

Typically, when someone asks me to make a pattern for them, I pull out my bolt of gridded fabric and either directions, photos or the actual garment to pattern and after taking a few measurements got to work!

With Japanese, the numbers are somewhat unimportant and thus patterns are limited in availability. For a kosode, even in our current modern era (take a look at the modern Kimono) the design is based on the width of the fabric. Historically, in fact, it was based on the width of the loom. During the Heian Era (794-1192) the looms produced fabric in the range of 12" to 14" although they did produce 16" to 18" for specialty fabrics. (Minnich, 1963)

It is always good to start at the basics. The purpose of this class is to show you that you can take very basic techniques and create spectacular Japanese Costumes. We will also demonstrate just how very little has changed in these basics over time.



## Kosode: “Small Sleeves”

小袖	<i>Kosode</i> – small sleeves
袖	<i>Sode</i> - sleeves
襟	<i>Eri</i> - collar
身頃	<i>Migoro</i> - body panels
衤	<i>Okumi</i> - overlap panels

Worn by both men and women, the *Kosode* most often in terms of articles of clothing refers to the main undergarment. It is part of the “*Hitoe*”, the term used to refer to the individual bottom layer of the dress as well as the *hakama* and *kosode*. (Dalby, 2001) The *Kosode* is worn tucked into *Hakama* (pants) and is the closest to the skin.

During the Heian era, a *Kosode* for women would most often be white or madder red. Men’s were traditionally white.

The layer that was referred to solely as *kosode*, and not given any other name, was the Heian woman’s undergarment. It was a shorter, small sleeved robe worn against the skin. It came down to just below the knees, with the *hakama* or *nagabakama* wrapped over it. It was barely visible under the other layers.

Unlike the rest of the layers (the *osode*), the sleeves of the *kosode* are more tube like, and were sometimes sewn upward, curving slightly in order to hold in body warmth (Stevens, 1996, p137) .

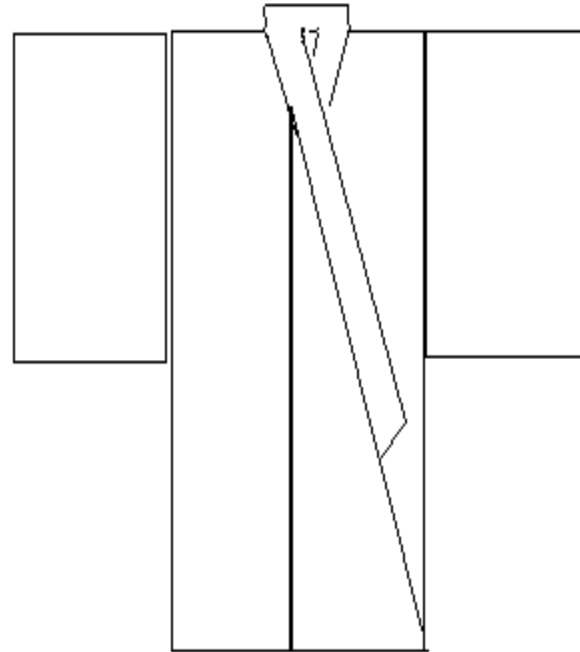


Fig. 2. Court Lady, Summer  
(Costume Museum, <http://www.iz2.or.jp>  
(2011)

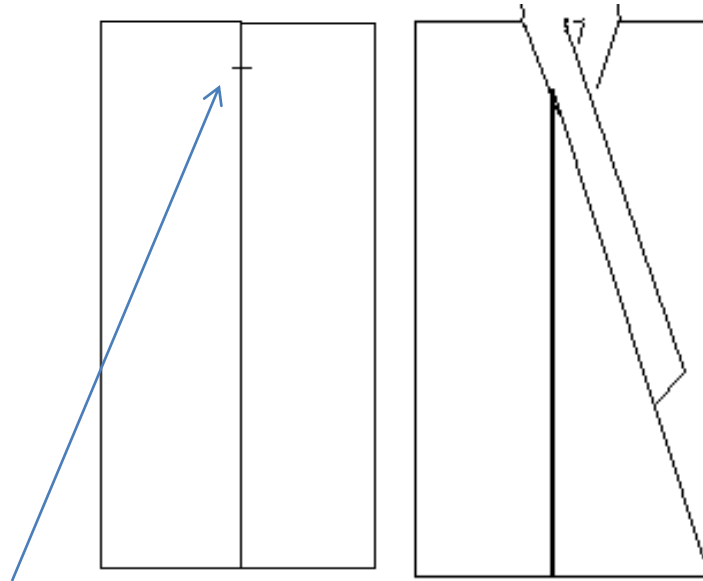
# Kosode: Patterning

The body is made of two panels that are 14" wide. This measurement is based on the width of the loom. Some adjustment can be made in order to compensate for different sizes.

- Take measurement from shoulder seam over front of body to toes. For floor length Kosode add anywhere from 2" to 14" (formal court)

In order to have the collar fit properly, you need to open up the back seam to insert the collar.

We typically set it about 2" back.



The front of the kosode for outer wear includes a 4" collar and a gore that attaches to the body panel approximately where your collar bone is.

Having investigate photos of extant textiles from Heian and Kamakura, as well as examined the reproductions at the Kyoto Costume Museum, we have found that the bottom width of the gore should be within 3 inches width of the main panels. This in part is what allows for the fullness that you see in Heian *kosode* (compared to modern kimonos).

The collar usually runs the length of the front to the tips of ones fingers, or to about 2 inches above the end of the sleeves (they really liked sleeves.)

The sleeves for the *kosode* are actually very simple. They are sewn to the body panel ten inches front and back and the rest is left open.

Note: hemming was a very rare thing in Early Japanese costume as with the 14" fabric, the selvages were used as the finished edges. Even in modern day kimonos you will find that many still use selvages for the finished edges.



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