



Pictured on the right:  
Full view of the kimono

Pictured to the left:  
Back view of the kimono

Pictured at the bottom:  
Left sleeve featuring ship motif



TITLE:  
*Japanese Furisode*  
*(Ship and Leaf Crest Motif)*

ARTIST: Unknown  
DATE: Late 20th century  
MEDIUM: Silk and embroidery



**MoFA**  
Florida State University Museum of Fine Arts

Additional work in the collection by this artist:

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Unknown X\_\_\_

Acquisition #: 2008.25

### Vocabulary

**KIMONO** -- in Japanese “thing to wear” or “clothing,” but has come to mean a specific type of traditional Japanese clothing.

**FURISODE** -- the most formal type of Japanese kimono; today mainly worn by young women for coming-of-age ceremonies.

**JUNK BOAT** -- A trade ship developed in 10th century China.

### Media Description

This kimono includes two major motifs -- embroidered bonsai leaves and ships featured on a black silk fabric. Bonsai trees were appropriated from Chinese culture, but the Japanese discovered a unique way of growing the trees which soon became synonymous with Japanese art and culture. Bonsai trees also took on a meaning of balance and peace. The pictured ships are “junk boats” which were also originally Chinese and used mainly as trade ships. Ships have various meanings in Japanese culture, but when paired with the bonsai plants they can be translated as auspicious signs for wealth and trade. This kimono design translates as a symbol of luck and wealth as well as references a history of cultural and economic trade with China.

### Culture of the Kimono

The kimono enjoys high status as a symbol of Japanese culture. The kimono, as we know it today, developed from the Edo Period (1603-1868) -- a time of economic prosperity and a growing middle class in Japan. It was the middle class or merchant class that popularized these garments. However, due to strict class laws many middle class citizens were unable to spend their newfound wealth climbing the social ladder, so instead they spent it on luxuries like beautiful clothing. To further enforce the class hierarchy, the ruling class put several restrictions on the kinds of designs and fabrics the middle class could purchase. Due to these restrictions, not only did the kimono become a symbol of class and taste, but the patterns and fabrics reflected social order as well. Large geometric designs were reserved for high classes and smaller designs were reserved for lower classes. During the isolation of the Edo Period, motifs became more Japanese in theme and reflected specific symbols within Japanese culture, such as the wave patterns or hemp leaves which reflected the everyday scenery and foliage of Japan.



### References

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/627782>

*Textile Art of Japan*

*The History of the Sailing Ship*

<http://www.japanpolicyforum.jp/archives/culture/pt20100928160529.html>

Albert and Victoria Museum of textiles

*Snow, Wave, Pine: Traditional Patterns in Japanese Design*

## What's your sign?: Motifs in Culture

Art Activity Lesson Plan: K-8

**Session Activity:** Students will create their own kimono patterns from a selection of motifs in order to tell stories about their own lives or that reflect themselves. They will use blank sheets of paper to draw patterns or motifs of things they see everyday or that represent themselves in some way and then carve them into a lino tile. They will then stamp their motifs onto the provided t-shirts.

**Activity Procedure:** Students will be shown a series of common Japanese motifs and asked to discuss what they symbolize and the way they relate to Japanese culture. Examples of motifs might be: chrysanthemums, hemp leaves, cranes, cherry blossoms, etc. Students will then come up with their own symbols that describe aspects of their own culture or everyday life. They will then carve these into linoleum blocks and print them on t-shirts as repeatable patterns.



Pictured to the right:  
Bonsai leaf motif

**Objective:** Students will understand the symbolism of motifs in Japanese textiles and create their own language of symbolism.

**Vocabulary:** motif - a decorative design or pattern; a distinctive feature or dominant symbol in an artistic composition.

**Materials:** Markers, linoleum blocks and linoleum cutting tools, ink, t shirts, motifs (can be found in Japanese Textile packet on MOFA website: <http://mofa.fsu.edu/learning-resources/>)

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards: K-8

Historical and Global Connections

Enduring Understanding 2: The arts reflect & document cultural trends & historical events & help explain new directions in art.

VA.68.H.2.1: Describe how previous cultural trends have led to the development of new art styles.

Next Generation Sunshine State Standards: 9-12

Historical and Global Connections

Enduring Understanding 1: Through study in arts, we learn about and honor others and the worlds in which they live.

VA.912.H.1.1: Analyze the impact of social, ecological, economic, religious and political issues on the function or meaning of the artwork.



Above:  
Historically larger, more elaborate patterns and the color red were two design elements restricted from the lower classes in Japan.

### Activity:

Students will write a comparative essay on the way art aesthetics and consumerism are affected by class differences and the way the limiting of availability of certain art forms contributes to power dynamics within society. They will first be asked to think of some examples of contemporary limitations between upper and lower classes and then asked to discuss the way these relate to the class division of Edo Japan. Students will research examples of items that represent or are only available to higher classes and items that represent lower classes from both Edo Japan and current events. Then they will discuss the division of availability and economy these representations create. How does art contribute to representation of wealth?

**Sources:** *History of the Kimono*, Albert and Victoria Museum of Textiles

### Class Wars: Art and Social Order

Art History Lesson Plan: 9-12

**Session Activity:** The motifs seen on a kimono of the Edo Period reflected the class and wealth of the citizen wearing it. Students will develop an understanding of the way art and consumerism are influenced by class differences.

**Discussion:** The discussion should first start with an examination of motifs that were available to the lower classes and ones that were available to the upper classes and the reasons these particular patterns would be available? How does making certain patterns available to only the ruling class promote a hierarchy of power?

**Objectives:** Students will learn the way art is influenced by social conditions and the way symbolism can grow from these conditions.