Regarding fashions in 20th century women’s kimono

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Caroline Jane Sato
Bachelor of Arts

School of Architecture and Design
College of Design and Social Context
RMIT University
July 2010
Declaration

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged; and, ethical procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Signed

Caroline J. Sato
16 July 2010
Acknowledgements

This project began with the prompting and support of my grandfather Basil Brown and has since been enriched by the help of so many. I give my sincere thanks.

Professor Sato Yasuko, Endo Yoko and Professor John Clammer for encouragement in the beginning, staff at the Orinasu Kaikan, staff from the Ochanomizu library and Matsui Kazuyuki from the Yano research institute for locating relevant information, Terase Mayumi, Tsuduki Ayako, Ochi Kahori, Nakahira Miwa, Sato Kazuko and Dr. Juliette Peers for their helpful comments, Sato Sho and Koyama Haruka for assistance with translation, Clare Doube, Rick and Melanie Bullers and Jimmy Ho for reading and suggestions, Rosemary Cross and Elva Buttsworth for financial support and my family for their continued encouragement through the years of study.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION .................................................................2

2 BACKGROUND .........................................................................5

2.1 KIMONO AND FASHION ......................................................5
2.1.1 DEFINING KIMONO .......................................................5
2.1.2 ENGLISH LITERATURE ON KIMONO ..............................7
2.1.3 KIMONO IN THE 20TH CENTURY ..................................................8
2.1.4 JAPANESE WRITERS ON KIMONO ...........................................10
2.1.5 KIMONO IN FASHION LITERATURE ......................................12
2.1.6 FASHION ........................................................................13
2.2 SUMMARY ........................................................................14

3 RESEARCH DESIGN ...............................................................15

3.1 SKILLED VISIONS ...............................................................15
3.2 METHODS ..........................................................................17
3.2.1 KIMONO MAGAZINES ......................................................17
3.2.2 THE PRACTICE OF DRESSING .............................................18
3.2.3 RECYCLED KIMONO ........................................................19
3.2.4 INTERVIEWS ..................................................................19
3.2.5 OTHER SOURCES ...........................................................20
3.2.6 RE-READING WITH A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ...................20

4 FINDINGS .............................................................................21

4.1 RESULTS ...........................................................................21
4.1.1 THE PRACTICE OF DRESSING ...........................................21
4.1.2 DECODING KIMONO ........................................................23
4.1.3 EXAMINING KIMONO IN MAGAZINES ................................32
4.1.4 COMPARING RECYCLED KIMONO ....................................36
4.1.5 INTERVIEWS ..................................................................37
4.1.6 SUMMARY OF RESULTS ........................................................................................................ 38

4.2 DISCUSSION .......................................................................................................................... 38

4.2.1 KIMONO MYTH: KIMONO IS A ROBE .............................................................................. 38

4.2.2 KIMONO MYTH: KIMONO IS RARE .................................................................................. 39

4.2.3 KIMONO MYTH: KIMONO IS VANISHING ....................................................................... 40

4.2.4 CHRONOLOGY OF CHANGES IN WOMEN’S KIMONO THROUGH THE 20TH CENTURY .... 41

4.3 SUMMARY .......................................................................................................................... 50

4.3.1 WHAT IS KIMONO? ........................................................................................................... 50

4.3.2 HOW HAS KIMONO CHANGED? ....................................................................................... 51

4.3.3 WERE THERE FASHIONS IN 20TH CENTURY WOMEN’S KIMONO? .............................. 52

5 CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................................ 54

5.1 REGARDING FASHIONS IN 20TH CENTURY WOMEN’S KIMONO ....................................... 54

5.2 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY ......................................................................................... 55

5.3 FURTHER STUDY ................................................................................................................ 56

6 REFERENCES .......................................................................................................................... 58

7 APPENDICES .......................................................................................................................... 67

7.1 APPENDIX 1: GLOSSARY OF JAPANESE TERMS .............................................................. 67

7.2 APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW DETAILS ................................................................................. 74
**TABLE OF FIGURES**

**FIGURE 1:** THE KIMONO ENSEMBLE .............................................................................................................. 6
**FIGURE 2:** KITSUKE CODES .......................................................................................................................... 24
**FIGURE 3:** KIMONO TYPES .......................................................................................................................... 25
**FIGURE 4:** CRESTED FORMAL KIMONO ........................................................................................................... 26
**FIGURE 5:** FORMAL KIMONO ........................................................................................................................ 26
**FIGURE 6:** ELEMENTS OF THE KIMONO ENSEMBLE ....................................................................................... 28
**FIGURE 7:** SNOWFLAKE, CHERRY BLOSSOM, PLUM BLOSSOM, PINE AND BAMBOO ................................. 29
**FIGURE 8:** SYMBOLIC PATTERNS ................................................................................................................... 30
**FIGURE 9:** DETAILS FROM *UTSUKHII KIMONO* ............................................................................................ 32
**FIGURE 10:** DETAILS FROM KIMONO MAGAZINES ......................................................................................... 33
**FIGURE 11:** TAMESODE DEVELOPMENT ......................................................................................................... 36
**FIGURE 12:** MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE ON CLOTHING IN JAPAN ........................................... 41
**FIGURE 13:** MAP OF JAPAN MARKING THE PLACES MENTIONED IN THE THESIS ............................................. 57
Summary

It is widely assumed that kimono is the antithesis to fashion because it is a traditional dress format. Literature in English presents kimono as a tradition or art and rarely addresses the idea of style change in the 20th century. Histories of kimono trace the development of kimono until the 20th century and then focus on the adoption of cosmopolitan clothing in Japan and kimono is relegated to the frozen realm of tradition and symbolism. The scarcity of literature on 20th century kimono development has led to the notion that kimono is a static form of dress. The stereotype of an immutable traditional dress contrasts with the kind of recycled kimono available and does not present a clear picture of developments in 20th century kimono.

Studies specifically on kimono have focused on art, history or on kimono’s social role. Studies on art, history and the social role in cosmopolitan clothing reveal the changing fashions. However, in similar studies on kimono, the main conclusion is that kimono is vanishing and only survives now in a fixed format for formal occasions. In response to the fact that kimono maintains currency scholars have framed it as a reinvented tradition. Rather than acknowledging the changes that have occurred over the 20th century as ongoing developments, there is a dialogue of loss and attempts to preserve tradition.

This study describes a way to see 20th century kimono in a different light using the concept of skilled visions. I propose that there have been fashions in women’s kimono right through the 20th century and aim to explicate these changing styles by explaining a way of perceiving change.
1 Introduction

This research is a visual inquiry into the fashions in 20th century kimono in which I have tried to take into account meaning and interpretation rather than a simple chronology of change. There is minimal information in English about kimono fashions during the 20th century, which has led to the assumption that kimono is now a traditional form of dress and not subject to style change. By inquiring into fashions in 20th century women’s kimono, this study builds on, and aims to contribute to, current literature about 20th century kimono, and consequently, work in fashion theory that delves into the relationship of customary dress and fashion.

Chapter two is a summary of the literature in English about kimono in the 20th century. There has been a tendency to be retrospective in research about kimono. This retrospective research has produced studies with notions of tradition and lost or revived textile techniques in view of the declining industry, and conclusions that kimono is endangered. English research on kimono fashions ends in the lead up to World War II and after the war it is presented as a traditional garment. This gap leaves the impression that kimono is disappearing and that it is only used for ceremonial occasions or by limited groups, such as geisha. Kimono has been framed as tradition or art in literature from Japanese people who write for an English audience.

Kimono is rarely mentioned in literature on fashion and when kimono does appear, it is commonly held up as an example of a fixed dress format: anti-fashion. This stereotype of static kimono reinforces the idea that kimono does not change in style. In contrast, the diversity of kimonos available in the recycle market (obviously produced in the 20th century), and current kimono magazines reflect cosmopolitan fashions. This raises the question ‘Were there fashions in 20th century women’s kimono?’

In chapter three I explain how I approached the project and the influences that shaped the way I began to see. Cultivating a new worldview has been central to this research because of the difference in cultural perceptions. Because of my background in fashion design, my first assumption was that there was cosmopolitan fashion in kimono in the colours and patterns on the garment. My notion of kimono fashions changed as I learned how to look, not only at the textile but also at the garment in context. I looked at kimono magazines through the 20th century, books on the rules of kimono, interviewed kimono retailers and looked at a range of recycled kimonos from handcrafted textiles to kimono produced for the mass market. I focused on the second half of the 20th century, as that is the area with the least scholarly
information about developments in kimono style. ‘Skilled visions’ (a term coined by Christina Grasseni to explain the process of developing ways of educating one’s attention) shaped how I perceived change.

In chapter four I outline how *kitsu*ke (how to put on and wear kimono) codes, the interviews and kimono magazines contributed to a deeper understanding of kimono. I gained new insights that refined the questions that I was asking and influenced the kind of changes I perceived. The discussion section combines the results of the study with literature and outlines the changes in style of kimono through the different eras in the 20th century. This chronology shows how kimono has developed and adapted over the 20th century and reveals various changes that include changes in style. Examining the changes as the process of fashion in kimono – and not a European fashion process – produces a picture of development in which tradition and cosmopolitan fashion are only two of the various influences that stimulated changes in style.

In chapter five I conclude that fashions are present in 20th century kimono but that looking for cosmopolitan fashions in the English definition of kimono reveals only a superficial level of change. Cosmopolitan fashion is only one of the many influences on kimono fashions. Certain cultural knowledge is important to perceive some style changes particularly as the definition of kimono is different in English and Japanese (see chapter two for definitions). The codes taught in kimono schools create a collective vision and enables more nuance in perception of change. I propose that the fashion process was evident in kimono throughout the 20th century. The findings of this research do not substantiate the assumption that kimono became a static dress format in the 20th century as they reflect the influence of cosmopolitan fashion and domestic trends throughout this period of time. I point to areas that would be beneficial for further studies.
I write Japanese names the Japanese way with the surname first and use the revised Hepburn phonetic system, without macrons, for Japanese words.

I use kimono in the singular form when it carries the meaning of clothing.

I use Japanese words when they have a specific meaning that does not translate well. From page 67 to 73 there is a partially illustrated glossary of the clothing forms and the Japanese terms written in italics.
2 Background

2.1 Kimono and fashion

In this chapter I outline the problems with the definition of kimono before discussing the English literature on 20th century kimono and the way it is presented by Japanese writers. I then consider the way kimono is addressed in conjunction with fashion. I have covered English texts specifically on kimono, as this is where the misconceptions have originated. I do not cover literature on theatre costumes, religious robes, *kosode* (the precursor to kimono) or men’s and children’s kimono.

2.1.1 Defining kimono

The word kimono came into use as western interaction increased in Japan after 1854 and so in English Japanese clothing has come to be called kimono. The English definition of the word kimono covers a range of garments, from priest robes, to theatre costumes, to many variations of Japanese clothing, and only people with a specific interest in Japanese clothing make narrower definitions like *kosode* (the precursor to kimono) and *wa-fuku* (Japanese clothing). Kimono also describes bathrobes, crossover tops or wide sleeves which creates a nuance in English that does not exist in Japanese. Within Japan the definition of kimono is being refined further as some Japanese are more likely to associate kimono with silk, specific textiles and garments, certain decorative techniques, etiquette and philosophy. *Wa-fuku* is preferred to describe clothing of Japanese origin, which covers the range of garments in the English definition of kimono.

The range in the use of the word kimono in English and within Japan calls into question what kimono means. All T-shaped Japanese garments do not fit in the category of kimono, and even the garments that are usually called kimono are no longer considered kimono if worn a certain way (Dalby 1993: 14). The definition of kimono is subjective as it depends on who is looking and their perspective and knowledge. On one level, in an English context, it is the Japanese garment with rectangular sleeves. Another meaning, in a Japanese context, is the ensemble and yet another idea is the quintessence of Japanese dress and manner. The definition has become a lot more complex during the 20th century resulting in the difference in the meaning of kimono in English and Japanese and also among special interest groups.
My own definition of kimono has changed during this study as I have begun to recognise different types of kimono and understand some of the contemporary rules. It is rarely the shape that determines the type of garment but rather the textile and the way it has been decorated. It is not as easy to differentiate between the jeans, suit and cocktail dress equivalents of kimono without some knowledge of textiles because the garments that encompass that range have the same shape.

I find defining kimono as a group of clothes is an approach that enables an easier differentiation between the forms. *Kiku* -__- has the same *ki* as *kimono* - __. In Japanese *kiru* is the verb for wearing things that hang from the shoulders as opposed to *haku*, which is the verb for clothing that is pulled up over the legs.

For the purposes of the study my definition of kimono is: T-shaped Japanese clothes with rectangular sleeves (that hang from the shoulders) and the accessories – under-garments, the *obi* (sash) and *han-eri* (collar) – that are essential in holding the ensemble together.

![Figure 1: The kimono ensemble](image)

This definition does not include other Japanese garments like hakama or *mompei* (that one pulls up) but does include coats like the *haori* which also has the rectangular sleeve and has been an important accessory to the kimono ensemble.
2.1.2 English literature on kimono

There has been interest in Japanese dress since wealthy Europeans wore it as a status symbol in the 16th and 17th centuries (Fukai, Suoh & Kyoto Fukushoku Bunka Kenkyu 2002: 28, Stevens 1996: 16). By the time Japan resumed international relations in 1854 there were already illustrated volumes explaining Japanese clothing customs (Breton de la Martinieré 1818). This interest in presenting kimono as a foreign dress custom (Bacon 1902 [1891]; Faust 1926; Gunsaulus 1923) prevailed for the first half of the 20th century and after World War II researchers focused in on aspects of kimono: textile techniques (Katoh 1962; Stinchecum 1993), symbol of national identity and femininity (Goldstein Gidoni 1997; Hiener 1997; Suga 1995), the trademark of geisha (Dalby 1985, 1992) or a reinvented tradition (Assman 2008; Goldstein Gidoni 1999).

Bogatyrev (1971), analysing Moravian rural clothing, showed that rather than being reinvented, garments or their elements change as the dominant functions change. Kimono functions have at times included national identity, symbol of tradition, conspicuous consumption or femininity, but studies on kimono have concentrated on these functions separately and so have created a limited explanation of kimono.

Taylor (2002), a dress historian, points out that illustrated dress histories are made up first of sculptures and paintings of wealthy people and then of magazines geared to the elite in Europe and America and so do not reflect everyday reality. Likewise, the illustrated histories of kimono (Liddell 1989; Minnich 1963; Munsterberg 1996) start by tracing the developments in kimono from prehistoric Jomon pottery to the woodblock prints and silks of the Edo period (1603 – 1868) and contain images of lavish garments that would not have been seen by the average Japanese person except in woodblock prints (Hauser 1992: 63).

A large proportion of the publications on Japanese dress are concerned with 19th century kosode (Ema 1936b; Gluckman & Takeda 1992; Ishimura, Maruyama & Yamanobe 1988; Kennedy 1990; Nishimura, Mailey & Hayes 1976; Peebles & Yamanobe 1987; Rathbun 1993; Stinchecum et al. 1984), as antique kimono are the kind of garments that are displayed in major kimono exhibitions in America, Europe and Japan. While I do not examine kosode in this research (kosode had become an antiquated term by the 20th century), it is worthy of note because there is no differentiation between kosode and kimono in the English definition of kimono. It is very similar in shape, is the most visible kind of kimono in illustrated texts on Japanese costume and is the kind that has most obviously become obsolete.
2.1.3 Kimono in the 20th century

Histories of kimono show an evolution in kimono up until the 20th century. If the histories do continue into the 20th century, they focus on the way cosmopolitan clothes were assimilated using as examples the aristocratic edicts in the Meiji period (1868 - 1912) and moga (modern girls) in the Taisho period (1912-1926) (Aikawa 1994; Dalby 1993; Slade 2009). This kind of trajectory follows Endo and Ishiyama’s (1962) history of Western clothing in Japan which is not the same as the history of clothing in Japan. Developments in kimono after World War II are dismissed with the explanation that kimono had evolved to the current shape by the 20th century after which Japanese people adopted western clothing (Aikawa 1994: 114-5; Dalby 1993: 123-33; Minnich 1963: 330-2; Noma 1974: 11; Slade 2009:99-116).

The discussion of change stops during World War II when clothing regulations, social pressure and lack of resources did radically change everyone’s dress habits between 1941 and 1945 (Dower 2005). After World War II everyday kimono became less visible on the streets. Minnich’s (1963: 329) mention of a renaissance is a rare indication that kimono was still popular after the war. Noma, an art historian writing for a series on Japanese arts, wrote about the complaints that kimono is not active or comfortable and hides the body and that the Japanese are ‘not proud of their kimono. Instead they regard it as a burden left over from the old Japan.’ (1974 [1965]: 11).

The increase in research into kimono corresponds with its supposed decline in use. Economic reports on kimono textile production show a decline in wool (Nakagawa & Rosovsky 1963), cotton (Uchida 1988) and silk (Zhao 1988). The theme of loss and decline also runs through research on hand-made textiles (Ishimura & Tokyo National Museum of Modern Art 1985; Katoh 1962) as yuzen, stencilling, tsumugi and kasuri are techniques that have received protection from the Japanese system of Living National Treasures or designation as a Traditional Craft (Shuefftan 1999). Outside of Japan, the work of National Treasures has been the main exposure to post-war kimono with the exception of Kubota Iitchiku. Kubota’s fame stems from his revival of an old technique and his work is likened to fine art (Gluckman, Goodall-Cristante & Kubota 2008; Kubota & Yamanobe 1984; Liddell 1989; Trucco 1986).

Dalby, a prominent writer on kimono, summarises the state of affairs after her experience in a geisha community in the 1970s and subsequent research into kimono. She says that by the
Taisho period (1912-1926) kimono ceased to evolve as it became a tradition and refers to the failure of an avant garde kimono magazine *Le kimono* in the middle of the 1980s as evidence that kimono ‘is now intolerant of variation and inimicable to experiment’ (Dalby 1993: 114). Dalby infers that kimono is only worn daily by subgroups that are disappearing, namely geisha. This opinion is also expressed by Liddell (1989: 211-9) who wrote her kimono history around the same time as Dalby’s study. She concludes that it will have to adapt in order to survive. Even Minnich (1963: 330), after an informative history, calls kimono-clad women martyrs for not adopting cosmopolitan clothing in summer.

Since the 1980s in Japan and in the last decade internationally, there has been a surge of interest in Japan in the 1920s and 1930s (the Taisho era and early Showa period). The research on Japanese department stores (Nakamura 2007; Sapin 2004; Yamanobe 1987) has been of particular use as it examines the work in conjunction with designers and design studios and the dissemination of styles. Publications of personal kimono collections also cover the period up until the war (Dees, Stokmans & Kunsthal 2009; Yumioka 2005; Yumioka & Fujii 2006), though they emphasise the visual appeal of the textiles rather then the historical and social context of the garments.

In England and America, the four major kimono exhibitions devoted to 20th century kimono have showcased *meisen* (spun silk that gained popularity in the 1920s and ceased production in 1955) as the 20th century fashion textile (Brown et al. 2001; Mochinaga Brandon 1996; Van Assche 2005) or used kimono as an illustration of war propaganda (Dower, Atkins & Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts Design and Culture 2005).

The kimonos from the Montgomery collection generated publicity that referred to the period before World War II as the last era of living kimono (Alexandria 2007) and the statement that ‘fashion kimono are very much a product of an era that has passed’ (Dunn 2009: 2).

With the lack of information on post-war kimono, Milhaupt surmises that very few people will tolerate ‘the burdens of the hobbling skirt, rib-crunching obi and movement-restricting contours of kimono’ (2002: 80). She reduces kimono to fragments of recycled textiles concluding that kimonos have ‘become rarer and possibly extinct in their primary use’ (Milhaupt 2005: 82), the notion that leads Assmann to focus on ‘why the kimono is being kept alive in contemporary Japan’ (2008: 360). Overviews of kimono history also conclude with concerns for its future (Liddell 1989: 219; Toyoshima: 87).
2.1.4 Japanese writers on kimono

This section addresses the literature from Japanese writers who have explained kimono culture in English or who have been translated into English. I do not cover the Japanese literature on kimono, partly because I do not have the reading skills and resources to trace the full depth of that diverse literature, but also because it does not pertain to how kimono is presented and perceived by an international audience. There are translations of the work by Japanese scholars of kimono (predominantly from American kimono exhibition catalogues) and writers promoting kimono to an international audience. Two influential people were Nomura Shojiro (1879 – 1943), an antique kimono trader, and Yamanobe Tomoyuki (1906 – 2004), curator of textiles at the Tokyo National Museum.

Nomura was influential on the American kimono collections and exhibitions (Boettcher 1987: 7-10). His collaboration with Minnich produced the most comprehensive history of Japanese costume in English to date, but his focus on kosode overshadowed the developments in ordinary kimono during his time. Both his and Ema Tsutomu’s illustrated volumes of Japanese robes (Ema calls them kimono), published in the 1930s and 1940s, displayed the textile art of bygone eras at a time when technological developments were enabling the production of innovative kimono. The image of kosode that both men promoted is the image strongly associated with kimono in an English context, which has created misunderstandings about what contemporary kimono is.

Yamanobe’s numerous collaborations with both Japanese and foreign writers have lead to a deeper understanding of the historical context of kimono textiles (Ishimura, Maruyama & Yamanobe 1988; Katoh 1962; Kawakatsu 1956; Kubota & Yamanobe 1984; Liddell 1989; Peebles & Yamanobe 1987; Yamanobe 1964; Yamanobe, Fujii & Kyoto Textile Wholesalers Association 1996). In his translated work, he addresses the developments in 20th century kimono by discussing the increase in mass production and the role department stores played in disseminating kimono fashions in the 1910s (Yamanobe 1987: 15, Yamanobe, Fuji & Kyoto Textile Wholesalers Association 1996: 9-10).

Though he did not write specifically on kimono, Yanigida, a Japanese anthropologist, has been influential. He wrote on social customs of which kimono was only a part and Slade (2009: 128-131) relies heavily on his insights into kimono fashions in the Meiji period (1886
– 1912). Yanigida (1957: 11) explained that rural Japanese clothing was similar to the cosmopolitan clothing that was adopted in post-war Japan, so the adoption was not a major change in the clothing style for people in rural areas. Kimono was originally clothing for festivals because the long sleeves were not practical for working in. Kimono was adopted as ordinary clothing in urban areas where the distinction between festive days and ordinary days had weakened.

Explaining Japanese dress to a foreign audience who do not share the same visual vocabulary has resulted in an emphasis on the virtues of kimono as a form of art (Kawakatsu 1936; Kubota & Yamanobe 1984) or tradition, or a combination of both (Yamanaka 1982). At the beginning of the 20th century kimonos were displayed alongside British oil paintings (Japan-British Exhibition 1910) and writers extolled the artistic merits (Ema 1936a, 1936b; Kawakatsu 1936, 1956). As kimono became less visible, it was used as an example of a long tradition (Aikawa 1994; Hibi 1987; NHK International Inc; Noma 1974).

A further development in the combination of kimono and art is the explanation of the art of dressing in kimono, which is promoted by kimono schools. Yamanaka Norio founded the Sodo Reiho Kimono Academy in 1964. His explanation of the etiquette for wearing kimono makes the process similar to a traditional art (Yamanaka 1982). Do means ‘a way’ and judo, sado (tea ceremony) and aikido all indicate a philosophy that goes beyond material objects or physical actions. The ‘Sodo’ (__) in the name of Yamanaka’s school means ‘the way of clothing’. He campaigned for a more philosophical approach asserting that dressing in kimono properly depends as much on the person's inner nature as on the garment itself. The development of kimono into a tradition, etiquette and art, or perhaps more accurately ‘a way’, has blurred the distinction between kimono as an object and what it can stand for. Kimono has been used to represent nation, femininity and cultural capital.

After World War II the discussion about Japan’s uniqueness was called Nihonjin-ron. Nihonjin-ron theories about kimono include its suitability for the ‘climate, social structure, physical body type, and aesthetic preferences of the Japanese’ (Dalby 1993: 141-3). Nihonjin-ron is also evident in the way kimono (the urban garments, not rural work-wear) was protected and how it has been positioned away from cosmopolitan fashion. In the 1950s there was an effort made by the Japanese government to stimulate the kimono industry as cosmopolitan clothing became more common. These measures included naming dyers and weavers as intangible cultural treasures and running an annual craft exhibition to showcase
Japanese tradition (Ishimura 1988: 34-3; Ishimura & Tokyo National Museum of Art 1985). In 1967 the Japanese government divided the annual survey on clothing expenditure into Japanese clothing (wa-fuku) and cosmopolitan fashion (yo-fuku) (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication 2005).

The separation of foreign and Japanese was also evident in the 1950s compendium on textiles, which traced pure Japanese styles (Nihon Seni Isho Center 1959), omitting textiles with a foreign influence and isolating the textiles from the ex-colonies. The focus on the Japanese aspect marginalized some of the textiles like meisen and the Okinawan vii textiles that have had a big impact on kimono fashions.

2.1.5 Kimono in fashion literature

In published discussions of Japanese fashion, the term fashion generally refers to cosmopolitan fashion. Topics range from the entrance of designers Miyake, Kawakubo and Yamamoto into the European fashion scene (Kawamura 2004) to visually striking contemporary street-styles (Groom 2009; Kawamura 2006; Kinsella 1995). Slade (2009), writes specifically on Japanese fashion in relation to fashion theory, but relegates kimono to the role of traditional identity in response to the adoption of cosmopolitan fashion.

When kimono is associated with fashion, it is mentioned as an influence on European haute couture (Breward 2003:95; Entwistle 2001: 209; Fukai, Suoh & Kyoto Fukushoku Bunka Kenkyu Zaidan 2002) or used as an adjective to describe attributes considered similar to kimono. Kimono appears as an adjective in Barthes’ lists of clothing (1990 [1967]:105-10) and remains in use today in the cosmopolitan fashion mass market. For example, descriptions of fashionable garments mention kimono sleeves, which actually do not resemble the rectangular Japanese kimono sleeves. Recent examples of kimono on the catwalk are Patrick Robinson reconstructing old kimono for Rabanne Spring 2006, and John Galliano’s interpretations in the collection for Dior Spring 2007, which are far removed from the way kimono is interpreted within Japan.

In literature on fashion theory, writers that do mention kimono use it to illustrate a point. Kimono is used as an example of clothing that hides the body (Hollandar 1993: 336-7), anti-fashion (Wilson 2003: 258) or men in skirts (Craik 1993: 193). The typical reference is as an

Kimono as an entity is not associated with fashion. Japanese costume was the term used to encompass the history of kimono (Gunsaulus 1923; Kennedy 1990; Minnich 1963; Peebles & Yamanobe 1987). Bacon, an American teacher at an elite Japanese school in 1889, observed that the dowry of a wealthy lady would contain enough garments to last her entire life because of ‘the unchanging fashions of Japan’ (1902: 53). The separation of fashion and kimono is part of the false dichotomy of fashion (change) and traditional dress (static).

2.1.6 Fashion

A substantial amount of research into fashion addresses so-called western fashion and links fashions origins to Europe. Skov (1996: 135) points out that western fashion is an obsolete term in an era when the bulk of garments are manufactured in Asia and Latin America and the majority of the world’s population wears some form of it. Eicher and Sumberg’s (1995: 296) suggestion of cosmopolitan fashion (rather then their other term ‘world fashion’) describes that kind of dress format more closely.

Though Kawlra (2002: 306) points out that looking for fashion in kimono is imposing western values on a non-western dress format, I agree with Cannon that the process of fashion is universal and 'results in the coming and going of particular styles as the result of unique historical trajectories of design comparison' (1998:.28). Therefore style change is a defining feature of fashion. I also agree that fashion is a belief as opposed to a material object (Kawamura 2005: 4), that it is not limited to clothing (Blumer 1969: 275) and it is not specific to industrialized Europe (Craik 1993: 18-36).

Ethnic dress - also known as traditional dress - identifies a group and though it is not static the defining feature is that people are not aware of the change (Eicher & Sumberg 1995: 300-4). The perception that kimono has not changed thus defines it as traditional dress, which is how it has been framed in recent studies on kimono. Kimono is a traditional dress format and so tradition is a facet of kimono, however, it is not the only factor that has helped kimono maintain currency in contemporary society.
The false dichotomy of fashion and tradition has precluded the idea of kimono as subject to the fashion process. Traditional clothing does not mean immutable dress. Anthropologists have also shown that traditional dress does change and have compiled bibliographies revealing a large body of work on the subject (Eicher 2000; Schneider & Weiner 1986; Schwarz 1979). To define fashion as a phenomenon from industrialized Europe is too narrow. Fashion industries independent of the cosmopolitan fashion systems exist globally (Fair 2004) and the fashion process is evident even in prehistoric cultures (Cannon 1998: 23).

Claims that kimono has not changed (Bacon 1902: 53; Barthes & Stafford 2006: 94; Blau 1999: 252; Braudel 1992: 312; Entwistle 2000:45,82; Lipovetsky 1994:19) or that it froze in the early part of the 20th century (Dalby 1993: 129) appear to be contradicted when looking at recycled kimono. Comparing the styles in Kawakatsu's (1956) account of kimono with the work of kimono trader and stylist Mamechiyo (2003; 2005) or the kimono magazines *Kimono Hime* and *Utsukushii kimono* reveals changes in style. Rather than framing these changes as reinvented tradition, I examine the relationship of customary dress and fashion by asking the question ‘Were there fashions in women’s kimono in the 20th century?’

### 2.2 Summary

The trajectory of 20th century kimono presented in English is that Kimono, the name of Japanese clothing at the start of the 20th century, was what the majority of Japanese women wore. Kimono means clothing (= wear, _ = thing) and urban kimono was subject to changes in style with subdued colours developing into brighter colours with bigger patterns in the 1920s (Brown et al. 2001; Mochinaga Brandon 1996; Van Assche 2005). During the war it was cut into a style of trousers called *mompei* due to government regulations and lack of resources (Mochinaga Brandon 2005: 45). Though kimono went through a renaissance in the 1960s (Dalby 1993:131:Minnich 1963: 329), it started disappearing from the streets. The majority of people opted for western clothes (*yo-fuku*) that were not included in the definition of kimono. Used now for ceremonial or festive occasions, difficult to put on and expensive (Dalby 1993: 134-7; Liddell 1989: 207), kimono now serves as a symbol of femininity, national identity and cultural capital (Assman 2008; Goldstein Gidoni 1999; McVeigh 2000). Vanishing kimono (Imperatore & MacLardy 2001; Milhaupt 2005) is a misguided notion, spawned from the focus on decline and tradition in kimono by theorists, historians and curators.
3 Research design

I began the project by studying Japanese language and by searching for images of women wearing kimono. I examined a kimono magazine that ran from 1953 to the present and realised that imposing my notions of cosmopolitan fashion history onto a non-western dress format was not a realistic approach. To try to readjust what I saw to how I saw, I examined the practice of dressing in kimono through kimono school publications and kitsuke books and watched the movies recommended in the literature I found. Getting dressed in kimono also effected my perception of kimono. I also interviewed Japanese women about their opinions on style change in kimono. Finally, with a better understanding of Japanese history, culture and dressing practice, I reviewed kimono magazines published in the 20th century and department store magazines that were published in the first half of the 20th century. The concept of skilled visions from Christina Grasseni has influenced the way I approached the research.

3.1 Skilled visions

The process of educating my eye runs through this research design: becoming visually literate about kimono. Morse (1994: 37-8) summarises the process by saying that the decisions one makes are influenced by the things learnt along the way, although she was describing ethnography. My background in fashion design, where I look at construction and surface design in garments, created a strong bias particularly in how I originally perceived fashions in women’s kimono. The other bias in this research is that I have been searching for changes and, in doing so, have not explored the idea that there has been no change. I have tried to take meaning and interpretation into account rather then a simple chronology as suggested by Styles (1998: 387). I focused on the changes in style of women's kimono in Japan throughout the 20th century and concentrated on the post-war era, as this era was the period with the least information available. Vision has been a central aspect to the way I have approached the project, partly because my Japanese (particularly my reading skill) is limited, but also because skilled visions are a fundamental part of the dialogue of clothing.

The works that I have found relevant for both visual research methods and fashion theory are influenced by Herbert Blumer’s theory of symbolic interaction. Blumer (1969) explains the process of attributing meaning to objects by social exchange and how those meanings are shaped by interpretation. For example, if we learn that white kimono are for funerals, white kimono (for example a white wedding kimono) will take on a certain significance. My initial reaction to images of kimono was identification of trends that paralleled cosmopolitan
fashions. I realised cosmopolitan trends were an inappropriate comparison the more I looked through kimono magazines. I tried to find a way to view kimono in a more meaningful way because I could not identify the kind of changes that were taking place.

‘Only when we have understood how the X-people see, according to their culture of seeing things, can we start to understand what the X people make, according to their culture of making things’ (Gell & Hirsch 1999: 219). ‘Seeing’ became an appropriate way to approach the subject. I looked to visual sociology and visual anthropology for methods but there was a preoccupation with creating an image. However, some scholars address methods for seeing in visual research.

While the same image can be used in various ways (Berger, Dibb & BBC Enterprises 1972) to give different meanings to different individuals (Pink 2001), there is also a collective vision within cultures or professions (Goodwin 1994; Grasseni 2004) that is culturally constructed and changes with time (Grimshaw 2001). My search began for ways to see that were more in line with the collective vision specific to kimono culture.

Grasseni’s concept of skilled visions was particularly relevant. She took ‘the notion of skilled vision as an analytical tool that indicates a process of embodiment and the acquisition of the capacity to see the world with new eyes’ (Grasseni 2008:168). ‘Skilled visions, once acquired, are not so much codes, or tools for actively manipulating messages, as much as backgrounds and scenarios that make those messages meaningful’ (Grasseni, 2007: 11). She developed her vision through filming her subject while asking questions to develop her understanding. I took photos of the things I wanted to remember and continually reflected on the way new knowledge was changing my perspective and refining my inquiry into fashions in 20th century women’s kimono.

I have been conscious of the extent to which my way of seeing has altered through the course of the project. While there are intentional methods that have altered my perspective, (for example examining magazines chronologically, reviewing photos I had taken and reading Japanese history) there have also been unintentional ways of acquiring new visions such as learning how to wear kimono, listening to Japanese people’s stories, and seeing kimono on television, in movies and on billboards. Learning how to look would not have been possible with texts only and skilled visions would not have developed by looking alone. What I present
is the way I shaped my way of seeing kimono, which is underpinned by my background as a fashion designer and experience as an Australian woman living in Japan.

3.2 Methods

My methodology involved acquiring skilled visions by living in Japan, learning Japanese, looking at both images of kimonos and real kimonos, learning about the practice of wearing kimono and interviewing kimono retailers. Constant reflection and reassessment refined the way I saw fashions in women’s kimono through the project. My decisions were guided by the knowledge I had acquired.

3.2.1 Kimono magazines

I began looking for images of kimono worn on the body as opposed to the flat object. I looked through *Utsukushii Kimono* (Beautiful Kimono), a magazine that specializes in kimono. *Utsukushii Kimono* has been in print since 1953 so it covers the period with the least scholarly information on the development of kimono.

I could immediately see cosmopolitan fashion in kimono in the colours, the textures and the styling of models. There were fashions in kimono. However, from the mid 1970s to the 1990s hair and make up were often the only points where I could identify changes. While it was possible to illustrate the presence of cosmopolitan fashion in kimono by showing many examples of international influences, thus claiming there were fashions in kimono, it was not representative of all the changes in kimono style in the 20th century.

Recent issues of *Utsukushii Kimono* have represented kimono differently to the kimono presented in the magazine *Kimono Hime* (Kimono Princess) that started in 2001. *Kimono Hime* styled kimono in such a way that it was easy to make comparisons with the street styles in Harajuku or Akihabara in Tokyo. It was possible to see girls going out for Sunday shopping dressed the *Kimono Hime* way. The *Utsukushii Kimono* elegance reminded me more of an aristocrat who had served me tea in kimono at a public exhibition.

There was some point I was missing. I could not identify the changes in style that *Utsukushii Kimono* presented, as the kimonos appeared so similar. However, I was convinced that there were fashions in the latter part of the 20th century because the kimonos were presented in stylish scenarios and on models with make-up and hairstyles that reflected the different eras.
The question I was asking changed from ‘Were there fashions in 20th century women’s kimono?’ to ‘How has kimono changed?’

*Kitsuke* appeared a relevant avenue to follow, as I wanted to see kimono on the body. I assumed the changes in the way to arrange a kimono would be documented and taught. I had taken some kimono classes in order to wear kimono to my sister’s wedding. My own experiences of dressing in both formal and casual kimono, while not a formal part of the project, have influenced the way I see.

### 3.2.2 The practice of dressing

Books specifically on how to put on and wear kimono are readily available from the local library and bookstores in Japan. There are also institutions that teach *kitsuke* and private classes available in Japanese culture centres. Tutoring from home or a classroom with certification from a kimono school is also common. I looked at the texts in English and Japanese from the Sodo Reiho Kimono Academy (also known as the Sodo Academy) and also at a publication from Yamano College of Aesthetics. Beauty schools also teach *kitsuke* and in addition they teach kimono styling. The industry for dressing people in kimono (in connection with beauty salons) dates from the Taisho period (1912 – 1926) (Encyclopaedia Nipponica 2001: 584). Wedding parlours offer this kind of service not only for the bride but also for guests.

What the *kitsuke* texts proposed was a series of codes that related to etiquette. I only saw the basic codes. There are two-year courses at colleges specifically on *kitsuke* and the fact that one can go to college to become a kimono stylist or dresser indicates how seriously information about kimono is taken.

The emphasis in *kitsuke* texts was on distinguishing textiles and arranging different types of kimono in a particular format. The *kitsuke* standard did not address changes in style through the 20th century, however, by recognizing a standard, I could understand what kimono was and from there it was possible to address the question of ‘How has kimono changed?’ I decided to compare recycled kimono to see if I could see and understand changes although it was moving away from my original plan to look at kimono on the body.
3.2.3 Recycled kimono

There has been an increasing number of kimono dealers in Japan who trade through the Internet. As their product is kimono manufactured in the 20th century, I looked at the kimono they sold. The dealers with an export market listed their stock with an approximate age. Kimono Flea Market Ichiroya and Yamatoku were the two export companies I looked at.

To become more familiar with the textiles in the domestic market in Japan, I went to recycled kimono shops and markets, as textiles can appear quite different in photographs. Recycle shops sometimes have a section for used kimono and there are various shops specialising in used kimono. Lists in the back of antique magazines and word of mouth helped locate recycled kimono shops. Kanaiya, a recycled kimono shop catering to domestic demand, was particularly interesting. It had grown from the time I first visited it in 1999, expanding the premises and opening an online shop. The antique mall in Ginza, Tokyo had a selection of high quality recycled kimono. I visited the department stores Isetan (in Shinjuku, Tokyo) and Iwataya (in Fukuoka) as they had recycled kimono bazaars that represented dealers specialising in recycled kimono from around Japan.

I have seen recycled kimono since I came to Japan in 1999 but after looking through the magazines that give a date to certain styles, I began to see patterns. Tufte’s (1990) examples of cognitive art reveal information by amassing similar images. In the same way, lining up Internet images contributed to identifying changes in hem patterns in some kinds of kimono. I began to see some changes in the kind of colours and designs on bridal kimono over a period of time.

3.2.4 Interviews

I realised that I was still imposing my ideals on kimono and that it would be beneficial to talk to people who knew about kimono. I interviewed Japanese people who had some connection with kimono. In order not to be intrusive, I asked people to recommend acquaintances who might be interested in talking about kimono. Personal introductions usually go a long way in Japan. I used photo elicitation and presented images from Utsukushii Kimono and a poster book which showed women in kimono in advertisements from the first half of the 20th century (Tajima & Sakatsu Corporation 2006).
Before the interviews commenced, I sent the interviewees a set of questions regarding their opinions about kimono, fashion and changes through the 20th century. This set of questions focused the discussion on style change. Interviews ran for an hour.

3.2.5 Other sources

I looked at the movies and television series recommended by the people I interviewed and by kimono books and magazines. While movies had an impact on fashion (Faust 1926: 146-7; Minnich 1963: 333) and Gorden (2007: 17) indicates the high consumption of media that developed into the consumption of goods, kimonos in mass media was an area beyond the scope of this research. What I did find interesting in the limited amount I saw, was that the majority of films recommended were period films; the kimonos were reconstructed. While there were some films that aimed for accurate period costume, there were also romanticised versions of kimono and some films that disregarded historical accuracy to achieve dramatic impact.

I checked the Class 25 patents listed on the Internet for kimono listings through the 20th century (http://www.jpo.go.jp). Madeleine Vionnet had patented her collections in France. The kimono patents though were for kitsuke devices rather then garment designs. The devices were designed to make dressing in kimono easier.

3.2.6 Re-reading with a different perspective

The last step I took was to look through the magazines again. I looked at Utsukushii Kimono from the second half of the 20th century and Fujin Gaho (Women’s Illustrated) from the first half of the 20th century. Fujin Gaho started as a magazine aimed at the elite market in Japan. While there were other women’s magazines with a wider distribution, Fujin Gaho was recommended as the magazine that showed fashions. I was fortunate to be referred to a magazine library where the staff recommended supplements and publications from department stores dating from the turn of the 20th century.
4 Findings

4.1 Results

Knowing what kimono is, is crucial to understanding the changes in style; it requires being able to identify various cues that range from patterns and textiles to the way the ensemble is assembled for various occasions, seasons and ages. If we know what is normal, then it is possible to understand what is special. It then becomes clear that the changes that kimono has gone through are influenced by international interaction, domestic politics, economy, social mores, technological innovations, cosmopolitan fashion and the role of kimono in society.

4.1.1 The practice of dressing

Sodo Reiho Kimono Academy and Yamano College of Aesthetics are both influential institutions that train people to dress in kimono according to a standard of etiquette. While the rules they provide do change with time, understanding current basic knowledge about kimono creates a useful yardstick by which to measure changes in style. While there are many similar kinds of kimono schools, Sodo Reiho Kimono Academy is the only one endorsed by the government and Yamano College of Aesthetics has a close association with Utsukushii Kimono and a major kimono chain store. Both were pioneers in publishing books on kitsuke at the time when kimono schools started proliferating (Sodo Kimono Gakuin 1970; Yamano, A 1960).

Heiner (1997:121-3), writing on samurai etiquette, names the Ogasawara and the Ise schools of etiquette in Japan as the advisors to rival military groups in the 16th century and notes that many of their rules have been absorbed into current Japanese culture. My own experience of formal Japanese etiquette (concerning birth, death and marriage) is of people looking to the Internet or books for the rules to follow. This manner of seeking the correct rules makes the role of kimono schools easier to understand. Dalby (1993: 119) talks of the kimono schools teaching a generation of Japanese, unfamiliar with kimono, how to wear it. While this may be true to some extent, I would also propose that with rural migration to urban centres and new distribution of wealth (Gorden 2007) that made luxurious formal kimono affordable for ordinary people from the 1960s (Hareven 2002: 110), kimono schools appealed to a new kind of consumer unfamiliar with the etiquette of a form of kimono (Yamashita 2002a) that had previously been used by a limited section of the population.
The kimono education and service industry is based upon kimono having codified rules so it is in the interests of this sector to present kimono as a classic dress format. Yamano and Sodo show codes in the object (textile construction, decoration, garment construction and garment variety) and in the manner of donning and wearing it (for example the messages conveyed in the placement of the obi). In the kitsuke rules I learnt a verbal vocabulary and a visual one that involves attributing meaning to certain patterns and ways of arranging kimono. The idea of collective vision is potent. The kimono school way of seeing is not universal in Japan but is a standard created through the teachings in the kimono colleges.

While I did examine Japanese texts on kitsuke, the aspect that changed the way I perceived kimono was the experience of dressing in kimono. Unintentionally, personal experiences (learning how to get dressed and being dressed in formal kimono) contributed to the way I looked at kimono. During the research I married a Japanese national, had a child and attended two funerals as a family member, all of which involved some form of kimono. I also wear yukata for the summer festivals and have done so since I came to Japan in 1999. Having my yukata rearranged by well meaning, mature Japanese women has taught me as much as younger acquaintances snidely eyeing up my tardy tucks while asking me if I got dressed myself.

The practice of wearing kimono made me aware of design points such as a design that crossed a seam and the beauty in a woven design that flowed onto the back of a sleeve (the more visible side). Also, it brought to my attention why undergarments can be so decorative; what appears under kimono is important. Dalby (1985: 287) talked of the back view being a focus as seating arrangements at a party show off the back of a person, so the sleeve slit (visible from the back) also becomes a point of interest as the lining and undergarments show.

I also began to understand why the contrasts of the naga-juban (under kimono), han-eri (detachable collar) and various cords that tie the ensemble together have been important indications of style. Looking back at the magazines, I started to see the colour and layering of the han-eri changing over time, and also recognised that the kimono I had been looking at were different kinds of clothing even though they had the same shape. Names like homongi and tsunugi took on a meaning as I differentiated garments that I had originally considered to be the same.
The choice in arrangement is a concept of dressing that is different for cosmopolitan clothing and kimono. Putting on kimono requires the arrangement of various layers over underwear. Nothing is fastened in the same way as cosmopolitan clothing. Jeans are pulled up, zipped and buttoned up; cosmopolitan clothes generally envelop the body in a way determined by the cut of the clothes. In comparison, kimono envelops the body in a way determined by the dresser. How much han-eri to reveal or conceal (risqué or prim) and how to arrange the obi with the various cords (festive, sombre, youthful or mature) are choices made in the arrangement of kimono every time it is put on. Kimono does not have set fastenings. How to fasten the garments with the cords so that they will stay in place (keeping the intended visual impact) until it is taken off is a lot more challenging for someone who does not wear kimono regularly. These choices of arrangement focus the points to look at. I had not considered looking at the collar or obi-age until I had the experience of arranging it myself.

Cultural concepts, such as uchi-soto (in – out), are also useful for understanding the importance of dichotomies (Japanese – foreign, public appearance - private appearance and festive – normal) that have an impact on Japanese clothing customs and determine wardrobe requirements. Specific formal clothes are required for certain occasions. Clothing customs differ, for example the funeral and memorial service customs.

For the social life of middle-class women in Tokyo, the most modernized and therefore the least ceremonious spot in the whole country, a woman is required to have at least three sets of ceremonial kimonos for felicitation and two for condolence. These ceremonial kimonos must be differentiated into winter and summer-wear; in the former case, lined silk is invariably used, and, in either case, the ornamental figures on the skirt must harmonize with the season.

(Mishima 1941: 252)

These formal clothes were part of a woman’s dowry that, by the late Showa period, had reduced to mofuku, tomesode and iromuji (M Terase 2008, pers. comm., 6 March). Fewer kimonos were required in a different segment of society. Working class Japanese immigrants from various regions in Japan could use the same crested kimono to cover all formal occasions from weddings to funerals at the turn of the 20th century (Kawakami 1993: 9-71,191-3).

4.1.2 Decoding kimono

Since habits change over time, and codes suggest that the signs are fixed, I do not think the concept of coding works so well for histories of clothing cultures. However, there are visual
clues that lead to identification of trends and for lack of a better word, I use decoding to suggest the process that goes on when visually classifying various factors. Text alone is not conducive to explaining vocabulary and concepts that are outside one’s experience and *kitsuke* books are profusely illustrated in order to explain various signs.

The following codes are a summary of what I understand through the Sodo and Yamano *kitsuke* books and the practice of dressing. Interpretations can vary as regional practices have differed greatly in the past and people now do not always subscribe to the etiquette taught in the academies. Wachs (1993: 85), for example, presents a slightly different account when she stipulates that *furisode* is for girls under 18, something I have heard applies in Akita, though the common practice in Tokyo is to wear *furisode* to celebrate the coming of age day (for those over 20 years old) or a university graduation ceremony. Though Dalby (2005) dismisses kimono schools as the institutions where un-sexy samurai ways are taught, they have had a substantial impact on the way kimono has developed and is currently worn.

Adjustments to the way one wears kimono can send out certain messages about the wearer. Figure 2 shows factors taught in the Sodo and Yamano schools. They can make you look old, or like someone trying to deny their age if kimono school etiquette is what you subscribe to. This way of wearing kimono has become a standard, as there is less variation in the way people wear kimono now.

![Figure 2: Kitsuke codes](image)

1. A right over left overlap at the front of the kimono is used for corpses. 2. If the nape is exposed by more than a fistful, it starts to have erotic connotations. Maiko and brides have more nape exposed. 3. Placing the *obi-jime* high is youthful, low is elderly. 4. Exposing more of the *obi-age* is youthful. 5. There are colours that are appropriate for different age groups. Bright colours are youthful and neutral colours are mature. 6. Exposing more of the *han-eri* is
mature though the indication is in the depth towards the décolletage rather than the back neck area.

These kitsuke codes are not universally understood in Japan (every summer there is inevitably someone wearing yukata overlapped right over left) hence the education and service industry of dressing people in kimono and increase of kitsuke publications in the second half of the 20th century. The codes are relevant when looking at the kimono in current kimono magazines, at kimono in advertising and at kimono worn at weddings. Understanding the manner that is taught, as an ideal, in institutions reveals the way kimono has become standardized since the 1970s.

### 4.1.2.1 Type of garments

The same garment cannot be worn by all shapes and sizes and sexes. Garments are cut and sewn according to the width and height of a person. Sleeves are sewn into the side seams for men who wear a narrow obi and have a slit for a woman, which enables a wider obi to be worn.

*Kitsuke* books always contain a breakdown of the different kinds of kimonos\(^\text{iii}\). These differences are similar to the difference between jeans (casual) and black tie (formal). It is also important to note that the formality of the different kimonos has changed over time and for different segments of society.

The current version of kitsuke has become possible because the ways of wearing kimono have become standardized. The Meiji government tried to implement dress standards (Yanagida 1957: 11), but they did not become a reality until the end of the 20th century as kimono became a luxury item and a dress format practiced and taught in fewer segments of society.

![Figure 3: Kimono types](image)

Figure 3: Kimono types
The way of identifying the type of kimono is unlike cosmopolitan fashion where the differentiation is by structure. There are formal and informal kimonos that have the same structure so differentiation is by the surface design or the type of textile. Generally speaking, you can recognize if a kimono is formal as the design, often *yuzen* (a surface design technique), continues over the seams. Formal kimono is also made from silk and the type of kimono determines the occasion when it can be worn. Informal kimonos usually have an all over pattern and are identified by the technique of dyeing or weaving and the fibre.

**4.1.2.1.1 Formal outer garments**

![Figure 4: Crested formal kimono](image)

*Tomesode* is one kimono with the highest level of formality as it has five family crests: two on the front, two on the back of the sleeves and one over the back seam. The immediate family of the bride and groom wear *tomesode*. Yamashita (2000b: 126) notes that *iro-tomesode* became popular in the 1960s. *Mofuku* is worn to funerals and it also has five crests. *Haori* (a coat) with three crests can also be worn to a wake in lieu of *mofuku*. *Iro-muji* (one colour and no dyed design) is a garment that can be used for a variety of occasions, from tea ceremony to memorial services. The *iro-muji* I saw often only had one crest.

![Figure 5: Formal kimono](image)
*Furisode* and *homongi* have a variety of surface decoration. The dyeing techniques used are generally *yuzen*, *shibori* (tie-dye), stencilling or a combination of techniques. The grey areas in Figure 5 just signify that the design continues over the seam and unlike *tomesode* the design is not restricted to the hem. The surface designs on *furisode* and *homongi* vary extensively and, compared to the other kinds of outer kimono, consistently reflect cosmopolitan fashion. Both kinds of kimono are more obviously subject to changes in colour and style than the crested kimono in Figure 4. They do not always have a crest and the design can be positioned anywhere in the kimono. The defining feature of *homongi* is that the dyed design continues over the seams whereas *furisode* is defined by the long sleeves (a rare structural difference from most kimono) that signify the wearer is young and unmarried.

4.1.2.1.2 Informal outer garments

Informal kimonos are not necessarily cheaper or the manufacturing techniques less labour intensive than formal kimonos, but they are not considered suitable for attending a wedding. However, I know people who have gone to wedding receptions in casual kimono, which shows that not everyone follows the same etiquette.

Yukata is almost in its own class. It has the same shape as unlined informal kimono but is simpler to wear as there are no undergarments and the *obi* is narrow and does not require extra cords. Some Japanese I spoke to do not consider it kimono, as it is cheap, not made from silk and does not require undergarments or as many accessories to hold the *obi* together. Offshore production, the kind of prints available and the fact it is only worn for such a short season were some of the reasons I was given for yukata not being included as kimono. However, yukata has been included in kimono and fashion magazines throughout the 20th century and, while I have been in Japan, it has become commonplace during summer festivals. It was the garment that heralded the bright designs at the turn of the 20th century (Yanagida 1957: 13) and also preluded the rise in popularity (within Japan) of vintage kimono in the past decade.

4.1.2.1.3 Inner garments and accessories

*Obi*, *han-eri*, *obi-age*, *obi-jime* and *naga-juban* also make up the kimono ensemble with *haori* (or some form of coat or stole) in colder weather or as a decorative element.
There are three main types of obi currently used. *Fukuro obi* is used for formal occasions (and has largely replaced the *maru obi*) and *Nagoya obi* is for more casual occasions. The *hanhaba obi* used for yukata is about half the width of the normal obis. This explanation is very simplistic as there are a variety of obis (and corresponding rules for wearing them in kitsuke texts) but it does cover the most common types.

![Figure 6: Elements of the kimono ensemble](image)

*Naga-juban* is the long under-kimono and has the same shape as the over-kimono except that the collar is half the width. *Han-eri* is sewn onto the collar of the *naga-juban* and between the 1950s and 1990s was predominantly white. The *obi* is held up with three or more cords of which two are visible, the *obi-age* for covering the pad that shapes the back knot of the *obi* and the *obi-jime* which is the cord in the middle of the *obi* though this cord is usually only worn with formal kimono. There are flat or round braided *obi-jime* that can also be specific for certain occasions. *Obi-jime* became more prominent after *obi* knots were tied around the back (Toyoshima 1967: 77). The *naga-juban, han-eri* and *obi* were the items where women expressed their taste in the earlier part of the 20th century (Gunsaulus 1923: 12; Yamashita 2000b: 120-1).

### 4.1.2.2 Types of textiles

The variety of kimono textiles is too wide for me to cover here, so I only outline some of the ones that I commonly found in magazines and in the recycle market or that were mentioned as a trend. Woven textiles include *omeshi, yuki tsumugi, Oshima tsumugi, Murayama Oshima tsumugi, kasuri, kihachio,* and *meisen*. Patterns are created by dyeing the yarn before it is woven and generally kimono made from these textiles are not used for ceremonial occasions.
Dyed textiles include *Edo komon, bingata* and *chuugata*. Kimonos made from these techniques are sometimes categorised as semi formal.

*Ryo* and *sha* are silk gauzes and so are used in summer. *Akashi* crepe was also a popular textile for summer in the first half of the 20th century (Shuefftan 1999).

Formal kimonos are made from various types of silk, for example crepe or *rinzu* (silk with a figured weave), which is then dyed. The fibre, the kind of weave or the dyeing technique usually identifies informal kimonos.\textsuperscript{xxi}

### 4.1.2.3 Construction

The season determines what kind of kimono should be worn. It is lined in winter and unlined in summer. Garments lined with padding were more common before heating systems removed the necessity for warm indoor garments. Padding is now largely restricted to kimono hems and mainly used for *uchikake* (a long over-kimono).

There are also kimonos that are considered appropriate for certain age groups. The long sleeves on *furisode* are an indicator of an unmarried girl.\textsuperscript{xii} The shape of the sleeve corner gives a sense of youth if it is round or maturity if it is square. Rounded sleeve corners are now only apparent on *furisode* and children’s kimonos. Men’s kimono sleeves are always square.

### 4.1.2.4 Motifs

There are motifs used specifically for occasions like weddings so it is worth noting some here. The presence of a crane motif on a *furisode* can change it from a coming-of-age garment to a bridal gown.

![Snowflake, cherry blossom, plum blossom, pine and bamboo](image)

*Figure 7: Snowflake, cherry blossom, plum blossom, pine and bamboo*
It is not always easy to guess what some stylised motifs are - for example the snowflake. The cherry and plum blossoms are differentiated by the split petal for cherry and round petal for plum. Sometimes the combination of motifs has significance. Pine, bamboo and plum (sho-chiku-bai) are an auspicious combination and can be found on wedding gowns and around the New Year. The combination of cranes and turtles with long tails can be found on wedding gowns particularly from earlier eras and mandarin ducks also appear at times. A phoenix across the back of uchikake was popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Combinations of motifs can allude to an earlier era, region or classical literature, for example, in the ashi-de and goshodoki styles. Noma (1974) gives a good outline of motifs and meanings, as does the Japan textile color design center (Nihon Seni Isho Center 1959).

Seasonal themes on the kimono were important until changes like central heating, and the reduction of kimono for clothing for special occasions, meant that motifs incorporating all four seasons could sell better. Season-specific motifs are no longer an ideal that all people follow now. Uniqlo, a well-known clothing chain store, recently produced a yukata with a print from a famous illustrator. Yukata is worn mid-summer but the motif was a camellia - a winter flower.

4.1.2.5 Patterns

I found that the Japanese people around me did not always know the meaning, as proposed in the kitsuke texts, of common patterns. Patterns are not only on kimono textiles, but are also found on home linen, stationary, architectural details and ceramics. I got the impression that the stronger association is that of something Japanese, rather than a specific meaning. This impression was because of the fact that kitsuke books and Internet sites about kimono explain the meanings of the patterns and because of the way items with those kinds of patterns are marketed.
Number one in Figure 8 is associated with demon characters in Japanese theatre (Noh and Kabuki) and the name *uroko* indicates fish or snake scales. This association can be quite powerful if you see the motif used, for example, on inner layers. Number two is water, number three is steam (it can also have clouds between the lines) and number four is hemp leaf and these last three have a positive meaning. Number four is regarded as a good pattern for babies as hemp leaves grow quickly and are strong.

At first I associated number 5 in Figure 8 with honeycomb but it represents a turtle shell. The turtle shell pattern was the most popular pattern on *yuki tsumugi* in the 1930s (Shuefftan 1999) and it appears throughout the 20th century in woven and dyed forms. Knowing that turtles are a symbol for longevity deepens the significance as does the knowledge that turtle shell patterns are considered a traditional Japanese pattern. The separation of Japanese and foreign is an important principle in Japanese culture and the incorporation of foreign elements (for example Chinese motifs and patterns in the 1920s) or lack of them in kimono can show the level of nationalistic sentiment of different historical periods.

This symbolic interaction illustrates the way skilled visions contribute to a deeper understanding of kimono and why it is more difficult to see a change of style (fashion process) that is based on unfamiliar concepts. In the case of kimono, the style change in textile (rather than construction) or motifs and patterns with unfamiliar meanings were the areas of change that I could not understand when I first examined the kimono magazines.
4.1.3 Examining kimono in magazines

When I first examined the kimono magazines I saw fashion. Cosmopolitan fashion was an obvious influence in the experimental kimono in the 1950s but, from the 1960s, increasingly became limited to colour and pattern and at times only to certain types of kimono. Trends include floral and abstract art in the 1960s, folk craft in slub weaves and vegetable dyes in the 1970s, glamour and shiny fabrics in the 1980s and vintage and nostalgia in the 1990s. I saw strong parallels to cosmopolitan fashion in the garments because originally cosmopolitan fashion was what I was able to relate to. However, relating changes in style back to the presence of cosmopolitan fashion is not reflective of the changes of style in kimono.

It was with a very different approach that I viewed the magazines the second time. I could see more in the images and could read more of the text. I found articles that showed an overview of the 20th century and one that graphed changes in kimono over the past 100 years. Instead of looking for cosmopolitan fashion, I looked for a fashion process in the textiles and kitsuke. In addition to colours and fabrics I examined the surface design, the ways of wearing kimono, accessories and the type of kimono. Understanding the kitsuke codes equipped me to see more than the influence of cosmopolitan fashion as I gained a more nuanced understanding of kimono.

Figure 9: Details from Utsukushii Kimono (images removed due to copyright)
At the beginning of the 20th century the kind of kimono worn distinguished the kind of person and region (Hayashi 1960: 51; Kawakami 1993: 202; Yamashita 2000b:120-1). As the century progressed and consumption patterns changed, expressions of personal taste moved from the more subtle areas of *obi* and inner wear (Yanagida 1957: 13-20) to the outer layers and big, bright, all over patterns peaking in the 1960s\(^{xxvii}\). The luxurious aspects of kimono became important by the 1970s (a time by which the majority of Japanese considered themselves part of the middle class (Kelly 1986: 604). Regional, handmade textiles became esteemed\(^{xxix}\) as *yuzen*, silk, formal kimono became more common. There was a decrease in the experimentation in styling as kimono became more formal, though the amount of experimentation increased again by the end of the 20th century as cheaper forms of kimono like *yukata*, recycled kimono and synthetic blends became more widely available and accepted. The changes in kimono style were in the appearance and disappearance of different types of garments and accessories, motifs, colours, fabrics and the combination of these elements over time.

### 4.1.3.1 Department store magazines

I examined the department store publications from Shirokiya, Takashimaya, Matsuya and Mitsukoshi.\(^{xxx}\) All publications showed monochrome photographs of kimono textiles that highlighted the fine designs on hems and all over patterns on bolts of cloth. Stripes and fine *kasuri* were common in the early part of the 20th century. Hem designs were placed symmetrically on formal kimono. Kimono was represented in photographs showing textile swatches or bolts of cloth (ready made kimono were not shown until the Taisho period) though occasionally I could see an ensemble worn when geisha or *oiran* were featured. These publications were useful for showing the kind of textiles that were promoted as stylish.
4.1.3.2 Fujin Gaho from 1905 onwards

*Fujin Gaho* began in July 1905 and is one magazine that has run through the 20th century. The early issues started with a woodblock illustration (usually of a kimono clad woman), then presented photographs of titled women in pale formal kimono in the front pages, which was followed by text. *Oiran* and geisha also appeared though they were not featured as they were in the department store magazines. In the 1920s coloured pictures of bright fashionable kimono on models began to appear more extensively. By the early 1930s the magazine was profusely illustrated throughout each issue and the kimono had large, brightly coloured patterns. By the end of the decade the magazine had thinned, lost colour and featured sketches of cosmopolitan fashion as the war effort intensified and resources dwindled. Kimono was showcased for more festive times like New Year and *mompet* also appeared.

4.1.3.3 Utsukushii Kimono from 1953 onwards

In 1953 *Fujin Gaho* separated kimono from cosmopolitan clothes by producing the magazine *Utsukushii Kimono*. *Utsukushii Kimono* contained photos of kimono worn by models and there was an obvious influence from cosmopolitan fashion in colour, surface pattern and even silhouette. While there were standard forms of kimono, like *furisode* and *tomesode*, there were also experimental kinds called ‘new kimono’. *Homongi* were showcased in the front in colour, and the rest of the spectrum of kimono, from bridal kimono to everyday kimono followed in black and white. Bold floral or abstracted patterns and bright colours were common and reflected cosmopolitan fashion.

By the late 1960s there was a pronounced change. Certain types of kimono, *furisode* and *fudangi*, continued to reflect cosmopolitan trends but the bulk of kimono showed Japanese sensibilities in the motifs, smaller patterns and muted colour schemes. The way kimono was arranged (for example how much the white *han-eri* showed, the length of the sleeves, position of the *obi* and where the *obi-jime* was placed) became standardized so changes in style became limited to the textile. There was an emphasis on handloom textiles and the magazine included explanations of production techniques.

By the 1980s articles went into minute detail about the appropriate way to co-ordinate the ensemble according to age, season and occasion. The first page had images from Japanese theatre, then changed to Japanese paintings, and had changed to antique kimono by the late 1990s. The emphasis on Japanese arts was reflected in the kimono presented in the magazine.
When *kosode* embroideries were featured, there was a spread showcasing *homongi* with the embroideries replicated in *yuzen*. By the middle of the 1990s the influence of cosmopolitan fashions were apparent again in colour and styling. *Utsukushii Kimono* started featuring the collection of Ishida Shigeko, a recycled kimono dealer, who had exhibited and produced catalogues of 20th century kimono. Interest in recycled kimono escalated into the antique boom in the 21st century (corresponding to the vintage and retro trends in cosmopolitan fashion) though the magazine continued to feature new kimono.

### 4.1.3.4 Other kimono magazines

From the 1950s the magazine company *Shufu to Seikatsu* (Housewife and Life) published occasional supplements devoted to kimono that accompanied their lifestyle magazines. In November 1956 the supplement *Atarashii Kimono* (New Kimono) provided instructions for sewing stylish kimonos that were practical for working in. By the 1980s the kimono supplements no longer contained information on how to sew kimono, but instead contained instructions on how to wear kimono.

Another magazine company *Shufu no Tomo* (The Housewife’s Friend) also published supplements called *Kimono to Yosoi* (Kimono and Dressing) that catered for a wider market. The kimonos were presented as stylish garments to wear in the supplements from 1969 to 1978. Though the supplement in March 1971 contained an illustrated account of age appropriate kimonos, educational content was usually kept to a minimum and the main focus was on showcasing the kimonos. The kind of kimonos in *Kimono to Yosoi* were the same kind of kimonos (for example matching wool *kasuri* and *haori*) that I often saw in recycle shops made me realise that *Utsukushii Kimono* presented kimonos from the high end of the market.

From 1981 *Kimono Salon*, a publication from the fashion and lifestyle magazine company *Kateigaho* (Home Illustrated), was the other main kimono magazine that was regularly published and it showed similar kinds of kimono to *Utsukushii Kimono*, though with less emphasis on art and more on lifestyle.

By the close of the 20th century alternative kimono magazines (such as *Kimono Hime*), publications and Internet sites began to appear and started presenting kimono in a way that appealed to an audience less interested in investing in luxury and etiquette.
4.1.4 Comparing recycled kimono

Online traders of kimono were not responsive to questions regarding the age of their kimonos. The use of terms like quite ‘old’, ‘vintage’ and ‘quite new’ are used to group Ichiroya’s kimono of a certain appearance. Yamatoku’s dating by decades is slightly more useful though they did not date any of their kimonos from 1950 to 1960 (a kimono boom time), or after 1980. Both companies mainly sell formal kimonos with the exception of meisen, which I assume has more appeal in the foreign market due to the kimono exhibition from the Montgomery collection that began touring England and America in 2006.

Compared to what Internet traders offered for export during the period of this research, recycle shops and markets in Japan had a far greater variety of informal kimono and a higher quality of formal kimono available. Gunsaulus (1923: 44) noted the gap in foreign and Japanese taste in kimono and this gap still remains. Among kimono, homongi and furisode reflected changing styles the most. However, it was harder to compare homongi or furisode using the Internet images, as the selection was too limited and these kimonos have the biggest variety in surface design. It was possible to see a change in uchikake from yuzen designs before the war to embroidered designs with gold, orange and red in the increasingly complex brocades after the war.

It was useful to line up tomesode viewed on the Internet, as there has been less variation in this form of kimono. Figure 11 shows changes in the hem patterns through the 20th century based on the images I saw from the internet traders and the tomesode presented in Utsukushii Kimono.

Figure 11: Tomesode development
4.1.5 Interviews

Finding people willing to talk on record was far more complicated than I had first thought. I tried to find people to interview through personal recommendations, but most people I approached were reluctant to share their opinions officially. I heard some very interesting opinions off the record, for example that people had changed rather than kimono. The reluctance to be interviewed seemed to stem from the fact that people did not feel they knew about kimono in a way that would help me.

The dealers of recycled kimono were the least helpful and they were very evasive in their answers about the dates of the garments they were trading. I had been referred to one boutique that sold high quality kimono but when I approached them for an interview, I was told that if I wanted to know about kimono, I should go to school. It became clear that knowledge about kimono was considered a commodity.

The people who were the most helpful were the traders of new kimono. Terase Mayumi, who ran a traditional style kimono shop in Nakano, Tokyo, shared recollections that were very informative. She talked about how her clientele had changed over the years from mothers assembling daughter’s dowries to entertainers and practitioners of Japanese traditional arts. Kabuki, high society and Mama San (called the yoru no cho - night butterflies) were trendsetters. She emphasised that there had always been customers who bought kimono simply because they liked kimono.

Terase believed that there were fashions in kimono, which gave it currency through the changing eras. She explained that cosmopolitan fashion changed a lot and that ‘kimono changes too or people will get tired of it’ (Terase M 2007, pers. comm., 20 November). Examples of changes included colourful undergarments and tabi before World War II and the zundo shape and white undergarments after the war when kimono became a garment for a special occasion. She recalled textiles trends such as omeshi, shibori and yamamayu and even more rapid changes in the colours and designs in furisode.

Tsuduki Ayako, who had worked for the Suzunoya kimono chain store for 30 years, talked about how staff input determined the colours and designs in each season’s collection. She mentioned that the trends in kimono had repeated in the 30 years that she had been working for the company. She also pointed out the change in kimono from a functional garment to one that was decorative. She was quite receptive to change, advocating wearing furisode after
marriage, which was in stark contrast to its usual association with unmarried youth. The interview took place in the shop in a shopping mall and many ready-made furisode were on display. Suzunoya is one of the biggest kimono chain stores in Japan (Yano Research Institute 2002: 567).

4.1.6 Summary of results

Personal recollections, institution’s rules on etiquette, magazine ideals of kimono, actual garments and images of garments have all contributed to a deeper perception of what kimono is and how it has changed through the 20th century. ‘What is kimono?’, ‘How has kimono changed in the 20th century?’ and ‘Were there fashions in 20th century women’s kimono?’ were the questions that led to the realisation that the fashions in kimono that I saw were specifically the process of fashion. While it is possible to trace cosmopolitan fashion in kimono through the 20th century, it is not representative of the more fundamental changes of the role of kimono in society that influenced style changes.

As for specific style changes, there have been changes in the colour and surface design and the amount of experimentation deemed acceptable. When I talked about fashion, the retailers I interviewed referred to colour, design and experimentation. There have also been changes in the way a type of textile had been used through the 20th century. Flannel for example was popular for an around-the-house kimono in the early part of the 20th century but had become pyjama cloth by the 1960s (Yamashita 2000a).

4.2 Discussion

This section presents two aspects that contribute to a better understanding of 20th century women’s kimono. Firstly, there are some common ideas about kimono (in an English context) that have been misleading: the idea that kimono is a garment, as opposed to a variety of garments, and that it is rare and vanishing. The second part of this discussion summarises changes in kimono throughout the 20th century.

4.2.1 Kimono myth: kimono is a robe

The unisex, one-size fits all, T-shaped garment called kimono is for tourists and is available at airport shops. Though kimonos have been a Japanese souvenir for over a century, kimonos produced for the foreign market have differed from those produced domestically (Sapin 2004:
329). There is an idea that foreigners can’t wear kimono properly\textsuperscript{xxvi} (Ashikari 2003: 77; Creighton 1991: 700) although even among Japanese there are elitist attitudes about who should wear kimono (Hamabata 1990: 9). Though kimono in English does have other meanings, a loose Japanese robe is the standard dictionary definition\textsuperscript{xxvii} and is a reflection of how the practice of dressing in kimono is not considered in an English context. The garment appears oversized but the worn kimono is not loose.

The narrowest definition of kimono that I encountered in Japan was Japanese, silk (handmade and hand-sewn domestically) garments with rectangular hanging sleeves (particularly \textit{furisode, tomesode, homongi, mofuku, komon} and the informal garments of the same shape) worn in a prescribed way. Among Japanese people there is also a difference in the way the word kimono is used. Suga (1995: 113) referred to kimono as a costume, likening it to a Halloween costume and Seigawa Kiyoko referred to all clothing of Japanese origin, including rural working clothes, as kimono in her 1946 publication (Dalby 1993: 147). Though there is no consensus on the definition of kimono, essentially the English concept of \textit{one} garment, in a T-shaped format, is different from the group of garments that Japanese call kimono.

\subsection{4.2.2 Kimono myth: kimono is rare}

Kimono is still visible on the streets despite Milhaupt’s claim that kimono is ‘rarer and possibly extinct in their primary use’ (2005: 82). There are even more kimono that are not visible as they are collected for dowries or worn to private functions such as weddings, funerals and parties. I have also heard of people relaxing at home in kimono\textsuperscript{xxviii} The kimonos visible on the streets are worn to occasions like tea ceremony, concerts and cultural events as well as to celebrate life’s milestones. In the middle of January girls wear \textit{furisode} when they celebrate their coming-of-age day and also for their graduation ceremony. Kimono can also be seen at Shinto weddings (public because the ceremony is held at a shrine) or the New Year visits to shrines and temples or when babies are brought to the shrine for the first time.

There is an open house group ‘Kimono de Ginza’ that meet once a month in Tokyo in order to make an occasion to wear kimono. Kimono beauty contests also exist. Kimono is also a working uniform in the service industry: in some Japanese style restaurants and also by \textit{Mama San} (female managers of bars), geisha and Furisode San (young female entertainers: \textit{...})
http://www.furisodesan.com). The kimonos range in quality from durable synthetics to exclusive textiles.

What is less publicised, but also now visible on the street, are the casual kimono, informal kimonos worn during leisure hours on shopping trips or on outings with friends. The ‘antique kimono boom’, over the past ten years, reflects the increased interest in recycled kimono within Japan. There is also new kimono with a nostalgic atmosphere (Mamechiyo 2003). When interviewed on 20 November 2007, Terase Mayumi showed me new textiles that had been woven from patterns designed in the 1920s.

The main exposure to kimono is through the media: in advertisements, in manga, on television, in movies and in cartoons. Kimono in the media is the most visible kind of kimono and it is always present. Fuji Television’s Oku (2003 – 2005), NHK’s Aguri (1997) and Atsuhime (2008) were drama series that were recommended to me because the characters wore stylish kimono.

While Dalby (1985) wrote of the geisha as being the group that continued the kimono tradition, Terase Mayumi recalled the Mama San as an influence on kimono style with their glamorous kimono. They were popularised in television dramas. She also mentioned that Kabuki influenced styles (2007, pers. comm., 20 November).

While kimono is described as rarely worn, I have seen it consistently during the 10 years I have been in Japan: for festive occasions, at the funerals I attended in both Tokyo and Tohoku, every weekend (less often on weekdays), in advertising and constantly on television. Kimono may not be as common as it was a century ago, but it still maintains a substantial presence in Japan.

4.2.3 Kimono myth: kimono is vanishing

There is an industry that involves the forecasting, design, manufacture and distribution of garments, and in addition there is an education and service industry specifically for kimono. Figure 12 illustrates the ongoing presence of ‘Japanese style clothing’ by showing the expenditure on cosmopolitan fashion in comparison to Japanese clothing (including men’s and children’s kimono and hakama). The graph covers the second half of the 20th century.
This period was the time when kimono was reported as vanishing so it is interesting to see that there was still money spent on kimono during this time.

![Annual average of monthly clothing expenditure in Japan](image)

**Figure 12: Monthly household expenditure on clothing in Japan**

Certain kinds of kimono have waxed and waned thought the 20th century. In the 1970s a dramatic change was the decline in the sales and manufacture of ordinary kimono resulting in less kimono visible on the street. Manufactures of kimono responded to the problem by promoting expensive formal kimono to make up for lost revenue (Horvat 1988) which created a boom in *iro-tomesode, homonogi* and *furisode* (Yamashita 2000b). After the economic crisis in the 1990s, there were higher volumes of cheaper kinds of kimono sold; so while customers spent less money on kimono, the sales volume rose (Yano Research Institute 2007).

The kimono industry has gone through various changes in the 20th century with various sections expanding or contracting as consumer demands change. The current kimono industry encompasses education and service sectors in addition to the manufacturing, sales and promotion sectors. It would be naive to assume that kimono is vanishing.

### 4.2.4 Chronology of changes in women’s kimono through the 20th century

I have divided up the century into the reigns of the emperors, a current calendar scheme in Japan. Kimono is commonly dated by era names, which is similar to the way Edwardian or Victorian fashion contextualizes elite clothing styles from their respective eras. The division within the eras are arbitrary, roughly relating to the turn of the centuries or the end of World War II and the 1970s oil crisis.
4.2.4.1 Late Meiji 1900 – 1912

1900 was the year the heir to the throne married in a combination of Japanese and western styles though Imperial fashions had little impact beyond the aristocracy (Hastings 1993). In Japan, 1900 was not the turn of a century; in the Japanese calendar scheme it was the 33rd year of the reign of the Meiji Emperor. In those 33 years, Japan had gone through radical changes of leadership and policy, leading to industrialization and greater interaction with foreign countries.

There were regional differences in the styles of dress, clothing customs and also in the name of clothes. It was possible to identify a person’s origin by the woven design on their clothes in rural areas (Hayashi 1960: 51; Kawakami 1993: 202) where changes in styles were slower. In urban areas women had adopted festive ‘kimono with long sleeve-pockets (about to the waist with arms stretched out)’ (Yanagida, 1957:14) for ordinary use and coped with the inconvenient sleeves by tying them back when working. In Tokyo the style of kimono denoted where someone lived (Yamashita 2000b:120-1) which also related to social standing.

Dry goods stores evolved into department stores starting with Mitsukoshi in 1904. Mitsukoshi, Takashimaya, Shirokiya and Matsuya had monthly or seasonal publications promoting kimono, obi, Japanese and western accessories such as shawls, gloves and umbrellas. Matsuya included swatches of material (fine kasuri, narrow stripes and plain colours in various shades of blues and browns) in earlier publications. Kimono style started to change more rapidly from the turn of the century as the department stores began to initiate fashions (Jinno 2002: 325, Sapin 2004: 330-4, Yamanobe, Fujii & Kyoto Textile Wholesalers Association 1996: 9-11). Geisha were used to advertise kimono.

Of course, there were rich people’s wives and ladies of the nobility who wore much better kimono than the geisha. But women of the nobility did not show up in public.

By contrast, the geisha’s business was to display good kimono and they were willing to appear on posters. Naturally kimono had to be advertised only through the geisha.

(Harevan, 2002: 114)

Rapid changes in style became possible as people in urban areas lost the distinction between ordinary days and festive days. This loss enabled the change from the limited palette of grey, indigo and orange to the relatively bright period designs offered by Mitsukoshi clothing store.
from 1905. The surge in nationalism from the 1904-5 war with Russia was another factor that revived old Japanese designs (Yanagida 1957: 16).

*Kasane* (layered) kimono became fashionable and the inner layer was lined with a new kind of bright red that made the ensemble look novel (Van Assche 2005: 25). Women of the nobility appeared in the early issues of *The Ladies Graphic* in formal kimono and occasionally western dress. There were fine floral designs on the front panels of *kasane* kimono and at times there were three layers instead of two.

Yanagida (1957: 13-20) described Tokyo trends for women such as finely striped scarves around 1903 and pompadour hairstyles for hakama-clad students. The collar of the undergarments became a focal point in red, purple, blue or yellow silk crepe. *Haori*, previously black and functional, became more ornamental. Thin figured satin became popular around 1901 and after 1905 ultra thin silk gauze *haori* became fashionable for summer. The *obi* took on greater importance as the main accessory. At the end of the Meiji period blanket-like shawls were in fashion.

**4.2.4.2 Taisho 1912 – 1926**

There was a revival of the past initiated by the Empress Teimei who reverted to traditional dress for the coronation in 1912 (Minnich 1963: 320). During and after World War I, Japan benefited from trade with allies and the territories (which at this time included Korea, Taiwan and the Kuril islands), creating a prosperous era.

The earthquake in 1923 devastated Tokyo and hastened the change of department stores to international-style department stores (Mishima 1941: 159). The earthquake is cited as the point where women changed to cosmopolitan fashions (Dalby 1993 125; Slade 2009: 112). However, Faust (1926: 146-7), working in a Japanese university and writing after the earthquake, concluded that the reason why the majority of Japanese women were still wearing kimono was that men did not want them to change.

Gunsaulus (1923: 4) noted the distinction between cotton for everyday garments and silk for formal kimono. She explained that kimono could be worn trailing on the ground or tied up with two cords around the waist and hips. Striped crepe or all-over designs were preferred for street-wear, but formal wear had crests and restrained floral or scenic designs on the hem and
sometimes on the sleeves. Formal wear consisted of three layers of kimono with a symmetrically placed floral pattern on the hem (Kamiya 1971).

According to Gunsaulus (1923), it was in the han-eri, undergarments and obi that bolder designs and colours reflected personal taste. Maru obis were worn for formal occasions and the chuya obi backed with a contrasting colour was worn at other times. The two main ways to tie the obi was the taiko (worn by all women) or a butterfly bow (worn by brides or unmarried girls).

Grey, brown, mauve or soft blue (bright in contrast to the dark colours of previous eras) were common for younger women and more subdued ones for matrons (Gunsaulus 1923: 5). Mishima (1941: 266-70) described the trousseau of her cousin that included a kimono for each month and explains that when the cousin went off on her honeymoon, they could not find her at the station as purple was in fashion that year and everyone was wearing it.

Department stores and large trading companies led the production of kimono and were influential on the fashions of the day, producing popular designs reminiscent of earlier periods or with a foreign influence. Chinese motifs became fashionable (Jinno 2002) and stripes became wider. Producers of kasuri, shibori and chuugata utilised new technologies and brought these techniques to new standards (Yamanobe 1987: 15). Striped kimono eventually gave way to patterned textiles as technological innovation and mass production brought the price of patterned textiles down (Uchida 1988).

Designs became bigger, bolder and more colourful and reflected modern graphics. Graphic patterns were particularly apparent in meisen kimono. Meisen, popular since the Meiji era, was made from the scrap silk from the silk weaving industry and was woven into durable and affordable silk kimono. Demand increased for Yuki tsumugi, originally an indigo striped textile, after it was produced with picture kasuri; the tortoiseshell pattern being the most popular design (Shuefftan 1999).

4.2.4.3 Early Showa 1926 – 1945

Early Showa kimono was colourful with woven graphics for informal kimono and bigger elaborate designs decorating formal kimono. Western motifs like roses became more common. Also during this period raincoats became popular, as did cheaper kinds of obis,
the current *Nagoya obi*, the *fukuro obi* and the *hitoe obi* (Yamashita 2000a). While Dalby (1993: 129) states that kimono froze into its current form in the 1920s, Yamashita (2000a) shows several developments in kimono that began during the early Showa period including the rising popularity of crested *homongi* as formal wear at the beginning of the period and a short trend for fox stoles. *Murayama oshima tsunugi* (Created in response to the high demand for *Oshima tsunugi*) and *ushikubi* (spun silk from double cocoons) production peaked in the mid 1930s.

What is less discussed, because of the current emphasis on silk kimono, is the use of non-natural fibres. In the early 1930s Japan was one of the four largest rayon producers in the world and half of the rayon manufactured was consumed domestically in the form of kimono and summer *obi* (Suzuki 1935). Mass production catered for the increasing demand for kimonos (Yamanobe, Fujii & Kyoto Textiles Wholesalers Association 1996: 9-10).

Mishima, in the early 1930s, recalls the similarity of styles in department stores when choosing her black silk crepe bridal kimono.

> I looked over all the ready-made ones and also all the sample books in the three biggest department stores in Tokyo, but found none that pleased me. The ornamental figures on the skirt looked all alike, mechanically designed by combining one way or the other the traditional figures of good luck, such as pine and bamboo foliage, cranes and turtles, treasure boats and fans.

(Mishima 1941: 171)

Brides started to use *uchikake* in the late 1930s. Bridal *furisode* for elite families became the normal *iro naoshi* bridal kimono and black *tomesode* (previously middle class bridal kimono) had become the kimono for married women (Yamashita 2000a).

Spending power decreased as more money became tied up in war bonds and resources became scarce (Dower 2005; Garon 2000). The tighter economic situation was reflected in the quality of *Mitsukoshi Times*. Full of colour plates in the late 1920s, the publication had thinned by 1936 and had reverted to a style similar to the turn of the century issues. The pictures of the sales at Mitsukoshi department store show all the female customers in kimono.
In 1940, due to the war effort, the government prohibited the manufacture of luxury fabrics and citizens who wore luxurious kimono on the street were considered unpatriotic and had their kimono cut by those supporting the war effort (Takasawa 1948: 32). Meisen was the only silk kimono government regulations did not prohibit as it was considered a necessity (Mochinaga Brandon 1996: 9). Kimonos were cut into mompei starting with the casual kimono and by the end of the war the good silk kimono were also used (Mochinaga Brandon 2005: 45). Kimonos were also traded for food with farmers during the war, or sent to the countryside for safekeeping as the firebombing razed cities (Mishima 1953: 22-3, 97).

4.2.4.4 Mid Showa 1946 – 1960s

Immediately after the war, Japanese women were encouraged to wear kimono (Mishima 1953: 66). However, as resources were scare and starvation was a more demanding problem, the streets showed a great variety of clothing styles.

Some women are seen in gorgeous kimono, others wear their war-time mompei, while the war veterans still wear the shabby uniforms of their erstwhile regiments. You will see on the bustling streets people in make-shift dresses made apparently from blankets of curtains, walking side by side by young women in smart western clothes.

(Takasawa 1948: 32)

Yellow, red and large floral patterns became fashionable soon after the war ended, while khaki and mompei, the clothes and colours associated with the war, were shunned (Cook & Cook 1992:185-7). Another post-war trend was that young people wore narrower obis and experimented with the way it was tied (Hashimoto 1962:38-9). While resources were still scarce, certain trends like dyeing silk kimonos black and printing patterns over them were short-lived fashions that enabled people to be stylish (M Terase 2007, pers. comm., 26 November). Around 1951 fabrics like cotton and silk became available for the common household (Mishima 1953: 230).

As wool became available, there was also a fashion for thick wool coats. The varying width of the bolt of wool fabric enabled a great variety of styles.ishi Omeshi was valued as an expensive silk for kimono and the trend for Majorca omeshi, woven with metallic threads (derived from the gold brocade from Majorca Spain), dates from around the 1950s (M Terase 2007, pers. comm., 26 November).
The American occupation ended in 1952 and in 1953 the first issue of *Utsukushii Kimono* was published showing a wide variety of styles and an obvious influence from cosmopolitan fashion in colour, silhouette and patterns. The Japanese government endorsed exhibitions that began in the 1950s in a bid to aid the textile industry (Ishimura 1988) and from 1955 brought particular artists to public notice by certifying people as living national treasures. *Yuzen* artisans and stencil cutters were the main recipients in the first year, reflecting the importance placed on dyers rather than weavers.

In 1959 the current emperor of Japan married a commoner who appeared in kimono and influenced kimono fashions (Yamano 2001: 54) such as designs on a white background. The kimono industry thrived (Dalby 1993: 131; Minnich 1963: 329). *Haori* with a picture design, a revival of the pre-war *haori*, became fashionable again and *hitoe obi* (a slightly narrower *obi*) reappeared (Yamashita 2000a). Movies had an influence on kimono styles in the 1960s (Minnich 1963: 333) and western influence in the kimono ensemble was found in the umbrellas, bags, hairstyles and *obi* patterns (Hashimoto 1962: 40).

As the economy grew, so did the spending power of the common Japanese person and for the majority of Japanese people consumption of media images turned into consumption of actual goods by the 1960s (Gorden 2007: 17). There was a boom in expensive kinds of kimono like *iro-tomesode, homongi* and *furisode* (Yamashita 2000b: 126-7). Though women did not normally wear kimono to work, during the New Year period they did wear *homongi* or beautiful kimono and had their hair arranged in the Japanese style. Pictures of these women were shown in the New Years newspapers each year (M Terase 2008, pers. comm., 6 March).

Wool *kasuri* kimono with matching *haori* started appearing and synthetic kimono was offered as an easy-care alternative to silk. At their children’s school entrance ceremonies, mothers wore black *urushi haori*, a trend that was so pervasive that they were nicknamed crows (M Terase 2008, pers. comm., 6 March).

Experimentation with forms and mixing of foreign and Japanese styles were gradually replaced with an increasingly standardized version of kimono, as everyday kimono decreased, and more importance was put on formal kimono. White became the standard colour for *haneri* and *tabi*. Designs on kimonos started to incorporate motifs from various seasons so that the kimono could be worn over a longer period in the year (Katoh 1962).
4.2.4.5 Late Showa 1970s – 1989

In the early 1970s women who worked in cabarets and clubs set trends with their shiny, glamorous kimono as they were featured in movies and television dramas (M Terase 2007, pers. comm., 20 November). The year 1973 was the peak year for kimono after which informal kimono sales dropped and the number of weavers and dyers halved by the late 1970s (Horvat 1988). Ordinary people still wore kimono but it was for special occasions like school entrance ceremonies, wedding receptions, tea ceremony, parties and for New Year celebrations.

Shibori was featured in the front pages of kimono magazines. The trend for shibori lasted until the market was flooded with Korean shibori, which was the cheaper alternative (M Terase 2007, pers. comm., 20 October). In 1972 Okinawa became a Japanese island once again, creating an interest in bingata, a technique that was once reserved for royalty (Stincheum, 1993). Murayama Oshima tsumugi became popular after it was designated a traditional Japanese craft in 1975.

Luxurious silk kimono for festive days had become more commonplace, and on the other hand, ordinary kimono had become rare. Understated luxury began to be found in the ordinary kimono in the form of hand-made traditional crafts. For example there was a trend for the yamamayu silk (from wild silk worms) in the early 1970s and high society wore the handloom yuki tsumugi and Oshima tsumugi to show their status (M Terase 2008, pers. comm., 6 March).

Kimono was visible on certain days, though not always well received by everyone. Hamabata, studying the Japanese elite, recorded the opinion of a wealthy woman who ‘… hated the arrival of festive days, for she would be forced to look at the tasteless silk kimono worn by ordinary women. The wearing of silk kimono should be reserved for women of good taste only, for women of position...’ (Hamabata 1990: 9).

Sales figures showed that people were still spending money on kimono (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication 2005). Kimono had become yosoiki (clothing for going out) and was promoted as an investment in a traditional and classical form of dress. Exhibitions in expensive hotels showcased luxurious kimonos, giving a sense of grandeur for a new kind of customer. Yamaguchi, a weaver from Kyoto, explained that, due to higher living standards,
ordinary people could now afford to buy furisode for their daughters and that there was a demand for more elaborate obi (Hareven 2002: 110).

The 1980s *Utsukushii Kimono* issues were full of advertisements and articles educating the reader about the different types of manufacturing processes. Kimono education became an important part of the kimono industry. There were schools for kimono that offered various levels of certification up to professor and their proliferation is a testimony as to how seriously kimono was regarded. The tubular ‘zundo’ silhouette was promoted by schools and magazines and taught in beauty salons. The rules made kimono an intimidating form of dress. A baseballer’s wife appeared in public in the 1980s with her kimono overlapped right over left and her mistake made headlines. xlviii

The journalist Trucco (1986: 26), championing the artisan Kubota Ichiku, called the kimono world a staid conservative society because of the inflexible attitudes. To wear kimono stylishly in the 1970s and 1980s involved knowing how to combine textiles the right way for the right occasion and the right season. Wearing kimono correctly, according to kitsuke school standards, required an enormous amount of knowledge about the kinds of textiles available and the etiquette involved in putting it together.

Silk kimonos were taken apart for washing and so laundering created practical problems by the 1980s, as Japanese sewing ceased being taught in schools. The time spent sewing or shopping for clothing had dropped from 50 minutes a day in 1965 to 10 minutes in 1989 because by the 1970s ready-made apparel and washing machines had become widely available (Iwao 1993: 34-6). With less people knowing how to launder kimono properly, cleaning also became an extra expense. Renting a kimono removed the problems of cleaning and storing kimono. The rental industry (particularly for weddings but also for the coming-of-age day furisode and graduation hakama) and kitsuke services became (and remains) an important part of the kimono industry.

**4.2.4.6 Heisei 1989 onward**

By Heisei (the era name for the current Emperor) kimono had become quite standard with white tabi, white han-eri and a padded zundo shape. The obi was tied high as it had become primarily decorative rather then practical (Tsuduki A, 2008, pers. comm. 18 March). Sales of formal kimono peaked in 1990 (Yano Research Institute 2002: 563) and then many kimono
firms went bankrupt in the 1990s recession. Fraudulent sales methods were exposed which contributed to a negative impact on the industry (M Terase 2008, pers. comm., 6 March). Media reports in Japan suggested that kimono was not relevant any more (Mcveigh 2000: 106). Normal kimono shops lost market share to kimono chain stores (Yano Research Institute 2002: 565). Offshore production and synthetic alternatives reduced costs and recycled kimono started making inroads into kimono magazines (notably illustrated articles showcasing the Ikeda collection in Utsukushii Kimono) and the market.

Yukata became more popular and reflected contemporary colours and patterns. As the price dropped Yukata became a lot more visible during the summer festivals. Yukata was much easier to put on and launder and the stringent rules of kimono were not strictly applied.

The relaxation of rules, acceptance of synthetics and synthetic blends that enable easy laundering and the increased trade in recycled kimono (the antique boom) have culminated in very interesting and innovative styling and design in the 21st century (documented by the magazine Kimono Hime and reflected in the kimono styling by Mamechiyo (2003; 2005). Internet sales, the wealth of information on the Internet and nostalgia no doubt have facilitated this development. However, the recent furore in 2009 over a Miss Universe candidate wearing a micro furisode, summarised by Japan Today (1 August 2009), and the fact the magazine changed its name from Kimono Michi (the way of kimono) to Kimono Hime (kimono princess) reflect just how strong the influence still is from current kimono organizations and how seriously kimono is taken in Japan.

4.3 Summary
My original question of ‘Were there fashions in 20th century kimono?’ changed to ‘How has kimono changed?’ because I found it difficult not to see style change. However, in order to know how kimono had changed, I had to find out what kimono was, because the word did not carry the same meaning in Japanese as it does in English.

4.3.1 What is kimono?
While kimono at the turn of the 20th century was a general term for Japanese clothing, within Japan, the meaning of the word has become more specific. The Japanese definition of kimono has gone through great changes from diverse meanings and contexts at the beginning of the 20th century to a standardised form at the end. Because the definition of kimono changed in
the 20th century, a gap was created between the use of the word in Japan and the meaning of kimono in the English context.

The term wa-fuku is closer to the range of garments the English definition of kimono encompasses, as the Japanese definition of kimono refers to specific kinds of garments and the etiquette involved in wearing them. The feature of kimono in the Japanese context is the prescribed way it is worn. Kimono has come to be associated with silk, etiquette and art. In Japan, what is considered kimono today has been standardised by the kitsuke schools and curriculum in beauty academies and this standard has also had an impact on what is presented in kimono magazines.

Dalby (1993) classifies kimono that is worn in alternative ways as kimonoa. This classification echoed the opinion I have repeatedly heard (from Japanese people I encountered) that separates kimono, wa-fuku (worn according to the standards of etiquette in kitsuke rulebooks) from kimono altered or worn in alternative ways. There is more experimentation with the practice of wearing kimono now. However, considering the opinions I heard from Japanese people and the controversies about kimono in the media, there are elements that are still fundamental to making a kimono a kimono. For example, hem length seems to be one aspect that can change a kimono into cosmopolitan clothing.

4.3.2 How has kimono changed?
The importance placed on certain types of kimono throughout the 20th century reflects the changes in social values, government policy and expendable income. These changes are also reflected in the growth or bankruptcies in different sectors of the kimono industry over the 20th century. There has been a growth in the kimono schools and dressing service sectors since the 1960s, which has changed and standardized knowledge about kimono and etiquette, making knowledge about kimono a commodity.

Offshore production has certainly posed some challenges for local manufacturers, particularly for the kinds of kimono textiles that are not associated with specific regions in Japan. Imported textiles have made domestic production appear more expensive. Because ordinary kimono was rarely used for everyday clothing by the 1980s, humble fabrics, like tsunugi (originally a textile made at a subsistence level), were propelled into the limelight and worn for status because they had become so expensive and rarefied. The desirability of handmade
Textiles also coincided with increased interest in folk art. In contrast, the luxurious silk kimono for wealthy families at the beginning of the 20th century became more commonplace during the economic boom after World War II.

Different types of kimono were popular throughout the 20th century and amongst different sections of the population and at different times. What is now known in Japan as kimono changed from a mainstream urban dress format at the beginning of the 20th century to a minor dress format at the end. Kimono has been subject to style changes as its function in society has changed.

### 4.3.3 Were there fashions in 20th century women’s kimono?

Seeing changes in kimono style requires a visual vocabulary that is specific to Japanese culture and kimono culture. There have been subtle changes in the arrangement of the ensemble. Popular types of garments and trends in different types of textiles and surface design have also changed throughout the 20th century, but without knowledge of textiles, surface decoration and etiquette, there can only be a superficial understanding of style change.

Cosmopolitan fashion is apparent in kimono throughout the 20th century, especially in the 1950s to 1960s period. However, almost anything is apparent in kimono on a superficial level. Kimono has been used to illustrate war propaganda, reinvented tradition, art deco, the skill of Japanese artisans and a vanishing tradition. Rather than use kimono to illustrate cosmopolitan fashion, I found it more productive to trace the process of fashion: to examine the changes in the style of kimono through the 20th century.

Luxurious silk kimono reached the mass market when, just over a century before, it had been prohibited for the lower classes and the change in consumer lead to brighter, more ornate designs in luxurious kimono. On the contrary, the hand-spun subsistence-level kimonoos from rural areas became garments worn for status as they had become rare and expensive which resulted in the dyeing techniques becoming more sophisticated. Patterns, rather then stripes or plaids, and a greater variation in colour have been created in order to maintain consumer interest in these hand made textiles. Knowledge of textiles and artisans became more important as hand-made kimonos were promoted.
Knowledge of kimono is an elitism found in the Meiji era’s *goshodoki* and the Momoyama era’s *ashi-de* styles where certain combinations created allusions that only a limited circle would grasp. In a similar way, kimono schools, kitsuke books and kimono magazines like *Utsukushii Kimono* also provided an elitist perspective of kimono, which has influenced the styles since the 1970s. Garments have also evolved through the 20th century (for example *tomesode* for the bride changed to the outfit for the mother of the bride) and kimono has been created as social habits change (for example *homongi*).

The kinds of kimono presented in kimono magazines in the latter part of the 20th century do not substantiate Dalby’s (1993: 129) assumption that kimono froze in the 1920s as they reflect both the influence of cosmopolitan fashion and domestic trends. Superficially, and on a deeper level, there have been fashions in women’s kimono in the 20th century.
5 Conclusion

5.1 Regarding fashions in 20th century women’s kimono

It is possible to look and find anything in kimono including cosmopolitan fashion right throughout the 20th century. I use the word ‘regarding’ because the way one’s vision is filtered by one’s knowledge determines what one sees. Enforcing a western concept of fashion history on non-western dress led to some unrealistic assumptions in the early stages of the project i.e. that kimono (as defined by English dictionaries) did parallel cosmopolitan fashion. What emerged was that kimono did not have the same definition in English and that cosmopolitan fashion was not the main influence on the stylistic changes that kimono went through.

One can regard fashion in kimono at various levels, but it was more illuminating to focus on the fashion process in kimono, in other words, the changes in style in what has now become a minor dress format in Japan. It has been harder to perceive some changes in style as they have been influenced cultural concepts specific to Japan or by lifestyle changes that are unfamiliar to Western cultural knowledge. In addition to cultural and historical contexts, understanding clothing etiquette, motifs, patterns and textiles is crucial to understanding some of the changes in style. The textile, type of garment, lining and construction in addition to colours and patterns and the way an ensemble is co-ordinated and arranged can indicate a particular era.

Several magazines specializing in kimono show changes in colour and pattern through the years and definite parallels to cosmopolitan fashion. There were trends in the kimono that Utsukushii Kimono presented that were similar to those seen internationally in fashion, art and design after World War II— for example abstract art, the folk crafts movement, 1980s glam and 1990s nostalgia. However, style change was also subject to exclusively domestic influences such as the Nihonjin-ron, furosato (hometown) nostalgia, the Taisho boom (a romantic version of the 1920s), the price of textile techniques (for example shibori), concepts of tradition, elevation of specific areas of hand weaving and dyeing and the change of urban housewives to unemployed consumers. The practice of dressing in kimono has also changed due to fundamental cultural and lifestyle changes like central heating, washing machines, home and car ownership, women in the workforce, visiting etiquette, celebration of festivals or life milestones, toilet fixtures and the general rise in the wealth of the country.

It is possible to recognize the mark of time in 20th century kimono although to contextualise the way one regards kimono requires a deeper understanding of kimono than what current
English literature on the subject provides. This study presents factors that enable more nuance in perceiving the changes in style that have occurred throughout the 20th century. These changes in style have made it possible for various groups to regard kimono garments as too old fashioned, current, classic or avant garde. Tradition, or more specifically qualities that are regarded as distinctly Japanese, and cosmopolitan fashion have been only two of the many influences that have impacted on the changes in style in 20th century kimono. This thesis provides a context that enable the reader to regard fashions in 20th century women’s kimono.

5.2 Implications of the study

This study addresses the gap in the literature on kimono in the 20th century as it details the fact that kimono has developed throughout the 20th century and continues to do so. The trajectory of changes in style in kimono after World War II has not been explicated previously in English language published sources. Although, in Japan and internationally, there is a close association of kimono as the timeless traditional dress of Japan, it has not been an immutable dress format. Change in style is the essence of fashion (Kawamura 2005: 5). Kimono has changed; it has changed in style as its functions in society have changed. Skilled visions enable a deeper understanding of changes in style. By showing a way to see the changing styles in kimono, I refute the stereotype of 20th century women’s kimono as an unchanging dress format.

One factor that has been used to classify kimono as anti-fashion, fixed dress or traditional dress is the pace of changes in style. For some fashion theorists a defining feature of fashion is the assumption is that traditional dress (kimono) changes slowly and cosmopolitan fashion changes rapidly (Wilson 2003: 258). However, an early theorist Kroeber (1919) revealed an interesting point about the perception of change. By ignoring the detailing in illustrations of women’s dresses he was able to conclude that garments changed quite slowly despite the fact that people had experienced startling changes in fashion.

To see little or no change in kimono for centuries overlooks a multitude of meanings that have made, and still make, kimono a relevant dress format. This thesis presents more nuances in the discussion of kimono’s ongoing presence in Japan.

Fashion, in some sense, has characterized human culture since the first adornments of the Upper Palaeolithic. Although the processes of fashion comparison, emulation and
differentiation are more noticeably apparent in the rapid changes that characterize systems of industrial production, the same processes are observable or at least inferable in most cultures.

(Cannon 1998: 23)

The broader implication of the study is the contribution to the discussion of the relationship of fashion and customary dress as I propose that the changes in style in kimono equate to the process of fashion. This study presents an interpretation of the global nature of fashion, not of cosmopolitan fashion as a global industry, but as the changes in style in diverse dress formats around the world.

5.3 Further study

A more detailed inquiry into the Yano papers, and also into the kimono industry, would benefit further research in the area of kimono and fashion. The chain stores that have been so successful in the latter part of the 20th century—e.g. Sagami, Suzunoya, Kyoto Kimono Yuzen and Yamano— and the trade papers like Nishijin Graph or small lifestyle magazines like watashi no seigatsu magazin sakura would be interesting sources to follow as they reflect the realities of the kimono trade.

While there are studies detailing the changing styles of non-cosmopolitan fashion (Craik; 2009: 23), they are minimal in comparison to the research locating fashion as a European and American related phenomenon. Research examining the fashion process as a universal phenomenon is a valuable contribution to fashion theory. This study demonstrates how language and cultural perceptions have created a barrier to a wider understanding of the fashion process in non-cosmopolitan dress formats. Further studies explicating stylistic change in non-cosmopolitan dress formats would greatly enhance the discussion on the nature of fashion.
Figure 13: Map of Japan marking the places mentioned in the thesis
References


Breton de la Martinieré, JBJ 1818, Le Japon, ou moeurs, usages et costumes des habitans de cet empire, d'apres les relations recentes de Krusenstern, Langsdord, Titzing, etc., et ce que les voyageurs precedens offrent de plus avere; suivi de la relation du voyage et de la captivite du capitaine russe Golownin, LE JAPON, A.Nepveu, Paris.


Dalby, LC 1983, Geisha, University of California Press, Berkeley.


Dees, J, Stokmans, ME & Kunsthall, R 2009, Taisho kimono: speaking of past and present, Skira, Milan; New York, NY.


Ema, T 1936a, A historical sketch of Japanese customs and costumes, Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, Tokyo.

---- 1936b, Kimono: one hundred masterpieces of Japanese costumes, Maruzen Co., Tokyo.

Encyclopaedia Nipponica 2001, Kitsuke, Shogakukan, Tokyo.

Endo, T & Ishiyama, A 1962, Zusetsu Nihon yoso hyakunendai (100 years of Western fashion in Japan), Bunka-fukuso Gakuin Shuppan, Tokyo.


Gunsaulus, HC 1923, Japanese costume, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago.


Hayashi, T 1960, Japanese women's folk costumes, Ie no Hikari Association, Tokyo.

Hibi, S 1987, Traditional costume and fashion, Thames and Hudson, London.


---- 1956, *Kimono*, 4th edn, Tourist library, Japan Travel Bureau, Tokyo.


Mamechiyo 2003, Mamechiyo no kimono modan (Mamechiyo's modern kimono), Marbletron Inc., Tokyo.

---- 2005, Mamechiyo no kimono a ra modo (Mamechiyo's kimono a la mode), Redi bado shogakukan jitsuyou shirizu, Shogakukan, Tokyo.


Minnich, HB 1963, Japanese costume and the makers of its elegant tradition, C.E.Tuttle, Rutland.


Schneider, J & Weiner, AB 1986, 'Cloth and the Organization of Human Experience', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 178-84.
Takasawa, K 1948, A pictorial story of the kimono, Japan Travel Bureau, Tokyo.


---- 2000b, 'Shashin de tadoru 20 seki kimono no shi (Tracing 20th century kimono in photographs)', *Utsukushii Kimono*, vol. 194, pp. 120-7.


7  Appendices

7.1  Appendix 1: glossary of Japanese terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akashi crepe</td>
<td>(Akashi chirimen) A lightweight crepe produced in Tokamachi, Niigata. It was very popular in the first half of the 20th century.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashi-de</td>
<td>A graphic style where images alluded to classical literature and were understood by an educated few. It was popular in the Momoyama period (1568-1600).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bingata</td>
<td>A stenciling technique from Okinawa originally reserved for royalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuugata</td>
<td>Stenciled textiles with a medium sized pattern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chuya obi</td>
<td>An obi faced with a contrasting fabric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edo komon</td>
<td>Small stencilled pattern originating from Tokyo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fudangi</td>
<td>Casual clothing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fukuro obi</td>
<td>A formal obi with sections of un-figured weave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furisode</td>
<td>Formal, long-sleeved kimono for single young girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furosato</td>
<td>Hometown. This has a particularly nostalgic nuance as there has been</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
substantial migration to urban areas over the 20th century.

**Goshodoki**  A graphic style where images allude to classical literature. It was popular in the Meiji period (1968-1912).

**Hakama**  Pleated pants for kimono. They are worn by men for formal occasions involving kimono but were adopted by women in the late 19th century. The female versions (coloured as opposed to neutral stripes) have a strong association with scholarship and currently can be worn for graduation ceremonies. They are also used for martial arts.

**Haku**  The verb to pull up - for example trousers.

**Han-eri**  A detachable under collar for kimono.

**Hanhaba obi**  A half-width obi.

**Haori**  A short overcoat for kimono.

**Hitone obi**  An obi that is slightly narrower then normal.

**Homongi**  A formal silk kimono defined by the designs continuing over the seams.

**Iro-muji**  A silk kimono with a plain colour.

**Iro-naoshi**  The colourful kimono a brides changes into during a wedding.

**Iro-tomesode**  A tomesode that is not black.
Kasane - Layered – in the kimono context it refers to multiple kimonos worn over each other.

Kasuri - Ikat. The yarn is dyed before it is woven. There are various kinds of kasuri and regional specialties.

Kihachijo - Yellow silk often with red and black stripes or checks from Hachijojima. It can come in other colours.

Kiru - The verb to wear by putting on as opposed to pulling up.

Kitsuke - How to put on a kimono and wear it politely.

Kosode - The precursor to kimono. Kosode became popular in the 16th century and literally means ‘little sleeve’.

Mama San - The female manager of a drinking establishment, particularly hostess bars. Hostess bars are a type of Japanese bar with glamorous female staff who cater for businessmen.

Maru obi - A formal wide obi common in the first half of the 20th century. The distinguishing feature is that it is one width of textile folded in half so both sides are the same for the whole length of the obi.

Meisen - Spun silk textile. The yarn is stenciled before it is woven.

Mofuku - The black, crested, kimono ensemble for funerals.

Moga - The abbreviation for modern girls that refers the women who radically
departed from Japanese feminine norms between the 1920s and 1930s.

**Mompei**
A style of trousers worn by women during World War II. They were also used in rural areas for working in the fields.

**Montsuki**
Literally means with a crest and refers to clothing with a crest for example montsuki haori.

![Montsuki](image1)

**Murayama**
Silk textile similar to Oshima tsumugi, though cheaper and with a wider range of colours.

**Oshima tsumugi**

![Oshima tsumugi](image2)

**Naga-juban**
The long under-kimono.

![Naga-juban](image3)

**Nagoya obi**
An obi that has part of the length folded and sewn together.

**Nihonjin-ron**
The theoretical discussion on the uniqueness of Japan.

**Obi**
The wide outer sash that holds the kimono in place.

![Obi](image4)

**Obi-age**
The sash that covers the cords tying the obi.

![Obi-age](image5)

**Obi-jime**
The cord that holds the obi together.
<p>| <strong>Oiran</strong> | A type of prostitute whose entertainment skills were cultivated for elite patronage. |
| <strong>Omeshi</strong> | High quality silk textile for kimono. Majorca omeshi was woven with a metallic thread. |
| <strong>Oshima tsumugi</strong> | Silk ikat from Oshima. It is dyed with local bark that gives it a distinctive brown colour that softens over time. |
| <strong>Rinzu</strong> | Figured silk. |
| <strong>Ryo</strong> | Fine, silk gauze with an opaque vertical stripe. |
| <strong>Sha</strong> | Fine, sheer, silk gauze weave used for summer kimono. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sho-chiku-bai</strong></th>
<th>Literally means pine, bamboo and plum, which are auspicious symbols when used together.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sado</strong></td>
<td>Japanese tea ceremony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seijin shiki</strong></td>
<td>The coming of age celebration held in January for Japanese people who turn 20.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shibori</strong></td>
<td>Tie-dye.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tabi</strong></td>
<td>Split-toe, woven socks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taiko</strong></td>
<td>Literally means ‘drum’ but in a kimono context it refers to the most common style of tying the obi.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tomesode</strong></td>
<td>Black crested kimono with a coloured pattern on the hem. It is now worn by the female relatives of the bride and groom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tsumugi</strong></td>
<td>Silk pongee. There are various kinds in Japan – see Oshima tsumugi, Murayama Oshima tsumugi and yuki tsumugi for examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uchikake</strong></td>
<td>A brocade coat with a padded hem that is usually worn over bridal kimono.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Uchi-soto  Literally in – out, a concept that permeates language and life in Japan.
Uroko  Scale (fish or snake) pattern.
Urushi  Lacquer. In the context of textiles it means that the thread used in the design has been lacquered.
Ushikubi  Silk textile made from double cocoons in Shiramineson (formally Ushikubi), Ishikawa.
Wa-fuku  Clothing of Japanese origin.
Yamamayu  Silk made from the cocoons of wild silk worms. It has a distinctive yellow colour.
Yo-fuku  Cosmopolitan clothing, clothing not originally from Japan.
Yoru no Cho  Literally means ‘night butterflies’. Refers to the female managers of bars. See Mama san.
Yosoiki  Clothes for going out. The opposite to around-the-house clothes.
Yukata  Cotton or cotton blend kimono worn at summer festivals.

Yuki tsumugi  Silk pongee made in Ibaraki and Tochigi prefectures.

Yuzen  Freehand paste-resist and painting that can combine shibori, stenciling, embroidery and gold leaf application.

Zundo  Cylindrical shape. Kitsuke texts promote the shape as the ideal for kimono.
7.2 Appendix 2: interview details

Name: Terase Mayumi
Place: Nakano, Tokyo
Dates: 20 November 2007
       26 November 2007
       6 March 2008

Terase is the proprietor of a small kimono shop in Tokyo. Though the shop was small, the
staff were always busy as the shop dealt directly with manufacturers of kimono textiles in
addition to consumers. Bolts of cloth were displayed on the shelves lining the walls on the
ground level where the first two interviews took place. The last interview was on the third
level of the building in a private room.

In November I asked Terase about trends in kimono and she recalled, in consultation with her
staff, trend-setters and specific changes in the types of textiles. She recommended the
magazine ‘Kimono Salon’. When I showed her images of kimono and a recycled kimono, she
reacted by talking about the particular era they came from and the way habits have changed
since then.

In March there were no other people in the room and Terase talked about personal
recollections in response to the kimono images I showed her. She also described the types of
consumers of kimono from each decade after World War II. She elaborated on the way
kimono was purchased for dowries and the kinds of kimono that had been popular over the
second half of the century. She talked about the way negative press over the past two decades
had impacted on consumer confidence and had resulted in a decline in the kimono industry.

Terase believed that there were fashions in kimono just as there were fashions in yo-fuku. She
stated that if there were no fashions in kimono, people would get bored. She also explained
that Japanese people can live without kimono now and that many people lack the space and
environment to wear and take care of kimono.

The sound quality of the first two recording is at times poor because of the background of the
shop noise. The interviews consist of Terase talking in both Japanese and English and also her
staff speaking in Japanese in response to her questions and calls for confirmation.

Terase has had experience in the kimono industry over a long period of time (Pre-pacific war
to the present). Her recollections on the changes, in not only style but also habits concerning
kimono, are enlightening. Though she is unclear about specific dates, she elaborates on trends
in kimono textiles and the reason why the textiles became appealing and then declined in
popularity.
Tsuduki has been working for Suzunoya, a large retail chain store specialising in kimono, for about 30 years. The interview took place in the Kisarazu shop, which was located in a multi-story shopping complex. The shop displayed ready-made formal kimono on mannequins.

In contrast to her mother and grandmother, Tsuduki did not have much interest in kimono before she began working. She had learnt how to dress customers in kimono as part of her job and was particularly interested in that aspect of the job. She said that the biggest change in kitsuke was that the way to wear kimono had become purely decorative. She also advocated ideas that were radical such as wearing furisode after marriage.

Tsuduki explained that the trends she had seen early in her career had repeated in the same way that trends are cyclical in yo-fuku. She talked of different trends in the colours and accessories for furisode and how the shop had tried unusual textiles, such as lace, in trying to promote a contemporary image of kimono. She said that the shop staff discussed and had an influence on the colours and patterns chosen for each season’s collection.

The interview was in Japanese and the sound quality is fair. At times other staff came in and gave their opinions and customers came in and out of the shop space which created breaks in the conversation.

While Tsuduki was not confident about giving her opinions on changes in kimono style outside her 30 year experience in the shop, she gives an insight into how a kimono chain store has become successful in a time when the kimono retail industry transformed.
In this thesis the word ‘recycled’ means ‘used’. It does not mean broken down and redeveloped into something new. The slightly ambiguous nature of the definition (convert or use again – see the Oxford dictionary) is also suggestive of the differentiation made in Japan of kimono worn in a prescribed way (kimono) or worn alternatively (not kimono). Japanese second-hand shops are called ‘recycle’ shops, spelt in the katakana script. This use also means that second-hand (or more accurately vintage) kimono are also called ‘recycle’ kimono. This sets them apart from antique kimono, which might also be called ‘second-hand’ or ‘used’.

The use of the phrase ‘open the kimono’ (meaning to reveal secrets) in the information technology industry reflects the association of kimono and exposure in an English context.

The change of examinations of culture (dress) from exotic habits (costume) to social practice is an academic trend found also in visual anthropology and visual research (Hamilton 2006; Morphy & Banks 1999).

Japanese scholars discuss areas ranging from the debates about Japanese sewing education to the experience and opinions of people who have an affinity to kimono, to the myths promoted about kimono and perceptions of important aspects of kimono.

Yamanaka’s philosophy is apparent even in current popular animations like Sazae San. The episode on October 19 2008, for instance, showed the exuberant main character changing into a mild, well-mannered lady when she put on kimono.


Okinawa became a Japanese prefecture again in 1972 but was under American administration at the time the book was published.

A neighbour, kimono sales staff and my students have told me that kimono has not changed. It is a very real notion for some people. Eicher and Sumberg (1995) define ethnic dress as a dress format where changes are not perceived. Dalby (1993: 14, 114) indicates that changes in kimono are not accepted.
It is difficult to get reliable information in English about the changes in kimono style over the 20th century. There are forums and sites on the Internet, discussing a wide range of topics related to kimono in English with an even wider degree of authority. Images are also restricted as access to the kimono magazines that span the century is difficult (and the earlier issues showed textiles rather than models) and with image reproduction restrictions, contemporary images of women wearing kimono are not widely disseminated.

Japanese culture centres are often located at the top of shopping complexes. They provide classrooms for private teachers. The classes are usually related to the arts, for example, dance, music, drawing, language, calligraphy etc.

There was a marked difference between the opinions of my kitsuke teacher and the kimono retailers I interviewed about the changing forms of kimono. The interviewees accepted and promoted kimono as a changing dress format. Both the Sodo and Yamano texts on kitsuke promote a standardised dress format.

For example, the October issue of Katei no Shirobe from 1905 presents a range of embroidered and non-white han-eri, as does Imayou in May 1915 on pp. 24-5 and Mitsukoshi in February 1928 on p.2. Atarashii Kimono 1956 and Utsukushii Kimono from the same period show only white han-eri on their models. In the early 1990’s Utsukushii Kimono began to show coloured and embroidered kimono on models. For example, there was coloured han-eri with casual kimono on pp.175-6 October 1993 and embroidered han-eri with a formal kimono on p.75 in Dec 1994.

For the most basic form of kimono (yukata), dressing involves one long garment fastened with three cords, and for a formal kimono it is two long garments and eight cords.

While I agree that clothing can convey an enormous amount of information to members of society who are equipped to read the codes at a glance (Dalby 1993:7), I also think that the codes change over time and do not convey the same meaning to all members of society. This variation makes the explanation of codes in clothing problematic.
For example, the Yamano school Principle styled kimono for *Utsukushii Kimono*, and the school trains students as kimono stylists (impacting on the way kimono is arranged in the media) and as dressers (impacting on the way formal kimono is arranged).

In addition to the Sodo and Yamano texts I studied, other *kitsuke* books in my local library (Hon-Atsugi, Kanagawa) also showed the different kinds of kimono.

Japanese funerals takes place over three days after the death and then there are periodical memorial services, which vary according to region. I heard of services on the 7th day, 49th day, 100th day, one-year and three-year periods.

I spoke to various ages and genders over the 10 years I lived in Japan.

For examples, see issues of *Utsukushii Kimono* and *Kimono Salon* from this period.

*Kitsuke* texts always have a section devoted to the types of textiles for kimono. Online there are websites in English that go into more detail, promoting regional handcrafts [http://www.kimono.or.jp/dic/eng/](http://www.kimono.or.jp/dic/eng/) and the work of national intangible treasures [http://www.kougei.or.jp/english/](http://www.kougei.or.jp/english/). *Textile designs of Japan* (Nihon Seni Isho Center 1959) is a publication quoted in English texts on kimono.

Nagasaki (1994) gives the history of *furisode* by discussing the changes in the length of the sleeve until the 20th century. There are various lengths in the modern versions of *furisode*, the longest reaching the ground. After the 1960s silk *furisode* became more widely worn, not only for weddings (both bride and guest) but also to celebrate the coming-of-age day. It is a pity that Nagasaki did not extend his history a little further.

Figured patterns in *rinzu* combined with a dyed design have been used to great effect, particularly in the post-war period with the weaving technology, increased general wealth and demand for luxurious kimono.

For example, *Utsukushii Kimono* 1955, Vol 4, p. 12.


For example, *Utsukushii Kimono* 1973, Vol 78, cover page.

For example, Utsukushii Kimono 1994, Vol. 170, p. 300.

See the issues of Utsukushii Kimono from the late 1950s and the 1960s.

There was an increase in articles educating the reader about the manufacture of regional textile from the 1970s onwards.

The years of the issues that I examined are in the brackets after the journals name.
Shirokiya’s Katei no shirobu (1904 – 1905) Shirokiya times (1920 – 1921)
Takashimaya’s Shinissho (1909 – 1910)
Matsuya’s Imayou (1908 – 1919)

For example, Utsukushii Kimono Vol 1, p. 32

The 4 Utsukushii Kimono issues in 1990 featured kosode from museums in different cities in the USA. Autumn 1990 had a spread featuring yuzen versions of Edo and Meiji designs, though the colours had been altered to suit contemporary tastes.

Gunsaulas explained that even the Japanese women who wore bright kimono would never wear the kind of kimono the tourists bought.

By traditional style shop, I am referring to the kind of shop where you have to take off your shoes and step up onto the tatami (straw) flooring to inspect the textiles. Rolls of cloth are taken off the shelf and spread on the floor for the customer’s inspection. This style of shop is less conducive for casual browsing compared to the chain kimono shops where kimono are displayed as garments (rather than rolls of cloth on shelves) and you do not have to interact with sales staff.

The novelist Uno Chiyo created a stir in 1985 when she wore a furisode at her 88th birthday party.

Creighton recounts the experience of a foreigner ordering a yukata, which was kindly cut to the customers exact height (instead of the usual longer length that enables a tuck on the hips) because she was a foreigner and it was assumed that she would not understand the Japanese way.
According to Longman dictionary of contemporary English: A traditional piece of Japanese clothing like a long loose coat, worn at special ceremonies.


According to Apple Computer Inc. Dictionary: A long, loose robe with wide sleeves tied with a sash, originally worn as a formal garment in Japan and now also used elsewhere as a robe.

Two female kimono shop owners mentioned wearing kimono at home because it was more comfortable and I heard of a friend’s father doing the same.

From the annual average of monthly household expenditure (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication 2005)

Hastings (1993) claims that the Empress had very little impact on the fashions of the general population.

This is an interesting observation as it contradicts the explanation of kimono coming from high society.

Alice Bacon (1914) explained the method of shopping in Tokyo in 1890. Wealthy families had fabric brought to their homes, and other customers went to tatami shops and inspected the cloth laid out for them. This way of shopping still remains for some kimono shops.

In contrast, Mishima (1941: 20) (from aristocratic lineage and growing up in western Japan) talks of cotton being the cheap cloth for children and servants. There were differences in clothing customs at a regional and also social level.

See, for example, Mitsukoshi October 1931, colour inset.

Terase (from western Japan) explained that she got married in a black kimono in 1945 but five years later when her sister got married, bridal kimono had changed to shiromuji, the white style (2007, pers. comm., November 26).
This variation in width is not possible in kimono textiles where the width was set at about 35cm. With the increasing height of the younger generations, there is now a wider option available.

Inspired by the imperial kimono, the Ochi family decided to open a kimono shop (Public lecture by Ochi Kahori 2008, Omiya, October 26).

This censure was not restricted to kimono. Iwao explains the Japanese group mentality. ‘...when young and unmarried, Japanese women may wear bright-colored clothing, keep their hair long and loose, and be somewhat spontaneous or flamboyant in behavior, the older they grow the more modest and subdued they must become in dress. And strong conformity to age appropriate norms is the safest protection from criticism and eliminates the need to make personal judgments, errors in which can bring quite devastating social consequences’ (1993: 23).

Terase talked of two types of fraud. One involved selling machine-made kimono (cheap) as hand-made kimono (expensive). The other fraud was male sales staff coercing female clients into borrowing money to spend on expensive kimono (2007, pers. comm., 20 November).

Images have influenced notions of traditions and nostalgia in Japan (Ben-Ari 1991). The Kosaka Kazuko, Tanaka Tsubasa and Ishida Shigeko collections (of high-quality 20th century kimono) have been exhibited in department stores and museums and appear in kimono and antique magazines. They are styled in a way that appeals to contemporary tastes. There have also always been period drama series on television while I have lived in Japan. All contribute to an image of the past that is romanticised.

There are alternative fashion industries (Akou 2007; Allman 2004), such as the kimono industry, that are independent of the cosmopolitan fashion industry.

Current dress history does address fashions in countries other than Europe and America, but the majority of research links the developments in style to cosmopolitan fashion. For example, ROOT, R. A. (2005). The Latin American fashion reader. Oxford, UK, Berg. 15 of the 17 chapters link fashion to influence on or from cosmopolitan fashion. Alternatively, research on non-cosmopolitan dress formats tends to focus on issues other than changes in style. For example, BANERJEE, M., & MILLER, D. (2008). The sari. Oxford,
Berg. This book does mention fashions that have no relation to cosmopolitan fashion. However, the focus is on placing sari in context and as such, does not detail how sari styles have changed.

Eicher (2000) summarises 125 years of anthropological writings on dress noting that the concerns of the discipline (particularly holism and including culture, fieldwork and gender) determine the approach taken to studies on dress. Thus studies on stylistic change in dress over a period of time are relatively rare.