)



SCALE (1c nes)

DIAGRAM 3

visible; *tabi* (white split-toed cotton socks) and *zōri* (brocade covered, flat-soled, thonged footwear) are worn on the feet.

Additional items of clothing are hidden from view, but also play their part in the over all kimono ensemble: the *koshimaki* is a white cotton wrap-around slip, that along with a white cotton vest, is worn under the *naga-juban*; the *datemaki* is an under sash, one is wrapped around the waist of the *naga-juban* to hold it in place, and another is wrapped around the kimono itself, under the *obi;* the *koshihimo* is a flat, braided cord, waist tie, one is used to secure the first *datemaki* in place, two more are used to secure the position of the *ohashori* fold under the *obi,* and a fourth is used to secure the second *datemaki* in place; the *obi-bustle* is a small bustle worn at the back of the *obi,* under the *obi* fold, to enhance its shape, with the *obi-age* holding this bustle in place and the *obi* fold being tied over it, so that it is hidden from view.

When studying the elements of the kimono ensemble, I have noticed that sleeve lengths, for example, may vary, or the distribution of pattern on the lower half of the kimono may change from kimono to kimono. Such differences are quite noticeable, but other variations are less obvious, such as the depth of crossover of the kimono, or how far the kimono is set back from the nape of the neck. Are these subtle changes in kimono style, pattern and form the result of passing fads in fashion? On the contrary, all the subtle changes in the kimono itself, and the way it is worn, have significant meaning. Although there are many aspects that influence the wearing of kimono, (such as gender, season, taste and class) age/marital status and occassion are the two dimensions that most strongly influence the kimono.

> "To be appropriate, a woman's kimono must consider her age and social station as much as it does the formality of the occasion.... women in kimono are constrained to conform to life's stages."
>
> (Dalby, 1993, p 193)

Age and marital status affect the kimono in a number of different ways that can be discussed under two distinct categories. The first category is that of actual changes to the kimono (changes in form, pattern and colour). The second category is that of the differences in how the kimono is actually worn. The age and marital status of Japanese women can be categorised into the female life stages. On reaching the age of thirteen, a female child becomes a young Miss(*Misu*). This stage is a sub-stage of the Miss stage. A girl is considered a young Miss until graduation from high school at the age of seventeen. From the age of seventeen, onwards until marriage, a woman is considered a Miss.

Although a woman is officially considered adult from her twentieth birthday, she does not graduate to the adult stage of life until she marries. "Everyone must [marry], because marriage is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for making one an adult (*ichininmae*) and a human being in the full sense of the term."(Lebra, 1984, p 78). This explains why women who remain unmarried are given the derogatory title of 'old Miss'- they are deemed never to have gained true adulthood. Once married, a Miss instantly becomes a Missus(*Misesu*). However, because motherhood is a stage in life placed in such high esteem, a woman until her first pregnancy is considered a young Missus. This stage is a sub-stage of Missus. Once a young Missus becomes a mother, she is considered a Missus, and she will remain in this life stage until old age. *Nenpai no kata* is a gender neutral term to describe elderly people in Japan. There is no specific age at which women graduate to this stage of life.

When I am discussing the life stages in relation to changes in the kimono, I will use only three life stages as follows:

Single Female - which incorporates young Miss and Miss.

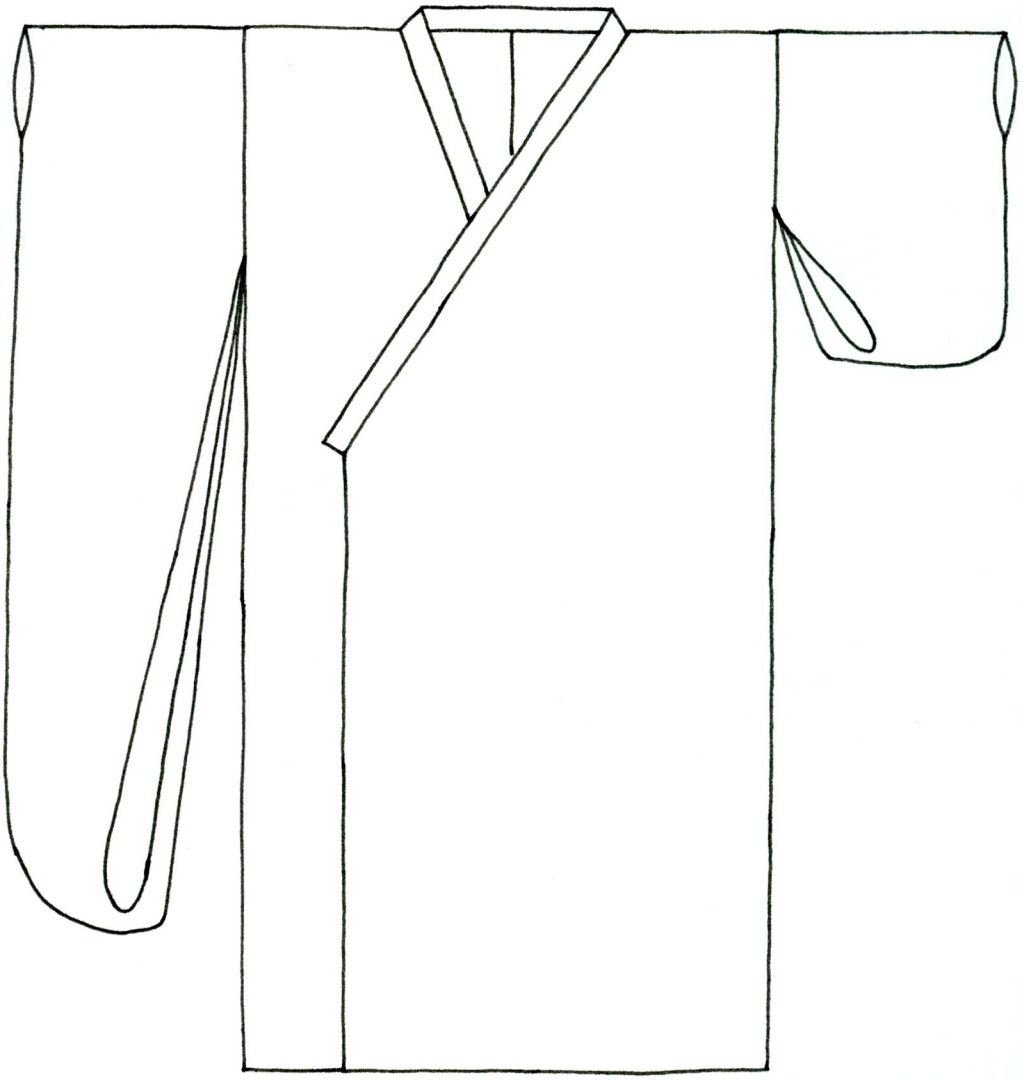
Married Female - which incorporates young Missus and Missus.

Older Female - which represents the *nenpai no kata* stage of life.

The basic shape of the kimono is non-changing; fashion does not influence the shape, which has not changed significantly since the *Edo* period (1615-1867). The only changing aspect of the kimono's basic shape is the sleeves. Not only do they differ from a man's, but the sleeves also change shape depending on the life stage of the woman wearer. The sleeves of the *furisode*, a single female's kimono are long and swinging, while the sleeves of the *tomesode* kimono worn by married and older females, are truncated, but still not as short as those on a man's kimono. Also of note is the degree of roundness of the outer sleeve corners of the kimono. The corner of the sleeves on a *furisode* are more rounded than those on a *tomesode*. The inside seams of the sleeves of both styles of kimono are left unsewn from the armpit to the hem (see **diagram four**).

The colours that single females can wear on their kimono are more bright and vibrant than those colours worn by married females, which in turn are brighter than those colours worn by older females. The kimono of a single female may have many different colours, a bright contrasting *obi* and accessories. The young married female may still wear quite brightly coloured kimono, but once a woman becomes a mother, the colour options decrease. Older females wear even more subdued kimono. **Plate three** shows the contrast in colour between a single female's kimono on the left and

SLEEVE LENGTH DIFFERENCES



FURISODE:

SWINGING SLEEVE, FOR SINGLE FEMALES

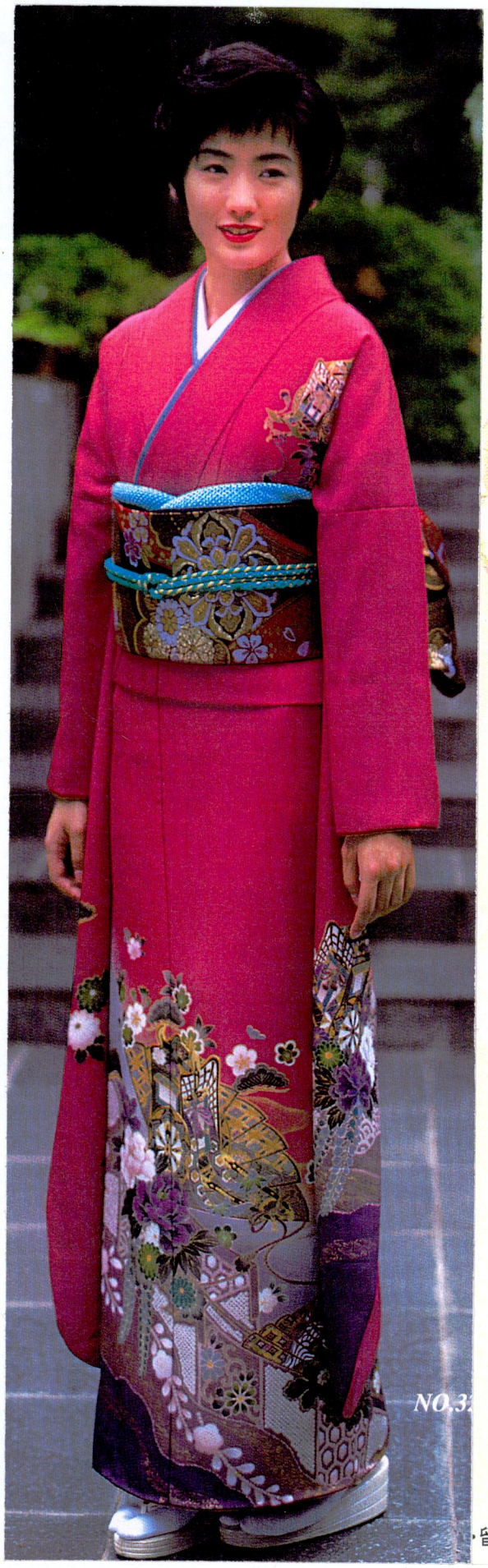
TOMESODE:

TRUNCATED SLEEVE, FOR MARRIED FEMALES

THE SLEEVE CORNER IS MORE ROUNDED FOR SINGLE FEMALES, THAN FOR MARRIED AND OLDER FEMALES.

DIAGRAM 4

THE CONTRAST IN COLOUR BETWEEN A SINGLE FEMALE'S KIMONO AND A MARRIED FEMALE'S KIMONO.



a married female's on the right. Not only do the colours of the kimono change according to the life stage of the wearer, but the degree of patterning allowed on the kimono also changes accordingly. The older the wearer, the less pattern on her kimono. The pattern on a single female's kimono extends from the hem of the garment, all the way up to, and under the *obi*, and continues above it on the left shoulder. The pattern on a married female's kimono, however, only extends up from the hem to the upper thigh area of her garment. As a woman reaches old age, even less pattern is evident, and is positioned only at the hem of the kimono. Basically, the older the wearer, the lower the pattern. **Plate four** shows the constrast in patterning on a single female's kimono (on the left) and a married female's kimono. As would be expected, *obi* patterns and colours change in the same way that kimono patterns and colours do. The younger the wearer the more vibrant the colours and the more profuse the patterning.

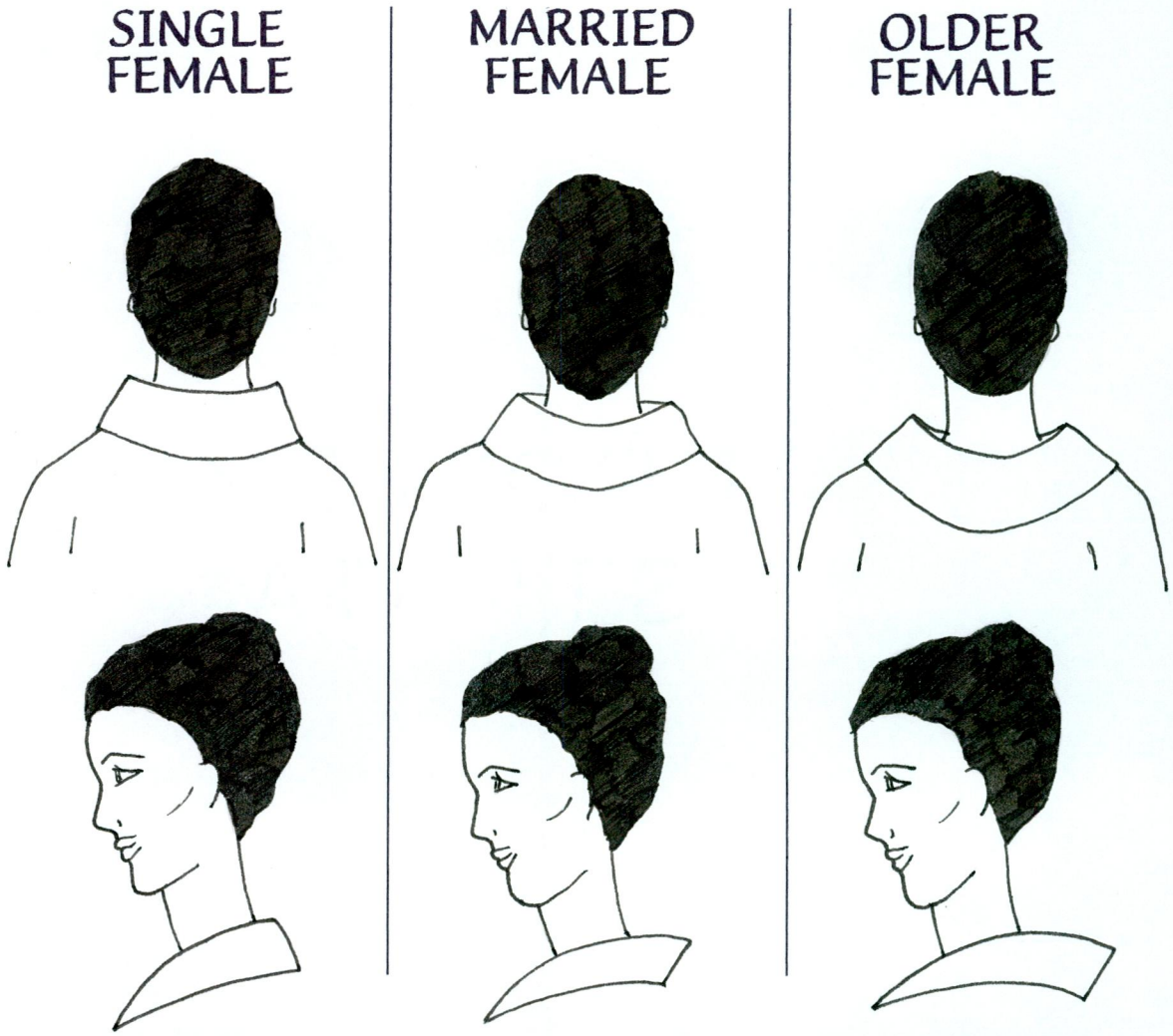
The way a woman actually wears her kimono, *obi*, and accessories can also tell one about her age and marital status. The nape of the neck is seen as the erotic focus of the Japanese female body. Thus, how much of the nape of the neck is visible is proportional to the age (and supposed sexual experience) of the wearer. Hence, the kimono of a single (and supposedly sexually naive) female should be worn close to the nape of the neck. The collar on a married female's kimono can reveal more of the nape as the woman in question is sexually mature. The older female may choose how far to set her collar back in relation to the nape of her neck. The older the wearer, the deeper and lower the V - shaped crossover of the kimono. For a single female this V - shaped line should be quite wide and shallow (nearer the throat) when compared with the deeper and lower V - shapes of married and older women. **Diagram five** shows these differences.

The overall shape of the untied *obi* never changes. However the method of tying it may differ depending on the wearer's life stage. Single females have more variety of *obi* folds that they can use to tie their *obi*, than married or older females. However, the most popular *obi* fold is the *taiko* fold (a drum shaped bow at the back of the kimono) and this can be worn by women of all life stages. Where on the torso, a woman wears her *obi* is also important. A married female wears her *obi* centred around her waist. An older female wears hers closer to her hips, whereas the *obi* of a single female is worn just below her armpits, suppressing her bust. The lower the *taiko* fold at the back of the *obi* also depends on the wearer's age. See **plate five** for examples of *obi* folds.

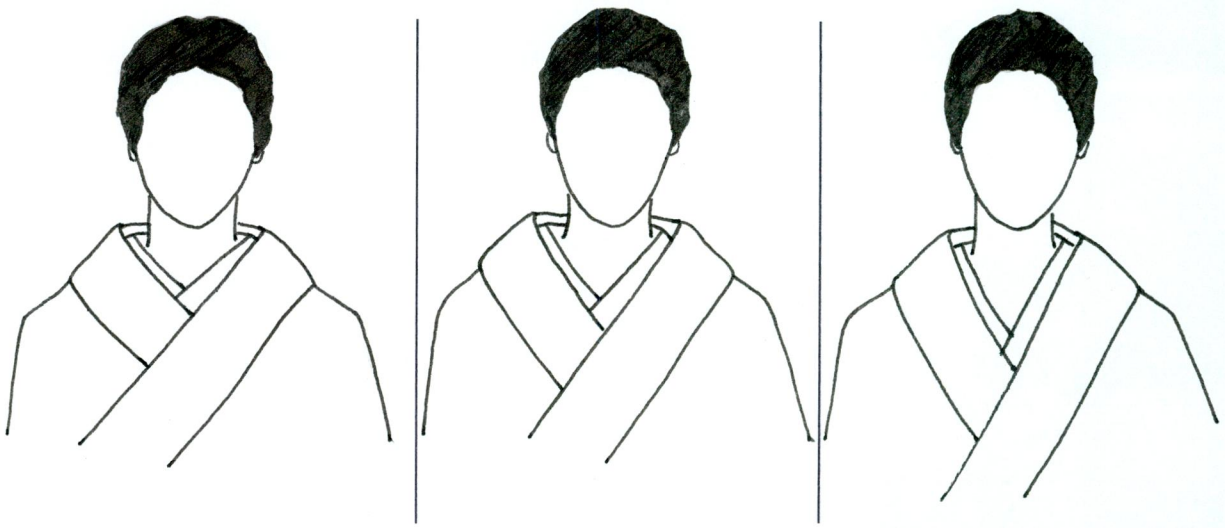
A married female wears her *obijime* around the centre of her *obi*. A single female wears hers

THE CONTRAST IN PATTERN BETWEEN A SINGLE FEMALE'S KIMONO AND A MARRIED FEMALE'S KIMONO.

NAPE OF NECK DIFFERENCES



FRONT OVERLAP DIFFERENCES



EXAMPLES OF VARIOUS OBI FOLDS.

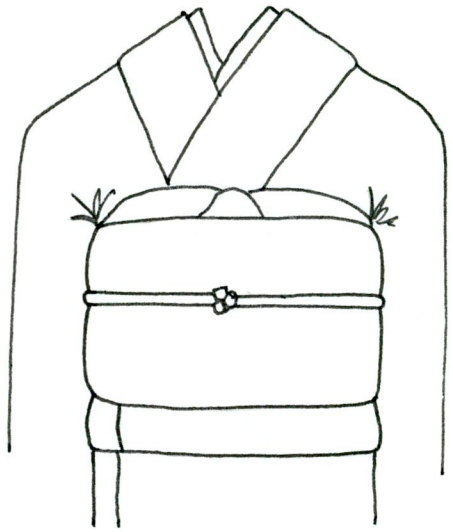
around the upper third of her *obi*, while an older female's is tied around the lower third of her *obi*. The position of the *obiage* also depends on the wearer's age. The *obiage* of a single female may actually overlap onto her *obi*, or if it remains tucked in, a large portion of it will still be visible. When worn by a married female, less of the *obiage* is visible, but more than when it is worn by an older female (in this case, it can hardly be seen at all). **Diagram six** shows these differences.

Formality and occasion also play a significant role in deciding what type of kimono is worn, and how it is worn. There are two main branches of kimono worn; formal kimono wear is called *haregi* and everyday/casual wear is called *fudangi*. However, because Japanese women, on the whole, wear Western style clothing for everyday wear and casual wear in the home, *fudangi* has become more or less obsolete. The only *fudangi* kimono still in use today is the *yukata* - a cool cotton kimono that can be worn as a bathrobe or casual summer kimono. Within the area of *haregi*, there are many grades of formality, from low formality (visiting kimono), through high formality (mother of the bride kimono), and on to ceremonial wear (bridal kimono).

The formality of an occasion is expressed by the type of kimono worn (its colour and pattern), the inclusion or absence of family crests, and the type of *obi* and accessories worn. First of all, silk is the only fibre that can be used in the making of formal/*haregi* kimono. However, some types of silk are considered to be more formal than others. Patterned damask silk is the most formal and, thus, would be used in ceremonial kimono. Habutae silk is less formal than damask, but can be used in highly formal kimono. Silk crepe is less formal again and is used only in low formality kimono. In fact, not even all types of silk are considered formal. Only glossed silks like the above are considered of high enough quality to be used in *haregi*. Raw silk, wild silk and *tsumugi* (pulled) silk can only be made into *fudangi*. It also goes without saying, that kimono made out of any other fibre, such as cotton or polyester, are considered strictly informal.

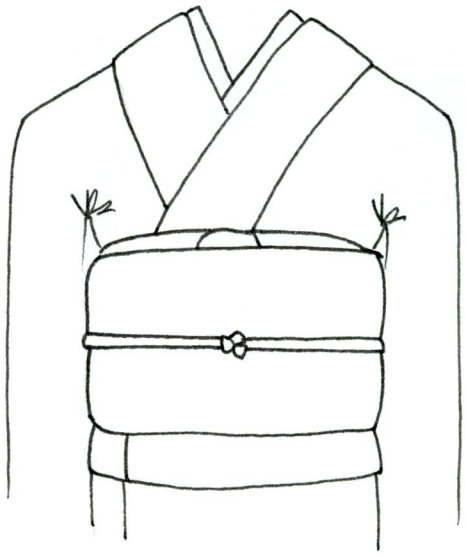
When it comes to pattern placement in relation to kimono formality, less is definitely more. *Hōmongi* patterning is considered the most formal type of kimono patterning. It is considered special because the garment is fitted undyed, then hand-painted, dyed and restitched again, so that the pattern at the seams is exact. The pattern is concentrated around the hem and on the left shoulder. *Tsukesage* patterning is similar in distribution to *hōmongi*, however the kimono is stitched straight from the bolt of cloth and thus the patterning cannot be as exact at the seams. This type of pattern is considered less formal than *hōmongi* patterns. The least formal type of patterning is called *komon*.

OBI WEARING DIFFERENCES



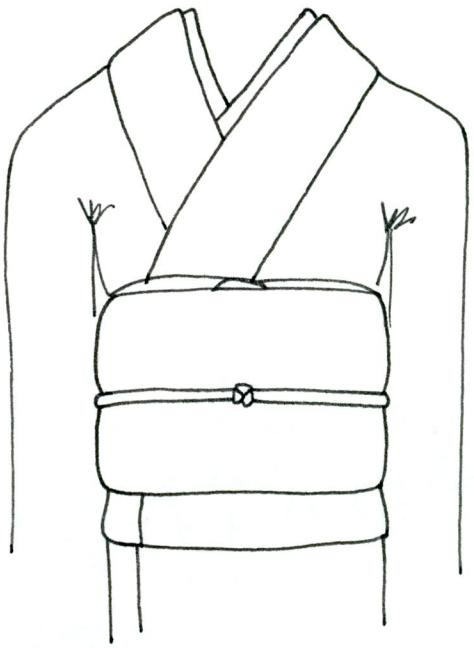
SINGLE FEMALE

OBI JUST UNDER THE ARMPITS. OBIJIME AROUND UPPER THIRD OF OBI. OBIAGE HIGHLY VISIBLE.



MARRIED FEMALE

OBI CENTRED ON WAIST. OBIJIME AROUND CENTRE OF OBI. OBIAGE LESS VISIBLE.



OLDER FEMALE

OBI CLOSE TO HIPS. OBIJIME AROUND LOWER THIRD OF OBI. OBIAGE BARELY VISIBLE.

DIAGRAM 6

The *komon* is a small, profuse, repeat pattern covering the entire garment. *Komon* patterns are used on *fudangi* wear, like cotton *yukata*. **Plate six** shows a *komon* patterned casual kimono.

Different colours in kimono, no longer have any great formal significance. In the past, red and purple were worn only by nobility, but these days, any colour can be worn. If all colours are of equal status, how does one know by colour, how formal a kimono is? One knows because black (black as the background colour, as distinct from a coloured background) is more formal than any other colour (solid black kimono are only worn as mourning wear). When combining colour and pattern, a black kimono with patterning on the hem and left shoulder only, is more formal than a monochrome kimono (not black) with no pattern.

Every family has a crest that may or may not be present on its kimono, depending on the formality of the occasion. A kimono with a crest is more formal than a kimono without. However, there are different types of crest, and some are more formal than others. Embroidered crests are the least formal type of crest, because they can easily be sewn onto the kimono after it is finished. The most formal crest is dyed into the fabric, before the fabric itself is dyed. This is called an *omote mon* crest. Also, the number of crests on a garment increases its formality. One crest (at the centre of the back of the kimono) is less formal than three crests (centre back, and one on the back of each sleeve), which in turn is less formal than five crests (the three crests above, plus two more on the front of the kimono just below the collarbone). The addition of crests to a kimono can increase its formality. The kimono on the right of **plate four** is a five crested kimono.

The relationship between the type of *obi* worn and the formality of the situation in question is the same as the relationship between kimono and occasion. In terms of formality, gold or silver metallic brocade *obi* are the most formal, closely followed by coloured brocade *obi*, and, decreasing in formality, dyed silk *obi*, woven silk *obi* and any other fabric *obi*. Woven silk *obi* (raw silk, wild silk, etc.) and any other fabric *obi* can naturally only be worn with *fudangi* kimono. Likewise, one would not wear a metallic brocade *obi* with any kimono other than a highly formal one. **Plate seven** shows examples of metallic brocade *obi*. What is true of *obi* formality also holds true for the *obi* accessories (the *obiage* and the *obijime*). The most formal *obijime* is a flat braided cord of metallic gold or silver thread. After that, round cords are considered more formal than flat ones. After metallic thread, pure silk floss thread is the most formal. Unpatterned monochrome *obijime* are more formal than multicoloured, patterned ones. Any colour can be worn except black, which is worn only in

A KOMON-PATTERNED CASUAL KIMONO.

EXAMPLES OF METALLIC BROCADE OBI.

PLATE 7

mourning. The *obiage* also adheres to the same formality rules, with monochrome patterned damask being more formal than nubble-textured dyed silk, which in turn, is more formal than plain-woven silk.

There are two types of Japanese footwear that can be worn with kimono. *Geta* are wooden, thonged footwear with prongs on the sole. These are worn only with casual kimono and without *tabi* socks. *Zōri* are cloth-covered, flat-soled, thonged footwear. They are worn with all grades of formal kimono and they differ in formality themselves depending on the type of fabric covering them. Once again, gold and silver brocade is the most formal fabric, decreasing in formality through other silk-cloth coverings, down to leather, which is the least formal. *Tabi* socks must be worn with all grades of *zōri* footwear but no socks are worn with *geta*.

HISTORY OF THE EVOLVING KIMONO

It is quite normal, when tracing a civilisation's historical past, that more can be discovered about the lives of the aristocratic people than those of the common people. Aristocratic people, more often than common people, had portraits painted of themselves, for example, and they would have had more possessions buried with them at death. Aristocratic people would also have family heirlooms which would be passed on from generation to generation. The common and simple possessions of poorer people were not considered important or exclusive enough to become heirlooms, and, thus, were not passed on. This leads to the lives and possessions of the aristocratic classes being better preserved than those of the poorer classes.This also holds true when tracing the history of the kimono. Most of the kimono's history can be traced through the ceremonial wear of Japan's aristocratic class. This is quite appropiate, considering the kimono's place in fashion today, as an almost exclusively formal or ceremonial ensemble. Also significant is the fact that although the kimono itself is not an exclusively female garment of clothing, its history can be traced through female clothing only, without recourse to men's.

Over the centuries, the Japanese have inherited a significant amount of their culture (including their written language) from mainland China. Items of culture, such as the tea ceremony, that are considered uniquely Japanese, are, in fact, Chinese in origin. This also holds true when discussing the history of the kimono in Japan.The kimono is now considered the national dress of Japan but

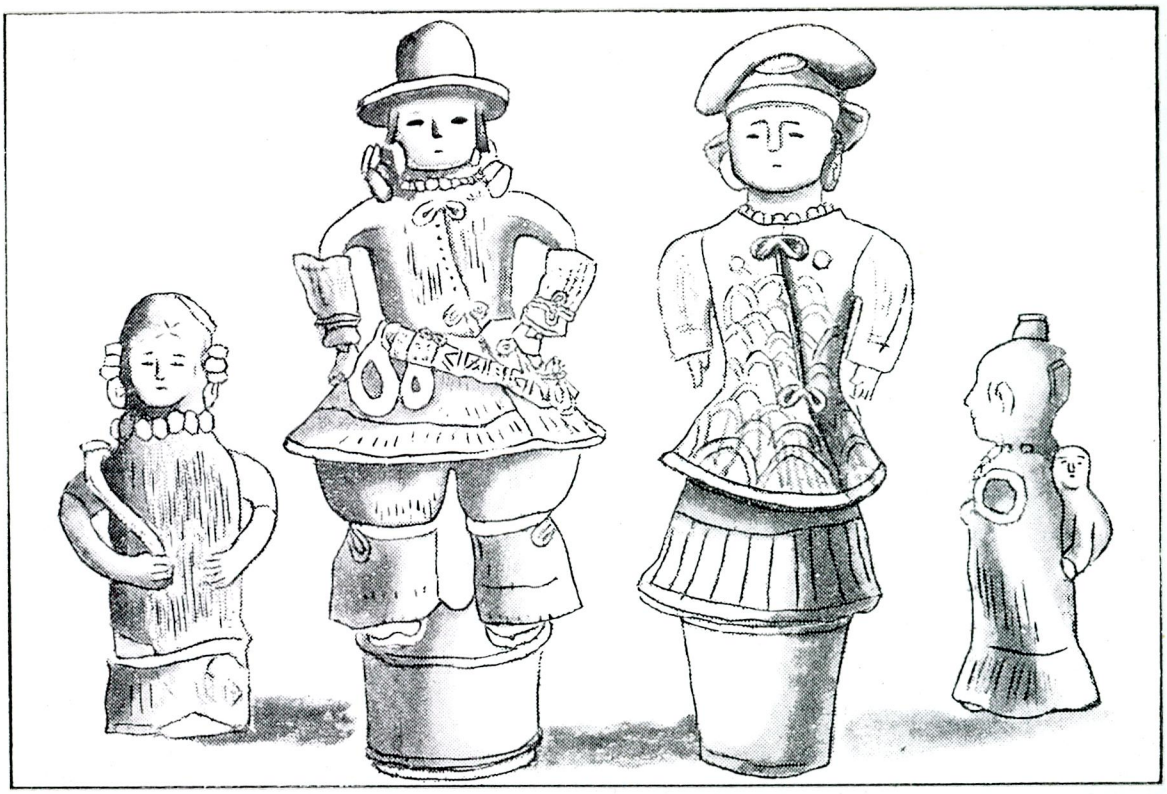
it too has evolved, from clothing originally brought to Japan from mainland China in the seventh century. The modern day kimono has evolved a long way from its early Chinese prototype, and today the national costumes of Japan and China bear little resemblance to each other. However, it is impossible to fully discuss the history of the kimono without also discussing China's influence on Japanese costumes in the seventh and eight centuries.

Prior to the seventh century, the Japanese were an agricultural community, governed by various clans. Their clothes were utilitarian, and bear no resemblance to traditional Japanese costumes today. The common people wore simple poncho-style tunics that were woven on a back-strap loom. The ruling clan families wore more elaborate costumes and these costumes are depicted on sixth century tomb figurines called *haniwa* (see **plate eight**). The men wore fitted jackets over wide trousers, while the women wore similar fitted jackets over long pleated or flared skirts. While the poncho-style tunics continued to be worn by the common people, the clothing depicted on the *haniwa* became extinct with the arrival of Chinese style clothes in the seventh century. Neither the poncho-style tunic nor the more elaborate clothing, are true ancestors of the kimono style, as both styles of costumes became extinct without influencing another generation of clothing. Rather, the imported styles of Chinese clothing are the first true ancestors on the kimono family tree.

In the seventh century, Japan became a fledgeling imperial state, modelled on the imperial *Sui* dynasty in China. The aristocratic Japanese clans adopted Chinese modes of court dress, which signified their rank in the new Japanese imperial court. Men wore a narrow sleeved jacket over a short skirt that was worn over *hakama* trousers. Women wore a similar jacket and skirt over a second longer skirt called a *mo*. These early Chinese imports, however, bear little resemblance to the modern day kimono either.

At this time, the male court costume ceased to evolve significantly, and never took on a kimono-like appearance. The male court costume with its round, high-necked robe over *hakama*, is still worn today as the highest ceremonial ensemble in the Japanese imperial court.While the male court costume ceased to evolve, the female court costume was still under influence from China during the eight century. The women of the Japanese imperial court adopted clothing styles from the now empowered *Tang* dynasty in China. This style of dress had a robe with wider sleeves and a lapover collar. This robe was called a *tarikubi* robe, and in it we can see a similarity with the kimono robe. In the year 718, the *Yōrō* clothing code was introduced, and explicit rules were set out for the

SIXTH CENTURY HANIWA (TOMB FIGURINES).



wearing of court dress in Japan. All clothing had to be crossed left side over right, like in China. Prior to this, all clothing was crossed the opposite way.

By the beginning of the *Heian* period (795-1184), Japan's clothing ceased to be directly influenced by Chinese clothing. A uniquely Japanese style of clothing began to evolve from the Chinese inspired *tarikubi* robe.The *Heian* court costume for women, called the *jūnihitoe*, was an extremely elaborate affair. It was called the twelve fold dress, because it consisted of twelve separate layers of clothing. The innermost layer was a white, small-sleeved undergarment that reached the calf, called a *kosode*. Over this were worn scarlet *hakama* trousers tied at the waist. On top of these were worn various layers of different coloured *tarikubi* style robes called *uchigi*. A *karaginu* jacket was worn over the top, and a *mo* skirt (little more than an apron) was tied at the back. The *uchigi* layers and the *karaginu* had long, wide, open sleeves. See **plate nine** for an illustration of this twelve fold dress. This court costume was extremely heavy and cumbersome to wear, so on less formal occasions, a simplified form called the *kouchigi* (having only seven layers) was worn. The twelve fold dress ceased to evolve, and is now still the highest ceremonial costume for women in the imperial court in Japan today. **Plate ten** shows the 1993 *shinto* wedding of Crown Prince Naruhito and his bride Masako. They are both wearing costumes that originated in the eight century.

Through the *Kamakura* period (1184-1336) the *kouchigi* dress continued to be worn, but on an increasingly simplified basis. Less layers of *uchigi* were worn, but underneath, the *hakama* and *kosode* were still in place.By the end of the *Kamakura* period, women on less formal occasions, wore just a plain white *kosode* with *hakama* trousers and one loose *uchigi* over the top.

During the *Muromachi* period (1336-1573) a fundamental change took place in women's clothing. Women ceased to wear *hakama* over their *kosode*. Thus, the *kosode* had to become ankle length to cover the now exposed legs, due to lack of *hakama*. The tied waist of the *hakama* trousers had held the opening of the *kosode* closed at the front, so when the *hakama* were dropped, a narrow sash (three inches wide) called the *obi* was introduced to hold the *kosode* closed. This *obi* was tied at the front of the *kosode*, as **plate eleven** shows. It was also at this time that the *kosode* began to absorb colour and pattern, now that it was no longer hidden under layers of *uchigi*.

During the short period of *Momoyama*, split-toed socks called *tabi*, came into general usage. It was also during this time that fashion ceased to be influenced by the aristocrats. The *geisha* and

THE JŪNIHITOE - THE TWELVE FOLD DRESS.

CROWN PRINCE NARUHITO AND HIS BRIDE MASAKO.

PLATE 10

EARLY NARROW OBI TIED AT THE FRONT OF THE KIMONO.
HARUNOBU; SCENE AT MIDNIGHT.

courtesans of *Edo* became the main influences on the fashion of the *Momoyama* and *Edo* eras. Prior to this, all changes in fashion originated in the imperial court, and filtered down through the aristocratic families to the common people. Under the influence of *geisha* and courtesans during the *Edo* period, the *kosode* and *obi* evolved into the kimono/*obi* ensemble that we are familiar with today. The *Edo* period (1603-1868) covers the two centuries that Japan was isolated from the rest of the world, with no outside contact whatsoever. Japanese costume (in addition to other aspects of their culture) evolved independently of any outside influences from mainland China, or elsewhere.

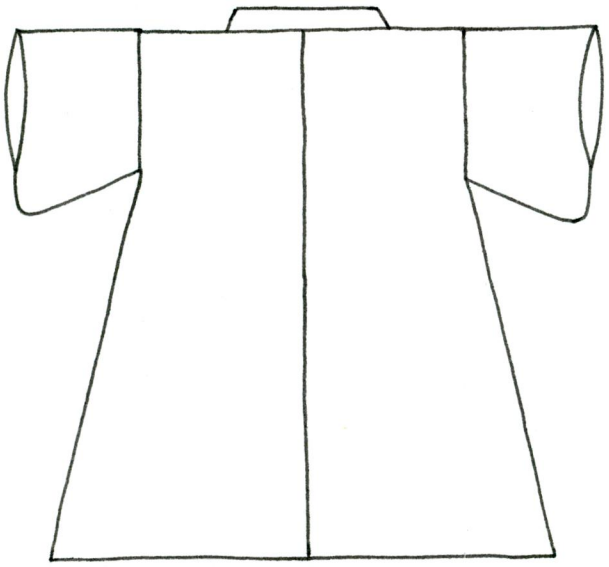
Early in the *Edo* period, the proportions of the *kosode* were different to those of the kimono today. The body of the *kosode* was wider, and shorter than the kimono now, and the sleeves were smaller, and sewn to the body of the garment. Only young people had long sleeves, with unsewn side seams. However, these so-called long sleeves are approximately the same length as adult sleeves today, which are considered short in length. **Diagram seven** contrasts the adult and young person's *kosode* from the early *Edo* period with those from the late *Edo* period. At this time, the designs and colours on the *kosode* became more elaborate as new dyeing and weaving techniques became available. These designs covered the whole *kosode*, using the garment as an artist's canvas, with the composition sweeping diagonally down from the shoulders to the hem.

Throughout the *Edo* period, sleeve lengths continued to increase. By 1770, a young person's sleeves were almost as long as the *kosode* itself. The adult sleeve lenghtened in proportion to the young person's sleeve. It was impractical to sew these lengthened sleeves to the body of the *kosode*, so they were left hanging with open seams, similar to the young person's *kosode*. The width of the *obi* expanded in proportion to the increased sleeve lengths, and by 1800 it was a foot in width. Prior to this the *obi* had always been tied at the front of the *kosode*. But at this time the *obi* was too wide and cumbersome to be worn tied at the front, so it began to be tied at the back. However, courtesans continued to tie their *obi* at the front, as can be seen from the wood block print depicting them on **plate twelve**. At this stage the *obi* was actually too wide to fulfil its function of holding the *kosode* closed at the front. The *obijime* and *obiage* were introduced to hold the *obi* in place, so that it could perform its function.The wide *obi* around the waist of the *kosode* and the longer sleeves, in turn affected the overall proportions of the garment, and the composition of the designs that could be placed on it. The *kosode* became longer with a trailing hem, as can be seen from the painting on **plate thirteen**. The design could no longer be placed over the entire garment, as the centre

ADULT KOSODE

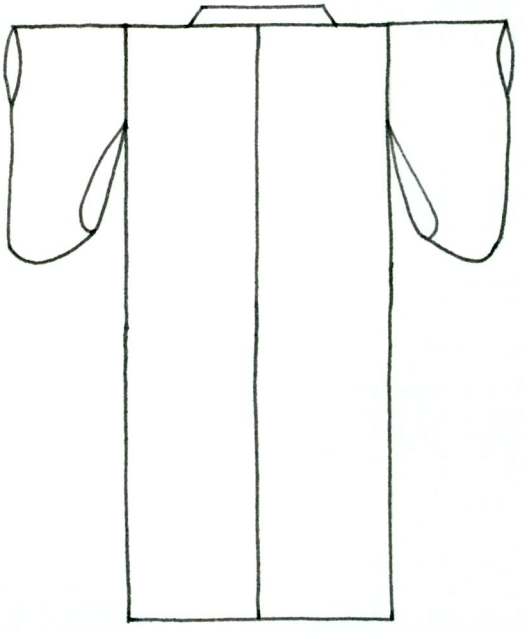
EARLY EDO PERIOD

SHORT SLEEVES, SEAMS SEWN TO THE BODY OF THE KOSODE. GARMENT WIDER AND SHORTER THAN LATE EDO PERIOD.



LATE EDO PERIOD

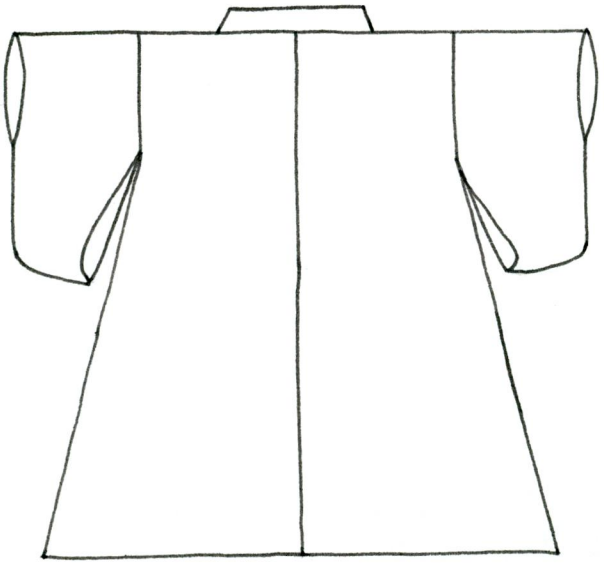
LONGER SLEEVES, SEAMS UNSEWN AND UNATTACHED TO THE BODY OF THE KOSODE. GARMENT LONGER AND NARROWER THAN BEFORE.



YOUNG PERSON'S KOSODE

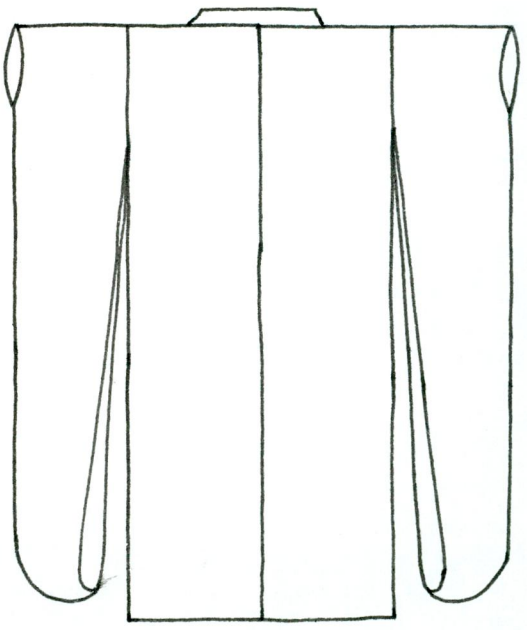
EARLY EDO PERIOD

LONGER SLEEVES THAN ADULT KOSODE OF SAME DATE. SLEEVE SEAMS UNSEWN AND UNATTACHED TO THE BODY OF THE KOSODE. GARMENT WIDER AND SHORTER THAN LATE EDO PERIOD.



LATE EDO PERIOD

EXTREMELY LONG SLEEVES, ALMOST AS LONG AS THE KOSODE ITSELF. GARMENT LONGER AND NARROWER THAN BEFORE.



COURTESANS WEARING FRONT-TIED OBI.
KIYONAGA; THE COURTESAN WAKAKUSA OF CHOJI-YA.

EDO KOSODE WITH TRAILING HEM.
MORONOBU; BEAUTY LOOKING BACK.

of the composition would be obscured by the wide *obi*. Hence, the design became restricted to the shoulder and hem of the *kosode*, with emphasis on the design below the *obi*.

Today, the kimono (as it is now known) is of the same proportions as the *kosode* was in the late *Edo* period. The kimono is still made longer than the person wearing it, but it no longer trails on the ground. Instead it is hitched up, under the *obi*, so that the hem just reaches the heels of the wearer. Apart from this, the kimono ensemble has not changed significantly since the end of the *Edo* period in 1868. **Diagram eight** shows the kimono family tree from pre-historic times to present day.

What made such a great impact on Japanese society, that its clothing, which had been evolving since pre-historic times, ceased to change in the late nineteenth century, and has remained the same ever since? In 1868, Japan's self-enforced isolation from the outside world was ended, and Japan began to come under the influence of Western culture. This had a drastic effect on the evolution of the kimono, and its place in the wardrobes of Japanese people.

WESTERNISATION

> "Awed by Western civilization, the Japanese of the *Meiji* era, devoted themselves to absorbing and uncritically following Western culture."
>
> (Muraoka, 1976, p 25)

Starved of outside influences for over two centuries, the Japanese of the *Meiji* era were eager to adopt items of Western culture, so as to appear modern in the eyes of the rest of the world. In reality, Japan was anything but a modern country at this time, because as a consequence of its self-enforced isolationism, the Japanese had not experienced the industrial revolution that had occurred in Europe and America by this time. Japan realised that to become a modern country, it would have to industrialise, and to do this they needed to borrow ideas from the West:

> "Ever since the *Meiji* era, when Japan entered the race for modernism as a late starter, the country has taken the shortest route possible in order to catch up with the leaders, the U.S. and Europe, by purchasing superior information and technology from them."
>
> (Matsumura, 1987, p 8)

Although the Japanese adopted many ideas of Western technology and culture, they did not forget

KIMONO FAMILY TREE

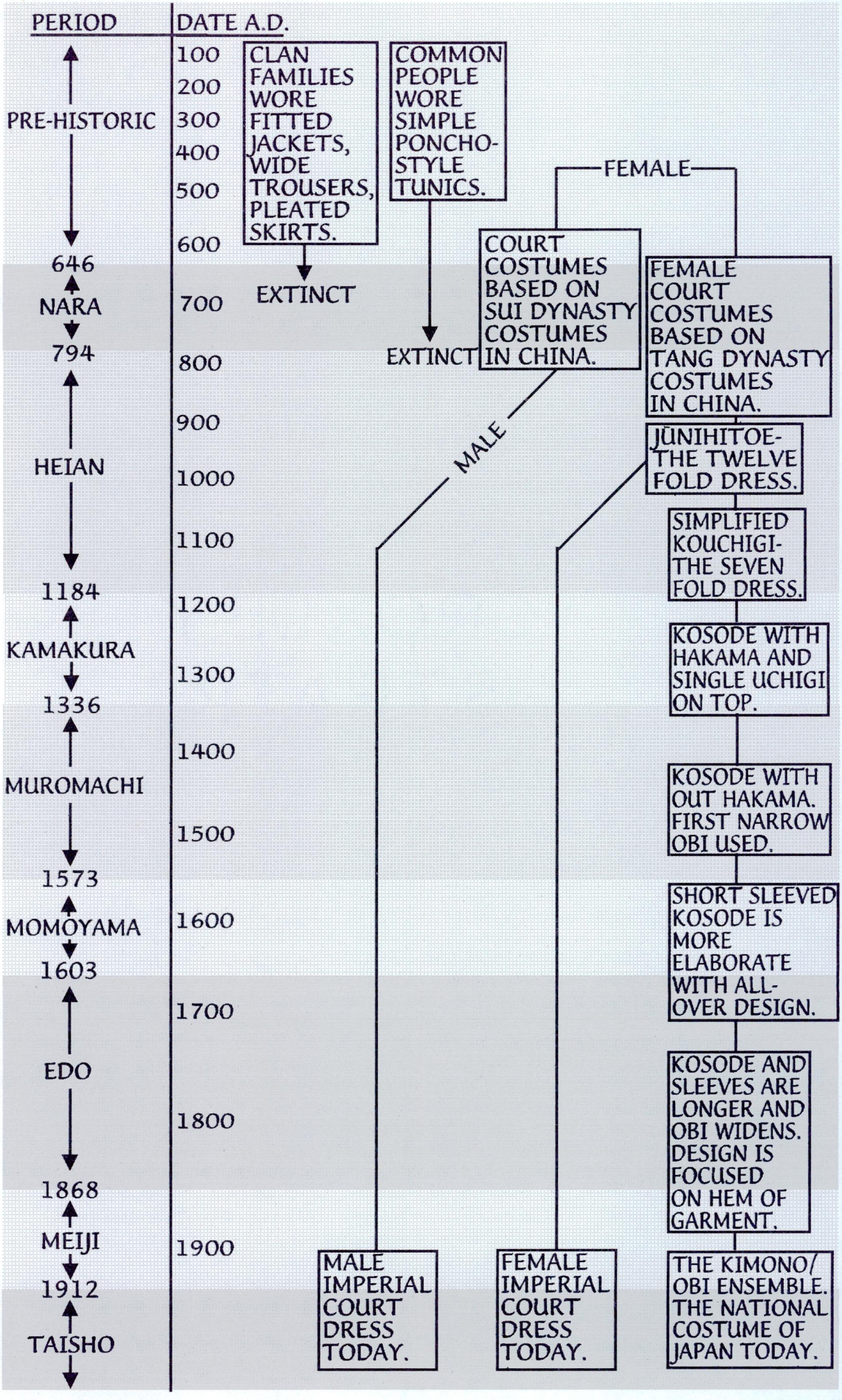


DIAGRAM 8

their own traditional culture, built up over the preceding centuries. Rather, they managed to embrace both cultures simultaneously, by selecting elements from both and combining them in a uniquely Japanese way:

> "The constant mixing in Japan, of things 'foreign' and 'Japanese' to form new, fresh ideas, and lifestyles, may itself be the true cultural legacy of the Japan of yesterday, today, and tomorrow."
>
> (Itoh, 1983, p 4)

As is the case with most progress, the Japanese imperial court, closely followed by the aristocratic class, were the first to adopt items of Western culture, as symbols of modernity. This progress took time to filter down to the poorer classes. In effect, Western culture came to represent not only modernity and progress but also prosperity, whereas Japanese culture came to represent traditionalism, old-fashionedness and even poverty.

Since the Second World War, however, Japan has become an increasingly prosperous nation with little poverty or unemployment. Western technology and culture is available, and used, by everyone. Now, in spite of, or perhaps as a result of, the availability of Western culture in Japan, traditional Japanese culture is undergoing a revival, of sorts. Now that Western cultural items are standard in Japan today, wealthy Japanese are rediscovering traditional Japanese culture, to use as a symbol of their prosperity and elitism. Thus, a complete reversal has occurred; where, in the *Meiji* era, Japanese culture symbolised poverty, in Japan today it has come to symbolise prosperity, in a nation where Western culture is the norm.

Westernisation had a profound and irreversible effect on *wafuku* during the *Meiji* era. The diversity of *wafuku* that had been worn prior to the *Meiji* era was lost forever. The *kosode*, that was worn by both men and women prior to this period, became known as the kimono, but was worn almost exclusively by women. The kimono became a classical garment, unchanging, stagnant and standardised, when compared to Western wear, which was constantly changing fashion. With time, the kimono went from being a garment for everyday wear, to being an almost exclusively formal garment, worn only on occasions of extreme formality, such as weddings and funerals. Why did the Westernisation of Japan have such a deep and lasting effect on the kimono in the areas I have described above?

Prior to the introduction of *yofuku* into Japan, *wafuku* consisted of an eclectic collection of diverse Japanese garments. When discussing the history of the kimono, in the previous section, I

concentrated on the *kosode* and its ancestors, because it is out of these garments that today's kimono evolved. It therefore may have seemed that the *kosode*,(and its ancestors), was the only type of *wafuku* in existence. However, in reality, many varieties of *wafuku* were worn, depending on the wearer's rank, station in life and occupation. Why then is it only the kimono that is worn today? What happened to the other types of *wafuku*? Liza Dalby states that:

> ". . . as kimono faced its first competitor, Western clothing, in mid-century, it was as though a frost had descended to kill off every species except the most hardy. From the fixed and frozen version of kimono worn by Japanese women today, it is scarcely possible to imagine the rich variations of style, fabric and accessories [worn before]. . ."
> (Dalby, 1993, pp 56 - 57)

In the face of the onslaught by *yofuku*, the Japanese realised that for any *wafuku* to survive Westernisation, the different elements of traditional Japanese clothing would have to unite and form a unified front with which to fend off advances by Western clothing. If every type of *wafuku* had to compete separately with *yofuku*, it would have been quite possible that none of it would have survived. However, because the Japanese promoted the use of the kimono (as distinct from other *wafuku*) in the face of Western competition, they were assured that at least one type of their traditional clothing would survive, to the detriment of all other types.

What occurred during the *Meiji* era to transform the kimono from a unisex garment into the chiefly female garment that it is today? Japanese men adopted Western clothing before their female counterparts, and the kimono, for them, became obsolete. The first Japanese to wear *yofuku* were those most in contact with the Western world - male members of the Japanese imperial court, and bureaucrats sent abroad in the early years of this era. Members of the imperial court wore *yofuku* so as to appear more modern to the rest of the world. For bureaucrats, Western style suits were promoted as a more comfortable and functional alternative to kimono. On returning home from work, however, the majority of bureaucrats changed back into kimono; although suits were more comfortable in Western style offices, they were not comfortable or practical in the traditional Japanese home, where one sits on the floor. So early in the *Meiji* era, *yofuku* became standard work wear for men, and the kimono, for them, was relegated to the home. The male kimono, by being thus relegated to home wear, became a garment for casual wear only and lost its formal function, which was taken over by *yofuku*. Today, quite possibly the only time a Japanese man will don *wafuku*, is on his wedding day - for other formal occasions, where dressing in kimono may be essential for women, their husbands are considered suitably attired in a *yofuku* suit (see **plate**

KAZUYO DOBASHI IN KIMONO AND RYOZO DOBASHI IN YOFUKU.

PLATE 14

fourteen).

This explains why the kimono is no longer worn by men, but why is it that women did not similarily reject it in favour of Western wear? At the time early in the *Meiji* era, when bureaucrats were adopting the *yofuku* suit, few women were experimenting with female *yofuku* wear. One of the reasons for this was the fact that, at that time, few Japanese women worked outside the home. Unlike their male counterparts, Japanese women did not need clothing suitable for Western style rooms because they spent the majority of their time at home in traditional Japanese settings. Also, Japanese women were less likely to come into contact with Western society, and thus at this time were less influenced by *yofuku*.

Unlike men, who could substitute the kimono for something more comfortable and functional, womens' *yofuku* alternatives (corsets and bustles) in the early *Meiji* era, were not any more practical or comfortable than the kimono ensemble (see **plate fifteen**). Even when more women began to work outside the home, they still did not adopt female *yofuku* as work wear, as the Western fashions at the time were no more functional than the kimono ensemble, for working in. Instead, progressive Japanese working women adopted male items of *wafuku*, to wear in conjunction with their kimono. The *haori* jacket, previously worn only by men, became popular with working women, as did *hakama* trousers, which had not been worn by women for centuries.

During the mid *Meiji* period, however, *yofuku* gained more popularity among Japanese women. This was mainly due to the Empress wearing *yofuku* and publishing her opinion that it was a more appropriate form of dress than what *wafuku* had become:

> "Now when we regard women's Western clothing we note that it consists of an upper garment and a skirt, and thus accords with our ancient system of dress. Not only is it suitable for the due performance of ceremony, it also allows for freedom of movement. It is thus entirely appropiate that we adopt Western-style tailoring."
>
> (Empress Haruko, quoted in Dalby,1993, p 82)

As the *Meiji* era drew to a close female Western style clothing became increasingly liberated and functional (gone were the bustles and corsets of before). As a result, the kimono appeared to be all the more restrictive in comparison. With increasingly more women working outside the home, the demand for *yofuku* rose, and the kimono began to be marginalised. As with other items of Japanese culture at this time, the kimono became equated with tradition and old-fashionedness, while *yofuku* became equated with modernity and progress.

IMPRACTICAL MEIJI YOFUKU FOR WOMEN.
CHIKANOBU; CONCERT OF EUROPEAN ORCHESTRA.

With the wearing of *yofuku* as work wear, and later, as casual everyday wear, the kimono became a classical garment reserved for occasions of high formality or ceremony. The wearing of classical garments for important ceremonies or formal situations is also common in Western countries - the traditional white wedding dress, for example, is hardly high fashion. One of the main reasons for the kimono's place as a formal garment is the prohibitive cost of wearing. All kimono, apart from *yukata* (casual cotton kimono) are made from silk. The high cost of silk, the long length of fabric required, and the accessories needed to complete the outfit, all combine to make the kimono ensemble a very expensive outlay when compared to a Western style outfit. Liza Dalby quotes kimono prices from the quarterly magazine Utsukushii Kimono (Beautiful Kimono, Autumn 1987). A ceremonial *furisode* costs $5,850 and the matching *obi* costs another $5,175. A black, crested ceremonial *tomesode* costs $4,350 and the matching *obi*, another $3,375. Even a less formal, visiting-wear kimono costs $2,625 and the matching *obi*, another $3,375,(Dalby, 1993, p135). Hence, with these prices, the kimono cannot be worn everyday, and thus, this expensive classical garment is now worn almost exclusively on formal and ceremonial occasions, as the following account of a local wedding records:

> "At her 1978 wedding, Suzuko wore four different dresses for *ironaoshi*, [colour alteration] including two Western-style dresses which together cost one hundred twenty thousand yen (six hundred dollars). She also wore a kimono rented for two hundred thousand yen (one thousand dollars). . . . "
>
> (Lebra,1984, p 109)

Plate sixteen shows two of the kimono ensembles that can be worn for a wedding today, in addition to a Western wedding dress. The quote above shows just how expensive a kimono can be, if hiring one for a day can cost more than buying two Western style dresses. As with other items of traditional Japanese culture, however, the kimono is regaining status among elite and individualistic Japanese women, as a garment that can be worn, in opposition to the Western clothing worn by the masses:

> "Yoshie Nishikawa is 25 years old. . . . She is typical of a small but increasing number of sensitive, avant-garde young people who are reviving the kimono as modern fashion wear. Most Japanese women might put on a kimono once or twice a year at most, but Yoshie and people like her are trying to integrate the kimono into their daily wardrobes along with their jeans and designer clothes."
>
> (Koren, 1984, p 168)

The Westernisation of Japan, therefore, has changed the course of the kimono irreversibly.

TWO KIMONO WEDDING ENSEMBLES.

Many varieties of *wafuku* became extinct under direct pressure from *yofuku*. The kimono was the only garment of *wafuku* to extensively survive, but at this time, the nature of the kimono changed forever. The kimono went from being a unisex garment, to one worn almost exclusively by females. It has also almost become an exclusively formal garment, whereas before the *Meiji* era, kimono were worn on all occasions, formal or otherwise. Westernisation has, therefore, had a profound effect on the history of the development of the kimono. It has also affected the kimono in other ways, that will be discussed in chapters two and three. Western diets, for example, have altered the body-shape of Japanese women, which in turn affects the aesthetic qualities of the kimono on the Japanese figure. Also, the Westernisation of Japan is having an effect on how children are being brought up. Children's personalities are becoming more Westernised, and as a result, the wearing of kimono correctly by this generation becomes more difficult.

BODY

本

BODY

The structure and shape of the Japanese body differs somewhat from that of the Western body. Size, bone structure and colouring are all elements of the oriental body that distinguishes it from a Western body. As a result of the Westernisation of Japan, however, the structure and shape of the oriental body is evolving into a shape that more closely resembles the typical Western body-shape. How does this new, Westernised body-shape affect the wearing of kimono? Is the new shape more, or less, suitable for the wearing of kimono?

Another topic of interest is the practicality and comfort of the kimono. The kimono, as I see it, cannot be a physically comfortable or practical garment to wear, in this, the twentieth century. It appears to be completely restrictive of the body as it controls all movements, when worn. How does the setting of a room (traditionally Japanese, or Western in style) affect the practicality and comfort of the clothing worn?

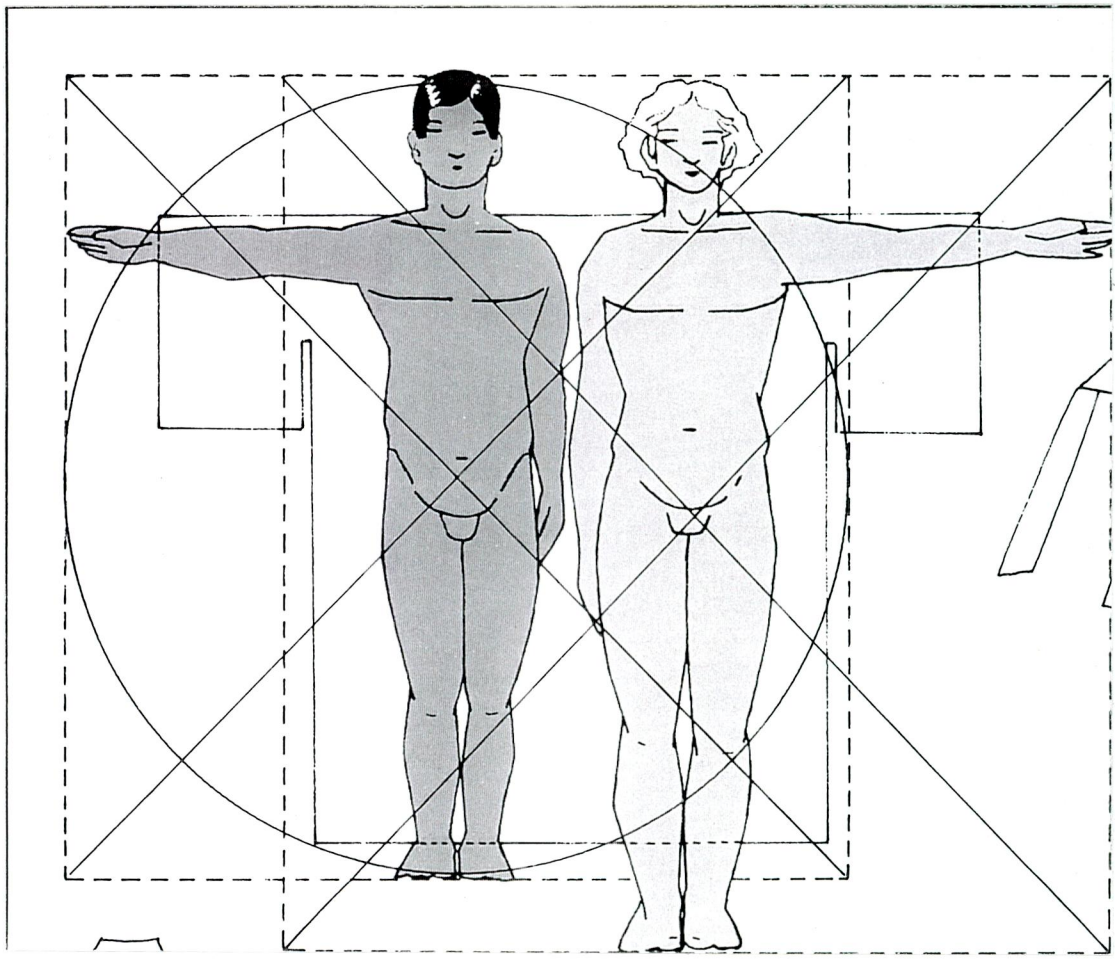
STRUCTURE OF THE JAPANESE BODY

> "Japanese born prior to World War II tend to have larger heads, shorter arms and shorter, slightly bowed legs, thicker ankles, narrower shoulders, smaller breasts, and less body hair than Western peoples. They are also thinner, more agile, and longer lived than Westerners."
>
> (Koren, 1984, p 30)

There is no doubt that the Japanese (Oriental) body-form differs from that in the West (European or North American), as **plate seventeen** shows. The Japanese body-form, however, is not an unchanging continuum, rather, it is being constantly influenced by, among other things, the Westernisation of Japan. Although the body-form is evolving quite rapidly, it can only change one generation at a time, with the result that middle-aged and older people in Japan still exhibit the pre-war build described above.

The first thing that struck me in Japan was, that suddenly, I was no longer a short person. I am only five foot, two inches tall, but on reaching Japan, I was no longer considered on the short side of average. Rather, I was actually considered normal, or even of slightly above average height. The Japanese, as a race, are not just short in stature, they are proportionally petite in build. The women have almost childlike features, with small breasts, thick waist and narrow hips. Basically,

ORIENTAL AND WESTERN BODY-SHAPE DIFFERENCES.



the pre-war body-form of Japanese women is quite cylindrical and straight, when compared with the hour-glass shape figure that predominates in the West, where women have larger breasts and hips, and narrower waists. In Japan, there is also much less variety in body-size and shape than is evident in the West. The majority of Japanese are of, or very close to, average height and weight. When you see a group of Japanese together, there is less diversity in height and weight than when compared with a similar group in the West, where people's heights and weights vary considerably more.

The Japanese, as a race, not only have little diversity in height and weight, they all have the same hair-type and they have less variety of facial features, than are in evidence in the West. All Japanese have coarse, straight, black hair, pale or sallow skin (rarely blemished with freckles or beauty spots) and dark brown eyes. Their facial bone structure differs from that in the West - they predominately have flat, round, moon-shaped faces, often with prominent cheek-bones. The main facial feature that distinguishes a Japanese person is the eyes, or eyelids to be exact. The epicanthic fold in the eyelids (just one fold downwards) give the Japanese what we call 'oriental eyes', although some non-oriental cultures have a similar fold in their eyelids. These eyelids, coupled with the moon-shaped face, and the straight black hair, differentiate the Japanese from any other race.

How does the pre World War II Japanese body-shape described above, suit the wearing of kimono, compared to the Western body-shape? First of all, I think it is true to say that no body-shape is completely suited to the wearing of kimono. Even Japanese women have to make adjustments to their bodies so as to wear kimono correctly. We can also turn this statement around and say, that, on no body-shape is the kimono a completely suitable garment.

Nonetheless, the pre-war Japanese figure is eminently more suited to the wearing of kimono, than the Western figure, or the new evolving Japanese body-shape. The silhouette of the kimono is straight and cylindrical, and thus, the petite, childlike and cylindrical nature of the female body-shape already described, can be seen as the most suitable body-shape for the wearing of the kimono. In Japan, the breasts, waist and hips are not erotic areas of focus, as they are in the West. The kimono does not pull and contort these areas of the body into unnatural focus, such as has occurred throughout the history of Western dress. The kimono ensemble is like an artist's painting, where a subtle frame (the Japanese body) enhances, rather than detracts from the picture (the kimono ensemble, itself). There is little emphasis on the breasts, waist and hips, because emphasis on specific body-parts would distract from the look of the whole kimono ensemble, in much the same

way that a highly decorated gilt frame can distract, and thus detract, from the painting it frames.

Thus a body with small breasts, a wider waist, and narrower hips (basically a body with a regular cylindrical torso) such as the pre-war Japanese figure, complements the cylindrical silhouette of the kimono ensemble. A torso with small breasts is more suitable for the wearing of kimono because the kimono can fold flat across the chest, with less opportunity for it to become undone than on a full-chested torso. Also, depending on the age of the wearer, the *obi* may be worn high enough on the torso to actually partially cover the breasts. The *obi,* however, also covers the waist, and thus a thicker waist, in line with the bust and hips, is more suitable because the *obi* will sit straight. Small hips that are roughly the same width as the waist are best suited to the kimono, because the skirt of the kimono can fall straight to the feet, below the *obi*, and not fall open. The lack of diversity in height and weight among Japanese women also means that all kimono can be made from one *tan* of fabric, with little variation in seam allowances. Although it can be said that no body-form is completely suited to wearing the kimono, the pre World War II Japanese figure is the most suitable of body-shapes.

How, on the other hand, was this Japanese body-shape suited to the Western clothing of the time? During the *Meiji* period (1868-1912) the Japanese body-shape at that time was not at all suited to the newly introduced Western fashions for women. Was this simply because Japanese women were unused to wearing anything other than kimono, and so these strange new fashions did not come naturally to them, or were there inherent body shape-differences that made the wearing of Western fashions difficult for them? I think that inherent body-shape differences, to a major extent, and unfamiliarity with the garments, to a lesser extent, combined to make the Western fashions of the time, difficult for Japanese women to wear.

The style of Western garments, in fashion at the time, also had a bearing on the suitability of the Japanese body to the clothes. Japanese women, with small breasts, thick waists, and narrow hips found it difficult to wear garments of clothing that emphasised these areas of the body. The Western clothing silhouette of the 1880's and 1890's was an S-shaped curve which was the complete antithesis of the straight cylindrical kimono silhouette.

> "Suddenly the waist, ignored in kimono, was highlighted by a laced corset, a bosom above, and curvaceous hips below. Feet accustomed to soft cloth tabi and thonged geta were enclosed in leather shoes. Corseted and shod, Japanese ladies occasionally fainted on the dance floor of the Rokumeikan [a showpiece building of high civilisation at the time]." (Dalby, 1993, p 80)

Additionally, because of the inherently small bosoms of Japanese women, the Western clothing of the time, which demanded cleavage, was difficult to wear. This problem, however, was also due to the fact that Japanese women were not used to exposing cleavage, or even uplifting their bust in any way - the kimono called for the flattening of the bust.

Thus, not only were there specific body-shape differences which made the wearing of Western fashions difficult, but because the Japanese body was conditioned by constantly wearing kimono, to wear anything else was unnatural. As a result of the Japanese sitting style, and the nature of the tied *obi* on the back, Japanese women had slightly stooped backs which did not enhance the 'shoulders back, chest out' style of the Western fashions at the time. Also, over the years, Japanese women had become accustomed to walking with their feet turned inwards, because of the narrowness of the kimono below the *obi*, and also in an effort to keep the kimono from opening at the front. This turned in nature of Japanese feet, did not enhance the look of the full-skirted Western fashions. A foreigner writing in Jogaku Sekai, (Coed World - a Japanese periodical) July 1906, wrote:

> "Japanese women wearing Western clothing is something, forgive me, that simply doesn't suit them. The first reason is that the Japanese are always bending over and their bodies have developed a tendency to stoop. Western dresses require a figure that emphasizes the chest thrust forward and full hips, yet in Japan both are denigrated. Another problem is that Japanese women turn their feet inward instead of outward as they walk, which does not enhance the look of a Western skirt. . . From the point of view of a Westerner's eyes, it is very strange to see our clothing worn by the Japanese."
>
> (Dalby, 1993, pp 86-87)

At this time, it is obvious that the Japanese figure was more suited to the wearing of the kimono, than the wearing of Western fashions. A question that now needs to be asked is, is the Japanese body-shape more suited to the wearing of the kimono because the kimono has evolved around this particular body-shape, or did the structure of the kimono itself affect and influence this pre-war body-shape? Many of the elements of difference between the Japanese body and the Western body are inherent differences that have not been influenced by the wearing of kimono. Rather the kimono has evolved itself, around these inherent differences. Height and bone structure, for example, are inherent qualities, genetically inherited from one's parents. What clothes one wears will not affect these inherited qualities. Thus the Japanese body-shape can be said to be suited to wearing kimono, because the kimono has evolved around this genetically inherited body-shape.

Environment (where we work, the upbringing we receive, the clothes we wear), however, is capable of influencing certain genetically inherited traits, although the resulting characteristics may not be genetically passed on to the next generation. One example of clothing affecting the inherited body-shape is the case of foot-binding in China. As a result of this tradition of foot-binding from childhood, Chinese people have smaller feet than they have genetically inherited (if their feet were left unbound, they would be larger). Thus the environment has affected a genetically inherited trait. Another example of this is waist sizes in the Western world. Waists are not as narrow today as they were when corsets were worn, because although the wearing of corsets narrowed waist size during the generations that they were worn, this trait was not inherited by future generations who abandoned the corset.

With these examples in mind, I suggest that the kimono itself has influenced the pre-war body-shape in Japan. While the small breasts and thick waist may be the result of natural evolution, I would suggest that they are also a result of kimono wearing. Just as Chinese people have small feet as a result of foot-binding, Japanese women may have small breasts because, from the time they start wearing kimono, their upper torsos are flattened by the tight *obi*. Their waists are not constricted as much by the *obi*, as they would be if they wore corsets. This is as a result of the straight *obi* also covering the upper torso and below the waist. Bearing these examples in mind, I suggest that, not only has the kimono evolved to suit the Japanese body-shape, it has also affected and influenced this body-shape. With this explanation, it would hold that one of the reasons the Japanese body-shape is undergoing change at the moment, is because the kimono is worn less frequently than before World War II.

Unlike during the *Meiji* era, the Japanese woman now appears natural in Western style clothing. This is due to many reasons - Western wear now appears natural because it is worn so often, and any garment that is worn so frequently becomes easier to wear. Now Japanese women are less relaxed wearing kimono because it is no longer a natural action, as they are worn so rarely. Another reason is the change in Western fashions since the *Meiji* era. Modern Western garments are now easier for Japanese women to wear - there is less emphasis on the waist, hips and bust than in the days of bustles and corsets.

The main reason,however,that Japanese women are more comfortable in Western style clothing today, is because the Japanese body-shape has evolved to fit Western fashions better than

in *Meiji* times. What elements of the Japanese figure have changed and what has brought about these changes? Height is one significant element that is rapidly changing. According to Peter Tasker the average height of a male university student today, is six inches above what it was before the Second World War(Tasker, 1989, p34). He goes on to say that most of this growth is in the legs, bringing the overall proportion of the Japanese figure closer to that in the West, in addition to the fact that: " The rapid influx to the cities has made skin tone much paler, and the boom in American-style fast food has created the first generation of obese children." (Tasker, 1989, p 35).

This fast food phenomenon suggests that one of the main reasons for body-shape changes is, changes in the dietary habits of the Japanese. The Japanese are using increased amounts of dairy products and meat- items that were non-existent in their pre-war diet. This, coupled with the reduced use of the Japanese staples of rice and fish, has helped to produce a body-shape more similar to that in the West. The majority of Japanese not only eat Western style food, they also live in homes with Western style rooms. This change in home environment must also have an effect on the Japanese body-shape. The Japanese are no longer sitting on the lower parts of their legs, but on chairs and sofas. Maybe the fact that the Japanese spent so much time sitting on their legs in the past, impeded their growth. Now that the majority of Japanese people sit in chairs, their legs are showing an increase in length.

> "Fixated on the notion that the Western-style body is more attractive than the Japanese variety, young Japanese want smaller heads, longer, straighter limbs, broader shoulders, bigger breasts, and thinner ankles. Accordingly these transformations are being effected through the implementation of Western dietry habits. . . . and by force of will. Relatively rapidly, the soft lines of the compact, streamlined Japanese body are metamorphosing into a harder-edged, large-size body that is becoming quite competitive with the American and European models."
>
> (Koren, 1984, p 30)

Not all changes in Japanese body-shape are involuntary evolutionary changes - women are now resorting to voluntary methods in an effort to appear more Western looking. These voluntary methods can be as simple and non-permanent as applying make-up that makes one appear Westernised, or as complex and everlasting as plastic surgery. Plastic surgery, especially facial surgery to resculpt the Japanese eyes and nose, is very popular in Japan. **Plate eighteen** shows the patients' masks at one Tokyo hospital that offers plastic surgery. The most popular operation is to remove the epicanthic fold in the eyelid, to make the oriental eye appear Western looking, because:

PATIENTS' PLASTIC SURGERY MASKS, FROM A TOKYO HOSPITAL.

PLATE 18

"The standard-issue Japanese eyelid (a single downward flap) is considered unattractive. Girls who cannot afford the permanent remedy can purchase small tabs of flesh-coloured adhesive paper which will do the job almost as well."

(Tasker, 1989, p35)

In Japan today, to be attractive means to look Westernised. Japanese women are constantly being fed subliminal messages that 'West is Best'. In Japanese fashion magazines the models used are either Western or Western looking, magazine and television advertisements feature Western models, and even in Japanese *manga* comics for women, the heroine is inevitably drawn as a tall, long-legged blond foreigner. Hence:"The subliminal message was clear: If you really want to look good in Western-style fashion, you must transform your face and body into the Western prototype." (Koren, 1984, p 19).

Due both to involuntary and voluntary methods, the Japanese body-shape has, therefore, evolved rapidly since World War II, the result being a body-shape much more Westernised in form. How do these changes in body-form affect the wearing of kimono in Japan today? Japanese women are now more suited to Western clothing, and the inverse also holds true - they are (because of this Westernised body-shape) less suited to wearing the kimono.

The increase in breast size is one element that has a detrimental effect on the way the kimono ensemble sits on the body - large breasts with cleavage do not enable the kimono to lie flat, causing the kimono to open at the front, above the *obi*. Also the discrepancy in width between the larger bust and narrower waist of today causes the *obi* (which is made from a length of fabric of standard width) to buckle around the waist. Larger hips can cause the kimono to fall in an A-line shape to the feet, ruining the composition of the ensemble, or even worse, causing the kimono to fall open below the *obi*.

The physical changes in the Japanese figure have, as described, affected the way the kimono is worn. For Japanese women to wear kimono correctly today, a lot more preparation must take place, than was necessary before this change in body-shape occurred. The modern woman needs to return her hour-glass figure to a cylindrical form, so that the kimono ensemble can sit correctly on her body. To achieve the cylindrical form, she must suppress parts of her body and pad out the rest to bring all sections of the body back into line.

To wear the kimono correctly, large breasts must be flattened against the body, and cleavage must not be evident. With this in mind, many Japanese women today must wear bust suppressors

when wearing kimono. Many use cotton wool to pad out cleavage underneath the kimono. Women with narrow waists find it necessary to pad them out with towels, so as to bring the waist into line with the rest of the torso, so that the *obi* can sit flat. All these extra accessories have to be worn underneath all the existing underwear for kimono, and this makes the putting on of the kimono ensemble even more time consuming, and the actual wearing of the ensemble increasingly more uncomfortable.

KIMONO BODY RESTRICTIONS

> "The kimono has a criminal record. For hundreds of years, up until the twentieth century, the kimono has unilaterally insulted the female sex.... and impeded natural growth. When women finally removed their kimono, they burst the shackles of feudalism....We must expose kimono for the pernicious device it is."
>
> (Murakami Nobuhiko, male clothing historian, quoted in Dalby, 1993, p 138)

The kimono ensemble is undoubtedly a physically uncomfortable, restrictive and impractical outfit: simple tasks like breathing, walking and housework are rendered more uncomfortable to achieve if one is wearing kimono; it not only restricts one's body movements, actual body development can be restricted by the constant wearing of kimono; it is also an impractical and non-functional garment when it comes to modern day tasks such as working in an office or driving a car.

The bust suppressor, *datemaki*, and *obi* all combine to constrict and restrict the torso, thus making breathing difficult, in the same way that corsets used to restrict breathing. With the chest constricted, only small, frequent breaths are possible, making any type of physical exertion more difficult. In addition, the narrow skirt of the kimono restricts physical movement, and even renders walking difficult. Women cannot take large striding steps when wearing kimono, because the narrowness of the garment does not allow large leg movements. The possibility of the front flap of the kimono falling open revealing the legs, if long strides are taken, causes women wearing kimono to shuffle along with small mincing steps. This could be one of the reasons that women in kimono tend to walk behind their husbands, they undoubtedly have problems keeping up! The traditional footwear of *zōri* or *geta* also slow down a woman's walking pace - like walking fast in either flips-flops or platform sandals.

Although the long, wide sleeves of the kimono do not physically restrict the body, the length

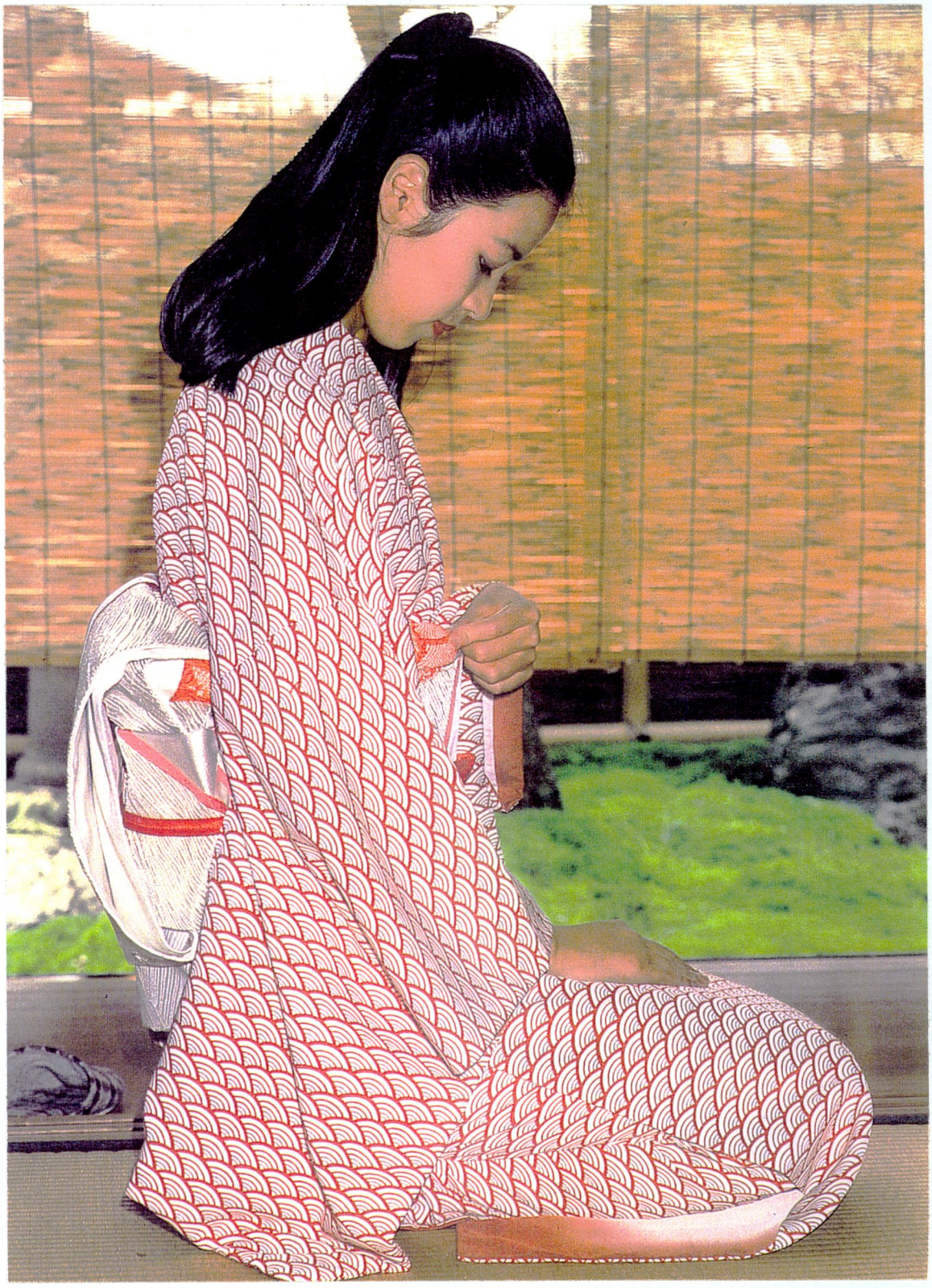
and swinging nature of these sleeves, especially those on a *furisode*, render them an extremely impractical element of the garment. Any tasks that involve moving the arms, become difficult to achieve because the sleeves swing around and can knock objects over. Passing food during mealtimes, or doing general housework are tasks more complicated if the person involved is wearing kimono.

Sitting is another task, complicated by the wearing of kimono. The only manner in which a woman can sit in relative comfort, while wearing a kimono, is on the backs of her legs, on the floor, in the traditional Japanese style (see **plate nineteen**). Unlike men, (wearing traditional wide-legged *hakama*) who can sit cross-legged on the floor, women must keep their legs together beneath them, again because the skirt of the kimono is too narrow, and would otherwise flap open, immodestly revealing their legs. Sitting in any style of Western chair or sofa is almost impossible if wearing a kimono ensemble, because the *obi* fold at the back does not allow the wearer to sit fully into the chair, and so women in kimono can only perch on the edges of Western style furniture. The model on **plate twenty**, although smiling, looks uncomfortable balanced on the edge of her chair, with her torso thrust forward to protect the *obi*, when compared with the ease in which the model on the previous plate appears to be sitting. With such simple tasks as those discussed above, rendered difficult when the kimono is worn, it is obvious that any more complex tasks, such as working in a Western style office, or driving a car become almost impossible to achieve, given the restrictions on the body imposed by the wearing of kimono.

It is true to say that women were more comfortable wearing kimono in the past. This, however, is not just due to the fact that they wore kimono frequently - it is also due to the nature of the kimono that they wore. As already mentioned in the first chapter, before the introduction of Western clothing into Japan, many diverse types of *wafuku* were worn, for different occupations and occasions. Nowadays, only the one style of kimono still exists, and this is the most formal and impractical style of kimono, when compared with the other forms of *wafuku* that became extinct. Traditional work garments for fishing or farming were much more practical than the kimono worn today. Slim *mompe* trousers were worn over shorter kimono, and kimono sleeves were tight to the arm (see **plate twenty one** and **twenty two**).

There are several other reasons why the kimono, as a garment, may have seemed to be more practical and comfortable in the past. For one, before the introduction of *yofuku*, there was no

SITTING, THE TRADITIONAL JAPANESE WAY.



SITTING ON A WESTERN STYLE CHAIR.

A FISHERWOMAN IN WAFUKU CLOTHING.

FARMING WOMEN IN WAFUKU CLOTHING.

comparative clothing with which to compare the kimono's practicality or comfortable nature. The Japanese knew no better, so it is possible that they thought that the kimono was as practical and comfortable a garment one could get. It was only with the introduction of *yofuku* that the kimono began to lose its credibility as a practical and comfortable garment. However, all credibility was not lost until the Japanese began to live and work totally in Western style settings. This is due to the fact that, environment is an important factor when discussing the practicality and functionality of the kimono. In the past, traditional style homes and religious shrines had *tatami* mat flooring to sit on, and shoes were removed at the door. Traditional *zōri* and *geta* could be easily slipped on and off without bending over, and thus were more practical than Western style shoes that would have be unbuckled or unlaced. Also the kimono is more practical than *yofuku* when it comes to sitting on *tatami* mat floors. The tightness of the *obi* around the torso helps support the back which can otherwise be put under strain when sitting in the traditional manner for any length of time. This can also explain one of the reasons why completing any modern day tasks in kimono would be so difficult - the kimono was not designed against the backdrop of modern Western style society.

Overall, the practicality of the kimono, and the restrictions it puts on the body are very important, and this will become even more evident when I discuss the psychological restrictions and constraints the kimono puts on the wearer.

MIND

禁欲

MIND

"Kimono embodies the characteristics deemed desirable in a Japanese bride and future wife. A willingness to sacrifice personal desires for family is a highly commendable trait in a wife. Compliance is better than independence. An attractive bundle of traditional accomplishments will be enticing to the groom's family by demonstrating that the girl has been properly brought up. . . . Wearing kimono gives an impression of the wearer as sweet, docile, and conventional - in short, a good marriage prospect."

(Dalby, 1993, p 117)

The quote above suggests that the kimono can psychologically restrict the personality of the wearer, by implying that a woman wearing kimono has a traditional feminine personality. This chapter will explore the link between physical restriction and mental restriction, in the wearing of the kimono. Are Japanese women, subdued, feminine, introverted, modest, unselfish, yet content, as the wearing of kimono would suggest, or are Japanese women in reality, more similar to their Western counterparts? How do the lives of Japanese women differ from the lives of women in the West? Of great importance to this discussion is the practice of femininity training (including kimono training) during childhood, and the effect that it has on the adult personality of those that have been thus trained. Femininity training is controlled by the nature of the home environment (traditionally Japanese in style, or Western) and style of clothing worn, (again, kimono or Western) with the result that traditional training is less relevant today, with most children being brought up in Western style homes, wearing T-shirts and jeans, not kimono. Therefore, with Westernisation and the relaxation of femininity and kimono training, Japanese women should become less psychologically restricted and more liberated. Change, however, happens slowly, as age old traditions are hard to break. These are the topics that are now to come under discussion, in this, the third and final chapter.

THE LIVES & PERSONALITIES OF JAPANESE WOMEN

"Whatever one's age, one's position in the hierarchy depends on whether one is male or female. . . . The Japanese daughter of the family must get along as best she can while the presents, the attentions, and the money for education go to her brothers. . . . from their [girls] earliest memories they have been trained to accept the fact that boys get the precedence and the attention and the presents which are denied to them. The rule of life which they must honor denies them the privilege of overt self-assertion."

(Benedict, 1979, pp 53 & 279)

Ruth Benedict's book The Chrysanthemum and the Sword was first published in 1946 - is this still the reality that Japanese women face today? In the aftermath of Japan's defeat in World War II, and during the U.S. occupation, many aspects of Japanese society changed. The Americans abolished many rules and regulations that discriminated against women, such as the inheritance law. Prior to World War II, it was the eldest son in the family who inherited everything, regardless of whether or not he had older sisters. Now, by law, all inheritance should be distributed equally among all offspring, irrespective of sex. It does, however, take more than the reversal of laws to change a society. For the Japanese, who had been living by the same code of conduct for centuries, change was very difficult:

> "The occupation authorities . . . . established female suffrage, and gave Japanese women stronger constitutional protection than exists in the United States, but they could not legislate away deeply-entrenched habits of thought. The participation of women in Japanese society is much less advanced than in other rich countries. Japan has no feminist movement worth the name. The standard assumption, held by both sexes, is that the primary purpose of a woman's life is to take care of her man and rear his sons."
>
> (Tasker, 1989, p 99)

With Japanese people receiving subliminal and conscious messages all their lives about the roles they must play, it is little wonder that they live in a country where equality does not appear to exist. These messages start on the most basic level - with the Japanese written language, where, according to Peter Tasker, the ideograph for woman is 'womb', in contrast to the ideograph for man which depicts 'power in the field'. Also, the word used most often to describe wife means 'inside the house', (Tasker, 1989, p100). Do these basic words in the Japanese language need to be altered so as not to stereotype women, and men, into the traditional roles? George Fields, in his book From Bonsai to Levi's features a useful pyramid of relative change in society (see **diagram nine**). In this, basic language takes between three hundred and several thousand years to change, whereas habits and customs may only take between five and thirty years to evolve. It is safe to say, therefore, that other aspects of Japanese society will change considerably sooner than the language describing women and wives becomes something less stereotyped and restrictive.

Given the subliminal messages that Japanese women grow up with, how much do their lives differ from their counterparts in the West? T.S. Lebra says that Japan is ten years behind the United States (Lebra, 1984, p IX), but when it comes to the lives of women, I would suggest that this is an optimistic opinion. Starting with education, the nature of schooling for boys and girls is changing,

PYRAMID OF CHANGE

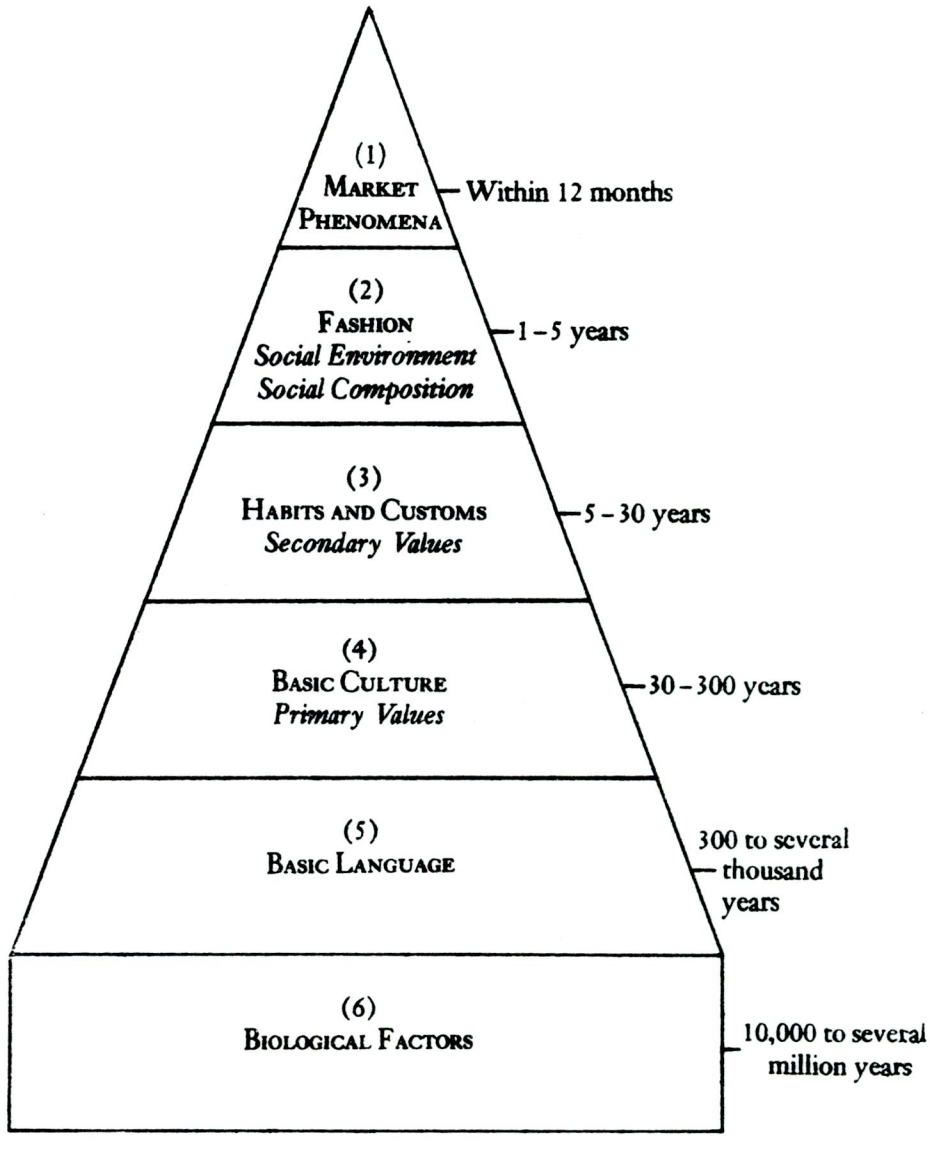


DIAGRAM 9

although boys still tend to have more opportunities than girls, especially when it comes to third level education, and graduate employment. Prior to World War II, few girls were educated beyond high school level, as it was not considered necessary because all that lay ahead of them was marriage and motherhood. In families where there was more than one child, the male children would be sent to university and the female children not, even if the female children were more intelligent. Women were not generally admitted to the universities and of those women who did go on to third level education, the majority attended bridal schools to increase their marital eligibility. At such schools they learnt to sew kimono, cook, perform the Japanese tea ceremony, arrange flowers, and play traditional Japanese musical instruments. Knowledge of these traditional arts supposedly increase one's marriageability, while also re-enforcing the female stereotype. Bridal schools are still in existence today but are less popular than before the Second World War. The skills learnt in bridal school are still considered important today; even female army cadets, in addition to regular training, must also take lessons in flower arranging. (see **plate twenty three**).

Today, universities do not discriminate against women, as a rule. The majority of women in college, however, end up studying non-specific degrees such as humanities or arts, while the men study subjects that will better equip them for the graduate job market. It is in this graduate job market that women are really discriminated against. In Japan, women are expected to resign upon marriage, and may be made redundant if they do not leave voluntarily. Indeed, women who do not marry at the appropriate age (mid-twenties) may be forced to resign regardless. Therefore, in the majority of cases, a woman's initial employment only lasts until the age of approximately twenty five (she may return after her children are reared). Thus female university graduates are discriminated against in two ways. First, female high school graduates are more useful to employers because they have more years to work before they reach mandatory retirement age, when compared with those educated for a further four years in university. Secondly, female university graduates, will not be given the jobs or training that their intelligence merits, as it is considered a drain on resources, because they will only be employed for a limited number of years.

The most important step a woman makes in her life is marriage, closely followed by motherhood. There is in Japan, a very strong stigma attached to being a single woman. Once a woman has passed the optimum marrying age of twenty five, and definitely by the age of thirty, and has remained single, she is considered an 'old Miss' or 'left-over-goods'. As Deborah Fallows

ARMY CADETS LEARNING FLOWER ARRANGING.

puts it:"Spinsterhood remains a dreaded fate. (An only slightly outdated slang term for an unmarried woman over the age of 25 is 'Christmas cake' because the latter drops sharply in value after December 25)." (Fallows, 1990, p 63).This stigma of female singlehood, T.S. Lebra explains, is so strong ". . . that almost every woman over 'the marriageable age' is eager to marry even without love. . ." (Lebra, 1984, p 300). Throughout her fieldwork in Japan she ". . .failed to encounter even one woman who was proud of being single or idealogically committed to staying unmarried." (Lebra, 1984, p 78). Part of the stigma must be the fact that ". . . single people are not considered proper adults, since they are free of the network of obligation that defines adult life. " (Tasker, 1989, p 100). Until the assumption that marriage is the only step for women is broken, it will be difficult for women to fully achieve equality in the work place, because although one-third of the Japanese workforce is female, and fifty percent of married women work:

> "The overwhelming majority are stuck in repetitious clerical jobs that offer no prospects of advancement. The average Japanese woman earns only 52 percent of the salary of the average Japanese man. That is a differential far wider than exists in any other rich country, and wider than in many developing countries as well."
>
> (Tasker, 1989, p 102)

These above examples all show how the lives of Japanese women today, differ from the lives of Western women, where although one hundred percent equality does not exist, less discrimination takes place. In the West, all college degrees are deemed suitable for both males and females, and although such male bastions as construction and engineering have less female students than other areas, numbers are on the increase. When it comes to the job market, prospective employers must advertise themselves as equal opportunity employers to escape prosecution. Female employees must be paid the same wages for the same job as their male colleagues. Women no longer have to retire on marriage or motherhood, and certainly do not have to retire regardless at the age of twenty five. Although marriage is important to many women, there is not such a large stigma attached to being single, and many women may choose their career over matrimony or motherhood.

Do the personalities of Japanese women also differ from Western women? In generalising I am not suggesting that all Japanese women have identical personality traits, but simply highlighting some common ones. One familiar personality trait among Japanese women is modesty, which is instilled into them from childhood. Modesty is concerned with the way one dresses, speaks, and the way one views oneself in a non boastful, vain or showy manner. Although the kimono cannot be

regarded as a reserved form of dress, (because of the opulent fabrics and colours used) it is not a showy form of dress, as convention does not allow for any alterations of form, fabric or colour from the standard, that might make for an ostentatious display. When Japanese women wear Western style clothing (other than T-shirts or jeans) they tend to wear discreet, subdued colours in simple styles, as exemplified by the clothing designed by Japanese contemporary designers Yohji Yamamoto and Rei Kawakubo.

Modesty within the area of speech demands:". . . overall reticence, a soft voice, the polite and feminine style of speech, and avoidance of exposing the oral cavity (the wide open mouth should be covered with a hand)." (Lebra, 1984, p 42). This trait of covering the mouth with the hand, especially when laughing, is one associated with Japanese women, like those on **plate twenty four**. Although Japanese women are extremely modest when it comes to themselves,(they never put themselves forward in a boastful manner) they can be less modest when discussing their offsprings' educational achievements, for example. They are quiet, reticent and reserved, and yet also friendly and helpful. They are mannerly, neat, feminine and elegant. These are all personality traits that a woman in Japan must embody so as to be a good wife and mother.

DRESS & PERSONALITY

> "Those who would make the kimono their own must first make their spirit and character a thing of beauty."
>
> (Norio Yamanka, founder of the Sodo Kimono Academy, quoted in Koren, 1984, p 59)

Are the Japanese personality traits inherited, or the result of upbringing? Do restrictive clothes play a part in influencing the personality of the wearer? Can clothing have an effect on the rate of female equality in a given environment? Is it entirely coincidence that, simultaneous to rejecting the corset, bustle, and other forms of restrictive and exploitive clothing, Western women began to gain more equality by being accepted into the workplace, and receiving voting rights, for example? Restrictive clothing can lead to, and maintain, a level of inequality, whereas a change in fashion to less restrictive clothing can result in increased equality for the female wearers.Since the end of the Victorian era in Europe (1901) clothing has become increasingly unrestrictive, and more similar to male clothing, and these changing fashions are mirrored by increasing rights and equality for women.

ELEGANT AND MODEST JAPANESE WOMEN.

While the growing lack of restriction in Western clothing has not single-handedly brought about the increase in equality for women since the Victorian era, I do believe that clothing did, and still does, have a significant role to play.

This argument is relevant to Japan after the *Meiji* era, since a direct comparison can be made between the restrictive nature of Victorian dress and the restrictive nature of the kimono. Both types of dress, although opposite in form, comparatively restrain and conceal the body. Both garments mould and present the body in an unnatural shape, and constrict the wearer's torso with either corset or *obi*. A comparison can therefore also be made between the lack of female equality and liberation in Victorian society, and the lack of the same in kimono wearing Japan. Just as the women of the early twentieth century in Europe gained emancipation simultaneous to the introduction of less restrictive clothing, with the increasing marginalisation of the kimono within the Japanese wardrobe, and the adoption of Western wear, women there should become more liberated and challenge the centuries' old stereotypes.

> "The Japanese woman walks behind her husband and has a lower status. Even women who on occasions when they wear American clothes walk alongside and precede him through a door, again fall to the rear when they have doned their kimonos."
>
> (Benedict, 1979, p 53)

A physical restriction, such as not being able to walk as fast in kimono, can lead to a psychological restriction where the women will walk behind her husband because she feels inferior and of lower status. A tight *obi*, which restricts breathing can lead to a woman not being able to answer back or have a proper argument, which will result in, over time, a reserved and compliant personality. Even wearing the kimono briefly, can temporarily alter a woman's personality."When I wear a kimono I begin to feel very silent inside. Usually I am a very high-energy person, which I like. But when I wear a kimono I feel calm and good, which I also like." (Yoshie Noshikawa, quoted in Koren, 1984, p 169).

As Benedict has suggested, male children are treated better than their sisters, and the result of this is the implementation and retention of female and male stereotypes in Japan. This is re-enforced by femininity training, which as the name suggests, only girls receive. This training begins before children start school and concerns female modesty relating to posture, sleeping positions, movement, manipulation and speech. Girls must learn to sit correctly on *tatami* mat floors, while wearing kimono, so as not to expose their legs:"For the woman, sitting with legs crossed in

front(*agura*) or stretched out would be the worst offence."(Lebra, 1984, p 42). Sleeping is another area where this differentiation is evident - girls are taught how to sleep correctly, again for maximum modesty:

> "The girl child must learn to sleep straight with her legs together, though the boy has greater freedom. It is one of the first rules which separate the training of boys and girls. . . . . Mrs. Sugimoto says of her own samurai upbringing: 'From the time I can remember I was always careful about lying quiet on my little wooden pillow at night....Samurai daughters were taught never to lose control of mind or body - even in sleep. Boys might stretch themselves into the character *dai*, carelessly outspread; but girls must curve into the modest, dignified character *kinoji*, which means spirit of control.' "
>
> (Benedict, 1979, p 268)

According to Benedict, modesty in relation to a girl's sleeping position is as important as modesty in relation to nakedness in the United States. Women have told Benedict how, as children, they had their limbs arranged into the correct sleeping position by their mothers when put to bed.

Many areas of femininity training directly pertain to the wearing of kimono, and become less relevant if the kimono is not worn. Body movements such as sitting down, standing up, walking, and opening doors, have to be perfected so as not to disturb the kimono and expose the under-garments or body. "Elegance training further involved encouragement of smoothness in the motion of the body or hands and the discouragement of awkward or jerky manners." (Lebra, 1984, p 43). Tidiness was also important, with female children being more strictly disciplined in this regard than male. Kimono training was very important, as girls had to learn from their mothers or grandmothers how to put on the intricate garment so that it did not become loose and be in danger of exposing the body.

It is, however, very important to note that:

> ". . . . Femininity training is largely conditioned by the domestic architecture and dress style. What was required from a resident of a house with raised tatami floors and privacy-inhibiting sliding paper doors would prove either irrelevant or unteachable to a dweller of a more westernized house with chairs and fixed, thick walls partitioning rooms. Femininity conditioned by the kimono must change into what is more suitable for Western-style dresses or even blue jeans."
>
> (Lebra, 1984, p 45)

As the majority of Japanese families now live in Western style apartments, and children grow up wearing Western style clothes, not kimono, many of the above areas of femininity training are becoming obsolete. Children need not learn how to sit on *tatami* flooring if their homes contain

Western style furniture, and kimono training is less relevant to children who only wear them a few times a year. Therefore, with the resulting changes in home environment and clothing, and with the increasing Westernisation of Japanese society, women's lives and their personalities must be undergoing change, although the change appears to be happening more slowly than would be expected. If we refer again to the pyramid in **diagram nine** we can see that basic culture/primary values take longer to change than habits and customs/secondary values. So, whereas Western style homes and clothing have almost totally replaced the traditional Japanese varieties, women have yet to become as liberated as those in the West. The idea of male supremacy is so deeply entrenched in basic Japanese culture that, although it is challenged, it will take more than a few years for women to realise their true equal status.

One of the reasons why change is taking longer than might be expected, is because the kimono, as a form of female restriction, is not totally obsolete. As it is still worn on special occasions it can still have an effect on the personalities of the wearers. If women are supposed to possess certain qualities to wear kimono properly, the subliminal message is still there that these are the necessary qualities to be a good Japanese wife. The fact that the kimono is just a formal garment today, could mean that it is even more psychologically restraining than in the past, where in a less opulent form it was worn everyday. As Liza Dalby explains:

> "Restrictive dress, especially when made of opulent fabrics, is a prime characteristic of the theory of conspicuous consumption. A woman rendered incapable of physical labor by her dress is more important as a indication of her father's or husband's status than as an economic contributor in her own right. She is a commodity. Kimono is surely conspicuously sumptuous..."
>
> (Dalby, 1993, pp 138-139)

Although the kimono is only worn on a few occasions a year, the previous generations have been taught in childhood how to wear it properly and have received all the appropriate femininity training. Although this is now irrelevant in their daily lives, lessons taught in childhood are difficult to forget, so while Japanese women may appear to be living Westernised lives, deep in their subconscious still, are their childhood learnings. It is only the present generation who are not being brought up with the traditional femininity training and kimono training that their mothers have received, and I believe thus, that it is with this generation that we will see great strides towards female equality.

CONCLUSION

What conclusions can be drawn from the discussion of the kimono ensemble as a physically and psychologically restrictive and constraining form of dress? The kimono is, without doubt, a physically restrictive and impractical garment, when compared with other clothing styles of the late twentieth century. Modern day activities are rendered almost impossible while wearing kimono. The kimono ensemble is not suitable or practical for living in a Western environment as most Japanese families do today. It could be argued that the kimono was relatively less restrictive and more practical in the past, before the introduction of Western clothing into Japan. Prior to the *Meiji* era, less restrictive forms of *wafuku* were used as working clothes, by farmers and fishermen, for example. The physical form of the Japanese body in the past, was more suited to the kimono ensemble, than the Westernised body-shape evident today. It must be noted that prior to the introduction of Western clothing, the Japanese had no comparative clothing against which to judge the kimono, and so it is only really since the *Meiji* era that the kimono has become viewed as a restrictive and impractical garment.

These physical restraints that the kimono puts on the body, can, themselves translate into psychological restraints. The restrictions of the kimono have led Japanese women in the past to live subservient lives, in the belief that they are of lower status than their less physically restrained husbands. The lives of Japanese women are changing, however, as they become increasingly more independent and less servile. Women are beginning to challenge the age-old stereotypes, now that they are more comfortable in Western style clothing than the kimono. It still remains to be seen, however,whether or not it is possible for Japanese women to gain ultimate equality while the kimono survives as a symbol of Japan's feudalistic past.

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