



THE GLORIOUS ACHIEVEMENTS OF TEXTILE ART IN THE MOMOYAMA
AND KEICHO PERIODS.

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A great advance in applied art, in whatever ^{period} period it may occur, rarely comes quite suddenly and unexpectedly, the textile industry of Japan is no exception to this.

Many causes may be enumerated for the sudden rise of various branches of applied arts in the Momoyama period (1572-1602), when "a resurrection of applied arts" centring about Kyoto, was brought about.

One of the greatest causes was the reopening of cultural intercourse with China during the Ming dynasty. This intercourse resulted in the importation into Japan of various specimens of the applied art of that period; also in bringing our people in direct contact with Ming culture, and in enabling them to learn the art and practice of Ming artists and artisans. Besides this, other foreign influences that came with the introduction of civilization from various other oriental countries and from western Europe, beginning with the coming into Japan, in the latter part of the Muromachi period, of the Portuguese ships that navigated to the Far Eastern seas.

Speaking more specifically about textiles, the weavers of the Ming period greatly developed their art by endeavoring to revive the textile triumphs of the Sung period (960-1279). Their products were silk brocade, silk twill, ra (rilk gauze), gold and silver brocades, satin damask, silk crepe, inkin (silk with designs printed in gold), etc. In the Tenmon era (1532-54), the Ming technique in textile arts was acquired by the weavers of Sakai in Izumi province, and later transmitted to Kyoto to be developed to such an extent that it succeeded in revivifying the looms of Nishijin.

By this time the long continued war clouds had finally subsided and peace was restored, producing many great masters in various branches of our applied arts. Together with these there appeared persons of means and rank to protect and encourage them. Thus time and people were in accord, and a new period appeared. For instance, long before this time tea had been imported from China, but was used mainly for medical purposes, while now it came to be utilized in a cult or institution known as chanoyu (tea ceremony, or the way of tea), which produced such eminent masters as Jowo Takeno, Yoshimasa Ashikaga, Sen-no-Rikyu, Enshu Kobori, Hideyoshi Toyotomi, Oribe Furuta and others. The lives of these great tea masters not only brought prosperity to the tea ceremony itself, but also to the various branches of our applied arts, such as bamboo work, woodwork, lacquer-work, and pottery. The last mentioned especially made wonderful strides, producing as it did tea caddies, tea bowls and other utensils indispensable to ceremonial tea. And not only these, but the textile arts also were greatly developed, for gold brocade, satin damask, kando in stripe design, and inkin, with designs printed in gold, were used for bags to keep tea utensils in and for fukusa (square

pieces of silk used in chanoyu for wiping the utensils, etc) Especially were famous silk, regarded as "celebrated textile fabrics), developed, together with other varieties of silk, such as were in great demand for the mounting of paintings and calligraphs to for kakemonon(hanging scrolls).

As another instance, attention may be called to sarugaku. Sarugaki(literally, monkey music) hitherto existed merely as popular music, but this was elevated to the higher plane of mohgaku (Noh drama) by the genius of Kannami. It was further revised by Seami, his son, and was finally perfected by Otoami, so that the shogun, daimyo(feudal lords) and aristocrats began to emulate each other in the protection and encouragement of this newly developed drama. Great rivalry was shown in the creation of splendid noh dresses, giving a stimulus of which led the textile art of Japan to rise to great heights of development. Painting, prospered, impelling the production of textile fabrics which were needed for the mounting of paintings for kakemono.

Such high-class fabrics were freely produced as silk brocade, gold brocade, kara-ori brocade, silk crepe, silk satin, kando, etc., the art of manufacture having been learned from Ming weaves. These fabrics were used for the Noh dresses, for uchikake(ladies' outer robes), for ladies' sashes, for kosode (wadded silk garments), for kesa(priests' robes), for the mountings of paintings and calligraphs to form kakemono, as well as for the bags for tea utensils and fukusa indispensable to chanoyu.

The Momoyama period and the Keicho era(1506-1614), which immediately followed it and extended over the first decade of the Early Edo period(1603-1680) formed the Golden Age of the textile art in Japan--a period of time lasting nearly twenty years. The term "splendour" usually employed to specify the characteristics of this period, conveys no more than a general idea of the condition then existing in our country. A closer examination of the actual products of this period, however, reveals different and somewhat intricate qualities. Some of them convey exquisite taste or delicate feeling; others are characterized by elegance or refinement; while still others are possessed of that peculiar quality known in Japan as sabi or wabi which suggests, by its quiet refinement and subdued beauty, the tranquility of the soul.

As an example of this, attention may be called to the bags for tea caddies. It is not at all unusual for a tea caddy to be provided with three bags of different fabrics; for instance, one made of gold brocade, the second of silk satin, and the third of kando with stripe designs. The first appears rather rich and gorgeous, the second elegant, and the third subdued and refined. Being provided with these different covers, the tea caddy may appear in proper style in any of the three different types of rooms for chanoyu. Again, take for instance a piece of inkin(having conventional designs printed in gold) on a purple ground. At a glance the piece looks gay, but upon closer examination one cannot help observing the classic tone of the traditional design, and the gaudy

element of gold is further overcome by the simplicity of the flat basketry weave of the silk upon which the design is printed. It is by these means that the best quality of the fabric is preserved. Examples of textile fabrics that are gorgeous, pure, and simple, are to be found rather in the work of the late Edo period (1779-1867). The product of the Keicho era, in a majority of cases, is characterized by a quiet splendour with depth acquired by combining gold with black, red with purple, knot-dyeing with black monochrome painting, and the like.

Such a condition of affairs caused extraordinary progress, during this period, in that type of dyeing known as Moyo-some (lit. pattern dyeing), which allowed freedom of expression in the matter of design. To be sure, there was a variety of moyo-some prevalent in Japan from the Nara period (645-781) to the Early Heian period (782-897). This variety consisted of rokechi (batik), kokechi (knot dyeing), and kyokechi (dyed with silk clasped between two wooded boards with pierced design), stencilled and painted dyeing. Many of these methods of dyeing died out in subsequent periods on account of the lack of practical use or the difficulty of technique involved.

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"J. Court costume for the ladies of high rank consisted of three main ^{words} parts: an ordinary kimono; a long broad divided skirt, hakama; and the elaborate layers of outer garment, uchigi, commonly known as juni-hitoe. A kimono of white material is worn first, & then the red hakama, which covers the entire feet & is trailed on the floor. The outer gown of several layers is worn over this like a loose overcoat without belt & trailed behind. On formal occasions the gown is closed above the waist in the back by a short tunic, kara-ginu, & below the waist by an apron-like piece called mo, which is tied loosely over the gown. A scarf, ^{Hiaz} haze, is worn over the kara-ginu & two long ribbons, ^{kuntai} kuntai (read also kutai, & in later periods called Hiki-kotti), which are attached to the mo, complete the costume.

"The word juni-hitoe, indicating twelve layers of robes, is found in historical works of the thirteenth & fourteenth centuries, such as Heike Monogatari, Jempu Seiran Ki and Masam Kagami, & it is considered that so many robes were actually worn in some special cases. Most of the old pictures, however, show only six or seven layers, with or without the tunic. These layers of robes that constitute an uchigi are made in graduated sizes; the uppermost the shortest and the undermost the longest. To judge from many old pictorial and literary descriptions of the costume, the chief interest of Jap. ladies of the old Imperial Ct. was in the display of colors. With an assortment of seven or eight pieces of robes, almost any effect in contrast & gradation can be produced."

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"The exact period in which this style of dress for court ladies was introduced is not plain, but all paintings we have after the 11th century show ladies dressed practically in the same fashion."

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