THE HEIAN JUNI-HITOE OF A NOBLE LADY AND COURTESAN

For the Team Mac & Cheese
at the Quest for the Golden Seamstress 2009

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(Figure 98 Heian Woman in Court Robes, Stevens, 1996, pg 136)
The team of *Mac and Cheese* has chosen to create the clothing appropriate for a Heian lady of noble birth approximately around 1074 CE. We chose post 1074 CE because of sumptuary laws limiting the number of layers of dress allowed (Bryant, 2004). Taking into consideration the broad scope of this project and our budget for materials, we are making clothing for a noble lady, widowed, who has become a courtesan. In this document, we will provide information on women in Heian Japan and how clothing was representative of status. We will then discuss the history of the *juni-hitoe* describing each item of the outfit, how it was designed in period, and then we will explain how we took our research and created the garment you will see today. Throughout this document you will see our interpretations of each layer of clothing in bold.

**Heian Japan: A Culture in the Making**

*Mono no aware*- Beauty is precious because it is brief.

*Mono no aware* is a phrase coined in the 19th century by Motoori Norinaga. It became the edification of the ideal that was the basis for aesthetics of the Heian Era in Japan (794-1192) (Hooker, 1999). The term *aware* during the Heian era represented ‘sensitivity to things’ ranging from beauty to sadness, life, love or death.

While the bulk of this article is about the clothing, it is very important to understand the cultural climate of Japan at the time in order to truly appreciate the thought and presentation behind the costume. Japan first began to develop its own personalized identity specifically in regard to the cultural arts and dress during the Heian imperial court in the ninth to eleventh centuries. Prior to this period, the Japanese observed Chinese customs and cultural nuances. This desire to break away from China brought forth a wide variety of extravagant expressions of self, especially in clothing and accessories.

Colors for robes worn by the noble women of the time came to be combined into discreetly named combinations known as *kasane no irome*. This refers to the sensitive layering of colors of Heian clothing. The ideal developed into a full and subtle bloom over the course of 300 years. Very little in the emerging style was Chinese. As an actual mode of dress, kasane fashion passed away with courtly society, but its influence on kimono style has had echoes down even to present day (Dalby, 2001).

The names of the layered colors are woven throughout Heian culture not only in the clothing but also in poetry and literature—serving to pull together nature, season, person and incident into a poetic whole.

“First we could see the fans come into sight, then the sprout-green robes of the gentlemen from the Emperor’s Private Office. It was a splendid sight. The men wore their under-robcs in such a way that the white material stood out against the green of their outer-robcs, and I was reminded so much of the saxifrage blossoms in their green hedge that I almost expected of find a little cuckoo” (Sei, 1991, pg 198).

In order to understand relationship between these cultural phenomena of poetry, perception of beauty, colors, the flora and fauna of the environment and the clothing of the time, one needs to understand the sources available. One of the incredible things about the Heian era is the availability of primary sources that we have access to for study: diaries.
Women in the Heian era were prolific in writing diaries and in fact several of them also published works of fiction and poetry (for example, see Shikibu, 2001). The diaries, or *nikki* as they were called, provide us with an inside look to the culture of Heian Japan (for examples, see Sei, 1991; Shikibu et. al, 2003; and Arntzen, 1997). It is from these glimpses into the court life that we found the inspiration for this clothing project.

**A note on Courtesans** (*Asobi-omna*)

A very common trend in Heian-kyo (modern day Kyoto) was that of casual and promiscuous intimate contact (Morris 1994). Sexuality in Heian Japan was not taboo. Women were not expected to remain chaste before marriage, nor was there condemnation of women having sexual relationships outside the contract of marriage, especially if their lover was a man of higher rank. Because of this flexibility with love relations, there was no clear distinction between a professional woman in the sex trade and a respectable woman who happened to have multiple lovers (Morris, 1994; Goodwin, 2007; Gerber, 2007; for examples see Sei, 1991).

For this project, however, we needed to develop a distinction within the SCA that would allow our model to wear the *kasane no iromo* (color combination) of her choice, as well as the *karaginu-mo*. Because Japanese rank is so very complicated, we have endeavored to translate it as best as possible into the confines of the SCA. For example, payment to a courtesan could have been in robes, particularly if the robes and the colors they represent reminded her lover of her in some way (Morris, 1991).

**Textiles: Preparation, Construction and Patterns**

*Construction*

In an attempt to complete this project in as close to a period way as possible, we are hand basting all of the seams, using period fabric widths, sewing with handmade kimono needles and dyed the fabric with period techniques.

During the Heian Period the fabric loom width ranged between 12 and 14 inches wide (Harvey, 2001). In order to conserve precious embroidered and dyed fabric and be able to adjust for size, garments made during this time were sewn with a basting stitch and any seam allowance was not trimmed. This allowed them to let out the seams if needed to fit another body. It also allowed them to take the robes apart easily the few times each garment might have been washed. The cut of the various layers is fairly simple; each robe is constructed out of rectangles (Costume Museum, 2009).

*Dying the Fabric*

*Shibori* comes from the verb *shiboru*, “to squeeze.” It developed from an Indian technique passed through China and transmitted to the Japanese dyeing culture in the 7th Century CE. It is considered one of the oldest dyeing techniques and one of the most famous techniques that developed into an art form during the Heian period in Heian-Kyo (Kyoto). Many types of *shibori* developed through Japan’s history (Nihon, 2000; Tokyo Toshi, 2008). The technique includes either tying or sewing areas of fabric closed curing a dip-dye process to create physical resist patterns. Using a variety of stitches and designs passed down from teacher to student, the patterns were created in small scale or on entire robes (Tie-Dye Museum, 2008).

Using Jacquard acid dyes, we dyed the *hitoe* blue-green and the *nagabakama* dark red and set with 2 warm, diluted vinegar baths. Dharma Procion dyes provided the pink *uchigi* dyed with a
gradient dip technique that allowed us to control the amount of dye the fabric absorbed that was then set with a soda ash solution. Our choice of dyes came down to two reasons: 1) we wanted to test both types of modern dye available from Dharma and 2) we had neither the time nor the money to purchase and dye our silks with natural Japanese dyes. Some of the ingredients are more difficult to get than ancient Western dyestuffs. We plan to do this in the future for our other Heian Cultural Anthropology Projects, but it was just not feasible for this project.

The medium pink *uchigi* was dyed using a very simple twist in the style of *shibori* to give it a mottled look. This type of shading is typical of the Heian period, where the fabric was rolled before dying to have uneven dye distribution. *Shibori* eventually developed into a very precise art that little resembles these ancient forms. Sei Shonagon mentions this type of dying in *The Pillow Book* (Sei, 1991, pg 270).

**Important notes on Pattern**

When we started the research for this project, there were very few patterns available. What patterns we did find, our research often did not often support all the specific details. Upon the receipt of photos from the Kyoto Costume Museum, we discovered many things regarding the construction of the *karaginu-mo* (also called *juni-bitoe*).

The most important discoveries we made as a team were the use of rectangles for as many of the panels as possible, the consistent width of those rectangles throughout the garment, the stitches used, how the seams looked and where the seams fit.

Of these discoveries, there were two construction ‘finds’ of the robes and apron that we had not seen before as accurately in any of the other sources. The first is that all of the robes appear to have a gore-like layer between the collar and the front panel that was of equal length at the base of the garments to the rest of the panels and then tapering up slowly mid torso. Previous patterns we’d found showed this panel being half the width of the other panels.

Our second most recent find is in regard to the construction of the *mo*, a Chinese style apron that is a very important part of the formal court wear. The discovery we made was that the seams of the *mo* were sewn together accordion style. From one edge to the other the seam was sewn up, then down, then up, etc (Griffin, 2007; Baba, 2008). This would allow for the *mo* to be folded together and stored more easily.

For this project, we have opted to use very limited patterning methods and take the measurements
of our model and add the appropriate number of inches to the robes to give us the desired effect.

We are using period style needles (left photo) to do the basting stitch (middle photo). The linings are also unique in this time as each lining is blind stitched to the top layer leaving some of the linings edge visible (right photo).

Notations on further construction will be with the individual garments.

*Karaginu-mo (Juni-hitoe)*

*Karaginu-mo* is the more accurate term for a court lady’s formal robes, commonly referred to as *juni-hitoe*. The characteristic of the “*juni-hitoe*” lies in the stacking of the colors (*kasane no irome*) made visible at the bottom of the costume, at the collar, and at the armholes by the progressive shift of each layer (Sugino, 2002)

*Juni-hitoe* translates as “12 layers” but the name is misleading. *Juni-hitoe* refers to the internal layers dressed between the *hitoe* (chemise) and the *ko-uchigi* or *uwagi* (both being outer dress robes).

Before the sumptuary law of 1074 limited the number of these many colored layers, noble women wore as many as 40 *uchigi* under the outer robes depending on the season and the traditional scheme for the day per *kasane no irome*. (Harvey, 2001; Dalby, 2001)

After 1074, the number of *uchigi* was limited to only 5 (Harvey, 2001). This is because many layers of silk, especially when it is lined and quilted is extremely heavy and difficult to move around in. Court women spent as much time moving around on their knees as they did walking because of the court custom of never being higher than the emperor (Morris, 1994, pg. 137). The challenge was in the color choices and the layering effect. Because the fabric was not cut, it allowed the garment to lie elegantly without the bulk of turned hems.

The *juni-hitoe* embodied many of the most important values in Heian Japan. The painstakingly selected colors of the many layers symbolized elements from the natural world, such as the natural beauty of the maple tree or the iris. Each color scheme was only to be worn during the appropriate season or special occasion, such as certain festivals. To wear the a color out of season, or even to get the color wrong for one of your layers, was to invite mockery from other women and brought embarrassment on the woman who erred (Morris, 1994).
At the same time that it reflected much admired, simple natural beauty, it was an expression of wealth and power. Japan’s social hierarchy was complex, rigid, and defined nearly every element of a person’s life. The fullness of the robes, the sheer number of layers of fine silk, and the incredibly wide sleeves all demonstrated the wealth of the woman wearing the *juni-hitoe*. Her court rank determined what colors her robes could be, how the textiles could be decorated, dyed or woven, and what outer layers were allowed.

**Our *juni-hitoe* is that of modestly ranked noble woman.** We chose as our color scheme “Beneath the Snow” (*yuki no shita*), a color combination worn by Empress Tashi and described by Minamoto Masasuke, “a master of court ceremony, a walking encyclopedia of Heian court ritual,” who took great interest in impression of flora and fauna on fashion. It is a set of robes for special occasions that would have been worn in the late winter/early spring (Dalby, 2001, pg 227-28). The blue-green *hitoe* and the shades of pink under the white outer layer represented cherry blossoms blooming under the snow (Dalby, 2001; Bryant, 2004; Dalby, 2005).

Being a woman of modestly noble rank, recently returned from court to the privacy of her own home, our model still wears the karaginu and *mo*, the formal outer layers worn by noble women at court. She is not wearing shoes because she would not have worn them inside. (Sei, 1991 pg 24)

As we have discovered, part of the fashion was the extravagant expense that went into these robes. The materials were a fine, polished silk with little to no slubs, similar to our modern silk taffeta and a slightly thicker version of our modern habotai. The period silk for the stiffer layers, such as the *hitoe*, would have been a fabric with the sericin left in the silk for extra stiffness called susushi (FUYUya, 2008). The silks worn by the nobility would have been very smooth, without slubs, and fairly heavy in order to keep its shape with constant wear.

Period silks are virtually impossible to find, and exceedingly expensive if you can find them. The closest modern equivalent in texture and drape is silk taffeta, which is still very expensive. Due to the expense of more period fabrics, we have opted to use a very smooth Dupion for the stiffened layers and 10mm Habotai from Dharma for the *ugichi* because it had a beautiful drape and a crisper hand than some lighter habotai silk.

We chose “Beneath the Snow” (*yuki no shita*) as our *kasane no irome* (color scheme) for this project in hopes that it would remind our model of the cherry blossom buds peeking out from beneath a light snowfall just as spring begins (FUYUya, 2008; Dalby, 2005). This *kasane* is comprised of two top robes of white over a dark pink, medium pink and a light pink. Underneath all a dark green (*ao*) *hitoe* is worn.

**Kosode**

The *kosode*, meaning small sleeve, was the term used for all individual robes. 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 always white and 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).

Our *kosode* is made of habotai silk so it will be comfortable against the skin, 

**Nagabakama and Hakama**

Hakama are the loose, informal trouser of Japanese traditional costume. Construction techniques have changed over the centuries, but Heian *bakama* were very full, pleated, floor-length trousers worn by both men and women. They are worn over the *kosode* and often come up to the waist or higher. For every day wear, *bakama* were made of stiff, raw silk without gloss. For official court functions, women wore an extra long version of *bakama* called *nagabakama*.

*Nagabakama* are the extra long trousers worn by Heian women. They were visible in the front where the robes fell open and trailed over the floor, up to a foot and half. Official court *nagabakama* for women are made of glossy, stiff silk and are either scarlet or madder red. Non-glossy silk was used for more informal occasions (Dalby, 2001; Bryant, 2004; McGann, 2003).

We are making *nagabakama* using a very fine woven dupion due to budget constraints. It has been dyed to a deep scarlet red.

**Hitoe**

The *hitoe* is the second layer of underwear, sometimes referred to as the chemise, worn beneath the *uchigi* and over the *kosode* and *bakama* or *nagabakama*. It is the first visible layer. Some sources indicate that the length of the body section and sleeves are slightly larger/longer than the layers that go on over it, in order to make it visible (see, for example, McGann 2003), though there isn’t consensus on this and it may depend on when in the Heian period the *hitoe* was worn. The *hitoe* was most commonly madder red, but it could also be white or blue-green depending on the color scheme. The sleeves were worn unsewn and open all the way down the front edge and for half of the back edge as well (Harvey, 2001).

We dyed our dupion a deep blue-green color and then dyed the silk threads to match. The *hitoe* will be cut slightly longer than the *uchigi* (over-robos) so that it peeks out beneath the rest.

**Uchigi** and **Uwagi**

The outside *uchigi* was called *uwagi* and the ones worn under it were called *katane-uchigi*. On formal occasions, depending on the season, many were worn, with overlapping colors visible at the edges of the sleeves and in the front. The colors of the layers were specified, seasonally appropriate color schemes. Some court ladies would wear twenty *uchigi* at a time. At the end of the Heian period, the Emperor ruled that only five *uchigi* should be worn. The fabrics were determined by rank. The highest ranked court ladies could wear patterned silk; the ordinary court ladies wore unpatterned waves similar to modern habutai. They were also called the *itsutsuginu* or *kinu*.

The *uwagi* (over-robe) topped the layers of *uchigi*. Its fabric was prescribed by rank. When women were high enough rank to be able to wear intricately woven patterns, the *uwagi* was the place to display them. The length of the hem and trailing effect were also a function of rank. The higher the rank, the longer the *uwagi* (Dalby, 2001, Costume Museum, 2009).

Our model’s outer *uchigi*, or *uwagi*, is simple and unadorned, not embroidered or painted. Brocades for the *uwagi* were reserved for the highest ranking nobles at court (Morris, 1994). All SCA members are court rank because we can enter the presence of the
King and Queen, so the karaginu-mo is appropriate (Bryant, 2004), but her rank within the SCA is modest and her uchigi correspondingly so. The uchigi simulate cherry blossoms beneath snow, so range from a pale pink to a dark pink with layers of white on top.

Karaginu-Mo

Karaginu

The karaginu is a Chinese-styled jacket worn over the uwagi and mo for formal occasions. The Karaginu, or “Chinese overcoat,” is one of the major holdovers from Chinese fashion (McGann, 1999). It had a wide collar, somewhat narrower sleeves, and was worn open and straight down in front. The back collar folded down and away from the nape of the neck. It was a very ornate layer, decorated either with brocade, embroidery, or painted images and is worn by high ranked nobility (Dalby, 2001).

The Karaginu was lined with either a plain silk lining or brocade. The edges of the lining peak out from beneath the top fabric. The sleeves of the jacket are several inches shorter than the rest of the robes beneath it. There are some discrepancies describing the length of it. In the nikki it is usually described as being waist-length (Shikibu et al, 2003). However, in the pictures of the Imperial Court, especially of the Imperial Family, the jackets seem to reach mid thigh (McGann, 1999). The karaginu hangs loose over all the other garments.

We chose a brocade fabric with both Japanese and Chinese motifs; cherry blossoms appropriate to our juni-hitoe and a very subtle Chinese knot found only on the outer layers in period (Costume Museum-Textiles, 2009).

We are lining it with a natural dupion.

Mo

Probably one of the most decorative and artistic pieces of clothing worn during the Heian period, the mo is a train or apron-skirt worn over the juni-hitoe for formal occasions. It was considered very formal and was required of women of the court while on official duty. It resembles a pleated apron that is worn in back, tied on by a long, attached sash that ties in front and then hangs to the floor (Harvey, 2009, Stevens, 1996). It is worn tied over the uchigi and uwagi and is often worn under the karaginu. It is often white and is decorated with either embroidery or painted images (Dalby, 2005).

In our research we discovered that the mo is pleated similarly to the bakama and nagabakama. A decorative band is
attached at the waist and tied, leaving it trailing along beside and behind. In several instances, we found that a decorative chord adorned the waist, or was woven into the fabric of the sash, or *tatob-obi*.

"...others had gathered to make their toilet, to attach the cords to their formal skirts or to sew their robes, which they had arranged in piles on the floor" (Sei, 1991, pg 226).

**We are using flat braid *kumihimo* for this adornment (see Accessories). We are using dupion for it’s stiffness and painting the *mo* with silk paints using the ‘serti’ technique of outlining with a resist as well as some freehand.**

(Photos by Griffin, 2008, Costume Museum, 2009)

**Accessories**

**Heian Japanese Footwear - Shitozu**

Through logic, we can look at the socks (Figure at right), called *shitozu*, and make circumstantial assumptions about their use by women in the Heian period. These socks are shown worn by a priest, but were the foot covering worn to protect the foot of a woman wearing the ceremonial shoe, *kutsu* (Sugino, 2002a). It resembles a modern clog.

The shoes were worn for ceremonial purposes. They did not have thongs like the *zori* did, and were not worn for day to day activities. In fact, Sei Shonagon makes an observation in “The Pillow Book” about the servants of a lady’s house running around to ‘fit the cords on my clogs’ and ‘repair my socks’ for the lady before a festival day in mid spring (Sei, 1991, pg 24).

Because the clogs did not have a split toe, the modern concept of a “tabi” sock would not be appropriate or necessary. “Tabi”, or split-toe, socks are worn when one is wearing *geta* or flat *zori* sandals because of the thong that keeps them on the foot.
We must also think about the climate of Heian Japan. *The Cambridge History of Japan: Volume II Heian Japan* claims that there was a warmer climate trend during the Heian period (Shitomizu, Heian Period Sugino, 2002b) (Shivley et al, 1999). We do know that during the winters slippers or socks were worn after a lady has removed her outdoor footwear to protect her feet inside from cold (Sugino, 2002b).

Sugino Gakuen describes it as “(…) a kind of ‘tabi’ (sock for kimono) inserted before the shoes, while wearing the ‘juni-hito’. Unlike the ‘tabi’ the toes are not separated and there are no metal fasteners called ‘kohaze.’ In its place, there are two cables that wrapped around the ankle to tie” (2002b).

We reproduce this sock here for inclusion in the wardrobe of a court lady with a rough 4-piece per foot cutting diagram. As you are able to see her face, we have decided that she is inside the home of her family, she is not wearing shoes, just socks to keep her feet warm against the cool floor. For this project, we are making the socks from white linen and hand stitching them.

**Japanese Braids**

*Kumihimo* means “braided cord,” or, literally, “gathered thread” in Japanese (nic Dhuinnshleibhe, 2009; Friedman, 2007) and refers to complex braids made up of many individual strands braided together to create elaborate multicolored designs. Unfortunately, braiding was a closely guarded secret passed down from master to apprentice, and patterns were not written down (Coyle, 2006). The plant and silk fibers in early period *kimihimo*, unfortunately, are prone to decay so that few braids from the Nara and Heian period still exist (nic Dhuinnshleibhe, 2009). The surviving extant braids are considered sacred, highly protected and either worn by royalty or preserved in temples. Scholars have attempted to figure out the construction of these braids by closely examining these fragments (Figure to the right), trying to reverse engineer them (e.g. Kinoshita, 2002).

Many of the more elaborate braids were made of as many as 172 individual strands, and they could be round, core filled, square, or flat. Modern recreations are made using the marudai (Owen, 1995), even though they may have been made originally another way and some sources claim that the marudai were not introduced until much later (nic Dhuinnshleibhe, 2009).

The Kyoto Costume Museum has a number of recreated and extant garments with cording or flat, decorative bands adorning them (Costume Museum, 2009). Japan has a long history, dating well before the Heian period, of using braids as elaborate decorative items of clothing.
(Nihon Kogeikai, 2004) as well for belts, hair ties, garment ties, and to secure items such as mirrors or pendants. The braids grew exponentially more elaborate and more distinctly Japanese during the Heian period (Owen, 2004; nic Dhuinnshleibhe, 2009).

Another possible use of braids was to assist the ladies in getting dressed. A dressing cord, called kogoshi, was used to place the kosode properly in order to achieve that carefully layered look. While this cord is not actually part of the finished outfit, it is essential for a lady to get dressed (Griffin, 2007; McGann, 1999).

We made two braids for the project. The first one is a very simple, thin round braid for the kogoshi. A kogoshi is literally translated to be a ‘small waist string’. We refer to it as our dressing string. It is also similar in style to braids used to tie letters together. We chose pink and green as attractive spring-like colors that would appeal to the sensibilities of a Japanese lady in the late winter/early spring.

The other braid is a narrow flat braid to adorn the sash of the mo, in colors that complement as closely as we could the colors in “Beneath the Snow.”

Because so little is known about the actual braiding process from that time period, and the fact that the braids have been replicated using the marudai, we chose the marudai for making our braids. We also chose a much simpler braiding pattern than the known ones from the period due to time limits and current skill level of our team.

While we intended to use silk for our braids, the five yard skeins ordered turned out to be five one-yard strands, far too short to use. Given the late date, and the large amount of money we had already spent, we chose to use cotton embroidery floss instead. We matched the colors of our silk dyes as closely as we could.

Hair and Make-up

The Heian mystic of beauty, the flash of clothing and color, illicit meetings in the night and women hidden behind translucent screens as gentlemen walked by was supported by the absolute beauty of a woman’s hair and the rarity of seeing her face. The pale skin, high dark eyebrows, and red bow lips were very important, ironically to a society where only a tiny percentage of the population, mostly female, ever saw it. Both hair and face were subjects of criticism and complement in many of the works of literature written at the time.

Regarding eyebrows
"Ugh!" said one of the maids. "Those eyebrows of hers! Like hairy caterpillars, aren't they? And her teeth! They look just like peeled caterpillars" (Morris, 1994, pg. 205).

The natural eyebrow of a Heian woman was most often shaved off (or waxed over) and then they would take the thumb and forefinger and dip it into black ink or khol. They would then press their two fingers into a shallow “V” and quickly press the shape to the upper forehead at least an inch above the natural eyebrow line or painted in thin straight lines (Dalby, 2005).

For our attempt we will not be shaving or plucking our model’s eyebrows, but instead using a more modern technique of covering them up with wax and then laying the ‘foundation’ over it to remove the color. We are using modern eyeliner due to allergies that our model has.

Regarding the Make-Up

Because noble women were mostly hidden from view, their beauty protected from the eyes of men, a women’s face was her ultimate beauty. Thus it was the most guarded; even lovers did not always see their ladies’ faces (Morris, 1991).

A pale face, smooth and unblemished was the height of beauty. They would clean their faces with ground up beans, and then apply rice flour as a lightener. Mixing the rice flour with a good deal of water into a thin paste, they would then apply it as foundation is today (Dalby, 2005).

Lips were reddened with beni, the juice from the benibana or safflower, that was also used as a fabric dye (Dalby, 2005). During the Heian era only the lips were reddened. Both in earlier and later periods the same dye was used to pink the cheeks, but this was not done during this time.

We will be attempting to use rice flour and water to make a foundation. We are going to grind the flour so that it is less grainy than what you find in our modern markets today and then mix it with water until we get a consistence that works. On our model we will be using a modern lipstick that she is not allergic to, but give the same color effect.

Hair

Beautiful hair was another fundamental part of a woman’s beauty. The hair of the Heian beauty was straight, glossy and long. It was parted in middle and fell freely over the shoulders in great black cascades. It was never worn “up”; at most, it was tied back in a simple pony tale at the nape of the neck (Shikibu, 2003; Dalby, 2005).

Sei Shonagon remarks many times through out The Pillow Book about the length and beauty of someone's hair (Sei, 1991). In fact, Sei writes very critically of her own hair:

"I, an old woman who had long since seen her best years and whose hair had become so frizzled and disheveled that it no longer loosed as if it belonged on her head" (Sei, 1991, pg 94).

As seen above, it could also be a great point of depression and criticism.

Because our model is a redhead, we have ordered a 60" wig that will be styled and cut onsite.

Blackened Teeth
A quick note on the final aesthetic of beauty in the Heian Era is one that is found to be very strange in our modern world. The blackening of teeth by using an oxidized iron mixture that was applied daily was considered one of the most important parts of a woman’s toilet at the time (Dalby, 2005).

Our model is allergic to most things that could do the blackening of the teeth, but we wanted to make note of its importance and use at the time.

Poetry and Passing Notes in Heian Japan

“Letters are commonplace enough, yet what splendid things they are! When someone is in a distant province and one is worried about him, and then a letter suddenly arrives, one feels as though one were seeing him face to face. Again, it is a great comfort to have expressed one’s feelings in a letter even though one knows it cannot yet have arrived. If letters did not exist, what dark depressions would come over one! When one has been worrying about something and wants to tell a certain person about it, what a relief it is to put it all down in a letter! Still greater is one’s joy when a reply arrives. At that moment a letter really seems like an elixir of life” (Sei, 1991, p. 207).

Literature, especially poetry, played a central role in Heian Japan. The diaries are filled with poetry, and letters like the ones that Sei Shonagon describes above undoubtedly contained poetry. People even exchanged poetry and letters within the confines of their own homes (Arntzen, 1997). Composing or reciting poetry on the fly was an essential skill in court. Failing to respond in a timely fashion, or responding with inferior poetry, could lead to the breakdown of relationships, whether between lovers, friends, family, or political associates (Derby, 2005; Gerber, 2007). Poor and ill timed poetry correspondence left one vulnerable to ridicule, while timely and clever poetry could bring a person much respect and favor at court (Sei, 1991).

Ladies of the court carried small books or loose paper with them, on which they would write poems for exchanges. Great care was taken in the presentation, as well as the content, of the poems. The calligraphy itself was an art form. The paper was carefully chosen to reflect the season and the mood of the poem, and often natural items such as a branch or flower would be included if appropriate to both the season and the poem (Derby, 2005).

The poetry of the Heian Era was written in Kana (Japanese). The preferred form of poetry, for both men and women, was called tanka, or “short poem.” These poems contained 31 syllables, arranged in lines in a pattern of 5/7/5/7/7 syllables per line, and frequently entwined themes of love and nature, moods and seasons. Deep traditional images associated with different months become incorporated into the poetry (Arntzen, 1997; Gerber, 2007).

We have chosen a paper for our poetry notes to tie in with the cherry blossom theme of the clothing: pink for the blossoms, green to invoke the feeling of spring. The blue offers her variability, and is reminiscent of water, a common theme in Japanese art and literature.

Dressing in Fashion

In order to get the layers to sit properly, one has to dress a certain way. Each robe is dressed, tied, the next robe dressed, the tie undone and transferred to the top and tied… and so
forth. It is best to see, to understand and we invite the judges to come watch us as we dress our model.

GLOSSARY

Hakama. Long pleated, very loose trouser worn by men and women
Haribakama. Another term for the hakama worn by women.
Heian-Kyo. (Tranquility and Peace) Capital city during the Heian city; modern day Kyoto
Hirao sashes. Wide, flat braided belts worn by the the emperor, his immediate family and a few of his most favored and highest ranked courtiers for very formal ceremonial occasions.
Hitoe. Type of underwear, sometimes referred to as the chemise, worn beneath the uchigi and over the kosode and hakama or nagabakama. It is the first visible layer.
Itsutsu-ginu. (robes) The robes worn over the hitoe and under the karaginu and mo. Also referred to as uchigi.
Juni-hitoe. Literally “twelve layers”, this is the term for the formal court attire of Heian women, consisting of a kosode, a hitoe, a nagabakama, and many layers of uchigi, often finished with a karaginu and mo.
Karaginu. Chinese styled jacket worn over the Uwagi and Mo for formal occasions.
Karaginu-mo. Formal term for juni-hitoe.
Kosode. (Short sleeve) Traditional robe style of Heian Japan. It is also the term for the undergarment of both women and men’s clothing.
Ko-uchigi. (Little cloak) A dressing robe that could be put on over the uchigi to slightly dress up the outfit.
Kumihimo. (Gathered threads) Japanese braiding technique.
Mo. Train or apron-skirt worn over the juni-hitoe for formal occasions. It was considered very formal and was required of women of the court while on official duty
Nagabakama. (divided skirt) Formal version of hakama worn by court women
Uchigi. The outside uchigi was called uwagi and the ones worn under it were called kasane-uchigi. The highest ranked court ladies could wear patterned silk; the ordinary court ladies wore unpatterned waves similar to modern habutae. They were also called the itsutsuginu or kinu.
Uwagi. (Over robe) This robe topped the layers of Uchigi. The higher the rank, the longer the uwagi.
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