

Kimono Culture

THE BEAUTY OF JAPANESE CULTURE VIEWED THROUGH THE LENS OF KIMONO



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The following are terminology for kimono and related items.

染物 **Some-mono**

Some-mono textiles are used for formal kimono including tome-sode, furisode, houmon-gi, iro-muji, tsuke-sage, and komon. Design motifs or colours are dyed after the textile is woven. Depending on how the design motifs are placed, levels of formality are different and classified as follows:

留袖 **Tome-sode**: The name tome-sode comes from the Edo-era tradition of shortening the long-sleeved kimono or furisode, after the female wearer marries. The word, tome is a noun-form of tomeru which means to fix or place into, sode means sleeve. Tome-sode is a mature or married woman's most formal attire.

黒留袖 **Kuro tome-sode (black tome-sode)**: The most formal attire for married women except for Royalty. For the Royal family, formal married women's attire is iro tome-sode with five 紋 mons (family crests). The Royal family does not use kuro tome-sode as they do not wear black coloured kimono except for occasions of mourning. For the rest of the population, normally kuro tome-sode is worn by the mother and married relatives of the bride and groom at a wedding. There are distinctive bold patterns in the lower front area and towards the back but no pattern designs above the obi-sash area. Kuro tome-sode usually has five 紋 mons at the upper kimono area and is only used for the most formal occasions.

紋付 **Mon-tsuki**: Term for kimono that has a family crest. Mon-tsuki kimono are very formal. The level of formality is classified by the number of mon or crests. The more crests, the more formal the kimono. 五つ紋 itsutsu-mon five crests: the most formal, 三つ紋 mitsu-mon three crests: the second most formal, and 一つ紋 hitotsu-mon one crest: the third most formal.

色留袖 **Iro tome-sode (colour tome-sode)**: Another formal kimono attire for married women. It is for attending relatives' or friends' weddings, formal festive occasions, or formal visiting occasions. While kuro tome-sode can only be worn for limited occasions, iro tome-sode can be used for a variety of festive and formal occasions. The pattern placement is the same as kuro tome-sode but the number of family crests can vary indicating level of formality.

振袖 **Furi-sode**: The most formal kimono for young and unmarried women. The name furi-sode comes from the length of the sleeve which can be from 90cm to 115cm. The word furi is the adjective form of furu, which means to swing, flow, or wave, and sode means sleeve. This long sleeved kimono started to appear in the latter half of the Edo period, when commoners, particularly amongst the merchant class, were gaining financial power and more luxury items were produced for their consumption. It was a way to show the power of one's wealth by dressing daughters in gorgeous furi-sode kimono. Wearing furi-sode also indicated that a girl was

eligible to marry. The furi-sode kimono can be worn up until the marriage ceremony, but after marriage or after a certain age, women wear shorter sleeved kimono. In the past, furi-sode was for girls younger than 20 years old, and became the attire for young women to attend 成人式 seijin-shiki or the coming-of-age ceremony. It was established by rule in 1948 that 20 years of age legally acknowledged an adult in Japan.

訪問着 **Houmon-gi**: Another most formal kimono for both married and unmarried women, houmon-gi usually has designs with a variety of patterns and colours with an elegant and luxurious look. Houmon-gi means clothes for visiting someone or someplace and are beautifully decorated to pay respect to whomever one visits. Furisode and houmongi are equivalent in formality. The design pattern of houmon-gi varies but is usually placed all over the kimono and the motif patterns often flow over the seams in 絵羽模様 eba-moyoh which requires the material to be sewn to the form of a kimono before applying the designs. After deciding where to place the design, the kimono is deconstructed back to the original strips of fabric and the design patterns are then applied with brush-painting and/or embroidery. Pattern designs are pre-planned to ensure a lovely flow for the finished kimono. Often, furi-sode can be made into houmon-gi by shortening the length of the sleeves.

色無地 **Iro-muji**: A plain one colour kimono that can be very bold or humble depending on its colour. Its level of formalness can be adjusted by the type of obi-sash it is coordinated with. If mon is placed, the iro-muji kimono becomes more formal.

付け下げ **Tsuke-sage**: Less formal than houmon-gi but more formal than komon. Tsuke-sage kimono was created as a replacement of houmon-gi when Japan came under military rule to be less festive and luxurious, which was suppressed and even banned for modesty during war time. The tsuke-sage pattern placement is much simpler than houmon-gi, but can be used as formally as houmon-gi if coordinated with a good quality formal obi or sash such as nishiki-ori. If coordinated with simpler some-obi, it can be dressed down to a semi-formal kimono.

付け下げ小紋 **Tsukesage-komon**: These are kimono in-between tsuke-sage and komon in formality.

小紋 **Komon**: Komon means small design patterns. Komon kimono patterns are placed randomly and do not have a grand flow in design like tome-sode, houmon-gi or furi-sode. Komon kimono is ranked as more casual than those listed above but the level of formalness of komon kimono varies depending on the pattern placement or the style of motif patterns and the type of obi or sash it is coordinated with.

織物 **Ori-mono**: A term for woven textile. Ori-mono is used for casual kimono. There is a wide variety of ori-mono depending on where the textile is woven. Historically, some-mono kimono were worn only among

aristocratic classes and high-society, while ori-mono kimono was for the peasant and working classes when the social hierarchy and clothing code were strictly preserved. The fabric of ori-mono is more durable than some-mono. Most types of Ori-mono kimono are washable and can be worn in reverse when the surface of the kimono wears out. By contrast, some-mono, which is a material for more formal kimono, is not washable at home nor reversible. Ori-mono kimono is more suitable for people who are engaged in physical labour, such as farming.

紬 **Tsumugi**: This is a term used for the all woven pattern kimono, of which the threads are dyed before being woven into the kimono fabric. The word Tsumugi is interchangeable with ori-mono, and is also a term for casual kimono.

Some woven kimono, such as 結城紬 yuki-tsumugi or 大島紬 oshima tsumugi are often more expensive than formal some-mono kimono. The weaving process of both yuki-tsumugi and oshima tsumugi is very intricate and often takes many months, sometimes nearly a year of labour to make one scroll of fabric which provides enough material for one kimono. How skilled the weaver is is usually reflected in the cost. The weavers of genuine yuki tsumugi are now recognized as intangible cultural assets in Japan.

Textile Details

箔織り/Haku-ori (woven with gold leaves): Creates special texture with a smooth and shiny surface.

相良刺繍/Sagara-shishu or 相良縫い/Sagara-nui: An embroidery method similar to French knots.

紅型染/Bin-Gata-zome (Bin-Gata style stencil dye): Created in Okinawa where there is a rich 琉球/Ryukyu kingdom culture known for vivid use of colour and unique stencil shaped patterns.

絞り染め/Shibori-zome: Known as tie-dye, which is made with a technique to resist dye from effecting certain areas by tying the cloth tightly with thread. 疋田鹿子/hitta-kanako, very fine tie-dye developed in Kyoto, is distinguished from any other tie-dye work as the most elaborate and refined.

湯のし/Yu-noshi: A process where the kimono material is stretched using 竹ヒゴ/take-higo (a long, thin skewer of bamboo) and passed through steam to ensure an even quality of textile. Yu-noshi is the final process to prepare new material for sewing and to complete cleaning of kimono where the garment is deconstructed before cleaning, and reconstructed after.

刺し子縫い/Sashiko-nui (Sashiko-stiches): In ancient Japan, commoners had to use cotton for their clothing as they were not allowed to use silk. Cotton clothes are not very warm compared to silk, and people creatively insulated the fabric by applying Sashiko stitches which helped the

textile retain warmth and also enhanced its strength and durability while adding design elements. An additional philosophical and cultural element of these intricate stitches is that good thoughts and care were imbued into the fabric to protect people, wishing their safety and warmth when wearing the carefully hand-crafted textile.

江戸小紋/Edo-komon: Edo-komon are very finely created stencil dyed patterns developed in Edo (Tokyo) area during the Edo period (1603– 1868). 鯨小紋/same-komon (shark-skin pattern), 行儀小紋/gyogi-komon (orderly pattern), 角通し/kaku-toshi (orderly square pattern), 万筋/man-suji (thousands of stripes), and 大小霰小紋/arare-komon (hail-pattern) are recognized as the five most prestigious Edo-komon. These patterns look like a plain solid colour from a distance, but upon close inspection, contain intricate small patterns. Many are designated design patterns for certain Samurai families, and are called 定小紋/sadame-komon (reserved or designated pattern). Samurai used these patterns for their work attire. As many skilled kimono designers/creators were lost during the Second World War, Edo-komon and their creators are recognized as intangible national cultural treasures after 1950 in Japan.

帯 **Obi**: The function of an obi is to fit the kimono to the wearer as well as acting as a complimentary decorative ornament. Obi (sash) plays an important role to complete a total look of kimono.

Type of obi available are:

丸帯 **Maru-obi**: A most gorgeous style of obi which was created around the mid Edo-period. Maru-obi is now used only for special occasion kimono, such as traditional Japanese dance and Geisha style kimono.

袋帯 **Fukuro-obi**: Created after the Second World War and is more commonly used for most formal kimono instead of maru-obi.


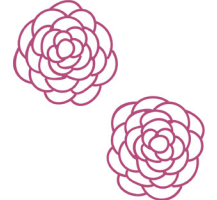
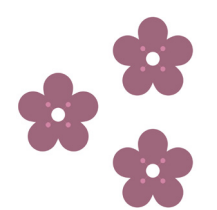
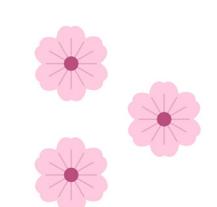


名古屋帯 **Nagoya-obi**: Used for semi-casual to casual kimono.


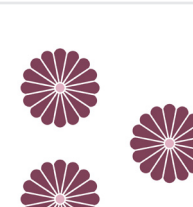
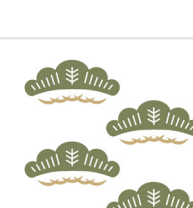


半幅帯 **Han-haba obi**: A half width of fukuro-obi. It is used for casual kimono and yukata.



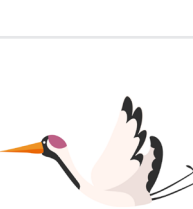
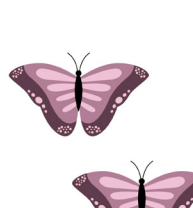
帯揚げ **Obi-age**: A long scarf type of cloth used at upper side of obi.



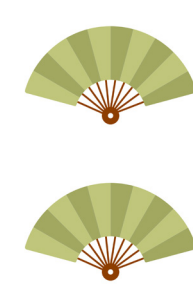

帯締め **Obi-shime**: A long cord or strap type of braid used on obi.

帯留め **Obi-dome**: An ornament or jewelry used on obi-shime.

	<p>花車文 HANAGURUMA-MON: FLOWER-CART MOTIF</p> <p>One of the favoured motifs for formal kimono design, the flower-cart started to appear during the Edo period (1603–1868).</p>
	<p>牡丹文 BOTAN-MON: PEONY MOTIF</p> <p>The peony was introduced to Japan from China during the Nara period (710–794). The peony motif pattern became popular in the Edo period when the flower was more commonly cultivated. Peony motifs have been considered one of the most prestigious traditional Japanese designs.</p>
	<p>梅文 UME-MON: PLUM-FLOWER MOTIF</p> <p>Ume (plum or apricot tree) was introduced to Japan from China in the Nara period. One of the famous and signature ume designs is by 尾形光琳 Ogata, Korin, who was one of the most talented artists responsible for many innovative designs during the Edo period (1603–1868).</p>
	<p>桜文 SAKURA-MON: CHERRY-BLOSSOM MOTIF</p> <p>Cherry blossoms overtook the popularity of ume flowers during the Heian period (794–1185), and has been the flower of Spring in Japan ever since. The way the flower petals beautifully scatter after a short blossom period was compared to the chivalrous way of life of Bushido.</p>
	<p>秋草文 AKIKUSA-MON: AUTUMN PLANTS MOTIF</p> <p>The motif of autumn plants suggests a cooler season and is one of the favoured designs for late August and September.</p>
	<p>楓文 KAEDE-MON: MAPLE LEAF MOTIF</p> <p>Maples leaves are symbols of autumn season design. A combined design of the maple leaf with flowing water is also popular.</p>

	<p>虫籠 MUSHIKAGO: INSECT CAGE</p> <p>Sometime during the Heian period (794–1185) appreciating the sound of insects at the end of the summer became a refined pastime in Japan, and various well crafted cages were designed to keep pet insects. Mushikago cage designs seem to be popular as kimono designs in the Meiji, the Taisho, and the early Showa period (pre Second World War).</p>
	<p>菊文 KIKU-MON: CHRYSANTHEMUM MOTIF</p> <p>Chrysanthemums, originally introduced from China as medical herbs during the Nara period, later became popular design motifs representing the autumns season in the Kamakura (1185–1333) and the Muromachi (1336–1573) periods. The special 十六八重表菊 (ju-roku yae-giku/sixteen-petal, eight layer chrysanthemum) is a Japanese Royal Family crest.</p>
	<p>松文 MATSU-MON: PINE-TREE MOTIF</p> <p>Pine trees are perhaps the king of trees in Japanese culture. They are considered holy and noble, and have been considered as spirit-dwelling objects. The pine tree motif design is auspicious and can be used for any season of kimono.</p>
	<p>松竹梅文 SHO-CHIKU-BAI MON: PINE, BAMBOO, PLUM MOTIF</p> <p>Each item of design, pine, bamboo, and plum, has individually appeared in Japan since the Heian period (794 - 1185), but the combination of the 松竹梅 sho-chiku-bai motif began in the Muromach period (1336 -1573). It is one of the most prestigious and auspicious design motifs in Japanese culture, and is often used for wedding wardrobe or accessory designs. This design motif can be used in any season throughout the year.</p>
	<p>雲文 KUMO-MON: CLOUD MOTIF</p> <p>There are a wide variety of cloud motif designs. Cloud motifs are often used to indicate the transition of time and are also used as outlines to divide one design scene from another. It can create effects of rhythm and contrast in the whole picture.</p>

	<p>鳳凰文 HO-OH MON: CHINESE PHOENIX MOTIF</p> <p>The phoenix is a mythological bird and one of the most auspicious and graceful kimono motifs favoured since the Nara period (710-794).</p>
	<p>鶴文 TSURU-MON: CRANE MOTIF</p> <p>Cranes are the most favoured and valued birds in Japan for their elegant and graceful figure, also for a calm and peaceful nature. As they are believed to have longevity, the 鶴文 (crane motif) is one of the most auspicious icons together with the 亀文 (turtle motif), and 松竹梅文 (pine, bamboo, plum motif).</p>
	<p>鶴亀文 TSURU-KAME-MON: CRANE & TURTLE MOTIF</p> <p>While 松竹梅 (pine, bamboo, plum) is the auspicious icon motif combination of vegetation, the 鶴亀 (crane & turtle) combination is that of animals. Both cranes and turtles are symbols of longevity, and these two have been paired as an auspicious icon since the Heian period (794 - 1185). 鶴亀 (crane & turtle) motif design patterns became widely popular during Edo period (1603–1868) among commoners, sometimes drawn rather humorously. 鶴亀 (crane & turtle) motifs were used for festive occasional kimono and wedding gifts and furniture, and used even for a variety of everyday item designs, such as 風呂敷/furoshiki.</p>
	<p>蝶文 CHO-MON: BUTTERFLY MOTIF</p> <p>The butterfly motif was adopted from Chinese design during the Heian period (794-1185). Similar to the phoenix, it is a symbol of immortality and eternity for which it was favoured for samurai crest motifs. However, it is considered not the best motif for a wedding or formal kimono, as the nature of a butterfly, flitting from one thing to another, symbolizes fickle and inconstant love.</p>
	<p>糸巻文 ITO-MAKI MON: SPOOL MOTIF</p> <p>Thread spools were something very close to women's everyday life up until the Second World War. The design was refined during the Edo period (1603 - 1868), and adopted for kimono design.</p>

	<p>熨斗文 NOSHI-MON: NOSHI MOTIF</p> <p>Noshi is thinly stripped, flattened, and dried abalone flesh, which was originally used as a ceremonial accompaniment for sake drink in the past. More recently, it became a decorative ornament for gifts for celebrating special occasions. Noshi-mon is a design created from this noshi. As noshi is something used for happy occasions, noshi-mon was an auspicious motif and favoured for 小袖/kosode or 振袖/furi-sode design in the Edo period (1603– 1868).</p>
	<p>貝合わせ文 KAI-AWASE MON: 'MIX & MATCH' SHELL MOTIF</p> <p>Kaiawase is one of the games enjoyed among aristocrats since the Heian period (794-1185). In the Edo period (1603–1868), beautifully painted shells and elegantly designed tubs for the shells were one of the most valuable and important belongings of a princess. It was used for the first main ceremonial exchange with the groom's house when she married. Gorgeously decorated kaiawase tools became a symbol of happy marriage and of high-class status and wealth. From that, kaiawase motifs were one of the favoured designs for wedding and furi-sode kimono.</p>
	<p>檜扇文 HIOUGI-MON: 'DECORATED-FOLDING-FAN' MOTIF</p> <p>The 檜扇 fan was created in the Heian period (794-1185), and used as one of the decorative ornaments for aristocratic ceremonial attire. For its elegant shape and beautiful artistic decoration, hiougi-mon has been a popular motif for kimono design. Additionally the 末広がり suehirogari shape of the fan is a symbol of increasing prosperity, which makes it an auspicious motif.</p>
	<p>流水文 RYU-SUI MON: FLOWING WATER MOTIF</p> <p>Flowing water motifs could be one of the oldest design patterns for kimono. This motif is often combined with other design motifs such as plants or animals.</p>

Men's Kimono:

The set of three items, kimono, haori, and hakama, is the formal kimono attire for men. For the most formal occasions, the kimono and haori are black.

袴 Hakama: A trouser-skirt bottom, worn over kimono.

There are two types of hakama according to structure:

馬乗り袴 Umanori-bakama: trouser-like
行燈袴 Ann-don bakama: skirt-like

For men's formal attire, hakama is a required item. The typical formal hakama is made with 仙台平 sendaihira fabric material.

In the Meiji period (1868–1912), when women could attend institutions of higher education, female students used hakama as school uniforms, following the formal outfit for men. From that tradition the hakama and kimono combination is one of the most popular ceremonial iconic attire for female students in Japan for school entrance or graduation ceremonies.

羽織 Haori: A jacket for kimono. Haori was first used among samurai as an outer jacket to keep warm on the battle field. Haori soon became popular among men as daily clothing, but was only worn by those with high social status. Samurai was once the highest position in Japan's social hierarchy. Haori was not originally traditional female attire, but was first used by geisha in the Edo period. Haori started to be accepted among women as fashion in the Meiji period (1868–1912), but is not used as a female formal attire even now, following the old custom.

Other terms:

半襟 Han-Eri : The extra layer for the collar part of kimono undergarment

比翼襟 Hiyoku-Eri: The ornamental layers for the collar area of kimono

足袋 Tabi: Kimono socks

草履 Zori: Kimono shoes

下駄 Geta: Wooden kimono shoes

雪駄 Setta: Men's kimono shoes, originally a special set of garden shoes for tea ceremony