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The Game of Meanings

**A Consideration of the Messages
conveyed by Japanese Textiles in Edo
from 1660 – 1886.**

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ABSTRACT

Chapter One examines the lengthy connection between Japan and the production and decoration of cloth, principally silk. The part played in the establishing of sericulture in Japan by both China and Korea and the significance of the textile in commercial, diplomatic and social terms is also considered. The belief systems of both Shinto, with its female/sensual undertones and Buddhism are examined with a view to the ways in which these systems have helped form the Japanese character. The significance of the female principle, arising from the matriarchal importance inherent in Shinto and the connection of silk with that principle are examined. The importance of textiles, principally in Shinto, but to some extent also in Buddhism, is examined. All of these areas in combination are considered as helping to produce the elements of the "game" of the title.

Chapter Two considers the interdependence of textiles and sex in the concept of *Asobi*. The suggestion is made that there may be a continuous thread of textile employment in visual and literary terms, running from pre-1660 to post-1886, putting forward the premise that it would be illogical to assume a break in this thread during the period under review. The use of textiles in *shunga* prints is considered in some detail, focusing on such areas of investigation as shadowing, the suggestion of fusion, the creation of tension and the illustration of passion. The symbolic use of the sleeve is examined and the contrasting use of clothing and nakedness is considered. Examination is made too of suggested movement, directional impetus, strain and compression. The chapter closes with a consideration of the textile-related metaphor.

Chapter Three looks at the ways in which the people of Edo regarded themselves and their society. Using both visual and literary evidence, the chapter examines how the *Edokku* presented aspects of themselves, using their personal textiles, and how

they evaluated others. The concept of "viewing" is considered and the ways in which textiles were used to reveal or conceal the "looking" process. Strict government regulations of the period regarding textile use and the *chonin* reaction is examined, as is the townsman's use of textiles to transmit personal messages. Aspects of the social evolution of Edo society as the period progressed is examined through the textile related expression of *Iki* philosophy and the politically-orientated use of textiles in the prints of Yoshitoshi.

Chapter Four puts forward a conclusion to the work of the previous chapters and considers the importance, not only of textiles themselves to the Japanese people, but also the distinct interconnection of textiles and the written word, especially poetry. The work of Joy Hendry in this area is commented upon. Some of the difficulties encountered in the process of research are explained, as are the reasons for certain aspects of textiles not being examined. The ways in which the research achieved its aims are explained and the chapter concludes with a possible way forward from the work of this thesis.

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**The Game of Meanings A Consideration of the Messages conveyed by Japanese
Textiles, in Edo, from 1660 – 1886.**

Introduction

The main aim of this research is to examine the possible effects resulting from the deployment of textiles in Japanese visual and written art and in the use of actual garments themselves during the period 1660 – 1886 in the city of Edo (present-day Tokyo). Would the suggestions already put forward by such scholars as Tzvetana Kristeva and Tanaka Yuko – the former concerning the importance of the sleeve during an earlier period of Japan's history and the latter considering the erotic significance of textiles – prove to be applicable to the period in question and if so, in what ways would these suggestions make themselves apparent? Would there be other messages transmitted by these textiles which were specific to the time and place under consideration?

The geographic focus of this research is the city of Edo and the period chosen is 1660 – 1886. In Japanese history, the period which takes its name from the city of Edo lasted from c. 1600 to 1868. In 1868 the system of government changed, the Emperor was restored and the period known as Meiji (Enlightened Rule) began. The decision was taken to research from 1660 rather than from 1600 on account of the fact that the vast majority of the images discussed in this thesis are woodblock prints. (Reasons for the predominance of printed rather than painted images are discussed subsequently.) The subject matter of most of the prints discussed is drawn from what is known as *Ukiyo-e* (images from the Floating World). The idea of the "Floating World" is one, which arises from the life of the city. It is essentially an urban phenomenon, which derives its impetus from the transience of city life with its insistence on commerce, the making of money and the idea of living for the moment. This view of life had been portrayed before 1660, but largely in painted

works. Produced in Kyoto as well as Edo, such artefacts as the panel painting "Courtesan at Rope Curtain with Small Dog" and folding screens such as the most famous of all the early *Ukiyo-e* paintings, the Hikone Screen, were all produced in the 1640's and their subject matter foreshadowed that of the next two centuries of Floating World images. However, the increasing popularity of commercial printing, linked with the rise of an urban commercial class, provided the necessary opening for the transference of *Ukiyo-e* from painted representations to the more widely circulated printed ones, although painted images of the Floating World continued to be produced. Some artists bridged the gap between these two forms and produced similar works in both fields, the Kambun Master being a noted example. His painted "Courtesan and Courtier" a medium-sized *kakemono* (a hanging scroll with a weighted bottom) in colours and gold wash on paper was produced in the mid 1660's. His " Yoshiwara Scene" an illustration from a printed courtesan critique " Yoshiwara Makura" printed in monochrome with hand colouring, was produced in Edo in *Manji 111* – 1660 and is credited as being the earliest dated work of Edo printed *Ukiyo-e*. 1660, therefore, seemed a logical date at which to start considering the type of image, in Edo, which provided the most significant material under consideration in this thesis.

Why was the geographic focus of the research the city of Edo? As both a city and a way of life, Edo came into being as a result of the accession to power of Tokugawa Ieyasu, who, after the death of Hideyoshi, the warrior who had completed the military subjugation of the country and who had ruled for several years, defeated his remaining rivals at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1660, took the title Shogun and established his seat of power in his castle town of Edo. From then on, the city of Edo became the centre, politically, of the Japanese world. Kyoto still provided a home for the Imperial court, but the decisions were all taken by the succeeding generations of the Tokugawa clan in Edo. Their power base was accorded pride of place in social, economic and political terms and consequently developed a distinct sense of

itself. It was a city based on a samurai society, but one modified and influenced by the members of its growing, wealthy merchant class. The emergence of the *chonin* – or townsman – although not peculiar to Edo, played a significant part in the development of the city's tastes and the ways in which those tastes were indulged and displayed. One effect that the rise of a wealthy merchant class with a pride in its native city produced was the increased consumption of mass-produced, printed works, both illustrated and literary, which showed the townsmen and women aspects of themselves and their own lifestyles. These printed works provide a window into the changing attitudes prevalent in urban Edo society during the period 1660 – 1886 and if there were messages to be discovered in the use of textiles at this time, then the *Ukiyo-e* prints and the printed written word produced in Edo would be a logical place to look.

The decision was taken to close the period of research in 1886. The last print artist to be considered is Yoshitoshi, 1839-1892, and the date of the last work of his, which is discussed is 1886. As an artist, Yoshitoshi produced his most mature work at the end of the Edo period and the first few decades of the Meiji. Although he was not solely an Edo period artist, his allegiance to the values – as he saw them – of the Edo period and his struggle to come to terms with the westernising influences of subsequent Meiji rule, made him an interesting subject to consider, so the time period under consideration extended slightly beyond the official endpoint of the Edo period in 1868.

The chosen focus for the possible conveying of messages was that of textiles for several reasons. Firstly, as Kristeva and Tanaka had indicated, textile items had played a noticeably significant part in Japan's culture and symbolism. It seemed reasonable, therefore, to take those assertions and see to what extent they might be borne out during the period 1660-1886. Secondly, textile production, principally that of silk, and the trade connected with it (both trade items and associated skills) has played a lengthy and highly influential part in Japan's history from the earliest times.

Japan's connection with sericulture resulted from political upheavals in neighbouring countries, played a part in commerce, determined the populating of specific areas and sections of towns, was used as a diplomatic counter, provided employment and played a highly significant part in the religious life of the nation. It has been acknowledged as being more interwoven into the culture and beliefs of the Japanese people than, possibly, those of any other race. Thirdly, on looking at a wide selection of images from 1660 – 1886 and reading examples from the popular literature of the Edo of that time, I was struck by the fact that textiles are omnipresent and not in an accidental or subsidiary way. They are there to be noticed. The question was, why? What messages were there to be read?

The methods I adopted to try to discover these messages were several. The research began with the reading of all the existing scholarship on the subject. This proved difficult on occasion as some work is published in Japanese. However, the quality of western scholarship is such that it provided an excellent basis from which to start.

Another difficulty associated with this approach was that there was not a vast quantity of existing work available on this topic. This, however, proved to be more of a benefit than a hindrance, as it forced me to produce my own ideas and not be overly influenced by the ideas of others. There was sufficient to serve as a starting point. Next, I looked at as many examples of prints produced between 1660 – 1886 as I could find, both in books and in collections. The more images I saw, the more I could compare, contrast and see to what extent my ideas on textile use were borne out. I visited as many public collections, both in the UK and abroad as I could and gained extensive access to holdings not on public display. A very useful area of print viewing was auction catalogues and commercial catalogues of international print dealers, in both published and internet format. I made considerable use of The British Library, The National Library of Scotland, the library at SOAS and the Inter-Library Loan Scheme. Talking to people was also a valuable method of research. Experts in the area and associated areas were contacted, either personally or by e-mail, and were

asked to provide specific information, to suggest alternative avenues of enquiry or to voice opinions based on their experience. I also made considerable use of my Japanese friends in order to try to understand the cultural implications of what I found. Their insight into their country's attitudes, history and religious beliefs was invaluable and helped me to move beyond a simply "western" assessment. I read widely around the period under review as I felt it was imperative to understand the forces which had shaped Edo period Japan and the city of Edo itself. This included works by earlier Japanese writers and those of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. I felt it was important to see to what extent, if any, the references I had read to textile importance in Heian Japan (794-1185) were borne out by the writings of those earlier times. It then seemed logical to wonder to what extent I would find a literary importance attached to textiles post 1886. If people are partly a product of their past and if I could find evidence of textile messages during the Edo period, would I then be able to discern its heritage in the decades after its closure? Cultural periods in a country's history are not discrete entities, but follow on from some and merge into others, so if I were to find evidence of textile importance and symbolism in my selected time period, then there should be similar references before and after. I read the works of Saikaku, the great Edo novelist, who concerned himself so closely with the inhabitants of his city, their attitudes and foibles. If there were messages to be discovered in the disposition of cloth then Saikaku should be making use of such references and symbolism. As the research progressed, and I began to see a connection emerging between textiles and poetry, I read the Imperial anthologies, the collections of the haiku poets and as many collections of Japanese poems in translation as I could find. Again, it seemed important to let the words of the Japanese poets themselves lend weight to, or help to disprove, my ideas. As the idea of masculine/feminine influences began to suggest itself and the references to cloth and the act of weaving in the belief patterns of both Shinto and Buddhism began to proliferate, it seemed sensible to read into the religious practices and

ideologies of both these ways of conducting one's life. Similarly, the emergence of the philosophy of *iki*, which will be considered at length in a subsequent chapter, required that extensive reading be carried out in this area. To sum up, my methodology fell into three, broad categories – observation, reading and discussion.

The consideration of the significance of textiles in Japanese visual and written art, from 1660 – 1886, stemmed originally from my reading of an article entitled "A Sleeve is not just a Sleeve (in early Japanese culture)" by Tzvetana Kristeva ¹ and a paper entitled "Erotic Textiles" by Tanaka Yuko. ² Although Kristeva's article considered the importance of the sleeve in Heian culture and its function as a conveyor of varied pieces of information, the question arose as to what extent a similar function could be discerned in, not just the sleeve, but a variety of textile items in use at a later period, namely the Edo Period and its interface with the Meiji Period. Kristeva observed of " material objects" such as sleeves, that

"... although they preserve their practical value, they become active elements of culture and through the interaction with its other elements, participate vigorously in the game of meanings." ³

If this premise could be said to apply to one period of Japan's cultural history, could it also be discerned at a later date? Kristeva's paper also indicated the connection between the sleeve and the language of a literary tradition, which extended to both prose and poetry. She noted that the *Nihon kokugo daijiten*, a Japanese dictionary, gives 218 expressions which contain the word *sode* (sleeve). ⁴ She quotes

sodetsuma – o hiku lit. " to pull the end of someone's sleeve" meaning a secret invitation. ⁵

sode – makura a "pillow sleeve" denoting the practice of using sleeves as pillows and clothing as bedding

sode – o kawasū "to exchange sleeves"

sode – o tsugu "to join sleeves"

sode – o kasaneru "to lay one's sleeves upon the sleeves of someone else" ⁶

All of the foregoing meaning, indirectly, to spend the night with someone.

Sode – o katashiku "to sleep on one's own sleeve" i.e. to sleep alone

sode – o wakatsu lit. "to separate sleeves" to part with someone

sode – o kaesu lit. "to turn one's sleeve inside out" i.e. to meet a lover in dreams ⁷

She also notes that other expressions incorporating the word for sleeve put across the idea of barriers between people, usually, and especially in Heian times, between men and women.

Sode – byōbu - "sleeve screen"

Sode – kicho - "sleeve curtain"

Sode – sensu - "sleeve fan" ⁸

She noted too that *sode* also carried the connotation of a "leaf of paper" in the sense that it referred to the blank space or margin of a written text. She wrote

"Thus, *sode-gaki* or 'writing on the sleeve' expressed the comments to a text, written in the margin, without which the whole text would be incomprehensible." ⁹

If making use of *sode-gaki* helped towards a fuller understanding of the written text, then might it be possible to see the use of the sleeve, or more properly the use of textiles in general as an aid towards the fuller understanding of a visual as well as a verbal situation? Whether the "text" were verbal or visual, to what extent would the "notes in the margin" i.e. the fabrics which covered, surrounded or were used by the protagonists, prove to be a help towards a deeper understanding of the situation depicted?

Tanaka asserted that there was a "difference in the reception of visual and verbal texts". ¹⁰ Traditionally, we are accustomed to "looking" at visual texts and "reading" verbal ones. However, if this view is adhered to rigidly, then no other way of approaching these "texts" seems feasible. But if, contrary to what Tanaka suggests, the images constructed by the words within the prose or poetry are "looked at" and the messages within the visual texts which might be there for the viewer to decode are "read", might this approach not permit different slants on these "texts" to be revealed? The representations of people, involved in relationships both with other individuals and with the society in which they lived could, arguably, through the medium of their textiles, reveal much about the people themselves, their attitudes and emotions and the mores of the culture in which they found themselves.

Kristeva felt that textiles, both directly and metaphorically, had, during the Heian Period, become a means by which ideas and suggestions were transmitted from one member of society to another. These ideas were projected visually, in the wearing of

the actual garments and in their painted representations, and also intellectually via the written word. What interested me was whether or not Kristeva's observations about textiles and the Heian Period would apply elsewhere. Would they be borne out by the visual and literary expressions of the Edo Period and its boundary with the Meiji? Would these 17th, 18th and 19th century textiles play a significant part in the transmission of a variety of messages for their own time and did they, in effect, at this later point in Japan's history, contribute to the "game of meanings" to which Kristeva referred?

The City of Edo from 1660 – 1886 and the Concept of Asobi.

Edo, during the period 1660 – 1886 was a city settling into, initially, a different political regime, with attendant social constraints. The emergence of the *chonin* with a vibrancy born of money and a frustration fostered by social and political restraint and, latterly, in the period under consideration, the interfacing of two quite different views of how Japan should proceed as a political and trading entity, suggested that it might be a specific place and period of time which would have a variety of messages to transmit. One catalyst for the transmission of such messages in the "game of meanings" could, arguably, be the textiles employed in so many situations by the people themselves.

Aside from Kristeva's use of "the game of meanings", the expression also assumed a significance on account of the several references I had come across during research to the concept of *asobi* or "play". Given that the idea of *asobi* was an integral part of the relationships in the world of the Heian court and that Kristeva perceived that element of playfulness behind the meanings put across by such items as sleeves, might not the whole area of textiles have been used in an equally "playful" or, at any

rate, connotative way at a later point in Japan's history? In short, was the suggestive textile solely a facet of Heian Japan, or could its effect be traced elsewhere? Given the time and the place under consideration, one vehicle for visual expression had to be the woodblock print. Although examples of printed material can be traced to older, religious roots, it was very much an art form which Edo, although not exclusively, took to itself. Other large urban centres produced prints of their own, Osaka, Nagasaki and Yokohama for example, but I felt there would be ample material to consider in Edo itself. For the same reason it was decided to limit the area of visual investigation to prints and not to include painting in any major way. There is undoubtedly overlap between the two forms of visual representation and in the world of *ukiyo-e* artists could move between both forms of expression, but the decision to focus on prints was largely swayed by practicality. As the idea was to view as wide a sample of Edo images as possible, the most practical area of investigation lay in the prints. In addition, the prints had a wider public in their own time and so could, arguably, be more indicative of the tastes and interests of the Edo city inhabitants. Also, I felt it was important to see as many of these images as I could in their original state and not reprinted in books. The reason for this was that if faced with the original, I would be forced to draw my own conclusions from my observations and not be swayed by a book's accompanying rubric. Again, in practical terms, access to prints in large numbers was more manageable, both geographically and in "hands on" terms, than to paintings. Reproductions of prints in scholarly works were, of course, also utilised but the usefulness here was in deciding to what extent I agreed with the writer's view and in what directions, other than those under discussion by the writer, I wished to proceed. Reference to paintings will of course be made in this thesis, but woodblock prints provide most of the focus for my discussion.

The decision was taken to concentrate on the depiction of textiles both in images created for the visual market and those produced in words for the literature-consuming public. The extent to which these textile "messages" could also be found

in real life situations was not part of the remit I set myself, except insofar as the printed images could be said to capture scenes from the "real life" of Edo and the literature to consider the day to day lives of the Edokku. To what extent the inhabitants of Edo during the period under consideration played these "games" in their everyday lives with the textiles they used could not be discovered, practically, it could be argued, other than in their images of themselves and in what they wrote of their lives and the people who lived in their city.

The Shunga Genre.

Of the printed images, a variety of genres come under review. One genre however which receives considerable attention here is that which has come to be known as *shunga*.¹¹ Given that the thesis was considering the idea of playfulness and the "games" that can be played with suggestions and meanings, the *shunga* genre seemed to be an area rich both in invention and in the use of textiles. *Shunga* prints play a variety of "games" with their viewers and the textiles contained within their images are major factors in these teasing fantasies.

Tanaka's paper considered the apparent interconnection of textiles and erotic representation and remarked on the strange insistence on clothing, post 18th century, in images whose function was to celebrate sexual contact and illustrate it graphically.

¹² Tanaka wrote

"It may at first seem counterproductive for a pornographic print to include covered bodies when the attention of the viewer is directed toward exposed genitals."¹³

However, Tanaka found such an insistence on cloth in these prints that the observation was made

" So much emphasis is placed on fabric, that one could describe shunga as a kingdom of cloth." ¹⁴

Tanaka also held the view that textiles are endowed with meaning, whether they are formed into garments, or exist as lengths of material for alternative uses, both secular and religious. From having considered the clothing worn by men and women in these images, the observation of textiles was extended to the fabrics which surrounded them and it was noted that, as the 18th century progressed and passed into the following one, the insistence on textile accoutrements increased.

" In addition to clothing, pillows and futons were increasingly present in the scenes. Various pieces of clothing, on the body or discarded, futons, pillows and sashes became more numerous and more elaborately designed each year. The bedding became larger and sashes became wider, so that textiles, rather than flesh, dominated the scene." ¹⁵

In my own viewing of numerous shunga images, by many print artists, I had also been struck by the insistence on textiles and their proliferation in these particular prints. Like Tanaka, I too considered the apparent incongruity of such an insistence on swathes of drapery, given the basic subject matter of these images and the apparent " job" that these prints were trying to do. An invitation to view sexual activity seemed to be the primary function of shunga but it occurred to me that so much more was going on between the image and the viewer. The nature of this secondary intention, or " fabrication" was what I hoped to discover. Tanaka, in the paper's closing paragraph, asserted that

" In short, textiles are endowed with a certain power because they can convey meaning indirectly." ¹⁶

It was the variety of that conveyed " meaning" and the nature of the indirect method or methods employed to effect that meaning that interested me by this point but it was also at this point that the focus of my interest started to move away from that of Tanaka. The paper finished by suggesting that the direction of future study should be towards devising

" ... a methodology by which the meanings of colours and patterns can be more thoroughly analysed and discussed." ¹⁷

I found that I was not so interested in the meanings of specific colours and particular patterns, but more in the resultant, cumulative effect that the employment of such decorated fabric had upon the prints' viewers.

Having decided that one area of visual investigation would be the erotic genre, I turned to extant published material in order to review existing scholarship dealing with the use of textiles in an erotically charged situation. This proved, unexpectedly, problematic. Compared to other areas of print production, the *shunga* genre is not as extensively covered by published material. Either it receives a section's coverage in books dealing with the wider erotic art scene, as in Philip Rawson's *Erotic Art of the East. The Sexual Theme in Oriental Painting and Sculpture*, published in 1968, or there are relatively few works devoted solely to the topic, the most notable being Timon Screech's *Sex and the Floating World. Erotic Images in Japan 1700 – 1820* published by Reaktion Books in 1999. ¹⁸ Screech's work provided both a basis for the work of this thesis and a point from which to depart. In his introduction, Screech says that his intention is to

"... offer a new interpretation of Japanese erotic images from the 18th century to the middle of the 19th century..."¹⁹

and his chapters look into such areas as what *shunga* images were for, social reactions to these images, the assessment of their representative standing in the wider area of pictorial communication, the "politics and mechanics of the gaze" and the eventual refashioning of the idea of erotica as the 19th century moved onwards. He writes in his introduction that

"Pictures of the Floating World do not depict actuality: they spin fantasies."²⁰

And this was the point at which my research ideas approached most closely to his work. The creation of fantasy by the *shunga* images was an idea of interest and Screech's consideration of that fantasy made it seem capable of further examination. I thought it would be worthwhile to see to what extent cloth was a contributory factor in the production of these fantasies and, indeed, what kinds of fantasies were produced – the Game of Meanings again. Chapter 5, in which Screech considers the concept of watching, from both inside and outside the image, also provided a stepping off point, as did his work on boundaries. However, it was his Chapter 3 *Bodies Boundaries and Pictures* and in particular the sections *Clothes*, *Cloth in the Edo Period*, and *Cloth and Shunga*, which proved most interesting. The statement on his part that

"The sexual power of texture and look in first-rate cloth was commensurately great: it may well have excelled in excitement the feel of skin..."²¹

is developed by him in his discussion on how cloth works in *shunga* prints. He speaks of how cloth divides the bodies up segmentally, but also how it fuses them into one

entity. However, the significance of textiles in *shunga* depictions, as well as in other areas, seemed capable of wider investigation than that accorded it by Screech, as it was not the sole topic of his book and therefore not the only focus of his discussion.

Kristeva, Tanaka and Screech were the initial influences on my ideas, but so too was an article written by Christine Guth, author of the catalogue which accompanied the 1992 – 93 exhibition *Asobi : Play in the Arts of Japan*. In her article, she remarked that the exhibition dealt with works of all media and of all periods, but that the majority of artefacts were from the Edo Period

"... which saw a remarkable explosion of playful literature and art forms ... It is in the arts of this period that the duality of play – its potential for simultaneously subverting and reinforcing the social order – is given its most eloquent expression." ²²

The idea that "play" could be something, which preserved the status quo and at the same time be a means by which the establishment could be attacked, was one which interested me. The problem presented itself - to what extent the utilisation of textiles, both visually and in their written description, could be seen to play a part in this "playful" view of the social order of the Edo Period and its interface with the Meiji. Guth's concept of the arts of this period both "subverting and reinforcing" seemed to have its basis in the conflict of interests present during that time between the ideas of Confucianism and the older precepts of Shinto. The former, which would provide the "reinforcing" she mentioned, served the side of the Japanese character which tended more towards the masculine at this time, with its accent on duty, loyalty and conformity. The latter, with its "subverting" undertones, appealed more to the side of the Japanese psyche which tended more towards the feminine, and it was in this feminine side that so many men took refuge when the austerity of the Confucian – inspired state took over. The places to go, where the feminine side held sway, were

the pleasure houses and the theatres. Both these worlds purveyed fantasy and permitted their frequenters to be caught up in the illusions they created. A prime factor in the production of this fantasy was the sumptuous clothing, which the courtesan and the actor used to such advantage, and from my reading it was apparent that this was a way of looking at life, which resonated down the centuries in the Japanese mind itself. Even in Japanese literature of the present day, the references to textiles helping to create fantasy, or to men and women using textiles to express their desires or fetishes, is apparent. The works of the 20th century writers, Mishima, Nagai Kafu and Tanizaki Jun'ichiro illustrate how deeply the Japanese appreciate the power of fabric. Philip Rawson encapsulated this well when he observed in his Introduction to the section on Japan in his *Erotic Art of the East. The Sexual Theme in Oriental Painting and Sculpture*:

"Clothes, especially beautiful clothes, in the highest of fashion, which were lovingly and accurately delineated, were always felt by the Japanese to offer the extra voluptuousness needed in emotively charged situations. This was not only for their suggestiveness by concealing here and revealing there, but for the opportunities they offered for the expression of feeling. The Japanese have always had a kind of sumptuary sense which few Westerners possess . . . In more intimate moments, the drooping folds of the neckline, the swing of the skirts, the suggestive multiple openings of the sleeve, could be made to speak a subtle, symbolic language of sumptuary gesture . . . we must always try and read from Japanese garment painting the movements which give this sumptuary gesture its deep appeal . . . the linear evolutions serve as a kind of outward or theatrical demonstration of the complex feelings and sensations of the wearers . . ." ²³

When Rawson says of clothes that they help create "opportunities . . . for the expression of feeling" and that textiles "speak a subtle, symbolic language of

sumptuary gesture . . ." it seemed to me that these comments, linked with Guth's assertion of *asobi* both reinforcing and subverting and Screech's ideas of the production of fantasy in *shunga* images, made a strong case for the examination of images and the written word in terms of the uses they made of textiles generally, during the period under review.

The Varied Nature of the " Games" Being Played.

The more examples I studied especially, though not exclusively, in the *shunga* genre, the more I came to realise that there were several " games" being played with textiles for the benefit of the viewer. As the situations depicted are, at the same time, basic and yet complex, the functions which textiles are called upon to fulfil are varied. The situations are basic in that, even allowing for differences in sexual positions and numbers or types of partners, what the viewer sees is essentially the same – a physical expression of sexuality which evokes an element of recognition, based on experience or hearsay, in the person viewing the print. The same image becomes complex because a variety of states of recognition exist, depending on the sex of the viewer, that person's own degree of sexual experience and proclivities, his or her background, etc. Consequently, by sending out several messages simultaneously, the image tries to be as many things to as many people as it can. It may only succeed on one level, for one viewer, but may transmit several levels of suggestion to another and the same textiles can be used to fulfil several " game" requirements. If there could be observed in these images an attempt to transmit not only vicarious, sensory experience and a sense of fantasy but also some suggestion of a variety of emotions, to what extent could the utilisation of Edo clothes and textile accoutrements assist this transmission?

If the writers and image makers of Heian Japan had used clothes – most significantly sleeves – to present their fantasies and emotions, to what extent were the writers and print makers of Edo their inheritors of this technique, not only in their erotic creations but in other areas too?

One such “other area” is that of literary expression. The symbolic use of textiles and clothing can be traced, I would argue, far back into Japan's literary history, dating from the time when Japanese writers began to use their own language to write *monogatari* and *nikki*. Both these forms of writing, the former a story, the latter a diary, make use of the language and metaphor of clothing to express the emotions of the writers. Love relationships of several different types are explored in these writings, from family sadness at the departure of a loved one, through rejected love (both emotional and sexual) to the pangs of jealousy experienced in a love situation. An understanding of all of these types of relationship is transmitted to the reader via the medium of garments, their component parts, the fabric used in their construction and the very weave of the textiles themselves. Sei Shonagon uses the technique in her late 10th century Pillow Book reflections, Murasaki Shikibu in her 11th century *Genji monogatari* and the slightly later Lady Nijo in her 13th century *Towazugatari*. The poems of the great Imperial anthologies resound with references to clothing and textiles as does the more specialised form of the *monogatari*, the *rekishi monogatari*. The late 11th century *rekishi monogatari*, the *Okagami*, makes use of the clothing metaphor, arguably, to help the reader understand the longings, frustrations and disappointments inherent in the lives of the people with whom it treats.²⁴ As mentioned earlier, 20th century Japanese writers found the textile metaphor a useful tool in their work. Would the literary Edo scene, as well as that of its visual arts, prove to have made use of it too and if so, to what purpose? The aim of this thesis was to look, not only to the *shunga* image but beyond it, to other areas of print production and to the writings of that time to discover, if possible, exactly what “game of

meanings" was being played out in Edo and what part that era's textiles played in its production.

Notes on the Introduction

¹ Kristeva Tzvetana "A sleeve is not just a sleeve (in early Japanese culture)" *Semiotica* 97 – ¾ (1993) pp. 297-314.

² Tanaka Yuko "Erotic Textiles" *Imaging / Reading Eros. Sexuality and Edo Culture, 1750 – 1850*. Indiana University, Bloomington, August 17th – 20th, 1995. The East Asian Studies Centre of Indiana University. Ed. Sumie Jones. P.1

³ Kristeva Tzvetana. "A sleeve is not just a sleeve (in early Japanese culture)" *Semiotica* 97 – ¾ 1993. pp. 303 – 304.

⁴ Sometimes known in English as Shogakukan's Japanese Dictionary, the Nihon kokugo daijiten is the largest Japanese dictionary published. The first 20 volume edition was published from 1972 – 1976 and was followed by the second 14 volume (later reduced to 13) edition from November 2000 – December 2001. It was published in Chiyoda, Tokyo by the publishing firm Shogakukan, a member of the Hitotsubashi Group.

⁵ Kristeva Tzvetana p. 309

⁶ Ibid. p. 309

⁷ Ibid. p. 309

⁸ Ibid. p. 309

⁹ Ibid. p. 310

¹⁰ Tanaka Yuko "Erotic Textiles" *Imaging / Reading Eros. Sexuality and Edo Culture, 1750 – 1850*. Indiana University, Bloomington, August 17th – 20th, 1995. The East Asian Studies Centre of Indiana University. Ed. Sumie Jones. P.1.

¹¹ The term *shunga* is that which is used to describe the genre of Japanese erotic prints. It is not however the only term used. The expression *makura-e* which translates to "pillow pictures" is also used, as are *warai-e* ("laughing pictures") and *higa* ("secret" or "private" pictures.) It should also be noted that the term *warai-e* with its connotation of laughter also implied masturbation.

¹² The paper also remarked on a move from naked to clothed bodies which, it asserts, took place early in the 18th century, citing naked bodies depicted by Torii Kiyonobu immediately after the turn of the century, to the fabric covered participants in the sexual liaisons depicted by such artists as Harunobu and Koryusai only slightly more than half a century later. This assertion on Tanaka's part will be considered critically.

¹³ Tanaka Yuko "Erotic Textiles" *Imaging / Reading Eros. Sexuality and Edo Culture, 1750 – 1850*. Indiana University, Bloomington, August 17th – 20th, 1995. The East Asian Studies Centre of Indiana University. Ed. Sumie Jones.

¹⁴ Ibid. P.1.

¹⁵ Ibid. P.2.

¹⁶ Ibid. P.6.

¹⁷ Ibid. P.6.

¹⁸ A significant exception to this state of affairs is the continued work over the years of Richard Lane, especially his series *Teihin Ukiyo-e shunga Meihin Shusei. The Complete Shunga*. Tokyo. 1995-96. ISBN 4 – 309 – 91011 – 4.

¹⁹ Timon Screech *Sex and the Floating World. Erotic Images in Japan 1700 – 1820*. Reaktion Books. London. 1999. P.7.

²⁰ Ibid. P.9.

²¹ Ibid. P.118.

²² Guth Christine M.E. *Asobi: Play in the Arts of Japan*. Exhibition Catalogue. 1992 – 93. P.1.

²³ Rawson Philip "Erotic Art of the East. The Sexual Theme in Oriental Painting and Sculpture" Prometheus Press. New York. 1968. P.281.

²⁴ The author of the Okagami is unknown, but the work deals with the life and career of Fujiwara Michinaga, widening out to include those people who moved in his sphere, both family and court

contemporaries. Born in 966 AD, Michinaga was the fifth son of Kaneie. He became Provisional Middle Counsellor in 988, Provisional Major Counsellor in 991, Minister of the Right in 995 and Minister of the Left in 996, where he remained until 1016. In that year he became Regent until 1017 and Chancellor from 1017 – 1018. The following year he took religious vows. He was variously father-in-law to 3 Emperors, 1 Retired Emperor and 1 Crown Prince. He was also grandfather to 2 Emperors and father to 2 subsequent Regents. His principal wife was Rinshi, who lived from 964 – 1053, the daughter of Masanobu. She was the mother of Yorimichi, Norimichi, Shoshi, Kenshi, Ishi and Kishi. His secondary wife was Meishi, daughter of Takaakira. She became the protegee of Michinaga's sister, Senshi. She was mother to Yorimune, Akinobu, Yoshinobu, Nagaie, Kanshi and Sonshi and was known as Lady Takamatsu from the name of her residence.

Chapter One

The Interconnection of Cloth with Shinto Belief and Buddhist Thought.

"The Japanese have always had a kind of sumptuary sense which few Westerners possess . . ." ¹

Japan's long connection with the production and decoration of cloth, allied to the very different but pervasive influences of Buddhist thought and Shinto belief, provides a starting point from which to understand the relationship which the Japanese have had, throughout their history, with cloth. Its qualities, literally and symbolically, permeate many facets of Japanese life and this has been the case from the earliest periods. We can see this in the use of clothing and cloth related articles in the decorations found in tombs ², in the fact that early burials contain remnants of textiles ³ and in the fact that temple documents record the gifting of textiles by individuals of rank. ⁴ Judging by the importance and significance of cloth in various shapes and forms in the legends and religious observances of Japan, we can assume that weaving and cloth production were practised from the earliest times. It is generally accepted that, like so much of Japan's cultural heritage, the ability to make cloth of various types, but most importantly silk, arrived from China along with settlers or travellers who brought with them the necessary knowledge both to produce silk and to work it into patterns and coloured designs. ⁵ The acquisition by Japan of the skills and methods required to produce cloth was the beginning of a cultural connection between the Japanese and textiles which would become an intrinsic part of their artistic and literary lives and indeed influence their actual day to day existence. In order to appreciate just how lengthy a connection exists in Japan between the people themselves and the production of cloth, a consideration of the history of sericulture in particular is required.

The Early History of Sericulture.

Much of the early history of sericulture in Japan is wreathed in legend and the exact chronology can be hard to pinpoint. ⁶ Not only was China important in the foundation of the silk industry, but so also was Korea and envoys were sent from Japan to both these countries. Japanese chronicles record that in AD 188, the emperor received a gift of silkworm eggs from the Chinese king and about the year AD 200, a Korean king sent gifts of woven silk, which were said to be far superior to the indigenous products of that time. The importance of silk as a diplomatic counter was established. In this period in Japan, hemp and mulberry fibres were more used than silk because the boiling of cocoons had not been fully understood. The hemp plant was used to produce fibres (although this type of hemp differs from that known by the same name in the West) but so too was the beaten pulp of the mulberry plant, known as *kozo*, which was used also to produce paper for woodblock prints. *Karamushi* was also used as an early fibre and it corresponds to what is known today as *ramie*. The fibres of the wisteria vine were also used to make cloth for garments for members of the poorest classes.

The first silks to make use of patterns were reputed to have been made by a Korean weaver early in the 3rd century AD. Tradition has it that he was brought to Japan from Korea, after its invasion by the Empress Jingu. Whether or not the actual case, it is interesting that there is a connection as early as the 3rd century between a woman and the recognition that silk was a significant commodity. The connection between the feminine and the deployment of textiles will be discussed subsequently. The type of silk woven was known as *aya*. The colour was traditionally plain and the designs tended towards a simple geometric motif in twill on a plain weave ground. After the invasion of the Three Kingdoms of Korea by Jingu, agreement was reached to pay tribute to Japan, part of that tribute being composed of silk and its associated industry. Again, not only is the actual textile seen as a worthy tribute, but Jingu saw

the importance to her country of the skill of silk production in commercial terms and in conveying the message that Japan was to be seen as an advancing country, with the capability to produce sophisticated goods. Already, textiles are being used to project messages, in this case of a political nature. This can be seen in operation in AD 243, when an exchange of gifts was made between Jingu and the Chinese king of Wei, in which 5 rolls of crimson silk were handed over.⁷ During the reign of Jingu's son Ojin, who ruled from about AD 270 to AD 310, a prince of Yuzu arrived from China with several thousand refugees drawn from all over the country. Their assembled talents in weaving and silk production so delighted Ojin that he dubbed Yuzu "King of Weaving" and made available to the refugees an area of land in the province of Yamato. They later moved two miles west of what became Kyoto and established the first centre of the Japanese silk industry. Like his mother, Ojin could see the benefits that would emerge for Japan from the resettlement of those with weaving and silk production skills. The group was later split up and they dispersed throughout the provinces to take the skills of silk production and weaving with them. A few years after Yuzu's arrival in Japan, Achi no Omi and his son Tsuka no Omi, as they came to be known in Japan, two more princes who fled from China, arrived in Yuzu's wake. They were accompanied by 17 families of refugees. They were also granted hereditary weavers' titles and their descendants of the 5th century were known as "suzerains of aya" because of their mastery of the production of that type of silk. Shortly before Ojin's death, he sent Achi no Omi and his son to China to gather more weavers. Japan's policy towards the acquisition of weaving skills was becoming more aggressive, underlining the importance which was attached to sericulture and weaving by the Japanese authorities. They were no longer willing simply to rely on refugees for their textile knowledge but were setting out to entice those with the necessary knowledge to live and work in Japan. Around 310 AD, they returned with 2 sisters, Aya-hatori and Kure-hatori, who have come to be regarded by subsequent weavers as the patrons of the silk craft. Ojin's reign also saw the arrival of a

seamstress named Maketsu, who had been sent to Japan by the ruler of the Korean kingdom of Kudara. She was to teach the Japanese improved techniques in the cutting and sewing of garments. She was followed a few years later, from Korea, by Saiso, a skilled weaver. Reputedly, along with Saiso came Wani, a great Korean scholar.⁸ He is credited with bringing the first books to Japan and with the introduction of ideographs. Whether Wani's arrival with Saiso is based on historical fact, or has simply come to be accepted by the Japanese people, it is interesting to see the possibility of cloth production and writing complementing each other even at this early stage and, arguably, it highlights the status of cloth alongside communication in Japanese culture even from this early period.

Royal Patronage and the Emergence of *Nishiki*.

By the reign of Emperor Ingyo – AD 412 to 453 – the royal family itself was supervising the weaving industry, underlining the extent to which the production of quality textiles was seen as such an integral and important part of Japanese cultural life. By AD 471, in the reign of Yuryaku, the Chinese drawloom was adopted, its enclosed rectangular frame setting the standard for material width. During his reign also, the first Japanese *nishiki* were reputedly woven.⁹ *Nishiki* translates to "beautiful combination of colours" and, in weaving terms, to a weave of silk threads of an uneven number of colours, usually 5 or 7 and, nearly always incorporating blue, red, yellow, reddish-purple and green. It is interesting to notice that, just as with the accepted tradition that links weaving with writing in the person of Wani, there is a similarity in the numbers of coloured threads employed in *nishiki* and the numbered conventions of syllable use in classical Japanese poetry and I intend to consider this in more detail in a subsequent chapter. It could, however, be argued that there is and has been a connection in the Japanese mind between cloth and communication and it is the purpose of this thesis to explore that possible connection.

By the 7th century, during the Taika era, *nishiki* was woven in 2 different ways. The *nishiki* known as *Tate-nishiki* was a warp patterned variety. In this, the warp threads of different colours were brought to the surface thus making the design. Consequently, the top threads can be seen to run parallel to the selvage. *Tate-nishiki* is the older of the two types. A weft patterned type was known as *Yoko-nishiki* and in this the colours are brought to the surface by the weft threads. The pattern threads can therefore be seen running across the width of the cloth. By the 8th century, gold threads became incorporated in the cloth produced. A love of colour in clothing went along with the increased ability of the weavers to produce *nishiki* silks. When the Emperor Kotoku reorganised the court in 645 AD, he caused court dress to imitate Tang costume as closely as possible and decreed that specific colours should be used for specific ranks. The colours of the garments worn told the onlooker the status of the person wearing them and social messages were therefore transmitted by the actual garments themselves. Although his regulations only lasted for a matter of a few months, the concept of different colours for different ranks took hold and with sericulture and weaving now firmly established in Japan, the delight in producing material of aesthetic quality became evident and the stage was set for the near obsession with costume which was such a part of life in upper class Heian Japan.¹⁰ The works of the Heian writers Sei Shonagon, Murasaki Shikibu and Lady Nijo, which were mentioned in the Introduction, resound with comments on garments, colour combinations, suitability of specific colours for specific occasions, the gifting of clothing and the social acceptability that items of clothing conferred. Throughout the written work of the period the use of the clothing metaphor is extensive and shows just how significant textiles have become to the culture of the upper classes of Japan at that time. From their writings we can see the extent to which textiles can be used to transmit a whole variety of messages about courtiers, their affairs, their amusements and how disastrous the effects of poor textile appreciation can be.

During the reign of the Emperor Kammu, 782 – 806 AD, the capital was moved from Nara to Kyoto, on the banks of the Kamegawa River. The Imperial Weaving Bureau was installed by him in the northeastern section of the imperial palace. However, when rival princes took advantage of the weakness of the throne and embarked upon a war which lasted for 15 years, all industry suffered, including the weaving industry, but *nishiki* and other fine silks continued to be imported from China. Known as *kara-ori* or Chinese weaving, or *kara-nishiki* to differentiate between them and domestic *nishiki*, which was known as *Yamato-nishiki*, these imported silks were very fashionable in court dress for some time. Once again, references to Chinese silk and Chinese-style garments are to be found as part of social commentary in the written works of the period. After the fall of the Tang dynasty, imports of Chinese silks declined and, as the domestic weaving scene was restricted, the arts of embroidery and dyeing became more important, because the patterns, which were no longer available owing to the restriction of weaving domestically and the declining numbers of Chinese imports, were reproduced by means of embroidery and the varying use of dyes. Few examples of these two techniques however survive today from this period. As the court gradually forsook Tang models in dress, it developed a distinctive style of its own, which was less ornate in decoration but grander in form and richer in colour.

¹¹ The cut of all garments, male and female, was very large and the practice of wearing multiple garments was taken to extremes. A Heian court lady wore a costume known as the *juni-hitoe* or "12 layers". However, in practice, these layers could total as many as 20 and sometimes even more. Mostly, these layers were composed of plain-coloured silks. Where elaborate weaves appeared, the patterning was nevertheless small and such silks would be used for outer garments only. The fascinating aspect of Heian costuming lay, not so much in the weave or the decoration of the silk employed, but in the combinations of colours achieved by the layering. This manipulation of colours became so obsessive as to make it an indicator

of sophistication and social superiority. Some combinations were achieved by the use of sheer silk gauzes so that the colours beneath would shine through an upper layer, creating subtle new shading. However, the area of most concern was the harmony achieved by multiple layers of edges at neck, front and sleeve openings. The classic texts of Heian Japan, both prose and poetry, concern themselves greatly with the inferences to be gleaned from the colour combinations affected by the courtiers and aristocrats of Heian-Kyo. A woman's ability to mix and match the variations of dyed and woven silk at her disposal, or her conspicuous lack of such ability, helped to determine her prospects as consort, lady-in-waiting or mistress to the influential men of her time.¹² The fact that such a large part of these women's lives was lived shielded from the eyes of others, that which could be safely shown, namely their sleeves with their multiple-layered edgings of complementary colours, had to advertise their owners' cultured sensitivity and hence their suitability for advancement. If the appearance and disposition of clothing had been utilised to send out messages at this point in Japan's history, when, for a period of time at least, the people of a wealthy strata of society could afford to indulge their fantasies and desires, might it not be the case also in a subsequent period, where an, albeit different, class of people also had money and the desire to express themselves publicly?

In keeping with the importance of poetry in the lives of these earlier men and women, the titles given to shades achieved in the dyeing process moved into the realms of the natural world with shadings being derived from flowers and plants and being known by these flower names. Colours too were specific to seasons and were blended accordingly, the arranging of coloured layers being known as *kasane-no-irome*. The dyeing process therefore became all-important at this time and relied heavily on plants and trees and varying tints of one colour could be achieved through redipping, or washing and bleaching. The process of tie-dyeing or *kanoko*

became widely used. By the end of the Fujiwara period, the number of layers in a woman's court costume had risen to around 25, but this was not exactly as it seemed, for, unlike earlier costumes, the 25 edges did not arise from 25 layers of clothing. The effect was achieved by putting in extra folds of colour at the points where the edges were visible.¹³ Male costuming too became increasingly elaborate as the era progressed, although it affected an imposing dignity thanks to the use of stiffened silk. By the middle of the 12th century however, the luxury and indolence of the court came to an end in the wars between the Taira and the Minamoto and the costuming excesses of the Heian nobility became virtually things of the past. It could be argued that the messages sent out by the court obsession with textiles and their disposition signalled to those disaffected with the current political situation that the court was rapidly becoming emasculated and therefore the time was right for a change. The nobility of Japan split into two separate camps after the Taira wars, the seat of power moving with the newly created Shogunate to Kamakura and the imperial court remaining at Kyoto, where successive emperors were little more than figureheads.

The spirit of the times changed too, with the old, more feminine, Heian attitudes prevailing only in Kyoto, despite sumptuary regulations, while elsewhere a sterner austerity took over. This was illustrated amply in clothing.¹⁴ Only in Kyoto did the older forms remain, while in Kamakura, with its emphasis on the samurai spirit of Bushido, clothing took on a more practical and restrained form. The short-sleeved *kosode* was adopted by samurai women and multiple layers of clothing were really only to be seen in Kyoto at the imperial court. This distinction between the elaborate, more feminine, older style, which relied on colour and sumptuous decoration and the newer, more masculine style which had its genesis in a code of restraint and discipline, illustrates, arguably, the dual nature of the Japanese psyche, which has its basis in the differing codes of Buddhism and Shinto.

This period however did see the emergence of the more richly decorated *uchikake*, which was worn as a loose outer robe. With the development of this robe, Japanese free-style decoration really had its beginning. The increased insistence on decoration rather than weaving saw the production of *nishiki* drop considerably. The Imperial Weaving Bureau was abandoned and silk continued to be woven only in 3 provinces, Kaga, Tango and Owari. For fine patterned silks, Japan relied almost wholly on foreign imports. The succeeding Muromachi Period saw the final transition from the sweeping elaborate styles of the Heian court, to the simple lines of the *kosode*. The intervening war years had so impoverished the nobility and caused so much hardship, that eventually the only remaining vestige of the court lady's former glory was the *uchikake*. Both *kosode* and *uchikake* were now made of soft silk which provided a good basis for decorative designs, painted, simply embroidered or making use of impressed gold leaf, a possibility not afforded by silk with woven, repeated patterns. Yoshimitsu, the third Ashikaga Shogun, made no attempt to revitalise the domestic weaving industry, preferring to import the much-prized Chinese silks. The Onin Wars of 1462 – 1473 saw the complete paralysis of the weaving industry until, by 1551, Sakai became virtually the only weaving centre left in Japan.¹⁵ Chinese silks continued to be popular but were expensive and not within the reach of all. As the Japanese weavers were hardly able to meet any domestic demand, the practice of decorating plainer silks by hand became more the vogue and, consequently, the cut of the *kosode* and the *uchikake* became simpler to accommodate this decoration. Embroidery too became more practised, but fabric dyeing was just beginning to be widely used and there gradually evolved a combination of stitching and tie-dyeing known as *tsujigahana*, which by 1600 was in widespread use.¹⁶ The fortunes of the domestic weaving industry were not revived until the reign of Hideyoshi who assumed power after the death of Oda Nobunaga in 1582. When he had restored peace to the Kyoto area, he set about rehabilitating the weavers who had been dispersed over the preceding years. He set aside an area in

the north western part of Kyoto, known as Nishijin, and from then on this became the centre of the Japanese weaving industry. Might this re-establishing of domestic cloth making skills not be seen as a message in its own right? With the emergence of Hideyoshi, his foundation of a secure power base in Edo and the development of an urban strata of society with money and leisure time at its disposal, might this somewhat differently organised society not wish to send out messages of its own making and might it not also call upon a commodity which had been so employed at previous points in Japan's history?

By the time the woodblock print became established in the 17th century, the disposition of layers of clothing and the patterns and colours employed had long been an all-consuming passion for the aristocrats of Japanese society. The nobles of the Heian court had defined themselves and others by the assurance with which they assembled the multiple layers of their clothing and by the taste, or lack of it, displayed by colour choice and combinations. Could it not be expected therefore that when woodblock prints were being commercially produced for an urban audience that modelled its tastes somewhat on those of its historical superiors, a concern for the depiction of costuming and design would figure largely in the appeal of these prints? And might it not also be possible that, just as that previous society had used its textiles to play the "game of meanings" so too did urban Edo? If the textile messages were there to be read in the painted images and writings of the Heian nobility, would a different set of textile messages, peculiar to a relatively new, urban situation, appear in its favoured image type – the woodblock print – and its city literature?

Buddhism and Shinto. Their Effects on Japanese Sensibilities.

One facet of the development of costuming, as stated previously, was the divergence of styles between the sensuously feminine and the more austere

masculine and it was suggested that a contributory factor in this divergence could be the very different attitudes to life contained within Shinto and Buddhism. These two belief systems have been major influences on Japanese culture and elements of both are embedded in the Japanese psyche itself.¹⁷ The popular native culture in Japan had its roots in Shinto, whereas Buddhism makes its appearance among aristocrats at the early 7th century court of Shotoku Daishi (who died 621)¹⁸ and was an import, as with so much else, from China and Korea. Although both ways of life became an integral part of Japanese culture, the contrast between Shinto – based populist culture and the more aristocratic, Buddhist – inspired train of thought was so marked, that Japanese society seemed to exhibit two separate cultures simultaneously. Buddhism appealed to the ruling classes of early Japan and they adopted it readily because of the stress it placed on morality and an ethical code. The early rulers of Japan saw, in these aspects of Buddhism, valuable aids towards their political goals of controlling the population. Both Buddhism, and later Confucianism, suited the purposes of the ruling classes admirably and were therefore adopted by them with enthusiasm. However, despite the official popularity of Buddhism and Confucianism, the more earthy, native traditions refused to disappear. Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines co-existed, as they do in present-day Japan, and both sets of observances were practised. The aristocratic world, adhering as it did to Buddhism, laid stress on restraint and austere perfection and with the introduction of Confucianism, these values were added to by loyalty and the idea of duty. The concepts of loyalty, restraint and austerity were regarded not only as indicators of upper class status but were also linked with masculinity and the code of " male" behaviour. By the time of Tokugawa rule, in the Edo Period of c.1603 – 1868, Confucianism, especially that of the school of Zhu Xi, a 12th century philosopher, was being strictly applied to society in an attempt to lessen the effects of hedonism and extravagance and to maintain obedience to Tokugawa rule. It was precisely because Shinto and its earthier approach to life had never died out that successive

governments felt themselves in need of the precepts of Buddhism and Confucianism in order to keep the populace under control.

The Importance of Women.

An aspect of the older beliefs, which surfaced repeatedly in Japanese culture, although consistent attempts were made to keep it subjugated, was that of the importance of women. Going back to the seminal legends of Japan, time and again we see the importance of women and things female. From Izanami, who helped create the world, to Amaterasu – Omikami, the sun goddess, through the early shamanesses who interpreted divine will and danced its wishes, to women in Japan's history such as Himiko, a shamaness of the 3rd century who became queen and Jingu the empress who invaded Korea after the death of her husband, the emperor Chuai, and brought considerable tribute back to Japan, the early culture of Japan was bound to the concept of matriarchal importance.¹⁹ This tied in well with the Shinto view of life, which was based on an enjoyment of and a reverence for nature and an acknowledgement of the importance of the female in the overall scheme of things. The significance of the female in Shinto can be observed externally in the very structure of Shinto shrines. Whether they are small or imposing, access to shrines is gained by passing through an opening in a fence or wall at the front. These openings are protected by the recognisable *Torii* gateway. Originally this gateway was more than a mere entrance. It represented a magical, protective device, which guarded the way into the shrine against evil or contamination. Sometimes there are 3 such gateways, one after the other. Sometimes a "tunnel" is produced, by repeated positioning of several *torii*. At the end of this tunnel, or entrance pathway, in the centre of the actual shrine enclosure, is to be found the *Haiden*. This could be translated as the "worship sanctuary". Just beyond this, usually, is situated an inner sanctuary, known as the *Honden*. This is the chief sanctuary of the shrine, where the

spirits revered in the shrine dwell and the ordinary worshipper is not allowed to enter. Penetration to the innermost area of the shrine is achieved only by passing through the doorway or the "tunnel" configuration. Within this inner chamber is to be found the *Shintai*, or "god body" – in other words, that which contains the deity or gives it form. A more archaic name for the *Shintai* is the *Kamusane* or the *Kamuzane*, meaning "god seed" or "god kernel". It could be argued that the parallel, symbolically, with the womb of the mother, reached by those initiates who are "one" with her, via the vaginal entrance way, to a place containing the "god seed" which evolves later into the "god body" could hardly be more obvious. The structural layout of the ceremonial buildings of Shinto worship and the terminology connected with them, are linked, markedly, with matriarchal functions.

In Shinto belief, there were originally two *Kami*, male and female. The male was called *Izanagi – no – Mikoto* and the female, *Izanami – no – Mikoto*. By coming together, these two created the Great Eight Island Country (Japan) and produced, among others, *Amaterasu – Omikami*, usually referred to as the sun goddess and her brother *Susa – no – Wo – no – Mikoto*, who is associated with the moon. However, unlike many creation myths, it is not the original pair who have the authority and who occupy the foremost position in Shinto belief. Rather, it is their daughter, *Amaterasu – Omikami*, from whom, it is believed, Japan's ruling house is descended and who is revered as the great mother goddess of Japan. Her importance is summed up well by Professor Kono, one of the most influential teachers of Shinto beliefs.

" As it is written in the *Kogushui*, ' *Amaterasu – Omikami* is a true ancestress; she is our true source . . . The Imperial throne – as enduring as heaven and earth – has its origin in her glory and our system of state organisation – flawless as a golden jar – is built on the development of her limitless divine attributes, on her powers of creation and

growth, on her magnanimity and generosity, on her capacity for careful forethought".²⁰

In the *Nihongi* ²¹ - the Chronicles of Japan, produced around AD 720 - she is accorded several names:

O - Hiru - Me - no - Muchi which means " Great Sun Female Possessor "

Amaterasu - no - O - Kami which means " Heaven Shining Great Deity"

Amaterasu - O - Hiru - Me - no - Mikoto which translates to " Heaven Shining Great Day Female Deity / Heaven Shining Great Day Eye Deity"

All of which point to the idea of both solar worship and the cult of the female.

Coming up to the present day, in Japan's schools, she is a compulsory part of the National History programme. The teacher's manual, which accompanies the first chapter of Volume 1 of the " National History for Ordinary Primary Schools" stresses that

" From these two *kami* was born *Amaterasu - Omikami*. From the beginning it was determined that she should be the person who should be the ruler of the realm. The Great Deity (*Amaterasu - Omikami*) . . . poured forth her benevolent will upon the people. She allotted the divisions of water and land, she taught the cultivation of the 5 cereals, such as rice, millet and panic grass and also imparted the knowledge of sericulture and textile manufacturing. There is not one of all our myriads of people who has not been bathed in her benevolence. Thus the brightness and the universality of her abounding virtue are just like the sun which covers the heavens with its radiance and lightens the whole world far and wide, wherefrom all things receive their growth."

The connection is made, even here, between textiles and the feminine. However, it could be said that as both the *Kojiki* - Records of Ancient Matters - and the *Nihongi* were not completed until the first quarter of the 8th century of the western era and

that in their compilation earlier Japanese traditions were reproduced using Chinese models in the interests of imperial centralisation, would that not lessen the impact of what they had to say? Would their messages not need to be taken at less than face value? Arguably, the models chosen could not have afforded to have been so very different from the actuality of Japan's past. In order to convince a body of people, in this case of the validity of imperial centralisation, the selection of models at variance with folk memory would have been ill advised as they would not have had the ring of veracity required to have them adopted and upheld by centuries of Japanese believers. So it seems reasonable to assert that the insistence on the importance of the female with her attendant attributes and linked practices, such as cloth production (and, by association, the importance of cloth too) is underlined by the continued acceptance of a founding goddess, a female entity who provides all that Japan requires. This would indicate the strength of an initial, tribal matriarchy and a reverence for the power of the feminine.

Throughout the references to *Amaterasu - Omikami*, we see that she is represented as wearing clothes and ornaments like other women, but also carries weapons like a warrior and cultivates fields like a good farmer. Even before the differing pulls of Shinto / Buddhism - feminine / masculine - we can see in the person of *Amaterasu - Omikami*, the founding mother of Japan, the dichotomy of male and female that so exhibits itself in the attitudes and behaviour of the Japanese people. The connection between significant women in early Shinto and cloth is decidedly marked and there is no doubting the significance of women in the emergence of this early set of beliefs. Shinto tradition tells us that when *Amaterasu - Omikami* is preferred in the line of succession after *Izanagi* and *Izanami* to their son and her brother, *Susa - no - Wo - no Mikoto*, it is she who decides that her grandson, *Ninigi - no Mikoto*, will rule all of Japan. Her brother's son and heir acquiesces to this, puts forward no argument in favour either of his sidestepped father, or himself and retires to the palace of *Kidzuki*,

thereby acknowledging the dominance of his aunt. Not only is it she who determines who will rule Japan at that point in time, but she also establishes the right of his descendants to succeed him, presenting him and his heirs with the Yata Mirror, the Clustering-Clouds Sword and the Yasuka Curved Jewels, which became accepted thereafter as the 3 Sacred Treasures and the Imperial regalia of the Great Eight Island Country. She also says that when her grandson and his heirs look into the Yata Mirror, they should "... regard it as beholding me, myself." ²² Their image was, not only, to be sacred, but arguably female. Arguably, in these early myths, although there is an obvious basis in the acceptance of a dominant female in the tribal hierarchy, the more important suggestion is that strength and power lie in the merging of masculine and feminine traits and behaviour patterns. Had the message been a simple one of preferred female dominance, then surely *Amaterasu – Omikami* would have established a matriarchal dynasty? She elects to settle the succession on her grandson yet says he has to be a reflection of her. Just as she is capable of masculine attitudes and exhibits aspects of masculine behaviour, so he has to encompass that which makes her female and an important part of that femaleness is the reverence for cloth production and its use. There are numerous references throughout the early myths to cloth and cloth-related items and this insistence on cloth's importance continues in Shinto practice today. Although fibres such as hemp are also mentioned, the most common fibre to assume importance in Shinto ritual is silk.

The Connection of Silk with the Female.

In the original creation story, the female *kami*, *Izanami*, the wife of *Izanagi*, has the double function of being an earth goddess of the upper world and queen of the lower world. Her body is associated with things that come out of the earth, such as metal, clay, water and crops. One of these "children" is "*Hana – yama – Hime*" or "

Clay Mountain Lady". She is also revered as an earth deity. In her turn she gives birth to "Young Growth Deity" "*Waka – Musubi – no – Kami*" who is responsible for the production of the 5 cereals, the silkworm and the mulberry tree. Fibres from the mulberry tree were used both in textile production and the making of paper and from the silkworm came the entire process of sericulture, so, thanks to two female deities, the Japanese believed that their country was gifted the means to produce both paper and silk. Another goddess to whom the advent of the silkworm is credited, is *Ukemochi*. She is the Shinto goddess of fertility and food and, having offended the god *Tsuki – Yumi* by vomiting up large amounts of food, she was slain by him. However, from her dead body emerged many animals, including the silkworm. This connection of silk with not one goddess but two, underlines the suggestion that cloth, especially silk, was to be seen in some way as a commodity associated with the feminine side of the human personality and it is this connection that will be explored in more detail in future chapters.

Amaterasu – Omikami herself is linked with several cloth-related anecdotes. One of the most important is the incident of her retreat from the world into a cave. Obviously deriving from early solar worship and the significance to the early followers of Shinto of the eclipse, the story of the goddess's abandonment of the land, narrated in the *Nihongi*, tells how her younger brother, *Susa – no – Wo – Mikoto*, was given to violence and making trouble. Not only did he destroy the order of her rice fields and defile the ceremony of the new fruits, but the deed which finally caused her to leave the earth altogether occurred as follows:

"Moreover, when he saw that *Amaterasu – Omikami* was in her sacred weaving hall, engaged in weaving garments for the gods, he flayed a piebald colt of Heaven and, breaking a hole in the roof tiles of the hall, flung it in. Then, *Amaterasu – Omikami*, startled with alarm, wounded herself with the shuttle. Indignant at this, she

straightway entered the Rockcave of Heaven and, having fastened the Rock Door, dwelt there in seclusion. Therefore, constant darkness prevailed on all sides and the alteration of day and night was unknown." ²³

In this account, it is not the disruption of agriculture which precipitates her abandonment of her realm, or the irreverent behaviour of her brother during a religious ceremony. Rather, it is the lack of respect shown towards her, in the defilement of her presence by the throwing in of an unclean object and the equally great disrespect directed to and the contamination of the act of weaving.

The Importance of Cloth in Current Shinto Ritual.

Nor is cloth only of significance in early Shinto belief. In present day Shinto ritual, cloth holds a position of considerable importance. One such area of significance is its use in connection with *Shintai*. A *Shintai* is something which is regarded as a physical enshrinement of a deity. Sometimes, these *Shintai* can be unhoused, natural objects, such as trees. The *Shintai* of the Omiwa shrine of Yamato is a mountain, while that of the Yudono shrine in Yamagata Prefecture is a hot spring. However, in most of the cases where enshrinement has been made since 1868 *Shintai* tend to be mirrors. This preference for mirrors may stem from the influence of the Sacred Mirror about which the Grand Imperial Shrine of Ise is built, but throughout many ancient cultures, the mirror has long been accepted as a sun symbol and has been accorded much reverence. The mirror therefore can be seen as a symbol of *Amaterasu – Omikami* herself and equally therefore a representation of the feminine. The extent of the reverence in which mirror *Shintai* are held can be seen in the elaboration of the ceremonial wrappings in which they are protected. The ceremonial textiles are always of silk. The mirror, which is traditionally made of metal, in keeping with the "children" of *Izanami*, is first tied with a red silk cord and tassels and placed in a bag of

gold brocade, fastened with a red silk cord. The bundle is then placed within a box of willow wood, which, in turn, is wrapped in plain white silk. The *Shintai*'s final placement is in a white box made of unstained cypress wood, ornamented with gilt metal work and tied again with a red silk cord and tassels. Over the whole *Shintai* is drawn a cover of Yamato brocade. The material, which is contiguous with the *Shintai* itself and, therefore, an immediate wrapping for the "body" of the deity, is silk. The costly woods employed do not touch the actual god or goddess. Again, a question could be said to arise over the fact that it is noticeably since 1868 that the majority of *Shintai* have been mirrors. Had there been no reference before then in Japan's cultural history to the importance of the mirror, then indeed it would be right to question the significance of the mirror *Shintai* and its connection with femaleness. However, it is not the case that mirrors only assume importance in Shinto after 1868. One of Amaterasu – Omikami's initial gifts was the Yata Mirror, one of Japan's 3 Sacred Treasures and in the legends, she herself draws attention to it and its reflection of herself as deity and woman. That the mirror's importance is accepted at the highest level is illustrated in the fact that the Grand Imperial shrine at Ise reveres the sacred Mirror above all. Interestingly, Ise also draws attention to the integration of female with male in the symbol of the "wedded rocks" joined together ritually with woven ropes. Once again, a form of textile plays its part in "the game of meanings".

Not only is silk used in the wrapping of *Shintai* but it is used also in several aspects of Shinto ritual, as are other fibres, such as hemp and, later on in Shinto's history, cotton. When specific ceremonies are being conducted at Shinto shrines, two tall poles are set up on either side of the immediate approach to the *haiden* or worship sanctuary. Each pole is topped with a branch of the sacred tree and from this branch are hung silk streamers in the 5 auspicious colours – white, yellow, red, blue and purple (which was originally black) – which are believed by the faithful to symbolise clouds of good omen. Within the shrine itself, purification is carried out by waving a ceremonial

object known as the *onusa*, which consists of a large object, shaped like a wand, made of paper and hemp fibre, mounted on a wooden stick. Ceremonial devices known as *tamagushi* are also used for presentation in Shinto ritual. Once again, these are small branches of the sacred tree, *sakaki*, which are hung with strips of white paper or cloth. When offerings are made to Shinto deities at their shrines ²⁴ these offerings can be divided, broadly, into two classes. There are offerings known as *Shinsen*, which translates roughly to "sacred food" and *heihaku*, which are cloth offerings.

Back at the beginnings of Shinto, the *heihaku* consisted of all kinds of presentation to the *kami*. Not only was silk cloth presented, but so were paper, money, jewels, weapons, farm implements, food and drink. However, *heihaku* evolved into offerings of cloth, of different kinds, such as cotton and linen as well as silk. To the present day, at major festivals, in the large government and national shrines, the cloth is made up into rolls of various sizes, depending on the grade of the shrine and these rolls are presented from the Imperial Household Department by special envoys.

In the observation of ransom rituals, cloth was used as the ritualised offering. The idea of expiating ritual guilt by giving ransom objects, known as *age-mono*, is one with a lengthy history in Japan. The more closely the *age-mono* was connected with the person offering it, the more effectual the sacrifice was reckoned to be. One of the most important and hence effectual types of *age-mono* was clothing. The emperor would be measured ritually for suits of clothes, using bamboo sticks. These sticks would be broken to the required lengths, giving the ceremony the title *Yo-ori* or "joint break". When it was completed, the clothing would be presented by a *Nakatomi* ²⁵ woman (and, once again, the ritual demands the connection of cloth with a woman) to the emperor, in a vase. He would breathe on it three times and then it would be taken away by religious dignitaries, who would throw it into a stream. Just as *Amaterasu-Omikami* wove silk for presentation to the gods, so her imperial

descendants, even today, present the deities of various Shinto shrines with woven cloth to pay their respects.

The Gifting of Clothing to Buddhist Temples.

Not only did Shinto shrines receive textile donations, but the practice crossed over to Buddhist establishments too. As was mentioned in endnote iv, the practice of gifting the clothes of deceased nobles to Buddhist temples had a long history, but fairly recent research has shown that this idea, of giving a person's clothes to a place of worship, was carried on into the period under review in this thesis. In 1982, a box was found among the textiles in the collection of Nomura Shojiro. This collection includes 156 kosode robes and 100 double-panelled screens on which fragments of kosode have been mounted and spans the period from the late 16th century to the mid 19th – more or less the period covered in this work. In terms of social class, the items in his collection belonged to the ruling class or to those members of the *chonin* with money. Also his collection is composed mostly of women's garments, which cuts across the trend of surviving clothes from the period being almost exclusively male. Men's clothes tended to be handed down through families, while those belonging to women were either remodelled in the owner's lifetime, or they were handed over to temples to be cut down into vestments (*kesa*), altar cloths (*uchishiki*), or temple banners (*ban*). As a result of this cutting down practice, many women's garments of the period were lost, or records of them were thought to be. However, the Nomura box contained fragments of silk, which had been cut from the linings of garments. On these pieces of silk were dedicatory inscriptions from Buddhist temples, brushed in ink and indicating the posthumous name and titles of the deceased, the date of her death, the name of the recipient temple and the names of those who had gifted the robe in her honour. One such dedicatory inscription reads

"In memory of Kenkoin – dono gyoku Honshun'ei Daidojo Seisan Bodai. Date of death 11th March, 1701. Donated 2nd March 1704. The above (robe belonged to) the daughter of Lord Matsudaira, Daimyo of Dewa, master of the castle at Unshu. She passed away in Edo in the province of Musashi. Donors: ladies of her household in commemoration." ²⁶

Whether you focus on the practice of gifting robes to a Buddhist temple, or to a Shinto shrine, you have to consider the purpose of treating textiles in this fashion. Could it be seen as an eastern forerunner of the Catholic practice of paying for masses for the souls of the departed? If beautiful silk clothes were highly valued, then would making a gift of them to a deity not accrue one blessings in this life and beyond? But then the problem presents itself - how would these ideas fit with the practice of gifting clothes to secular retainers? Arguably, what all these practices have in common is the fact that the textiles in question all embody the person of the owner. If you gift a deceased woman's robes to a Buddhist temple, then a part of her remains in a place of prayer, surrounded by sanctity. If the emperor gifts cloth ceremonially to Shinto shrines, it is no coincidence that he breathes on it before it is despatched. A part of his physicality goes with it. If a lord gifts a robe to an heir or a trusted subordinate, the value resides in the fact that he has worn the robe, not in the intrinsic value of the garment itself. Time and again in this research, situations have presented themselves in which the connection between the owner or the maker of the garment have assumed an enormous importance. The actual material takes on the imprint, as it were, of the person with whom it is most closely associated. Sometimes the connection is implied symbolically, sometimes the connection is implicit, sometimes quite explicit, but textiles, principally clothing, seem to retain in their weave the very essence of the people with whom they've been most intimately connected.

To what extent could this be said to be the case in the period under review in this thesis?

That it is the case and that textiles do have an intimate connection with their wearers or users will be explored in subsequent chapters, but there are many examples of this kind of association both before the 1600's and after the 19th century and I would argue, it would be illogical to assume that for the period 1660-1886 all such associations disappeared.

In the 13th century *nikki* known as the *Towazugatari*, discovered in 1940 among the holdings of the Imperial Household Library in Tokyo, there is a striking example of just such an association. When NiJo, the female author of these memoirs, recounts her wanderings after she has left court to become a Buddhist nun, she writes of staying for some time in Kamakura, where she is befriended by Iinuma, the son of Yoritsuna and a figure of as much power in the government as his father. During her stay, she frequently composed poetry with Iinuma and he was most distressed to discover that she intended to leave. On her final visit, before her departure, they spent the whole night composing poems. Iinuma then makes her the gift of an outfit in which to travel, along with one last poem.

"Frail though our tie may be
Wrap this gown around you
Don't ever part with it" ²⁷

Could this not be interpreted merely as a practical kindness to an itinerant woman? Had it not been for the link between the substance of the gift and the accompanying poem I might have been inclined to accept it at this level. However, the message in the poem lends the gifted clothing an altogether deeper significance. Although their relationship has been brief and therefore had not been able to deepen into something more significant (the "frailness" of the tie that exists between them) nevertheless, he wishes her to take a fond memory of him away with her. The gown is more than merely a protection against the elements, it also

represents the warmth of his affection, which he wishes her to know still surrounds her. He instructs her never to part with the gown. If taken at face value, in terms of the actual clothing, it is hardly likely that she will never be parted from the garment. However, if the garment represents his affection and perhaps even his protection, then his use of the imperative fits well with his being a powerful man. The gown is at once a practical gift, a metaphor of his affection and a pledge of his concern for her in the future. We can see the gown as being the symbolic link between two people. Nijo and Inuma must part, but the feelings they have shared linger in the robe and will be felt by Nijo each time the garment is worn. The textile, in some way, retains their feelings in its weave and keeps them and the wearer safe for the future.

Someone could take this example and say that it was purely symbolic and that there was little, if anything, of the actual physical in it. Also, were it the only reference in the work to such textile association, one might be more inclined to accord it less significance. However, in the very next section of the same book, Nijo recounts a chance encounter with her former lover, the retired emperor, GoFukakusa. He summons her and tells her, to her amazement, that he has never forgotten her and they remain in conversation all night about their past relationship. Before they part the following morning,

"... he took off the three small-sleeved gowns he was wearing next to his skin and presented them to me." ²⁸

He bids her

"... keep them with you always." ²⁹

Here there is definite evidence of the idea of his physicality in some way accompanying the robes. They were worn by him "... next to his skin" ³⁰ and Nijo decides, apparently for the practical purpose of not attracting undue attention, to "... wear them under my own dark robes." ³¹

The gowns are an obvious link between their respective sensualities. Through the medium of clothing, his skin touches hers and the message of his feelings is

transmitted. Nor is Nijo the only writer of this period in Japan's history to suggest such a connection between textiles and physical messages. Murasaki Shikibu makes many references to similar ideas in her *Genji Monogatari* as does Sei Shonagon in her *Pillow Book*. The cultural effect of these textile suggestions can be felt in Japan to the present day. As recently as the start of the Second World War, in the Okinawa Prefecture, a narrow belt, known as a *minsaa*, was woven by the women of these islands. The belts were of plain weave, warp-faced rib construction about 8.5cm wide and 230cm in length. The *minsaa* has long been used with the traditional dress of the islanders, although when its name came into use is unclear. The word *min* in Chinese means "cotton" and the word *saa* means "narrow", so the combination of the two denotes an item of "narrow cotton weave". Okinawan traditional dress reflects that worn in Japan during the 12th – 16th centuries and closely resembles the style prevalent in Noh drama in both form and construction, which are said to date from that period. The wearing of a broad *obi*, so fashionable in mainland Japan, was never adopted by the traditional Okinawans. *Minsaa* were woven by the island women, using patterns and dyes handed down from generation to generation, then given by them to the men of their choice as tangible expressions of their love. A typical *Yaeyama minsaa* would be dyed dark indigo blue, with spots alternating along the entire length of the sash. These spots are bordered on each side by a narrow, chequer-board stripe, known by a name which translates to "centipede feet". The message contained in the allusion to centipedes' feet is that the woman who weaves the sash wishes her prospective lover to visit her bed at least as many times as a centipede has feet. The expression used to describe this is *ashi-shigeku* which literally means a multitude of feet and, by extension, a multitude of footsteps, or "frequently". This referred directly to the fact that the marriage system prevalent in Okinawan society centred on the woman's house and the multitude of footsteps referred to the frequency of the husband's visits there. The 4-spot/5-spot motif carries the message that the relationship should last forever and the 2 white stripes within the

chequered borders, whose name translates to "straight lines" refers to the message that the love between the partners should follow a straight path and that they should not stray in their devotion to each other. Inside these straight lines, in the exact centre of the sash, is the most important of the message design features, the central ikat motifs. The basic unit of these ikata is rectangular-shaped and approximately 2cm long. One motif consists of four of these rectangles and another consists of five. These two motifs are spaced about 9cm apart and form a rebus in Japanese, which means " forever more". Not only were *minsaa* regarded as message bearers, but they also served as tangible evidence of a marriage contract between the two partners. If a man pursued a woman and she wove a *minsaa* and presented it to him, it was accepted as proof that his suit was acceptable to her and they were officially contracted to each other. Nor was this custom peculiar to Yaeyama. In Yonaguni, another location in the Okinawa Prefecture, a similar custom of weaving message sashes, for precisely the same reason as that mentioned previously, prevailed, although in this instance the sashes were known as *kagannubuu*. Regardless of the geographic location of these sashes, the men who received them treated them, traditionally, with the utmost respect and equated their preservation with the projected duration of their marriages. The sashes were worn until they split along the folded edges, at which point they would be refolded in half and worn until they split again. This practice of refolding along slightly different lines each time would continue, hopefully, until the man died. That the tradition was to wear the original piece and not to have subsequent sashes woven by their partners, shows that the men believed that the first item had the wishes and hopes of its female creator woven into the very textile. The sash's message was that it was more than a gift, however symbolic. It was an actual physical repository of the emotions of the woman who made it and for as long as the recipient of the sash wore it on his body and preserved its fabric, so too would he feel he was clothed in his wife's love. Just as in the 13th century accounts of the gifting of pieces of clothing to Lady Nijo, the actual

interweaving of the warp and weft threads provided a mesh for the containment of the sentiments of the gift-giver. They became intrinsically interwoven into the fabric and remained as an integral part of the garment's construction. In the case of the *minsaa*, although a subsequent sash could be woven with affection, it could not be seen as equalling the first, because the message the woman sent in the first was that all her love and hope for her married future were contained in the original. Her feelings had already passed to her partner in that particular textile and subsequently he was in possession of them. Should the partner die, or the *minsaa* be returned for whatever reason, only then would the woman, theoretically, be free to pass the message of her feelings to someone else. These textile messages in Okinawa represent, in our times, part of the cultural heritage of textile transmission that this thesis seeks to examine. They are, arguably, recent examples of a cultural attitude, which is, and has been for centuries, deeply embedded in the Japanese psyche. Present day Japanese literature also provides several examples of the connection between clothing and the physical associations of the wearer embodied by that clothing. Short stories by Yukio Mishima, Nagai Kafu and Tanizaki Jun'ichiro, all of which will be referred to in subsequent chapters, attest to the continued obsession of the Japanese people with textiles and physicality. Looking at these two time periods, one, centuries ago in Japan's history and the other belonging to the present day, it seems illogical to accept that, for the period under review in this thesis, such associations disappeared entirely and consequently, one of the tasks of this research was to discover if such associations could be shown to have existed in Edo and pre-Meiji Japan.

The Concept of the Sensual.

This concept of the sensual was one,³² which emanated from Shinto and seemed intrinsically linked with the various uses to which textiles were put. As a set of beliefs

that revered the female and the natural world, it is only to be expected that Shinto would have a deep acceptance and celebration of the physical and the sensual. Sometimes, the concept of male and female becomes blurred or merged in Shinto belief as has already been seen in the attributes of *Amaterasu-Omikami* herself. In the person of *Inari*, the deity connected with the production of rice, we see an acceptance of this deity as being both a god and a goddess at the same time. However, the deity most closely connected with the importance of sensuality in early Shinto is *Uzume*. When *Amaterasu - Omikami*, the sun goddess, retreated from the earth and refused to reappear, the other kami were thrown into confusion. Without her light and warmth, the earth was threatened with disaster. Many attempts were made to persuade her to reappear, but she resolutely refused to do so. Eventually, it was *Uzume* who was summoned to help. The legends relate that she used the power of her sensuality to dance in a lewd and provocative manner and in so doing caused the other gods to laugh so loudly that *Amaterasu - Omikami* was intrigued enough to push open the Rock Door just enough to see what was going on. She was then pulled back into the earthly realm. Another example, which pre-dates the previous one in the supposed chronology of the myths, is to be found in the account of *Izanami's* death and *Izanagi's* pursuit of her into "the land of *Yomi*". By the time he arrives to reclaim her from death it is too late for she has already eaten of "the cooking furnace of *Yomi*"³³ and so is subject to the processes of death. She tells *Izanagi* not to look upon her, but he ignores her command and does so. The *Nihongi* then relates how

" Her body was already putrid, maggots swarmed over it and the eight thunder gods had been generated in her various members. *Izanagi*, greatly shocked, exclaimed ' What a hideous and polluted land I have come to unawares!' So he speedily ran away. *Izanami* was angry and said ' Why didst thou not observe that which I charged thee? Now I am put to shame.'"³⁴

In her anger, she has him pursued by the Ugly Females of Yomi, whom she intends should kill him. He outwits them however, and she is forced to take up the pursuit herself. When she finally catches up with him at the Even Pass of Yomi, he blocks her path with a rock, formally divorces her and enjoins her to come no closer to him. The *Kojiki* account of this incident identifies *Izanami* with Death itself, by referring to her as "The Great Deity of Yomi" which is a personification of Death. Confronted by Death, *Izanagi's* immediate response is to remove all his clothes in a ritualised act of defiance.

"Moreover, he threw down his girdle, which was called *Nagachika - no - Kami*. Moreover, he threw down his upper garment, which was called *Wadzurahi - no - Kami*. Moreover, he threw down his trousers, which were called *Aki-guhi - no Kami*. Moreover, he threw down his shoes, which were called *Chi-shiki - no - Kami*." ³⁵

He stands before her, without the covering of his clothes, asserting the power of his sex and refuses to be defeated by her. Infuriated by this display, the *Kojiki* tells us that *Izanami* says to him "I will in one day strangle to death a thousand of the people of thy land" ³⁶. To her, *Izanagi* replies, defiantly "If thou dost so, I will, in one day, build a thousand and five hundred parturition houses." ³⁷ A "parturition house" was a specially constructed hut or temporary dwelling in which menstruating women, or women in and after childbirth, were accommodated, to keep the rest of the community from the defilement of blood. By saying that he will construct one thousand, five hundred of such houses, *Izanagi* is saying that he will employ the power of sex to defeat Death itself, not only equally, but by half as many again.

A more obvious example even of the importance of sex, the recognition of its power and the acceptance of sensuality as a means to achieve a goal, is to be found in the

Nihongi account of *Ninigi*'s descent to earth to claim his realm. As mentioned previously, the grandson of *Amaterasu* – *Omikami*, whose name was *Ninigi* – no *Mikoto*, was chosen by her to rule the earth. When he was about to travel down to earth to establish his rule, his grandmother, the sun goddess, addressed him and said

" This Reed – Plain – 1500 – Autumns – Fair – Ears – Land is the region which my descendants shall be lords of. Do thou, my August Grandchild, proceed thither and govern it. Go and may prosperity attend thy dynasty and may it, like Heaven and Earth, endure forever." ³⁸

However, a problem arises when the advance party returns and reports to *Ninigi* and *Amaterasu*

" When he was about to descend, one who had been sent in advance to clear the way, returned and said ' there is one god who dwells at the eight crossroads of Heaven, the length of whose nose is seven hands and whose stature is more than seven fathoms. Moreover, a light shines from his mouth and from his posteriors. His eye-balls are like an eight-hand mirror and have a ruddy glow like the physalis.' Thereupon he (*Ninigi*) sent one of his attendant deities to go and make enquiry. Now, among all the eighty myriads of deities, there was not one who could confront him and make enquiry. Therefore, he specially commanded *Ame* – no – *Uzume*, saying ' Thou art superior to others in the power of thy looks. Thou hadst better go and question him.' So *Ame* – no – *Uzume* forthwith bared her breasts and, pushing down the band of her garment below her navel, confronted him with a mocking laugh. Then the god of the crossways asked her, saying, ' *Ame* – no – *Uzume* ! What meanest thou by this behaviour?' She answered and said ' I make bold to ask who thou art, that dost thus remain in the road by which the child of *Amaterasu* – no *Omikami* is to make his progress?' The god of the crossways answered and said ' I

have heard that the child of *Amaterasu* – no – *Omikami* is now about to descend and therefore I have come, respectfully, to meet and attend upon him. My name is *Saruta – hiko – no – Omikami*.' Then *Ame – no – Uzume* again enquired of him saying 'Wilt thou go before me or shall I go before thee?' He answered and said 'I will go before and be his harbinger.' *Ame – no – Uzume* returned and reported these circumstances. Thereupon, the August Grandchild, leaving the Heavenly Rock Seat and thrusting apart the eight-piled Clouds of Heaven, clove his way with an awful way-cleaving and descended to earth." ³⁹

The new ruler of the earth, *Ninigi*, has, in this extract from the primal myths of Shinto, realised the power of sex and its attendant sensuality. Backed as he was by the sway of *Amaterasu*, he could have resorted to a display of manly force when faced with the quite impressive deity of the crossroads. There is no shortage of instances recorded in the *Nihongi* in which gods use violent force, or even resort to killing, to achieve their particular ends. However, *Ninigi* shows his intelligence by realising that a greater force than mere brute strength can be employed against this obstacle. There is no indication that he considered it a lesser strategy. In fact, when his information gatherers return, it is his first choice of action. Nor is it deemed to be something shameful to use the power of female sensuality to achieve a particular outcome. Rather, he seems to have recognised it as a powerful and valid tool to employ. Interestingly, *Ame – no – Uzume* in this account uses the disposition of her clothing to send out the required messages to the deity of the crossroads. As the concept of nakedness was perfectly acceptable in the attitudes fostered by Shinto, it could be argued that the goddess is depicted as choosing to employ her clothing in this fashion to achieve the maximum effect. She wishes to transmit a specific meaning to the obstructive deity, which was that it would be better if *Saruta – hiko – no – Omikami* chose the more pleasant of the options available to him to clear the way for *Ninigi*. She offers him the face-saving situation of being "persuaded" by a

seductively semi-clad female deity, using the disposition of her garments to draw him into this "game" and thus permitting him a way out of the impasse into which he has placed himself.

The Negative Attitude towards Female Power.

This acceptance of female power, based both on natural accomplishment and on sensuality, was an aspect of Shinto that, as time progressed, did not appeal to certain sectors of Japanese society. Fuelled by the advent of Buddhism and Confucianism, the ruling classes of pre - Tokugawa Japan, with their insistence on the manly virtues and the code of the warrior, moved noticeably and consistently against the pre-eminence of Shinto. Examples of phallicism, and by association the whole idea of male and female physical sensuality, to be found in temples and in tombs, were gradually eradicated and its worship discouraged. The worship of the phallus and physicality generally was not some relic of pre-history. As relatively late as the 8th century, artistic representations deriving from associated cults were being used as decorations on tomb walls. One such tomb was unearthed in 1925 at Fuchi Village in Hikawa-Gun in Shimane Prefecture. References are also made to such emblems in the *Kogoshui*. Japan was clearly a society, initially, which did more than simply accept the power of the feminine and physical sensuality, and was rather one, which delighted in both. However, succeeding generations of rulers did their utmost to move Japan from its adherence to Shinto towards Buddhism and Confucianism and in so doing attempted to devalue the position that the feminine and the physical had hitherto held in the minds of the Japanese people. It could be argued that this process, although carried out extensively and persistently, did not succeed totally, and that evidence of a continued leaning towards the physical and the attributes associated with the feminine can be seen in the cultural output, both visual and literary, of the period covered by the work of this thesis. The delight taken in fine cloth

and its disposition, the residual importance of the female in the collective folk memory and the subconscious refusal of the Japanese people to deny the importance of physical sensuality all combine to produce the elements of the "game" which I suggest was being played out in Edo, during the period 1660 – 1886.

Notes on Chapter One.

¹ Rawson Philip. *Erotic Art of the East. The Sexual Theme in Oriental Painting and Sculpture*. Prometheus Press. New York. 1968. P.281.

² The name of the period which lasted from ca. 10,500 BC - ca. 300 BC, the "Jomon" is so called because it means "cord markings" and refers to the clay vessels and figurines made in this culture. They bear the imprint of rough ropes and strings wound round sticks which were used to press roughly woven patterns into the clay when it was still wet. By working backwards from the imprints, the weave of these early strings and ropes can be reproduced. *Bridge of Dreams. The Mary Griggs Burke Collection of Japanese Art* Miyeko Murase. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Harry N Abrams Inc. New York. 2000. ISBN 0 - 8109 - 6551 - 8.

³ Textiles which are highly advanced, both warp patterned and twill on a plain weave ground have been recovered from the 5th century burial mounds (kofun) in Fukui Prefecture, at the Juzen - no - mori kofun and in Tokyo at the Kamezuka kofun. "Jodai - gire. 7th and 8th century Textiles in Japan from the Shoso - in and Horyu - ji" Kaneo Matsumoto. Pub. Shiksha. pp. 201, 202, 203.

⁴ Not only were textiles belonging to influential deceased members of Japanese society gifted to temples by members of their families, but gifts such as wrappers for sutras (kyochitsu) and costumes worn at temple ceremonies were also made. The oldest firmly dated kyochitsu is to be found in the Shoso - in collection and belongs to 742 AD. The costumes, worn by Bugaku dancers at the consecration ceremony of Todai - ji in 752 AD number more than 200 and are in a reasonable state of preservation. Also preserved are textiles used in the funeral services of Emperor Shomu in 756 AD. There are box covers and pendant ornaments (keman) made of ashiginu or ra silk and dyed with kyokechi or rokechi resist patterns. Textiles and other objects belonging to Shomu were also dedicated to Todai - ji over a period of 2 years by Empress Komyo and these may be seen in the Shoso - in collection. *The World of Rozome. Wax Resist Textiles of Japan*. Betsy Stirling Benjamin. Kodansha International. Tokyo, New York, London. 1996. pp. 78 & 79. Another interesting source of information regarding gifted textiles is to be found in the Todai - ji Kenmotsu - cho of the Shoso-in in Nara. Dated to 758 AD, this work is a catalogue of donations made by nobles and members of the Imperial family to Todai - ji in Nara. *Kosode. 16th - 19th Century Textiles from the Nomura Collection*. Amanda Meyer Stinchecum. Kodansha International. 1984. Appendix 1. P. 192.

⁵ For a more detailed account of sericulture and textile production in Japan throughout its history than that outlined here, see Gluckman & Takeda *When Art Became Fashion. Kosode in Edo Period Japan*. Weatherhill. Los Angeles & New York. 1992. Stinchecum *Kosode. 16th - 19th Century Textiles from the Nomura Collection*. The Japan Society and Kodansha International. New York. 1984. Minnich & Nomura *Japanese Costume and the Makers of its Elegant Tradition*. Tuttle & Co. Tokyo. 1963.

⁶ A passage from the *Wo - jen - chuan* (Accounts of the Japanese People) of the *Wei - shih* (History of the Wei kingdom) of China, is frequently cited as the earliest recorded description of Japanese textiles. It discusses the progress of Japanese textiles from the primeval era and how they appeared in the third century AD when the account was compiled. It mentions the various Japanese made tribute textiles, called *wo - chin* and *I - wen - tsa - chin*. Thereafter, the development of Japanese textile arts

can be pieced together from entries in the *Kojiki* (A Record of Ancient Things) and the *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicles of Japan.) *Jodai - gire. 7th & 8th Century Textiles in Japan from the Shoso - in and Horyu - ji.* Kaneo Matsumoto. Pub. Shiksha. p. 201.

⁷ Ibid. P. 202.

⁸ Joan Stanley Baker *Japanese Art* Thames & Hudson. London. 1984. Reprinted 1991. Ch 3. P. 30.

⁹ An in-depth consideration of the early techniques and patterns of weaving can be found in *Textile Designs of Japan. Vol 1.* Japan Textile Color Design Center. Osaka. Japan. 1959. Reprinted 1962.

¹⁰ See Kosode. *16th - 19th Century Textiles from the Nomura Collection.* Amanda Meyer Stinchecum. Kodansha International. 1984. Chapter 1. Page 23.

¹¹ The history of the kosode and its associated textiles can be found in the following works. *The Story of the Kimono* Jane Liddell. New York. 1989. *Robes of Elegance. Japanese Kimonos of the 16th - 20th Centuries.* Ishimura Hiyao & Maruyama Nobuhiko. Raleigh. North Carolina. 1988. *Japanese Costume and Textile Arts.* Volume 16. The Heibonsha Survey of Japanese Art. Seiroku Noma. New York. 1977. All of these works cover the development of costume art throughout Japan's history.

¹² See references to clothing in *The Confessions of Lady Nijo* Trans. Karen Brazell. Peter Owen Ltd. London. 1973.

¹³ See Liddell, Ishimura & Maruyama and Seiroku Noma.

¹⁴ For a more lengthy account of the development of Japanese costume, see " Towards a New Aesthetic: The Evolution of the Kosode and Its Decoration" by Dale Carolyn Gluckman in *When Art Became Fashion. Kosode in Edo Period Japan.* Weatherhill. Los Angeles & New York. 1992.

¹⁵ See Liddell, Ishimura & Maruyama and Seiroku Noma.

¹⁶ *When Art Became Fashion. Kosode in Edo Period Japan.* pp. 74 & 75.

¹⁷ For further examination of the religious and cultural influences on early Japan, see Aston W G *Shinto. The Way of the Gods.* Longmans, Green & Co. London, New York, Bombay. 1905. Hume Nancy G (Ed) *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture. A Reader.* State University of New York Press. 1995. Souyri P F. *The World Turned Upside Down. Medieval Japanese Society.* Trans. K Rothe. Columbia University Press. (English Translation) 2001.

¹⁸ W. G. Aston. *The Rise of Buddhism.* Chapter xiv. P. 358.

¹⁹ For more information on the importance of women in the culture of Ancient Japan, see *Shinto. The Way of the Gods.* W G Aston. Longmans, Green and Co. London, New York, Bombay. 1905. Chapter 7. P. 133.

²⁰ *Jingishi teiy-o. An Outline of Shinto History.* Kono Shozo. Library of Congress. BL2224 . 4 . K65. (Publisher not recorded). 1944. P. 7

²¹ The *Nihongi* - the Chronicles of Japan - was compiled in AD 720, but in Chinese, not the vernacular. Its usefulness was compounded by the fact that the text has added variants on current myths, thus giving a wider and more authentic view.

²² *Shimpen Chkagu Kokush I* Shiba Katsumori. Tokyo 1927. pp 1 - 5.

²³ *Transactions of the Japan Society.* " Nihongi Supplement 1" W G Aston. 1896.

²⁴ It should be noted here that the use of the word " deity" is not strictly correct in connection with Shinto. As it is not a religion in the fullest sense of the word, the use of religious terminology is not apt. However, for the purposes of discussion, I intend to use religious terms while fully aware that they are not totally appropriate.

²⁵ The members of the Nakatomi hereditary line were seen as being very close to the Imperial family and for many centuries the Emperor's religious functions were carried out by Nakatomi family members. They were not regarded as a priestly caste and most of them carried out secular functions, but they could also be the Emperor's representatives in religious ritual. Etymological research explains their name as deriving from " Naka - tsu - omi" which translates to " Minister of the Middle" suggesting their role as intermediaries between the Emperor and the gods, although Shinto does not require a priestly go-between.

²⁶ See Stinchecum, Appendix 1. P. 193.

²⁷ *The Confessions of Lady Nijo.* Trans. Karen Brazell. Peter Owen Ltd. London. 1973. Book 4 Section 21 p.201.

²⁸ Ibid. Book 4. Section 22. p. 208.

²⁹ Ibid. Book 4. Section 22. p. 208.

³⁰ Ibid. Book 4. Section 22. p. 208.

³¹ Ibid. Book 4. Section 22. p. 208.

³² Aston W G *Shinto. The Way of the Gods.* . Longmans Green & Co. London. New York. Bombay. 1905. Ch 6 P 93.

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- ³³ Ibid Ch 6 P 93.
³⁴ Ibid. Ch 6. P 94.
³⁵ Ibid. Ch 6. P 94.
³⁶ Ibid. Ch 6. P 94.
³⁷ Ibid Ch 6. P 94.
³⁸ Ibid P111.
³⁹ Ibid. pp. 111&112.

Chapter Two

The Interdependence of Textiles and Sex in the Concept of Asobi.

"... fine clothes meant the garb of theatricality or of paying sex. The Edo male would have touched finer fabrics in the arms of these two categories of provider than on any other occasion." ¹

In the Introduction, I commented on the concept of *asobi* or "playfulness". This idea was one, which surfaced repeatedly in the world of the Heian court and the literature of that period testifies to its important part in Heian aristocratic relationships. Kristeva herself notes an element of this playfulness behind the meanings put across by such items as sleeves. Christine Guth observed that the majority of the items displayed were from the Edo Period, for the reason that this period

"... saw a remarkable explosion of playful literature and art forms..." ²

The problem posed was, if the people of urban Edo society were indeed exhibiting a "playful" attitude towards life and were arguably the inheritors of their predecessors' leanings towards the physical with its attendant feminine undertones and in addition had inherited a delight in the disposition of fine cloth, might it not be possible to discern evidence of all these traits in their artistic output, both visual and literary, during and as a result of the period under consideration in this thesis?

One area in which all these traits could perhaps be discerned was that of "paying sex" ³ and its visual representations produced in the *shunga* genre. Although the period under consideration in this thesis is particularly rich in erotic woodblocks, there is ample earlier evidence of the genre. Early *shunga* images were produced by such masters as Moronobu (d. 1694) and Sukenobu (1671 – 1750). These earlier images were mostly produced in printed book format and were monochrome, occasionally

with hand tinting. ⁴ However, that they were not rare occurrences, even in the late 1600's, can be seen from the work of Asano Shugo and Shirakura Yoshihiko, who list the production of 24 books for Hishikawa Moronobu and 17 for Nishikawa Sukenobu, among a list of other artists' productions. ⁵

The first thing, perhaps, to strike the western viewer of those *shunga* images which followed on from the earliest examples is that nudity, even partial, is not a prime factor in the depiction of the people engrossed in sexual activities. I say here "sexual activities" and not simply "sex" because *shunga* illustrated not only the variations of the sexual act itself, its preliminaries and its aftermath, but also a variety of images which, at first glance, perhaps do not seem to fall into the category of erotica, but which, on closer observation, would actually produce a similar type of response as their more graphic cousins. Would it be possible to find, on studying many of the examples of the *shunga* woodblock, that the use made of textiles, principally, though not exclusively, clothing, was a prime factor in the production of the "play" component of these illustrated encounters?

An initial obstacle, which had to be overcome, was the assumption, to a certain extent inherent in westerners, that sex is an activity for which one either strips or undresses partially. We may incorporate clothing into our sexual encounters, clothing which we regard as "sexy" "seductive" or "playful", but such garb is usually scantier than we would wear normally. Even the English expressions "to go to bed with" or "to sleep with" are suggestive in western society of partial or total disrobing. This was not the case in Edo period society. Interestingly, clothes could be used as bed covers, so if the western expression "to go to bed with" were to be applied in Edo society, or indeed in previous centuries, then it would imply the use of clothing in the bedding situation. Given the full emergence of the city dweller from the 17th century onwards and the appearance of a more demanding and sophisticated urbanite, whose desire for the trappings of "middle-class" wealth, such as fine cloth, which could be sewn and embroidered into fine clothes, it could be argued that it is not in

the least surprising that the depiction of one other trapping of class and / or wealth, the high-ranking prostitute, should go together with illustrations of fine cloth decorated with those designs, simple or elaborate, in vogue at that time. Indeed, the two, courtesans and cloth, seem to have had a mutual interaction, the former depending to a considerable extent for its allure on the latter.

The power of cloth to create illusion

It is reasonable to assume that the experience of visiting one of the fabled oiran of the Yoshiwara ⁶ would have been heightened by the expensive appearance and tactile sensation of the clothing worn. Given that some of this apparel would have been intimately involved in the sexual act for which the customer had paid such a considerable amount of money, the pleasure of the entire experience would derive to a fair extent from the sensuality of the clothing / bedding. That the stars of the Yoshiwara demi-monde understood this very well is illustrated in the fact that, after successful petitioning by them in periods of sumptuary reform, the right of Yoshiwara courtesans to purchase and wear extravagant cloth was upheld on the grounds that it was a necessary component of their trade. This was a considerable development from the situation which had existed in the charter granted to Shoji Jin'emon by the shogunal authorities in 1617, for the establishing of a pleasure quarter. In two books written in 1720 and 1725 by Jin'emon's descendant, Shoji Katsutomi, entitled *Ihon dobo goen* and *Shin Yoshiwaracho yuishogaki*, it is recorded that courtesans were to be prohibited from wearing luxurious clothes which made use of gold or silver embroidery or appliqué. Rather, they were to be clothed in the simplest of blue cotton. It has to be asked, why this, later, apparent volte face?

In the very early 1600's, during the initial establishing of Edo as a power centre for the shogunal government, the prevailing attitude was more militaristic and hence "masculine". It was necessary to establish a new regime, one which adhered to

Buddhist / Confucian principles – one which apparently eschewed more "feminine" frivolity and luxury.⁷ The very early 1600's were also a time before the full emergence of an urban class of people, with the money and leisure time at their disposal to indulge their fantasies of previous ages – principally of an age where another affluent, leisured class indulged itself with literature, art and luxurious clothing. Not only did courtesans have their right to wear elaborate clothing upheld, but so too did actors, as costumes for them were the means by which they created illusion, again, one of the stocks of their trade. Both in the world of the theatre and the pleasure houses of the Yoshiwara, Shimabara, Shinmachi and Maruyama⁸ the gloriously fashioned textiles worn by both actor and *tayu* assisted the creation of sumptuous illusion and drew their viewers into the "play" situation, whether dramatic or sexual, that their wearers were purveying. The Floating World⁹ was always more influenced by the Shinto view of life discussed previously and it attracted those who contributed to this world of natural and sensual enjoyment, such as writers, musicians, actors, writers and prostitutes. The Confucian precepts of strict social order and codes of conduct broke down here and people were encouraged to indulge their tastes for "play" of all kinds, sexual, literary and even political. The rigid social demarcation lines did not apply so forcibly, which was why the actor and the courtesan were seen as dangerous people. They were the catalysts, who brought about this blurring of social distinctions, who encouraged the entry of their patrons into a play world and whose clothing textiles were used consciously to create their worlds of sensuous illusion.

As has been referred to previously, the ideas under consideration in this thesis do not simply pertain to 1660-1886. The entire concept of textiles wielding suggestive power, of one sort or another, permeates Japanese history, both before the period under discussion and after it. References to works prior to 1660 and after 1886 are included to contend that the idea of textile messages was, I would argue, a continuous one and it would not make sense to think that for the Edo period all such textile

suggestions disappeared. If writers in the Heian period are making such references and writers like Mishima in the present day are making similar suggestions, then this makes a strong case for similar associations to have existed during 1660-1886. A short story by the writer Yukio Mishima, entitled *Onnagata*, shows the power of textile illusion. Although written in the 20th century, the story shows just how compelling and seductive the illusion cast by the costuming of kabuki plays could be.

Through the eyes of *Masuyama*, a theatre employee, Mishima describes a moment from the kabuki play *Imoseyama* in which *Omiwa*, played by the *onnagata* *Mangiku*, looks back along the *hanamichi* and is

"... completely transformed." ¹⁰

Mishima writes

"Masuyama felt a kind of terror every time he witnessed this moment. For an instant, a diabolic shadow had swept over both the bright stage, with its splendid set and beautiful costumes, and over the thousands of intently watching spectators. This force clearly emanated from *Mangiku*'s body, but at the same time transcended his flesh. Masuyama sensed in such passages something like a dark spring welling forth from this figure on the stage, this figure so imbued with softness, fragility, grace, delicacy and feminine charms. He could not identify it, but he thought that a strange evil presence, the final residue of the actor's fascination, a seductive evil which leads men astray and makes them drown in an instant of beauty, was the true nature of the dark spring he had detected." ¹¹

Returning to the stage where her death awaits her in *Funashichi*'s blade, *Omiwa* is described as "... kicking the lines of her kimono askew" ¹² as though she knows

exactly "... when and where on the stage the violent emotions now urging her forward will end." ¹³

Mishima adds

"The pain she reveals outwardly is backed with joy like her robe, on the outside dark and shot with gold thread, but bright with variegated silken strands within." ¹⁴

The ability of the costuming to suggest Omiwa / Mangiku's complex mixture of pain and triumphal celebration of her own slaughter is indicative of the power of cloth's illusory quality. By using the woven threads of Omowa's costume as an image of the complexity of her interwoven emotions, the "dark" contrasted with the "gold" and the "silken strands within" being "variegated", we see in Mishima's artistry the acknowledgement of the ages-old ability of sumptuous textiles to suggest and to provide illusion and symbolism. That this suggestion and illusory symbolism went beyond surface appearance is also hinted at by Mishima. He says

"Even after Mangiku had disrobed, it was apparent that he was still wearing several layers of splendid costumes beneath his skin; his nakedness was a passing manifestation. Something which could account for his exquisite appearance on stage surely lay concealed within him." ¹⁵

The utilisation of the sumptuous costumes of the *kabuki* theatre – the theatre beloved of the *Edokku* – and the wearing of fabulous textiles by the courtesans of the great houses represented, however, a deeper reality than a mere invitation to play away a few leisure hours. The actor and the courtesan had the power within them to awaken in their audiences or their clients a recognition of and response to the more primal emotions, such as fear, lust, triumph or despair. The controlling veneer of the state

slipped under these enticements and, it could be argued, the acknowledgement within an individual that he, or she, was prey to such extremes of emotion and even delighted in experiencing them was a dangerous trend in the eyes of the Confucian establishment. The idea, acknowledged later by Mishima, that such emotions, once awakened, were not to be shed as easily as clothes, but could seep "under the skin" as it were of the players in the various "games" on offer, was one against which the authorities were constantly on their guard. The visual and, in the case of the courtesan, tactile, sensations afforded by the wearing of fabulous garments were an entrée into the play world of the sensual, essentially the world of the feminine, where the men of Edo were encouraged to leave their more controlled selves behind. In the Floating World, not only could the courtesan create, by means of her textiles, the world of playful physicality, but also, on occasion, she ¹⁶ could weave intellectual fantasy into the material of her seduction by using poetry in dyed, woven or sewn form, as will be discussed in a later chapter. It is small wonder that the Confucian-inclined authorities brought out sumptuary regulations at periodic intervals. A combination of the sensual and the intellectual as components in an *asobi* orientated situation would have been a powerful weapon indeed in the hands, or rather on the bodies, of those who, like the shamanesses of old, could cast out spells and project men, who were more than willing participants in the game, into other-worldly realms. In a sense, the courtesan or the beautiful boy became the Sun Goddess, who used colour and warmth to enthrall and ultimately dominate. The great performers of the prestigious houses of the licensed areas, the *tayu*, those at the top of their profession, were not only great works of art, assisted by fabulous costumes, but were also great players.

The Importance of Asobi

It was the play aspect of a visit to the Yoshiwara that was arguably more important than the actual sex on offer. Indeed, sex was only a component of *asobi*. The elegant flirtation, which might or might not include sex, had long been accepted as an integral part of the play relationship between men and women in Japan's history and in the period under consideration in this thesis there was a remarkable increase in playful literature and art forms.¹⁷ Games, both visual and verbal, as well as tactile, figured prominently in the examples of "amusements" on offer.

Why should the emerging mercantile class so involve itself in the fantasy worlds of the theatre and brothel? Would such men not exhibit strongly practical and down-to-earth attitudes befitting their position as the group of people who produced the wealth of their society by means of their application and entrepreneurial skills? Why would such men wish to indulge themselves in a game of make believe and pretence which was clothed in fabulous garments?

When Edo was established, in 1603, as the power base of the Tokugawa clan, on the rise to total power of Tokugawa Ieyasu, after a hundred years of fighting among provincial warlords, it was founded as a city on the principles of Neo-Confucianism, based on the classics written some two thousand years earlier in China. Among these principles were a reverence for the past, submissiveness to established customs and, above all, submissiveness in the face of established authority. These principles were used to enforce the privileged status of successive Shoguns. A rigidly hierarchical society was maintained. Next to the Shogun were the *daimyo*, the members of the samurai ruling class. Below them were the farmers, feudal subjects of the *daimyo* and beneath them again, in terms of privilege, were the merchants. There did exist another, even lower sector of society, the "classless" people, actors, courtesans, the blind and the "eta" who performed "untouchable" tasks like tanning hides and burying the dead. To the Confucian way of thinking, this hierarchical view of life was

as it should be and all men should know their place in the social structure and adhere to it. However, an outstanding feature of the later Edo period was the rise of the merchant class from the lowest of the four social divisions to a position which necessitated their recognition by the samurai class. These *chonin* – the men of commerce in Edo, who took such a pride in the city that provided them with the means to flourish – evolved into a force within their city which coloured the attitudes of their time.

Essentially they were a class, or rather, a group, within Edo society, in a curious position. Despite the fact that they were frequently more secure, financially, than their political overlords, their wealth gave them no say in the running of their city or country. Rated as lower than peasants, they wielded no power overtly and were excluded from the political manoeuvrings of their superiors. The Floating World gave them the parity, or even the superiority, they desired. Within the brothel especially, the social order of the outside world broke down. The samurai symbol of authority, the sword, was left outside. Inside, only money mattered and that was one commodity the merchants possessed in abundance. Outside this fantasy play world, in the streets and houses of Edo, the stricter, Confucian-inspired, patriarchal order prevailed, the class structure was adhered to rigidly, ethical codes of conduct were observed and the concept of duty reigned supreme. Inside, in the apparently "softer" world of the pleasure areas, a more feminine-orientated regime took control and wealthy members of the mercantile class could achieve a recognition denied them elsewhere in their society. By immersing themselves and, in several cases their not inconsiderable fortunes, in the *asobi* ethos of the pleasure areas, the men of Edo found a playground in which they could stave off for a while the strictures and demands of the world outside the brothels and the theatres. In the person of the virile, leading man of the *kabuki* stage, the merchant had a model for the fantasy that he too could overcome oppression and injustice. Not for nothing is the villain in *kabuki* plots depicted on several occasions as belonging to the samurai class. ¹⁸

Dressed in sumptuous costumes, the actors gave the townspeople the role models they desired – the dashing hero and the faithful, beautifully clad, courtesan. The absorption by the men of Edo of this set of play roles meant that when they visited the real life "Agemaki" of the brothels, they too could adopt the role of the brave, witty, well-read hero who was adored by the beautiful courtesan and the beautiful courtesan used every means at her disposal, including her textiles, to help construct this fiction. Aided by the clothes she wore, as well as her skills in music, conversation, dance and poetry, a courtesan could hold her client in a willing state of submission. He wished to play the game and she made sure that he was kept within its allure. The ability of cloth to attract and then to fascinate was a powerful weapon in the courtesan's armoury.

Even pictorial representations of clothes could be used to amuse, intrigue and add to the feeling of play. Screen paintings of gowns draped over lacquered racks were called *tagasode* or "whose sleeves?" (Plate 1.) This name came originally from classical poetry where it was first used as a metaphor for erotic longing for a woman who was desired but unobtainable. This idea probably originated in Heian times, where aristocratic women would shield their faces from view but purposely allow their sleeves to emerge from carriages or from behind palace screens or curtains. Possible suitors, in the passing, would be intrigued by the material thus displayed and would attempt to connect the textile, in its patterning, colour and decoration with a particular woman. The painted or printed *tagasode* screen arranged the draped garments in such a way as to hide, supposedly, the activity going on beyond the rack and the clothing. This type of image projected a visual game for its viewer. As the clothing itself became associated in the mind of the viewer with the imaginary woman behind the screen and the implied suggestion was that the "garments" were hanging because of the sexual activity going on beyond the viewer's line of vision, the garments became a figurative representation of the woman herself. The textiles and the woman were one.

The Connection between Women and Clothing.

This idea of the garment becoming a metaphor for a real woman, and in the period under consideration in this thesis more properly for the courtesan, was one which was passed from Heian times, where a trailing sleeve suggested a particular woman, right through the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, to the modern period in Japanese literature. I would argue that it was a continuing consciousness. Suggestions that textiles connect people physically and are linked with women and things female appear throughout Japan's literary history. We see such writers as Nagai Kafu, in the 20th century, putting forward this idea of the interconnection between women, sex and clothing.¹⁹ A professor of French literature and an expert on Baudelaire and Verlaine, he pursued his life in the seedier areas of the large cities of both the West and the East. Gradually he turned his back on the academic life and, although he continued writing, he embraced a bohemian lifestyle ever more assiduously, entering into a quest in his writings to re-capture those aspects of life in the period under discussion which he found most alluring. In 1937 he wrote "Strange Tale from East of the River" *Bokuto Kidan* in which the main character becomes a client of a prostitute called O-yuki.²⁰ When he speaks of her it is in cloth imagery. He compares the dying traditions of the Floating World to woven patterns and refers to the early 20th century prostitutes in terms of rags, which have been thrown away. For all his experience in brothels worldwide, it is interesting, but not surprising, that to convey his message regarding the changing values of the demi-monde, he should employ textile imagery. As the inheritor of a centuries old sumptuary sensibility and a man with an overwhelming nostalgia for the pre-Tokyo capital of his country with its attendant Floating World connotations, it would have been more surprising had he chosen not to do so. Kafu said frequently that women, and their clothing, tended to invoke a longing in him for a traditional Tokyo that had all but disappeared by the time he was

writing his best work. He visualised this traditional Tokyo as the Edo of centuries before and, just as textiles were of great importance to the courtesans of Edo, so is clothing to his modern, female characters. The reader can see the concept of the power of clothing to establish personality appearing once again in Kafu's 20th century character O-yuki. He says of her

"She stood up and changed into an unlined summer kimono with a pattern printed low on the skirt – it had been draped on the rack beside her. The under sash in fine reddish stripes was knotted in front and the heaviness of the knot seemed to balance the almost too large, silver-threaded chignon. At that moment, to me, she was the courtesan of 30 years before."²¹

Not only does the detail of her front-tied under sash and the heaviness of the knot, allied with the implied elaboration of her hair ornament conjure up the courtesan of years before and by implication an entire set of values and way of life that Kafu sees as having well-nigh disappeared, but there is reference also to the draping of clothing over the rack beside her – a modern day *tagasode*.

Another 20th century literary inheritor of the textile metaphor is Tanizaki Jun'ichiro.²² In his short story *Aguri* we see that the connection between women and clothing, or female representation through the medium of clothing, is not confined to Japanese costume. Rather, it extends beyond particular styles and applies to textiles and clothes of a variety of types and styles. This short story recounts the relationship between the eponymous female character and her lover Okada. Right from the outset, the contrast is built up between Okada's perception of the voluptuousness of *Aguri*

"Childish little hands, as tender as a baby's and as voluptuous as a whore's – how fresh and youthful they were, always restlessly seeking pleasure." ²³

And his own fading physical strength

"Everyone he met said he was 'getting thinner' – he had worried about it himself for over a year. In the last six months you could almost see the change from one day to the next, as his fine, rich flesh slowly melted away." ²⁴

Okada is obsessed with Aguri, whom he has known for 3 years, since she was 14. She, in her turn, adores shopping and is content to continue her liaison with Okada on the basis of his being willing to continue buying her items of clothing and jewellery. Nor does he seem to be unaware of this dimension to their relationship. On the contrary, it seems to be an integral part of their sexual attraction. The buying of clothes and jewellery and Aguri's putting them on are the necessary forerunners to their lovemaking.

"I'd like to buy that for you, he thought, and this too . . . Later on, they would play their enchanting game together." ²⁵

Here again can be seen the inheritance of *asobi* in operation. The purchasing of clothes and other decorative items for Aguri will provide the necessary aura of fantasy so that Okada can initiate their "enchanting game". The author uses the symbolism of western clothing to illustrate the opposing effects that their sexual attraction has on Okada and Aguri. For Okada, his obsession is slowly strangling and suffocating him, sapping his strength daily. He observes of his own western attire

" Around the waist, over the shoulders, under the arms, around the neck – every part of the body was pressed and squeezed by clasps and buttons and rubber and leather, layer over layer, as if you were strapped to a cross." 26

For *Aguri*, the clothing metaphor reveals a woman liberated – released from the confines of her upbringing and cultural conditioning.

" As she walks along, breathing a little heavily in the early summer heat, her white skin damp with sweat under the heavy flannel kimono that hampers her long, youthful limbs, she imagines herself shedding these 'unbecoming' clothes, fixing jewels on her ears, hanging a necklace around her throat, slipping into a near-transparent blouse of rustling silk or cambric, swaying elegantly on tiptoes in fragile, high heeled shoes."

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The full power of the sexual thrill that *Okada* derives from his youthful mistress is inseparably interconnected with his fantasies of her clothing. Yet, unusually, it is not with the more customary removal of her clothing, but rather with the application of it, like layers of paint upon a canvass. He sees the contours of her body under her kimono as they walk together through the foreign shopping quarter of Yokohama and he fantasises about dressing her in western clothes, which he sees as moulding themselves to her body and becoming a second skin.

" He would accentuate every curve and hollow, give her body a brilliant surface and lively flowing lines; he would fashion swelling contours, make her wrists, ankles, neck, all strikingly slender and graceful." 28

This idea of a second skin is more forcibly brought out when *Okada* and *Aguri* enter a ladies' fashion store to purchase clothes for her. *Okada* reflects that for only a little of his money

"... any of the things in these shops would cling fast to her white skin, coil around her lithe, graceful arms and legs, become a part of her..." ²⁹

He actually believes that the clothes he is about to buy for his mistress are not, in fact, wrapped around her body but

"... dyed into its very surface like a kind of tattooed decoration." ³⁰

The textiles on her skin and the skin itself become one in *Okada's* mind.

"... all the goods in the show windows seemed to be so many layers of *Aguri's* skin, flecked with colour, with drops of blood." ³¹

The inanimate items in the display cases and on the clothing racks become infused with *Aguri's* life force when she puts them on. They fuse into each other and it is difficult to tell whether they become an extension of her, or she of them.

"If you put on that squirrel coat... think of yourself as an animal with a velvety, sleek coat of hair. If you buy the celadon-coloured stockings... your legs will have a silken skin warmed by your own coursing blood. If you slip into patent-leather shoes, the soft flesh of your heels will turn into glittering lacquer. My darling *Aguri*... blue, purple, crimson skins – all were formed to your body. It's you they are selling there, your outer skin is waiting to come to life." ³²

The contrast between *Aguri* and himself could not be more marked. Her own skin is enhanced, augmented, by the textiles placed upon it. His is constrained and is noticeably wasting away. Like the evil creatures of Japanese legend, *Aguri* seems to feed off *Okada's* obsession and each time he indulges in his play fantasy and her desire to acquire items of clothing and jewellery, the fantasy increases and demands more. Like an addict, *Okada* is enmeshed – literally, if you consider that he is a purchaser of clothing – as well as metaphorically, in a sexual obsession, which will eventually destroy him. He does realise this, yet is powerless to break the silken bonds that *Aguri* has secured around him. He is not oblivious to the dangers of his situation and realises the rapaciousness of *Aguri's* desire for new clothes and showing herself off in them, but he sees this danger as the price he must be prepared to pay in order to satisfy his sexual obsession.

" And there the game would begin, the enchanting game that he was always dreaming of, that gave him his only reason for living . . . Then she would stretch herself out like a leopard. A leopard in necklace and earrings . . . knowing exactly how to please its master, but one whose occasional flashes of ferocity made its master cringe . . . finally ripping and tearing him to shreds and trying to suck the marrow out of his bones . . . A deadly game! The mere thought of it had an ecstatic lure for him." ³³

The story closes with the couple returning to the store later on that day to have the garments fitted that they had purchased earlier. Tanizaki Jun'ichiro's visual, cultural heritage can be seen in a wonderful reinterpretation of the *tagasode* conceit of previous centuries. In the closing section of his story, the author takes us, for once, behind that screen.

" *Okada* followed *Aguri* behind the screen, gently holding over his arm the soft, snowy garments. They came to a full-length mirror and *Aguri* . . . slowly began to

undo her sash. The statue of a woman in Okada's mind stood naked before him. The fine silk snagged on his fingers as he helped apply it to her skin, going round and round the white figure, tying ribbons, fastening buttons and hooks. Suddenly, Aguri's face lit up with a radiant smile. Okada felt his head begin to swim." ³⁴

The entire idea is one of inversion. Unlike the original *tagasode*, Aguri's clothing is put on, not taken off. Her nakedness is covered, not rejoiced in. The entire experience enervates Okada rather than infusing him with sensation. Aguri's radiant smile at the end derives from her pleasure in the clothing and not her lover. Okada's slippage of senses does not have its basis in physical, sexual abandon, but rather in his perverted obsession with dressing Aguri. Even allowing for the fact that this story functions on several levels, one other being that of social commentary on the political direction being taken by Japan from the turn of the 19th century onwards (an area which will be examined from a textile viewpoint elsewhere in this thesis) nevertheless, the all-important medium for the transference of the author's ideas and for the several messages he wishes to convey is that of textiles. He admits his reader into his particular "game of meanings" by weaving a textile web through the strands of which his meaning can be unravelled, just as successive generations of Japanese writers had done before him.

Textiles Being Used to Draw Viewers into the "Games" on Offer in Woodblock Prints.

Not only were literary artists aware of the power of cloth, but so also were the producers of visual works of art and, during the period 1660-1886, the woodblock print artists of Edo made ample use of illustrated textiles in order to draw their viewers into the "games" their images offered the buying public. One major area of production, which utilised textiles to the full, was that of the *shunga* print.

One play fantasy for which so many men paid so handsomely in the Edo period was that to be indulged among the courtesans of the Yoshiwara. As mentioned previously, a visit to one of the high-ranking brothels of the "Floating World" permitted a man to leave behind the restrictions of his duty-filled existence and to indulge his more instinctive appreciation of the world of the senses. His every taste could be catered for, from the intellectual and cultural, to the sensual and physical and the images which have come down to us in the *shunga* genre show us just such men and the women who provided them with the necessary aids to effect their translation from the strict control of their lives into a world of pleasure, warmth and fantasy. One of the most immediately noticeable of these aids in *shunga* images is the textiles in which the women and their surroundings were draped.

The type of image which has come to be known as *shunga* is a printed or painted reproduction of intimate scenes in the sex lives of the men and women of the image's time. It tries to help those who have had such experiences re-live the sensations of those encounters, or to suggest to those, as yet uninitiated, the various pleasures to be derived from a variety of sources in the situation. In short, it seeks to produce in its viewer a vicarious sexual thrill and, in this, it faces a considerable task. In a medium, which can call upon only shapes and colours, it attempts to convey most of the five senses to its viewer and permit him, or her, to feel, see and hear most of what took place or what is projected as having done so. In order to achieve this, the viewer's attention must be directed, not only towards various parts of the bodies of the protagonists, but it must also be held there – have the anatomical message reinforced as it were – and the best visual aid, arguably, with which to achieve this is that used by the courtesan herself – the textiles which pertain to the encounter. However, as the encounter extends to others than the courtesan herself, then the textiles of those other people must also be drawn into the equation. Various methods could be said to be used by *shunga* artists to make use of textiles for the purpose of

drawing the viewing public into the erotic play experience on display. Firstly, I would like to consider what I call "shadowing" by which I mean that the textiles echo the shapes to which the artist wishes attention to be drawn.

The Use of "Shadowing".

In this technique, parts of clothing or bedding are used to mirror or "shadow" anatomical parts of the sexual protagonists, thus highlighting the parts in question and drawing the viewer's gaze more insistently towards them. Among the print holdings of the British Museum, there is a collection of *shunga* prints, which was formerly the property of the artist John Singer Sargent. In this collection there are two prints by Suzuki Harunobu (c. 1724 – 1770) which illustrate this technique well.

In one print, a couple engage in foreplay while a small boy, who might be their son, plays with water beside some carp. The man gazes over his left shoulder, while the woman, who is situated behind and to the right of him, reaches over to fondle his penis, which is erect. As she does so she watches the boy playing with the water. The right fold of the man's kimono, from his waist down, loops directly over his penis, thus exaggerating its shape. ³⁵ This curved shape is also echoed by her kneeling rump, the curve of her bottom paralleling his penis exactly. The curvature of her bottom is stressed to the viewer of the print by the vertical striping of her buff and white kimono, because the verticality of the stripes mould to the contours of her bottom and, thanks to the "shadowing" effect, give a heightened awareness of the roundness of her rump. The sense of the physicality implied by the curve of her bottom would have been far less appreciable had it not been so suggested by the shadowing of the striped material. Her roundness and implied fleshly receptiveness is juxtaposed by his rigidity and the suggestion of thrust, as yet unrealised. Both their states and their suggested fusion are drawn to our attention by the disposition of their clothing and the patterning employed on it. ³⁶

Another print in the Singer Sargent collection, also by Harunobu, shows a party of two courtesans with a customer, viewed through a partition. The courtesan seated with her back to the partition plays a samisen. Outside the partition however, more in the viewer's space of the print, are another two people, a man and a woman, she being sexually accosted by him. The woman seems shy or unwilling and holds her left sleeve across her face in embarrassment. With her other hand she attempts to remove the man's right hand, which is between her legs as she stands. Again, the use of striped patterning in her pinkish-red kimono accentuates the curves of her lower body and creates a very precise shadowing of her two legs. The front adjoining folds of the kimono, which are of a darker brown colour, serve a double purpose. Firstly, they allow us to see the extent to which the man's hand has penetrated her outer garments and secondly, they create, by means of their slightly curved vertical edging lines, a set of folds suggestive of a vagina and, therefore, the ultimate focus of his manual (at this point) attention is created in our minds. His sexual readiness is underlined for us by the distinct key-pattern edging of her olive-green obi. It is so positioned as to create a straight horizontal across their two joined bodies. The key-pattern highlights its " horizontality" and " straightness" as it appears to connect their two bodies, implying the physical connection that would appear to be the object of the man's advances.

A print by Utamaro (1750 – 1806) one of the 13 plates of the album entitled *Komachi-biki* can be seen to illustrate this idea also. This album, dateable to the New Year of Kyowa 2 (1802) is said by some to be the pinnacle of Utamaro's erotic achievement. In what must be the most accomplished print of the album, a high-ranking Yoshiwara courtesan indulges in some stolen sex with her lover, her wealthy patron being asleep in the next-door salon. As the printed conversation reveals, she has taken the opportunity to slip from the room to spend time with her preferred lover, who enters her from a side-rear position. She has one breast almost totally exposed as she supports herself with her right hand and arm. The left frontal curve of her open

gown shadows exactly the curve of her right breast and the scarlet of her under-robe echoes exactly the curves of her vulva. In his case, the drapery of his greyish-brown under-robe shadows the curve of his scrotum. The very colouring of her richly-flowered, crimson robe leaves the viewer in no doubt as to the intensity of their emotions in this stolen moment of passion.

A problem arises when discussing colour in the woodblock prints belonging to most of the period covered by this thesis. As organic pigments were very sensitive to light, many of the colours of the prints we have today have faded from their original or have changed colour altogether, blue and purple for example having changed to shades of tan and buff. Even the synthetic (aniline) dyes, which were introduced in 1864, could lose some of their intensity. For the purposes of this discussion, the colours of garments are not of prime importance, given that the colour now in evidence in a print may not be that which was originally intended, so to draw any conclusions from present-day colourings could be erroneous. However, red, although subject to fading also, would retain enough of its original intention to make it worthy of comment. For the Japanese, the colour red is associated with the sun, with life force and with passion. Indeed, in Japan and Korea, when depicting the sun, the colour red is always used, unlike the tradition in many other cultures to show the sun as golden yellow. As the comparison has already been made between the courtesan and the sun goddess, it seemed acceptable in this instance to comment on the colouring of the courtesan's textiles as well as on their disposition. However, in general, fabric disposition and design will be the topic of discussion.

Not only can "straightness" be shadowed by drapery but cloth can also be used to highlight the opposite idea of a "flowing" quality. Another print from the *Komachi-biki* illustrates the idea of textiles suggesting intensity of emotion (Plate 2). This print shows a young prostitute of the *Fukagawa* brothel quarter about to mount her male

partner. Her left thigh and shin are raised over her partner's penis and her foot is held in his right hand as he brings her leg over his body. The inverted "V" of her leg frames his erect penis and his fingers in her vagina, slightly to the right of centre. The shape of her thigh and shin is shadowed by three layers of drapery which makes for positional accentuation. This positioning is further stressed by the layers of clothing echoing the curve of her buttocks. Her drapery overlaps his right shin as though flowing over it, with the suggestion that just as the cloth "flows" over him, so too will she in the next few moments onwards from the one captured in this print. His garments illustrate the idea of "flow" well too, but for a different reason. What he is wearing lies open, with a suggestion of receptiveness, accentuated by the lines of the folds, which are set in darkish lines to highlight the fabric flow. Every pattern on the material of his clothing, with the exception of his belt, is linear, which places even more insistence on the idea of "flow". Given the scene under consideration and the implied outcome of the encounter, the flowing nature of the drapery echoes the resultant flow of their sexual encounter.

There are many instances where the flow of seminal fluid is symbolically suggested by the use of drapery. Print number 5 of the same album uses flowing scarlet silk from beneath the point of sexual contact, down onto the floor, to stress the passionate conclusion to the coupling. This use of a textile which stems from beneath or around the point of penetration and which "flows" from there onto the ground or the bedding is a commonly used device. Frequently red, although other colours of textile appear, it can be smooth in its flowing curves or, especially in the *shunga* of Hokusai, exaggeratedly zig-zag in its edging, but the intention behind its use, arguably, is to highlight the frenetic intensity of the sexual game being enjoyed.

Many of the *shunga* prints of Hokusai (1760 – 1849) illustrate this idea very well. His use of agitated drapery can be seen quite obviously in the album *En – musubi Izumo – no – sugi* among others. This album, re-issued around the 1890's as a reprint entitled *Tsuyu no hinuma*, used the original key blocks but had new blocks carved for all

colouring and kimono patterns. The original 1822 / 23 edition consists of twelve *chuban* prints ³⁷ and is signed with the pen – name *Dai – jinkyō Inse I* which translates to “Greatly Impotent Sex – Immortal”, assumed to refer to Hokusai himself. Among the participants in these prints, one finds an unusual number of older women and the opening print illustrates just such a woman. A passionate matron with shaven eyebrows, indicative of her married status, is caught in the embrace of her younger partner. The scene is one of complete abandonment, with her hairpins scattered in disarray as she strains her entire body to meet that of her lover. The discarded clothing and thrown aside bedding are treated in Hokusai’s typically agitated and nervous fashion, with jagged and angular edges indicative of the extremes of passion. In case the viewer should miss the suggestion of frantic and heated sex, the inclusion of crumpled tissue paper at the lower left of the print should leave no doubt. Wads of tissue papers figure in many prints, both of the *shunga* genre and in those which illustrate the world of the courtesan. Used for cleanliness after the sexual act, they represent, in their used state, the spent passion of the lovers.

The third print of the same series shows a passionate young married woman and her lover engaged in the preliminaries of sex. She lies on her back with her head resting on the pillow block. He is positioned on top of her and bites her right breast. Around both her shoulders, but open over her breast, is cloth of pale blue with tiny white circles. Over her right arm is draped a brick – red material, which, like the blue and white cloth, flows down erratically to the bottom left of the print. Both the textiles connected with her have a distinctive zig – zag method of flow. He wears a dark purple / grey material with a three leaf pattern inside interlocking circles. A plain material of the same colour drapes over his left thigh, which straddles her lower body. The material nearest to his penis displays a zig – zag configuration as the material over his shoulder is starting to do. Interestingly, this area of material is directly next to his mouth on her nipple. The rest of his clothing, which is spread over his shoulders and back, is smooth and flat. The use made of the material of their clothing, both

agitated and smooth, directly echoes the intensity of arousal in those areas. All of the woman is aroused, as can be seen from the complete agitation of her associated textiles. The textiles pertaining to him, which display agitation, are those adjacent to his areas of arousal, namely his mouth and his penis. The material across his back, where it is removed from his areas of arousal, is smooth and untroubled. The textile of the bed covering, which is dark green with yellow and white stripes and irregular black bands, is, unlike the bedding of the previous print, smooth also. It is not a part of either of the lovers and therefore, in this case, does not echo their passion.

The smoothness of the drawn – back covering textile displays another interesting facet, when contrasted with the disturbance of much of the clothing material. Not only are these two textile “conditions” visual illustrations of the passion of the sexual play, but they have an auditory symbolism as well. The rustling quality of the disturbed clothing – the *kinuginu* or “rustling silk” of poetic allusion – is a symbolic representation of her excited acceptance of her partner's lovemaking. The implied smoothness of the sound of the drawn – back coverlet implies, in its flowing sound, the smoothness and ease of his impending entry, which is obviously only seconds away from the scene captured in this print.

A different, but interesting, use of undergarment material can be seen in a print by Utamaro, of 1794 – 95 (Plate 3). Signed *Utamaro hitsu* and published by *Uemura Yohei*, it is entitled *Kuchi – beni* (Painting the lips). Several museums own copies of this print, notably the New York Public Library, Tokyo National Museum and the British Museum. Against a yellow background, a woman, shown in profile, kneels on her right knee, with her left knee raised. In her left hand she holds a face mirror, while her left uses a lip brush to apply the red cosmetic. On the ground in front of her lie accessories to blacken her teeth and a small pot of lip paint. Her clothing textiles are subdued in both colour and design. Allowing for some colour alteration over the

years, she is dressed in an almost unpatterned outer robe, of a purplish – brown colour, its tiny squared design being quite unremarkable. With a black edging around her neck and sleeve edgings of an undergarment protruding just slightly at her wrists in a barely visible starburst design against a virtually identical colour as her outer robe, the only exception to this uniform somberness is her obi, which has a combined chevron and circular motif design. However, with the background being a dark olive green and the circular motifs being a dull purplish – red, the overall effect is of plainness also. Only one component of her assembled clothing textiles does not fit into this subdued / restrained mode. Her undergarment, glimpsed between her kneeling and her raised knees, shines out a confident red. The colour itself was not so unusual as red was a commonly enough employed colour for basic undergowns, but its use in this print is interesting. Arguably, it is meant to be noticed and to focus attention onto this particular part of the woman's anatomy. Just visible inside its folds is the white inside of her left thigh. As Utamaro could easily have draped her crotch area with the purplish outer gown, even allowing for a raised knee, it has to be asked why he chose to use the partially opened red textile.

In itself, it could be interpreted as risqué enough – indeed there is a genre of prints, known as *abuna* – e or " mildly suggestive / laughing pictures" in which only minimal reference is made pictorially to anatomical details, but when one other component of this print is taken into consideration, it could be suggested that this print moves into the realms of the type of *shunga* print which relies on the playful effect of symbolic allusion. Aside from the pot of lip paint on the floor in front of the woman, the only other use made of the colour red beside that of the textile, is in the lip brush and the woman's lips themselves. Given that the pot contains cosmetics for the lips, it can be allied, by association with the brush and the lips, so, it could be argued, that the only other use of the colour is in the lips. Now, if the folds of the red textile are regarded from the point of view of erotic symbolism, the curved sides and the glimpse of flesh within can easily be interpreted as the folds of a vulva. This idea is mirrored neatly –

and the use of the hand mirror may also be included in this suggestion – by the other orifice which is outlined in red, namely the woman's mouth. It also has lips, an expression used in sexual anatomical description and these lips lead to a place within. The symbolic linkage of the mouth and the vagina has been an accepted one throughout many cultures and over many ages and the act of "painting the lips" retains, even to this day, the connotation of sexual readiness. If, finally, the playful suggestion of the lip brush is added to the compilation, the sexual connotation of the print becomes complete. Essentially though, it is the use of the red textile, which sets up the entire allusion. Had the purplish outer garment covered the space between her legs, the image would have had more of the overtones of a simple domestic scene. Making use of the red textile as he does and involving the viewer in the "play" situation where he or she has to recognise the implications of the lip brush and the lips themselves, *Utamaro* takes this print beyond the realms of straightforward domesticity and into the world of *shunga*.

Another print which relies on the recognition by the viewer that there's a connection to be made between a piece of apparel and the person or people involved in the image and that an erotic charge arises from that connection, is again by *Utamaro* and was produced around 1800 (Plate 4). Published by *Maruya Jimpachi*, this *naga* – *oban* print shows the lovers *Umegawa* and *Chubei*. Famous in both *Joruri* and *Kabuki* plays, the story of *Chubei*, who worked for a firm of couriers and *Umegawa*, a courtesan, has a happy ending. *Chubei* runs away with *Umegawa*, who escapes her servitude and lives with him in his native village of *Ninokuchi* in Yamato Province. In this print, *Umegawa* stands, a wad of tissues in her mouth, to the right of the image, over the half – seated, half – reclining form of her lover *Chubei*, who leans on his right hand, looking up at her, a pipe to his mouth. Because of the shape of this print, narrower than the usual *oban* print, her standing form occupies almost entirely one vertical half of the print and her slender elongation is accentuated by the ascending

panels of starburst designs and dotted star – shapes which progress vertically on her outer gown. His seated form occupies almost all of the horizontal lower half of the print, his geometrically patterned gown with black edging providing a very solid base to the structure, a structure which *Utamaro* has conceived very cleverly. She provides the vertical, he the horizontal; she represents the decorative, the elegant, he the practical, the solid. They are two halves of the ideal balance, the happy relationship between man and woman. And the element in the print, which joins them together, is the trailing end of her obi, which she holds in her right hand. It extends from her waist, from her clothing area, onto his left shoulder, where it rests upon his clothing. The tightness of the cloth is accentuated by the folded lines of the obi, where she ties the knot. Vertically above the knot, we can see a wad of tissues held in her teeth. Although quite a common illustration of tissues, the assertion could be made that it is not simply yet another depiction of tissues being held at the ready in a sexual situation. The print's viewer is being invited into the game being projected by the combination of the obi and the tissues. *Utamaro* perhaps wants us to realise, that what binds these two people together, what makes them into the balanced entity that they are, is their happiness in their sexual relationship. Through the medium of the print's structure, the symbolism of the obi, which flows from her to him and the added symbolism of his pipe, we are drawn into the visual fiction of *Umegawa* and *Chubei* as a physical entity and not as a depiction of two separate individuals. Their sexual contentment will hold them together as securely as the material of her obi will hold her gown.

The Employment of Textiles to suggest Fusion, create Tension or show Depth of Passion.

Clothing and bedding textiles can also be used as a device to transform two individuals into one couple – a fused entity. Linked with this is the idea that these

textiles can be used to create sexual tension or depict the intensity of sexual passion. In the *Komachi - biki* album, print 6 shows us a winter scene in a brothel. (Plate 5) The courtesan mounts her naked lover, with her right leg crossing over his body. He lies on his back, with his head slightly above the pillow rest. She wears an outer robe of brickish - red, decorated with white dots. Her undergarment is white. As she mounts him, she pulls one side of her robe around the back of his neck and over his left shoulder, while at the same time taking the opposite side of her robe across his front with a view to meeting it up with the other edge. As she draws herself closer to him, her face nestles into his right cheek. The practicalities of the robe covering are obvious. It is a cold time of year. There is a charcoal brazier in the room for warmth and the clothing will add to the comfort of the two lovers. However, arguably the implication in the pictorial use of the clothing is more subtle. She is enveloping him in her clothing, drawing him into her personal space. That which is used to encompass her form, her physicality, is now being used to encompass his also. Encircled as he shortly will be by her clothing, he is now part of her space. As they will presently both "wear" the same piece of clothing, it is as though they have ceased to be two separate entities but, rather, have become one being, wearing the same gown. There is the further suggestion that the drawing of him into her gown is a figurative preliminary to the drawing of him into herself and the encompassing of his sex with her own - the obvious culmination of the encounter.

Perhaps the print which best illustrates the idea of clothing textiles producing a single entity from two individuals is the frontispiece to Utamaro's *shunga* album of 1788, the *Utamakura* or " Poem of the Pillow". (Plate 6) Varied in its content, from a rape scene to a print depicting a grotesque Dutch couple, the album undoubtedly represents a major achievement in Utamaro's erotic oeuvre. Sometimes entitled in English, " Lovers on a Balcony", the print illustrates a couple, in summertime, making love on a balcony open to the outside world across the width of the print, save for a

small expanse of bamboo blind at the extreme left – hand side. She wears a gown of black with white cross – hatching, a brick – red obi with white flower patterning and an under garment of scarlet. He wears a greyish gown, which may originally have been of a darker colour, with white interlocking key pattern and an outer gown of fine *sha* silk in black, patterned with white dots, which was highly fashionable for summer wear at that period.³⁸ In this *shunga* print, the woman's red under garment flows down between her body and his at their point of sexual contact, as discussed previously. The geometric cross – hatching of her black gown serves well to outline the curve of her back and her supporting right arm and suggests a backwards motion which is counterbalanced by the implied grip of her left leg over his body. The impression is given, thanks to the textiles which pertain to her, of her physical receptiveness – the "flowing" undergarment – and her readiness to sink backwards and take him with her and, ultimately, over her. This impression of him being brought over her is skilfully assisted by Utamaro's use of the spotted *sha* silk. Obviously part of his clothing – some can just be seen disappearing over his right shoulder – it has started to drape over her left shin, knee and thigh. Concealing and yet revealing at the same time, the spotted silk seems to be moving forwards in this print, from his plane to hers, enveloping her body gradually as it goes. It is a wonderful example of the use of a textile to symbolise the physical dynamism of the lovers. As his clothing moves to envelop her, so his body will follow, aided by the sinking backwards of her body, highlighted by her clothing. His gown covers her, his body will cover her, they will cease to be two individuals and become a couple, a fusion of their respective sensualities.

If clothing can be used to "fuse" two people together, so its use by only one of the two protagonists can be significant. Print number 5, from the series *Roku Amida*, attributed to Shuncho (fl. Late 1770's – late 1790's) and produced around 1780, shows two lovers, he naked, she almost so. (Plate 7) He has his back to the viewer

and she is seated across the top of his thighs as they have intercourse. He has both arms around her upper torso and she has both arms around his neck as she kisses his forehead with her eyes closed. Their joined genital areas are just slightly below the exact centre of the print. Minimal body outlining is employed, the curves of their respective anatomies being laid in with single lines. The idea of nakedness is conveyed with very sparse outlining. His black and beige striped gown lies discarded behind him on the floor, to the right of the print. Her gown is in the act of slipping down her back. The implied downward movement of her gown highlights, in its curving motion, the curved roundness of her shoulder and back and lends an air of voluptuousness both to her and to the scene, which would not have been so marked had she also been naked. The curved contours of both garments, echoing as they do the participants' bodies, draw attention to this curved softness by the contrast, which is set up between their curved outlines and their linear or geometric patterning. In the restrained linearity of the patterning of his gown, we can see an echo of the practicality of the man himself. Although a few of the fold lines are curved, others are restrainedly linear. Her gown, by contrast, although geometrically patterned, is almost totally curved in its fold edging. It cannot simply be seen as the result of types of patterning being applied to male garments in preference to female garments. Both gowns share geometric designs, yet the fold dispositions are different. If these fold descriptions are compared with the protagonists, a certain similarity can be observed. Although the man is obviously aroused and in the throes of passion, as suggested by the curved folds, there is nevertheless a practicality inherent in him, as represented by the straight edges. His eyes are open, his concentration fixed on what is taking place. There is a suggestion of his making sure he's getting it right for her. She, on the other hand, is transported. Her eyes are closed in passion and her toes are curled. Her garments are soft and flowing and, just as her gown slips in curved folds off the soft roundness of her back, so her senses are slipping into swirls of abandonment. Both garments represent the mindsets of the lovers.

The Symbolic Use of the Sleeve.

A particular form of visual "playfulness" which makes its appearance in many *shunga* prints, is the utilisation by various artists of the sleeve. As mentioned in the Introduction, not only did the sleeve have a lengthy symbolic tradition in prose and poetry, but it had also occupied a position of importance in the intercourse, social and sexual, of Edo's cultural predecessors. The game, which is being played in many of this period's prints, requires the viewer to be able to interpret the messages thrown out by the representation of the sleeves on display. The degree of amusement or stimulation to be derived from the images hinges on the extent to which the print's observer can unravel the sleeve's message.

One such print, produced in Kansei XI (1799) by Utamaro, shows just such an erotic use for the sleeve. This oban - size print is the frontispiece for the album *Negai no itoguchi* (The Prelude to Desire). This print album, which consists of 12 prints, was Utamaro's second, major erotic album production. The particular print is known in English as " Lovers in a House of Assignment". It shows a man reclining on one elbow, a pipe to his mouth, looking over his left shoulder at a courtesan who crouches at about his waist level, her legs tucked underneath her. She rests her right elbow on his back with her cheek on her hand. Behind her, stretches out her partner's legs and feet. Both lovers are fully clothed. We can tell from its use as a frontispiece, that the evening in question has not advanced too far physically, as the print used for an album frontispiece tended to be of a more decorous and less graphic nature from those inside. There is an air of companionable reflection about this scene - he smoking, she dreaming, perhaps about the evening ahead of them. There is a considerable insistence on textiles and their involvement in the overall scene, from the variously patterned items of clothing of both the lovers, to the patterned folding

screen behind them. However, the object which catches the eye most is her fan and plum blossom decorated sleeve. The pattern begins about halfway down the sleeve, the long sleeve of the *furisode* and continues down to its bottom edge, which disappears out of the print at the left base corner. Above the patterning, the sleeve and the body of the robe itself are self-coloured, sweeping downwards from her middle back in a gradual curve across the left bottom half of the print, in front of her lover's body. We can tell that the scene is set in winter from the layers of warm clothing and the charcoal brazier to the middle left of the print, behind the reclining man. There is, subsequently, a sense of physical warmth present in the room, but the sleeve, in its curve around the man, sends out a message of a different type of warmth. The physical intimacy of their positioning has the added erotic fillip of the intellectual implication of his being contained "within" her sleeve.

Long accepted as an erotic symbol for female sexuality and used colloquially in expressions which referred to the hiring of a prostitute, with attendant sexual implications, the fact that this print depicts him as being actually contained within her sleeve, added to the situation of this print being used as the frontispiece to the album's erotic contents, draws the viewer into the game that *Utamaro* wished to set up. Having given the print's viewers the visual stimulus, which will trigger them into making the cultural association, the artist then sets them off on an erotic voyage of discovery through the rest of the album and the viewers are prepared for the increasingly graphic images to follow. Another aspect of the playful use of the sleeve in the opening print is to provide an interesting pictorial expression of the album's title. Although not graphic in itself, the print achieves its erotic effect both from its positioning in the album and the playful symbolism of its allusion, both of which hinge on the viewer's gaze being drawn to the *furisode* sleeve.

One other print which uses the sleeve is a symbolically erotic fashion belongs to a set to be found in the Shenking J W Goslings' Collection in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Unsigned, but dating from the 19th century and resembling the work of

the Utagawa School of that period, the set consists of 12 prints and a further cover print.³⁹ The 12 prints represent the 12 months of the year, while the cover print shows a woman cutting her nails. Each print measures 12.8cm x 9.00cm. As you would expect, the amount of textile coverage in each print decreases as you progress away from January, up to about September, when it increases in coverage once more as December approaches. The print which is the image for September / *Kugatsu*, (Plate 8) shows a seated couple, she to the left, he slightly below her to the right.⁴⁰ The print's textiles sport chrysanthemum designs in profusion. Her outer gown has a grey background, upon which are red and orange flowerheads. Both his and her genital areas are framed in their red undergarments in the centre of the print and hence are the focus of the viewer's gaze. His thumb is inserted in her vagina with his other four fingers resting on her pubic hair. Beneath his genital hair, his penis is discernible. However, the end of her *furisode* sleeve loops around the back of his neck and over onto his left shoulder. He is obviously " within" her sleeve and equally obviously the sexual inference is unavoidable, given that his thumb is within her vagina. The colloquially expressed idea of him being " in her sleeve" comes across to us visually thanks to the illustration of the textile in question.

A print which takes this idea of the encompassing sleeve further into the erotic arena is one by a follower of Utamaro – Chobunsai Eishi, (1756 – 1829.)⁴¹ The particular print under consideration (Plate 9) from a series entitled *Juniko hana – no – sugata* (Passion Flowers of the 12 Seasons) was produced around the end of the *Temmai* Period (the late 1780's), interestingly about 10 years before the Utamaro print previously discussed. In its depiction of two young people, it owes more to Kiyonaga than to Utamaro. The scene consists of two young lovers, positioned in front of a *Kano* – style screen to the left of the print and a *Genji monogatari* book box to the right. Their positioning, although viewed from a more removed point, is very similar to that of the couple discussed previously in *Negai no itoguchi*. He reclines on his right

elbow and she sits, again, at about his waist level. Eishi's man also glances to his left to look at his partner. However, unlike the Utamaro print, his legs are not stretched out, but raised at the knee and she is not crouching but seated, with her left leg raised in front of her and bent at the knee. Her right leg is still on the floor, but with the shin bent backwards underneath the folds of her clothing. Her pubic hair and vagina, with his fingers inserted, are visible between her legs. They have interrupted a game of backgammon (the box visible behind his right arm) to indulge in foreplay. As in the later Utamaro print, her outer gown is of the *furisode* or long-sleeved, type and the body of the gown is self-coloured. The pattern, this time of small flying birds, appears half way down the sleeves and continues to their edges. Her right arm, completely covered by her sleeve, is looped around her partner's neck as she leans slightly backwards into his supporting left arm. Her sleeve, accentuated by the light – coloured bird design, loops in a graceful curve upwards from his left shoulder, around the back of his head and neck and downwards over his right shoulder and upper arm. Even more insistently than in the later print, the man is contained " within" her sleeve, which has the added symbolism of the sleeve opening being blatantly visible. In its curved opening folds, we can see an obvious reference to anatomical sexual configuration. Although the earlier of the two prints, this example, in terms of sleeve symbolism, depicts a stage further on in the relationship of the lovers, a depiction confirmed for us by the actual physical details illustrated. This print also operates on several levels of "playfulness". A game – of backgammon – has been abandoned in favour of the "game" of foreplay, which in turn will lead to the ultimate amusement of the evening, which in its turn is suggested to the viewer by the setting up of the visual game described above.

An even more subtle use of the sleeve in the game of sexual suggestion can be seen in a print of 1800. This vertical print, which is number 12 from the series *Fumi no kiyogaki* " Clean Draft of a Letter", was produced by Eisho (fl. Ca. 1790's) another

follower of Utamaro. It shows a courtesan with her young lover (Plate 10). She occupies the bottom half of the print, fully clothed, her left arm around her lover's neck, connecting with her right hand. His right arm is around the top half of her body, supporting her beneath him. She bends backwards to the right middle of the print and he bends over her. They seem to be about to kiss. He occupies the top left-hand quadrant of the print, his back vanishing out of the confines of the print at the left edge. He appears to be naked, although a suggestion of a textile, perhaps a piece of bedding or perhaps part of her gown covering her right raised knee, can be seen in the top left-hand corner of the print, above his bare back. The textiles of her clothing display various patterns on their pink, purple/lilac and grey grounds. There are spiders' webs, stylised 4-petalled blossoms and cross-hatched designs. That we are meant to take into account how clothed she is, is accentuated, it could be said, by this insistent patterning. These are textiles which Eisho intended us to notice and the erotic charge of this print arises largely from the juxtapositioning of her obviously clothed body and her lover's obviously naked one. The suggestion could be made however, that the fuller intention behind the clothing, or lack of it, goes deeper than this.

At the point captured in this print, she is a draped doll – her layers of textiles are intact, her hairpins are not disarranged. He, on the other hand, is totally unconstrained by the trammels of his attire. He has shed his clothing, and, by association, has shed his outer self. What we see here is a man in essence, pressing his physicality upon her as in the actual construct of the print. It would appear as if she has not, as yet, approached this state. However, once again, the textiles help us to understand that this is not just exactly the case. She is starting to cross from the restrained, the controlled, to the abandonment of his passion and this can be seen in the conceit of the gradual rolling back of her left sleeve, which reveals her forearm. As the material of this courtesan's sleeve wrinkles backwards, so her restraint loses its grip and she will eventually abandon herself to the physicality of the moment. He,

having shed his clothing and she, being in the opening stages of shedding hers, indicates to us, through the medium of their associated textiles and, most importantly in her case, her sleeve, the mindsets of these two people at this particular point in their sexual play encounter.

The question of the non-importance of nakedness does, however, arise. It could be argued that, as nakedness did not assume the same erotic associations in Japanese art as it did in the art of other cultures, especially of the West, its inclusion in this print is in no way to be remarked. It was used in many *shunga* prints, so was not an illustration calculated to shock. But it is not the man's nakedness, *per se*, I believe, which is the artist's concern here. Its use is to highlight her opposite state, which then focuses the viewer's attention on her. By setting up the non-clothed/clothed situation, Eisho ensures that his viewer looks more closely at his clothed woman and that is when the teasing possibilities of the slipping sleeve come into their own.

That the idea of sleeves being a symbol for the relationship between lovers is not one of later Edo print artists exclusively, can be seen excellently well in an early print belonging, once again, to the Shenking J W Goslings Collection in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Unsigned, but belonging to the early Primitive school of prints, in the style of Moronobu, the print, which measures 37cm x 25.5cm, is executed in black and white. It depicts a couple, he naked, apart from his loin cloth, which is knotted behind him. She is fully clothed in a sumptuously patterned gown. His back is turned towards the viewer of the print as he embraces her. She, in her turn, leans over him from above and behind, her left arm curving round him, supporting herself on her left hand on top of a black and floral-edged floor covering. The moulding together of their two bodies in their embrace is echoed, amazingly, by the two sleeve openings of his discarded gown, which lies behind her on our top viewing left. The material of the gown and its sleeves displays a distinct three-striped pattern, set in vertically, and these stripes, running parallel to each other, accentuate how these two pieces of

garment echo each other. Although this material belongs to two separate sleeves, its identical nature, in both pattern and positioning, indicates how "together" these two sleeves are. They may be two individual parts, a right and a left sleeve, but they are an exact copy of each other and they underline the "oneness" of the garment. One sleeve is behind and slightly to one side of the other, just as the lovers' bodies are positioned on the floor covering. The sleeves "echo" exactly the closeness and the "fitting together" quality of the man and the woman. A very similar example of this conceit appears in a print by Kiyonobu, which was produced in the early 1700's in Edo (Plate 11). Here too can be seen the right and left sleeves of the same striped gown illustrating the togetherness of the protagonists.

Perhaps at this point, having mentioned a print by Kiyonobu, it would be sensible to consider the assertion made by Tanaka's paper.⁴² The paper mentions a move from naked to clothed in the 18th century. Torii Kiyonobu is mentioned as illustrative of the unclothed end of the scale, with Harunobu and Koryusai (fl. mid 1760's – 1780's) representing the clothed end, only slightly more than half a century later. Certainly there is an increasing flourish of textiles as the century progresses, but I would not agree that there was a move from naked to clothed. Nakedness and partial nakedness continued to be illustrated in the *shunga* which followed on from the early examples. It was not a wholesale "move" as Tanaka would suggest. However, the uses to which nakedness were put, in these subsequent prints, it could be asserted, arose from altogether more subtly suggestive reasons than the illustration of nakedness for its own sake. In order for these different suggestions to have the required impact it was necessary, arguably, to contrast those lacking textiles with fully clothed participants in the game. As the textiles in question became more extravagant in many cases, it must seem as though nakedness was either being faded out or was of decreasing importance. In my opinion, neither of these

interpretations was the case. Nakedness was being used for different reasons, not being phased out.

Contrasting Use of Clothing and Nakedness.

A print by Eisho, number 13 in the series *Fumi no kiyogaki*, is a good example of textiles being used to contrast with nakedness and in so doing the artist plays a visual game, in that he makes the viewers focus specifically where he intends they should.

Produced in vertical format and measuring 25cm x 19cm, the print shows a man, on the left side of the print, embracing a semi-reclining courtesan, who occupies the centre of the print (Plate 12). Both bodies disappear out of the print on the left-hand side. From what can be seen of the lovers, both are fully clothed. However, on the left side of the print, touching the left edge, her left thigh, which is raised, occupies a considerable amount of surface space, cutting as it does across his right arm and the side of his body, effectively blocking them from our view. A single, great, curving, black line outlines her thigh and encloses an expanse of bare, flesh-coloured limb. The severity of the plainness of her thigh is brought across to us immediately by its contrast with the layers of her clothing, the patterning of the covers on which she lies and the busy, geometric pattern of the man's gown. The several folds of the pushed-back kimono beside her thigh serve to highlight the skin all the more dramatically.

Why would Eisho wish to highlight the paleness and smoothness of the skin and draw his viewer's eye precisely to it? I believe it was not simply to accentuate its being naked skin, per se, but to draw attention more closely to its being the skin of a thigh, which is also a drawn up thigh. Given her partner's positioning, the reason for its being drawn up is obvious. Thus, the erotic charge of the scene derives its force and its sensuality from an expanse of pale colour, to which attention is drawn by the complexity, in both form and design, of the materials which surround it. Although the focus of the print would appear to be the textiles, in actual fact they are more of an

important component of the artist's intention, which is to make the viewer consider the culmination of the sexual game, being set up in the image offered by the print. Another print which derives its sensual force in a similar fashion is to be found in the Goslings' series, named for the month of May, *Gogatsu*.⁴³ the print shows a scene set in a house interior with a partially open balcony at the back of the print (Plate 13). There is blue sky beyond to the left and a green slatted blind to the right. The couple occupy the entire centre of the print from almost top left diagonally downwards to bottom right. His head appears top left and hers bottom right. He is seated facing outwards, supporting himself on his straightened right arm and holding her right leg by the ankle up in the air with his left hand. She lies on her back, totally open, her left leg held open against his right ankle. They are joined sexually just slightly below the visual centre of the print. The front of his body is totally naked, his gown open but still on his shoulders and down by his sides. She is naked from the waist down only. This image derives its immediacy and visual impact because their nakedness is accentuated and drawn to our notice, not only by the sexual activity and genital hair on display, but also because of the textiles which surround the area of sexual activity. His associated textiles are extremely eye-catching in terms of their patterning. His gown exhibits a black/grey/white chequered pattern. As the colours of all of the 12 prints in this series are very well preserved, the contrast between the chequering of his gown and the unbroken whiteness of his skin is extremely marked and draws the eye very insistently to his skin area. Her outer gown is not particularly eye-catching in a colour or patterning sense, being a dull, mink brown with large darker brown patches containing mink brown, stylised, *kiku* patterns. How the textile draws the eye to her skin and ultimately to her genital area is only incidentally the colour contrast. Rather, it is the fact that she has her gown "bunched up" in voluminous folds around her chest and neck area, holding onto it, to keep it there, with both hands. Her right hand can be seen holding the folds away from her chin, while her left arm disappears over the top of several folds, to hold it all (although her hand cannot be seen) away

from her lower body. The end result of this "bunching" on the part of her textiles and the striking patterning of his textiles, is to draw the eye inexorably to the centre, where the contrasting plainness and smoothness of their skin suggests, finally, the smoothness of his entry, which is equally hinted at by the necessity for so many pieces of tissue, which lie crumpled beside the couple.

The Suggestion of Movement – Directional Impetus – Strain – Compression.

Yet another aspect of the visual games that print artists play with their viewers, using textiles to assist them, is the suggestion of various types of movement contained within the scenes they depict. A sense of dynamism is set up by the positioning of the subjects in the prints vis a vis their surrounding textiles. The types of movement vary – a directional impetus, a physical strain between subjects and a sense of, what I will refer to as, compression.

A good example of directional impetus can be seen in an early print ascribed to Moronobu (Plate 14). In this monochrome print, we see two lovers locked in an embrace. He is naked, his discarded clothing behind him. She is still fully clothed with her hair looped down. His arms are around her and her right arm is over his hips. Her left arm disappears under his right shoulder. The impression given by the dynamics of this print is that the two lovers are sinking backwards, he falling on top of her. As there are no surrounding visual indicators present in the print to help the viewer set up this movement in his/her mind, how does the artist achieve this effect?

It is achieved by a combination of two factors, the disposition of their drapery and the detail of her legs. Executed in black and white with no hand colouring, the print cannot rely on colour in any way to assist what it is trying to suggest. Instead it relies on heavy outlining and bold patterning to give the impression of swirling, boisterous motion. The print achieves an almost snap-shot effect, a glimpse of two people caught and fixed forever in time. The element of surprise and exuberance derives

from the tremendous curved swirl of discarded clothing behind them, which billows and curves, echoing the curve of his naked bottom and the inverted curve of his waist. This sense of curvature is paralleled by the opposite curve of her buttocks at the bottom of the print. The extremely bold use of patterning, executed in the broad, black strokes of the print, help to accentuate the rounded motion of the drapery. We can see his left leg, which is across her body and his penis is focused on in the centre of the print, outlined against the patterning of her gown. All you can see of her legs is her two feet, almost being thrown into the air. There are hardly any straight lines in the drapery of these two lovers. They are both caught up in the passion of the moment and the small detail of her legs flicking upwards as she loses her balance before his onslaught adds a delightful human touch to this very robust scene of early eroticism.

In its earthiness and solidity, this print is very much in keeping with the standing courtesans of the *Kagetsudo* school, where, although there is little or no sense of the movement suggested in the Moronobu print, nevertheless the drapery lends an air of solidity and realness of body to these women. The monumentality given them by their clothing and the boldness of its design features, aligned with the monochrome nature of most of these prints, or with the simplified hand colouring of some of them, makes these women come across to us as real physical presences. There is nothing of the ethereal or the delicate about them as was apparent in the women of Harunobu and his followers of just a few decades later. This feeling of earthiness is exactly what comes across in the *shunga* print discussed above. When this earthiness is linked with the joyousness of the movement conveyed by the swirling clothing, the lasting impression given by this print and those similar to it is of a people very comfortable with their own sensuality and, arguably, by sending out this suggestion, Moronobu is inviting his viewers to share in this feeling of sexual enjoyment and exuberance. He is setting the premise before people that passion can sweep people away and is there to be enjoyed.

A print of around the same time which suggests, by means of its drapery, an obvious impetus, was produced in the mid 1680's by Sugimura Jihei (fl. ca. 1681 – 1697). A prevailing emotion is suggested here too, although this time it is not of the enjoyment to be derived from passion. This hand-coloured *oban* album print, a copy of which is to be found in the Art Institute of Chicago, shows a standing courtesan being importuned by her reclining lover, while a maidservant stands to the right rear of the print, in front of a small table, with what looks like a dish of fruit upon it (Plate 15).

Sugimura Jihei, exhibited a style which was so close to that of Moronobu that for years no distinction was made between them as artists.⁴⁴ All three participants in this image are fully clothed, the man in a gown with small, circular flowerheads against a plain background. The edge of his gown is black, as is his belt. The left sleeve of his gown bears his crest or *mon*. He leans upwards to clasp the courtesan around the waist as she stands on the left of the print with her back towards him, her head tilted slightly over her left shoulder to glance down at him. Her gown is heavily patterned with maple leaves, large lozenge shapes, characters inscribed on her sleeve and hem and clusters of circular and geometric patterns. The sweep of their commingled garments leads from the hem covering his feet, through the top of his gown and the base edge of her drapery, round in a great upwards sweep, which takes us eventually to her face and it is this that the artist, thanks to the movement of the textiles, intended to be the focus of the viewer's gaze. Sugimura did not want this print to emphasise the exuberance or the earthiness of these lovers, but to make us consider the courtesan's face and the teasing calculation which pervades this image. The viewer is left to wonder whether or not she will succumb to his advances and to what extent he will succeed in his suit. The print shows us the commercial aspect of the game of sex played out in the pleasure quarters. The courtesan's face, with its suggested cool consideration of the situation, would not be just so insistent a focus for our eyes, and hence would not draw us into the guessing game of whether or not the suitor was a sufficiently alluring commercial prospect to invite capitulation,

were it not for the upward sweep of the curving draperies. In contrast, we tend not to notice the maidservant to the same extent because she is not part of the curve – she stands apart – outwith the space of the two lovers. Her existence is of little importance in the game. Only the suitor's commercial viability and the courtesan's consideration of his chances matter to the teasing message of this print, so these two characters are joined together by their textiles, just as they are joined together in the assessment/importuning play which is being acted out for the viewer's amusement. A later print which sets up a physical dynamic which is intended to draw the viewer into the scenario being depicted and to engage him/her in speculation as to the possible outcome, is by Kunisada (1786 – 1865). From the book " Recitations for the Four Seasons" – *Shiki no nagame* – of around 1827, this print shows a seduction scene being played out (Plate 16). Spread across two pages, the print portrays a somewhat coy maiden on our viewing left and her determined seducer on our right. He holds her by her left hand, their arms stretching across the centre of the two pages. An obvious tension is set up by this device. She pulls away from him while he attempts to interest her in the unfurled, erotic scroll, which is spread out in front of and between them. That she is confused and embarrassed can be seen by the traditional gesture of raising her sleeve-covered hand to her face. The primary device to suggest the physical pull between them is obviously the joined hands. It is quite clear that she is pulling in one direction, while he is attempting both to restrain her and pull her back in his direction, thus forcing her to view the scroll with its graphic images. However, a powerful aid to this device is the disposition of the clothing. Her gown, beautifully patterned with grasses and butterflies, is gathered around her almost horizontal body, to lie in deep folds about her face and head. Combined with the gesture of the sleeve to the face, the overall impression of her clothing is that it covers her almost completely. She is swathed in it and there is the idea of her being "protected" by it. It is gathered towards her and around her, cocooning her from him and from the implication of their encounter as suggested by the scroll. His

garments, a small-flower-patterned robe with a dark self-coloured over robe, flow towards hers and disappear or "merge" into them at leg and foot level. His seated posture is open-legged, the scroll resting on his left knee with his right knee raised, his shin and foot disappearing behind her. The frank openness of his pose is highlighted by a piece of pale, self-coloured material, which drapes between his parted legs. As his textiles curve towards and merge into hers, so his intent is that his body should do likewise, his seduction should prove successful. To underline this intention, the scroll illustrates just such a situation. Unrolling it from left to right, we can see that the opening image depicts a clothed couple, who, by the follow-on image, are both divested of the trammels of their respective textiles. Apart from the fact that he obviously hopes that the titillation of the images will produce the desired effect in the maiden, the inference can be drawn that he wishes also for her to place herself in the state illustrated in the scroll, where she will not have the refuge of clothing. It is a game on his part – how much experienced persuasion will it take – and the viewer is drawn into the game too. Male and female participation in this guessing game will have, in all probability, a variety of different slants, but the print's buyer, or viewer, will construct an end scenario for him or herself.

A print of the same period, which forms part of the Goslings' collection in Amsterdam and which belongs to the set mentioned earlier, sets up a similar idea of directional force, although in its case it is not a straining away, but a moving into. It shows a couple in the month of December / *Gokugetsu* (Plate 17). As is to be expected of this month's portrayal, the use of textiles is considerable. The couple are clothed almost fully, except for her genital area and her right inner thigh and the tip of his penis. Her gown is a deep indigo blue in colour with a flower pattern. He is dressed in plain grey with his *mon* on his sleeve. She balances herself on her right elbow, in a reclining position, as her body twists round to grasp the black lacquered edge of the screen behind her with her left hand. With his left hand he raises the bottom edge of her garments, as he spreads her left thigh open with his right hand, the fingers of

which are just visible under her thigh. The tip of his penis, just visible outwith the edge of his garments, is poised for imminent entry. By having her grasp onto the edge of the decorated material screen, the artist uses this gesture to suggest that she is bracing herself for the directed force of his entry. Had the screen (decorated seasonally with prunus blossom against a red ground – which is indicative of the valour and masculinity of the male protagonist) not been there, but she had merely rested on both hands, the sense of impending impact would not have been so tangible. The presence of the material screen presents the necessary visual counterforce to suggest the physical and counter-directional impact of his entry. Visually, on the part of the male lover, the very slight appearance of the tip of his penis from beneath its covering textile suggests a length behind that textile, if the depth of the textile is considered. Having gauged that approximate length, the viewer is left in no doubt as to the possible depth of his entry. However, neither this depth nor the suggestion of directed impact would have been drawn, so graphically, to the attention of the print's viewer, had it not been for the presence of the screen, her grasping of its edge, or the amount of textile covering the barely visible penis.

Not only are textiles used by artists to admit their viewers into the sensations of movement and directional impetus, but they are also used to set up the idea of "compression". Timon Screech, in Chapter 6 of his book "Sex and the Floating World. Erotic Images in Japan 1700 – 1820" speaks of

"... the tendency of shunga to confine sexual encounters to enclosed spaces." ⁴⁵

He interprets the use of "enclosed spaces" as being a way of stressing the "imminent danger" of sex's "breaking out". He says

"Its housings are always on the point of falling away. The very pictures that uphold the belief that sex can be pinned indoors also exhibit its confinement as susceptible to collapse: sliding doors are open and screens are positioned obliquely so that they fail to shut out views beyond . . . Human figures are pushed near to the openings that puncture their rooms. They do not spread futons in the middle of the room, as logically they might, but lay them up against doors and windows, as householders generally did not." ⁴⁶

He suggests that the positioning of love-making areas near "boundaries" or "lines of liminality", far from being representational of Edo's householders' habits, is to represent the sex on show as being "unstable and perennially verging on the uncontained". He equates the pictorial representation of sex as being in keeping with the whole concept of "floating" in Ukiyo-e.

While symbolically the sex on show may be "unconfined", as it were, it could be contended that the more immediate and perhaps more physically – associated feeling to arise from the sectioning of sexual action by clothing, bedding, screens and nets is that of a compression of the bodies involved. Their closeness or "one-ness" is insisted upon by the squashing, as it were, of their bodies into exaggeratedly small spaces within larger ones. Though agreeing totally with Screech's concept of sex's "breaking out", a reaction to these images and the use of their textiles in terms of "compression" seemed just as reasonable. How could it be possible to accept what seemed to be two opposing interpretations of the same images? The sexual activity in these images was either apparently intensely concentrated and encapsulated (both by the image and by the surroundings and accoutrements depicted) or the suggestion was that it was a barely contained explosive force.

In fact, there was no either/or. Both interpretations are valid – indeed they hinge upon each other. The "compression" response to these images is a forerunner to the explosion/uncontainment interpretation. Where it could be argued that the textiles

and surrounding objects force the lovers together, Screech's view provides the logical ending to such a situation. When two forces are compressed, the resultant release brings a sense of explosion and non-containment.

Several prints in the British Museum, in books and scrolls and some which have been taken from sets, illustrate amply this idea of "compression". These prints, whether in book or loose form, utilise the textiles worn, the textiles of nets or hangings and objects of which textiles are component parts, to produce the effect that the bodies within them, or beside them, are being pressed physically together. Even allowing for the fact that sex is the main focus of most of these prints and that the bodies of the participants would therefore be in proximity, an extra feeling of compression derives from the textiles around them.

One book, which contains 58 prints, each measuring 12cm x 9cm, illustrates this idea repeatedly, with each scene's contents squashed right up to the four edges of each print.⁴⁷ Sometimes the anatomy of the people themselves goes to the edges of the print; heads at one border, and feet pressing against the opposite one. Sometimes bedding or clothing spreads out to meet the boundaries of the paper. In print 7, the two side edges barely seem able to contain the courtesan's clothing to the left and the pillow blocks to the right (Plate 18).⁴⁸ At the bottom edge there is only the tiniest of unoccupied space, while the top edge is impinged upon by her hair pins, which spread out to fill the space top right centre. Not only do the couple and their accoutrements fill the entire print space, but their joined bodies are crowded in upon by screen edges, cartouche edges, window frames, panels of calligraphy, hanging textiles, bolts of cloth, two pillow blocks in a non-aligned arrangement so that both their edges meet the right lower edge of the print and a hanging lantern. The viewer is left in no doubt by prints such as this that the main inference of this visual game is physical togetherness.

Another print in the series illustrates a scene in which the lovers are almost smothered in layers of textiles. Here, the actual patterning employed lends to the overall sense of heavy compression implied (Plate 19).⁴⁹ Not only are their respective textiles heavily patterned and voluminous in their folds and curves, but the entire background of the print is covered in a green, star-patterned design, which adds to the cumulative effect of the textiles pressing upon them. His clothing is patterned, with repetitive, light and dark blue dots. His garments cover him, he is on top of her and she lies on her red garment, which is patterned with small, white circles, which are equally fussy and repetitive. These two textiles, the dotted blue and the white circled red, seem to encase the lovers, to sandwich their smooth, self-coloured flesh between two layers of intricate patterning. To add extra weight, as it were, to the force of his superimposed body, the bedding textiles lie across his back and lower body. One layer is thick, curving and black and follows the curve of his buttocks. Yet another layer, which is dark green, sports a hexagonal design containing a flower head. Again, the patterning is insistent and "heavy" and again it adds to the overall "pressing down" effect of his body on hers. The viewer's eye is drawn to the smoothness of the copulating flesh by its comparison with the fussiness of the textiles, both in disposition and pattern, but also by the implied overall weight of the various pieces of clothing and bedding employed.

A further print which produces a similar effect shows a courtesan offering a pipe to her client who lies with his head on a pillow block to the left of the print (Plate 20).⁵⁰ There are at least 9 different patterns employed in the clothing and the bedding and the overwhelming effect is to emphasise the togetherness of these two people, cocooned as it were in their own private world of textiles. It also forces the viewer into recognising the little game being played by the artist who draws attention to the linking symbol of the pipe being handed to him by her, with its attendant sexual connotation.

The first print in another set also displays a proliferation of textiles and patterns surrounding the two lovers, but in this example, the compression is added to all the more by his wearing armour, which even includes a quiver full of arrows (Plate 21).⁵¹ The actual extra weight of the armour worn by him, as he mounts her, leaves the viewer in no doubt as to the compounded forces behind his sexual thrust. Even his furred shoes add to the idea of inward force or compression, as he kneels with his feet pushing him inwards. The centre point of the print is the sexual action completely encircled in textiles and armour. The suggestion is not being made that the use of military textiles here is solely to infer compression. There is, of course the suggestion of the valour of the male and the pre-battle haste of the coupling, but, both of these could have been suggested by the armour being stacked elsewhere in the room, or only parts of it being worn. Arguably, the wearing of the entire suit of armour was a deliberate device used by the artist to add to the above - mentioned inferences with those of inward force and compression.

Not only does the type of textile and its patterning suggest compression, but so does the multiple folds of the clothing and bedding employed. A print which uses both complex patterning and multiple folds to achieve its effect conceals most of the lovers within swathes of material, showing only their faces, a small section of her thigh and the top of her penis.⁵² In this instance though, the compression of the people by their textiles is added to, not only by the patterning, which is diverse, but by the very angular folds of the clothing, which seem to push inwards in straight lines, as though imploding, due to the coming together or drawing inwards of the two bodies.

The examples discussed are only a small sample of the numerous prints which make use of textiles in this fashion and, I would suggest, for this purpose. Such an extensive use of textiles in this way, by a body of artists working at this time in Edo, cannot be purely incidental. Given the purpose of such prints – to draw the viewer into the visual games being offered on the topic of sex – such a widespread disposition of textiles and textile-related items has to be noticed and interpreted. Even allowing for the

Increase in the commercial aspect of textiles in Edo, the shops selling cloth, the printed production and sale of *hiinagata-bon*, the interest in fashionable clothing on the part of Edo's inhabitants, there is more to the inclusion and use of textiles in these prints than a simple reflection of commercial, urban taste. ⁵³

The Use of the Textile - related Metaphor.

An intriguing use of textiles, albeit in a curious form, can be seen in a series of prints, again in the Amsterdam collection of S J W Goslings. ⁵⁴ The particular use of textiles made in these examples is in the construction and decoration of fans, of the folding – *ogi* – variety. These fans are used, humorously in their suggestion, as backdrops for the human action taking place. Each actual print of the *shunga* genre has an accompanying explanatory print with text and linking image. All the prints measure 13.7cm x 7.00cm and are viewed horizontally. There is no ascription for this series, but, judging by the style, it would seem to date from the 19th century and to owe its allegiance to the *Utagawa* school. Each *shunga* print has a type of decorated, folding fan as a backdrop to the scene of lovemaking in the foreground. The employment of these decorated pieces of textile based accessories is both subtle and witty.

Print 317, also numbered 208a, shows a couple making love against a *ryusen* – type fan, dyed black, with the branch of a flowering tree across it, which was originally gold, but which is now considerably dulled and faded (Plate 22). The lovers are shown almost entirely clothed, except for their slightly exposed genital areas in the centre of the print. She is on the viewing right of the print, seated, supporting herself on her left hand. Her right is around his neck. He reclines slightly on top of her left side, resting on his left leg (unseen) with his right leg raised and visible from the knee down to his shin almost to his ankle. Presumably he supports himself on his left hand, while with his right (visible) he places all four fingers inside her vagina, only his thumb

remaining visible on her pubic hair. He looks out towards the viewing left of the print. Behind her back and in front of the right edge of the fan, sits a small, portable, wooden chest of drawers. Both lovers are dressed in elegant clothing, she in an outer gown of light mauve, heavily patterned with dark purple flower heads. Her undergown is Eau de Nile in colour, with darker blue patterning. A collar appears of blue with red/white flower patterning. Her basic undergarment is red and her obi is dark blue with large flowers in olive green, yellow and lighter blue. He is very much the sophisticate in vertical purple, dark blue and blue/green stripes on an indigo blue background, with a border at the bottom of the robe. However, the textile "conceit" in this print and in the others of this series stems from the painted fan.

A fan known as a *ryusen* was connected with the idea of flowing water and is also being used in this connection to indicate the couple's state prior to their lovemaking. The state of her physical readiness (indicated by the insertion of his four fingers) and that particular fan's associations with flowing water make for a witty reference to her state of arousal at that point and her receptiveness to his subsequent penetration.

Prints 318 and 318a (also numbered 209a and 209b) contain an even more playfully amusing suggestion in the type of fan employed by the artist (Plates 23 & 24). The fan in this *shunga* print is depicted as being in a severely frayed and distressed condition and the reason for this is to be found in the accompanying print. This print shows a chest of drawers, one drawer of which is open. Inside this drawer, with its tail hanging out over the edge, there is a mouse, which is nibbling away furiously at the silk of the fan, visible inside the drawer. Back in the *shunga* print, a couple are in the process of wiping themselves with tissues, after obviously frantic lovemaking. He wipes his penis with his right hand, on the left of the print, while he holds another tissue in his mouth. With his left hand he holds open her left thigh, while she rests on her left hand and wipes her vagina with her right. She holds the wad of tissues in her mouth.

Both to her left and his right, on the ground, lie piles of crumpled tissues. The couple's backdrop is a red *ogi* fan, with two, visible, broad, gold bands. The edges and the downward verticals of the fan, between the sticks, are frayed as a result of the mouse nibbling. The interconnection between the mouse nibbling print and the *shunga* print is both amusing and sophisticated. The artist is using the frayed textile of the fan as a visual metaphor for the woman in the *shunga* print. The red fan is nibbled – frayed – no longer as pristine or as functional as it would have been to begin with. Its textile is "exhausted" "disintegrating". If the courtesan in the *shunga* print is examined, she is the personification of this fan. Her coiffeur is escaping, at least two strands can be seen hanging down, one on her neck, one on her left temple. Her pose, not quite sitting anymore, almost slouching backwards, is suggestive too of exhaustion – of the whole series of sexual encounters having gone on for far too long and far too vigorously. This supposition is amply backed up by the piles of discarded tissues on both sides of the couple. However, judging by the erectness of his penis and the obvious pressure on her thigh to keep her legs open, added to the fact that he has another tissue at the ready, it is clear that he is far from finished. She will obviously find herself far more "nibbled" like the fan before the sexual interlude is over. Even the fraying of the silk being placed between the verticals of the fan is an amusing touch to the overall metaphor. The whole conceit is witty in the extreme and the intended response on the part of the prints' viewers would have been that of delighted amusement.

Prints 319 & 319a (210a & 210b) show, in the *shunga* print, a fully armoured warrior embracing a fully-clothed woman. The accompanying print shows battle banners and an arrow (Plates 25 & 26). The background fan this time is the *gunsen*, the great military fan with its painted rising sun. The fan signifies valour and the bravery of the warrior and serves as a symbol for the valorous lovemaking, which is about to be enacted in print 319. The next two prints, 320 & 320a (211a & 211b) make reference to the *maisen*, or dancer's fan (Plates 27 & 28). In the *shunga* print, the woman is in

a dance costume with a performance drum to the viewing right of the print. She is in a seated position, her right arm over her partner's back, her left cradling his head. He is curved over her front, his penis in the act of being inserted into her vagina. Her left leg curves upwards to meet her right hand on his back, thus encompassing his torso altogether. Their entire joined curve echoes the curved fan edge behind them. It is no coincidence that their position is very balletic, acrobatic and full of movement. The dynamics of their coupling are entirely in keeping with the fact that their accompanying painted *ogi* is that of a dance performance. The couple's sexual accomplishments and the fan's use in a dance performance are each an extension of the other. Another two prints from the same series which derive from the idea of performance are numbers 327 & 327a (218a & 218b) The fan in these prints is the *ogiotoshi*, which is the "dropped" fan (Plates 29 & 30). The *ogiotoshi* is connected both with a No play, in which a fan is deliberately dropped and with an Edo Period party game, in which fans are thrown to knock over a balancing toy. ⁵⁵ The accompanying print of this pair shows a fan, apparently having been thrown into mid-air. The woman in the shunga print faces away from her partner, out towards the left of the print. She is seated, backwards, on top of him, supporting herself with her right hand on the ground and her left hand against his right shoulder. His right arm and hand are around her waist and his left holds her left buttock open as he enters her from a sitting position. The *ogiotoshi* fan behind them is red with a large flower head pattern on it. Three crumpled tissues lie on the ground. If both associations are taken from the fan, those of both throwing and dropping, then cleverly, the suggestion of two movements on his part are made clear. The force of his thrust will throw her upwards, while his hold on her waist and buttock will constrain her to "drop" back down once again, thus setting up the sexual motion of their encounter. The fan referred to in prints 324 & 324a (215a & 215b) is a *shibusen* – a type of fan traditionally treated with persimmon juice to give it strength (Plates 31 & 32). Once again, the connotation here is witty and would have provided the viewer with

considerable amusement. The *shunga* print shows a couple, he to our viewing left, she to the right. He wears a dark-blue / light-blue chevronned gown, she, a dark purple, self-coloured gown, with blue undergarments. She has both legs wide open with her right leg up on his shoulder as he bends away from her to his right to pour tea. They are still joined sexually. His left foot is on her left breast as she masturbates with her right hand. They both look dishevelled, with several crumpled tissues in front of them. The sexual scene is one of freneticism, with a pillow block knocked over in the throes of passion. The accompanying print shows two full slices of watermelon on the right and two scraped rinds on the left. The amusing implication of the *shibusen* – the fan which has to have its fabric coated with persimmon juice for extra strength – is that, like the fan, the male lover will require all the extra strength he can summon up (hence the reviving tea) if he is to satisfy his rapacious partner, who cannot even wait for the resumption of their intercourse, but who resorts to masturbation while her partner refreshes himself for a few moments. Again, viewers of these two prints would find the suggestion amusing, although some might respond more wryly, given their own personal situations. Prints 328 & 328a (219a & 219b) make use of a *harimaze ogi* – a fan used in decorations, perhaps even being "scattered" or painted onto a screen (Plates 33 & 34). The fan itself in the *shunga* print is highly decorated as well as being decorative. It is divided into sections, which display grasses, calligraphic characters, pine branches against mountains and maple leaves. The print which accompanies the *shunga* image shows bolts of silk of varying patterns. The *shunga* print with this fan as its background, shows the woman on her left side, stomach down, resting her head on her left elbow. She looks up and backwards at her male partner, with tissues in her mouth. He is on top of her back and with his right hand he holds up her right leg from behind the knee as he straddles her bottom. Her vagina is clearly shown, but the sex is anal and he is almost fully inserted. The link between the *harimaze* or decorated / decorative fan and their lovemaking lies in the fact that their choice of position is an elaboration on the norm. It is an enhanced posture, not

the basic model, as it were. Yet again, the choice of fan, or the state of the fan depicted, has been used, by the artist, to make a definite comment or suggestion on the type or state of sexual activity shown. The fans and the condition of their component textiles make metaphorical observations on the physical state of the lovers, or on the type of sexual activity in which they are involved and the "game of meanings" arises from the viewer's capacity to notice and interpret the metaphors which are set up in the form of these fans.

In the course of this chapter, several uses made of textiles and textile-related items by both writers and visual artists to transmit an assortment of meanings to their audiences have been examined. These meanings have been as diverse as shadowing, fusion, the contrast of the clothed with the naked, the setting up of dynamics and compression and the use of textiles to set up metaphors. In both the literary sphere and the sphere of the visual - principally the *shunga* genre - these suggestions were there for the reader or the viewer to discover for him or herself, thanks to the conceits employed by the various artists. However, it was not in the visual representation of cloth, clothing and textile related items alone that messages were conveyed. Indeed, it would be incongruous to imagine that the significance of textiles did not extend beyond the visual. An article of clothing or its disposition and its ability to send out suggestions wielded the same power in other areas and outwith the world of the erotic print, textiles were being used to put across a variety of other meanings about how the people of Edo saw themselves, how they judged others and how they felt about the society in which they lived and these uses will be examined in the next chapter.

Notes on Chapter Two.

¹ Screech Timon *Sex and the Floating World. Erotic Images in Japan 1700 – 1820.* Reaktion Books. London. 1999. Chapter 3. P. 118.

² Guth Christine M E *Asobi. Play in the Arts of Japan.* Exhibition Catalogue. Indiana. 1992 – 1993. P.1.

³ See note 1.

⁴ Typical examples of the work of Moronobu And Sukenobu can be seen in The Early Ukiyo-e Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The first signed and dated works by Hishikawa Moronobu, who died in 1694, appear in 1672. These four works comprise printed illustrations of warrior poets in *Buke hyakunin isshu* and three sections of painted handscrolls. One of these illustrates a brothel scene, while the other two belong to a collection of seven handscrolls known as Illustrated Handscroll of the Northern Quarter (Yoshiwara) and (Kabuki) Theatres. Early in his career, Moronobu concentrated on illustrations for printed *ehon*. About sixty of these survive and they include some twenty books of erotica. Nishikawa Sukenobu, 1671 – 1750, was recognised as being the most accomplished ukiyo-e painter in Kyoto during the first half of the 18th century. He was an important producer of shunga imagery in both painted and printed albums and handscrolls. The Boston collection holds a fragment of a large erotic handscroll showing the final four couples in a possible sequence of twelve.

⁵ This estimate is provided by Asano Shugo in *Hishikawa Moronobu no hanga*. Chiba. 2000. p.202. Timon Screech also comments on Asano Shugo and Shirakura Yoshihiko's estimates of 5 books for Torii Kiyonaga, 22 for Okumura Masanobu, 9 for Suzuki Harunobu, 23 for Isoda Koryusai, 17 for Kitagawa Utamaro and 7 for Utagawa Kunitora among those produced by other artists. He also asserts that our estimates of shunga production may be too low for a variety of reasons.

⁶ The pleasure district of Edo.

⁷ For a lengthier discussion of Buddhism / Confucianism, see *Japanese Aesthetics and Culture. A Reader.* Ed. Nancy G H Hume. State University of New York. 1995.

⁸ The pleasure districts of the cities of Edo, Kyoto, Osaka and Nagasaki respectively. Each of these districts was set aside from the main city originally, although with urban expansion they became incorporated within the city itself. However, their inhabitants both worked and lived within these quarters. Of the larger cities, only Nagasaki permitted the situation where the workers in the pleasure industries inhabited the city proper.

⁹ The expression used to describe the world of the theatre and the pleasure houses. The word *ukiyo* (floating world) derived from a Buddhist term, which originally described a world of earthly pain – a world which contrasted strongly with the world of paradise. In the second half of the 17th century, this connotation altered and instead of being written with the character for “ sad world” the expression came to be written with the character for “ floating world” and its associated meaning altered to suggest a world of pleasure and hedonism. It was essentially a world of the here and now and one which was regarded as fleeting and ephemeral. It is best described by Asai Ryoi in his *Ukiyo monogatari* (Tale of the Floating World) c. 1661. “ . . . Living only for the moment, turning our full attention to the pleasures of the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms and the maple leaves; singing songs, drinking wine, diverting ourselves in just floating, floating; caring not a whit for the pauperism staring us in the face, refusing to be disheartened, like a gourd floating along with the river current: this is what we call the floating world . . .”

¹⁰ Mishima Yukio. “ Onnagata”. Donald Keene (Trans). *The Oxford Book of Japanese Short Stories.* Goossen Theodore W. (Ed) Oxford University Press. 1997. p. 295.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 295.

¹² Ibid. p. 296.

¹³ Ibid. p. 296.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 296.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 297.

¹⁶ Although I use the word “ she” I am aware that textiles would have been similarly employed by male prostitutes in the world of *nanshoku*. Originally a practice pertaining to warriors and the battlefield, it evolved into a more emasculated practice and male brothels such as those at Yushima, Fukiya-cho and Yoshicho were integral parts of the urban “play” experience.

¹⁷ It could be argued that the noticeable increase in such forms was attributable to the increased technical production of the time and the concentration of potential buyers in Edo. However, it would not make commercial sense to produce, either visually or for literary consumption, material which was not sought after by the public. The taste of the times determined what was produced.

¹⁸ For an in depth consideration of kabuki plays see *A Kabuki reader. History and Performance*. Ed. Samuel L. Leiter. East Gate Books. 2002.

¹⁹ Nagai Kafu, who lived from 1879 – 1959, was the pseudonym of Nagai Sokichi. He was a novelist who strongly identified with Tokyo and its immediate past. Kafu's work dates principally from the early part of the 20th century and he writes with longing for the traditions and ways, which he sees disappearing on account of westernisation. The sadness of change, with which his stories are redolent, creates a sense of nostalgia for times past, which he applies to his own world with its changing post Meiji values.

²⁰ This story can be found in the anthology "Kafu the Scribbler. The Life and Writings of Nagai Kafu. 1879 – 1959." Trans. Edward Seidensticker. Michigan Classics in Japanese Studies. No. 3.

²¹ As Note xii above.

²² The novelist Tanizaki Jun'ichiro was born on July 24th, 1886, in Tokyo and died on July 30th, 1965 in Yugawara. His early work was influenced by Poe and the French decadents, but he gradually turned to expressing more traditional Japanese ways of looking at life. His mature work, which describes, like that of Nagai Kafu, the destructive effect of the modern world on traditional ways, is characterised by its eroticism and use of irony.

²³ Tanizaki Jun'ichiro. "Aguri". Hibbett Howard (Trans) *The Oxford Book of Japanese Short Stories*. Goossen Theodore W. (Ed) Oxford University Press. 1997. Page 64.

²⁴ Ibid. p.62.

²⁵ Ibid p. 65.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 67.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 65.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 70.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 71.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 71.

³¹ Ibid. p. 71.

³² Ibid p. 71.

³³ Ibid. p. 66.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 66.

³⁵ Although aware that pre Meiji terms for specific garments were various, for the purposes of this discussion I intend to use the contemporary generic term *kimono* for items of clothing, both male and female.

³⁶ I appreciate that to have had images for all of the prints referred to in this section would have been ideal. However, as there were no existing photographs of all of these prints at the time of putting this thesis together and the resultant cost of having these works photographed for the first time was considerable, I had to restrict the numbers of images I ordered.

³⁷ Japanese prints were produced in a variety of sizes, each with its own name. A print of *naga – oban* size would measure approximately 50 x 23 cm. Other sizes included *aiban* 34 x 22 cm, *chuban* 26 x 19 cm, *hashira – e* 70 – 75 x 12 – 15 cm, *koban* 23 x 17 cm, *oban* 38 x 25 cm, *shikishiban* 21 x 18 cm.

³⁸ This particular silk can be seen on Utamaro himself in a print parodying a scene from the *Chushingura*. From a series entitled *Komei bijin mitate chushingura junimai Suzuki* (The Chushingura Drama Parodied by Famous Beauties: A Set of 12 Prints) the particular print illustrates Act 2, *Juichi – damme* and was published around 1794 / 95, approximately 6 years after the *Utamakura*. (Plate 7) It shows a party in a brothel, during which Utamaro himself is handed a sake cup in a parody of *ko no Moronao* being handed a dagger with which to commit suicide. Utamaro's white spotted overgown is repeated in the *Utamakura* print, where its use is significant. Interestingly, the black material with the white cross – hatching seen on the woman in the *Utamakura* print can be seen on Utamaro in the *Chushingura* print.

³⁹ Museum reference RP – P – 1995 – (304 – 316).

⁴⁰ Museum reference RP – P – 1995 – (313) also numbered 204.

⁴¹ Living and working at approximately the same time as his mentor Utamaro, Eishi was unusual among *ukiyo – e* artists in that he came from an influential samurai family and began by studying painting under official *Kano* school masters. Around 1786, he renounced his samurai background and devoted himself to the recording, in print and painted form, of the women of the *Yoshiwara* and everyday life in *Edo*.

⁴² See Introduction note

⁴³ Museum reference RP – P – 1995 – (304 – 316) numbered 309.

⁴⁴ Sugimura Jihei was active between 1681 – 1698. An inhabitant of Edo, he was an early book illustrator and ukiyo-e print artist, particularly in the field of shunga. He dominated the decade of the 1690's after Moronobu's virtual retirement. Richard Lane mentions 7 signed albums or series of erotic works by Jihei in his *Shinpen shoki hanga Makura – e*. Tokyo. 1995.

⁴⁵ See Screech. P. 237.

⁴⁶ Ibid. P.241.

⁴⁷ British Museum reference number OA + 0455.

⁴⁸ BM reference number as above.

⁴⁹ BM reference OA + 0443

⁵⁰ BM reference number OA + 0439 also numbered 1.

⁵¹ BM reference number OA + 0441.

⁵² BM reference number OA + 0449 number 17.

⁵³ *Hiinagata-bon* were printed books of kosode design. The first of these design books was published in 1666. (" The Dawn of the Floating World. 1650 – 1765. Early Ukiyo-e Treasures from the Museum of Fine Arts Boston." Thames & Hudson Ltd. London. 2002. Timothy Clark.) From 1666, such books as " A New Selection of Kosode Patterns" *Shinsen o-hiinagata* made available to the buying public of Edo the latest designs for kosode decoration. Each page showed the back view of a kosode on which was produced the currently fashionable designs. Notes on the margins would provide details of the background fabric colour and the various techniques employed as decoration.

⁵⁴ Museum reference RP – P – 1995 – (317 – 328).

⁵⁵ I am grateful here to Timothy Clark for this information.

Chapter Three

How Textiles Illustrate the Ways in which the People of Edo looked at Themselves and their Society.

" Clothes, especially beautiful clothes in the highest of fashion, which were lovingly and accurately delineated, were always felt by the Japanese to offer the extra voluptuousness needed in emotively charged situations. This was not only for their suggestiveness by concealing here and revealing there, but for the opportunities they offered for the expression of feeling." ¹

There were other "games" to be played with textiles as well as those associated with the depiction of the sexual act. During the period under consideration, textiles were being employed, both in literary works as well as visually, to send out a variety of meanings. From these uses of textiles we can learn, to a certain extent, how the people of everyday Edo saw themselves and how they assessed others in their society. Not only did the depiction of clothes convey ideas about the people themselves, but it also suggested, subtly, how the Edokku judged their society and, as the Tokugawa period drew to a close, how that society began to alter.

The Concept of Revealing and Concealing.

In the opening quote, Rawson speaks of clothing's "... suggestiveness by concealing here and revealing there ..." ² This idea of hiding but at the same time throwing out certain suggestions was not peculiar to Edo society, but had long been part of Japanese cultural life. The association of " looking" or " gazing" with acts of physical or sexual possession - *ryoyu* - has its roots deeply embedded in the early mythic history of Japan. The idea of *ryoyu* makes its appearance in the motif of *kunimi* or " surveying the land" and *kunimi uta* or poems on the *kunimi* topos are to be found, for example, in the *Kijiki* tale of *Toyotamabime*, the daughter of the sea god. This concept of " looking" as a recognisable motif has been explored by Nakanishi Susumu. ³ Throughout the prose writings of the Heian period, we see

repeated reference, in such works as "The Tale of Genji", to the concept of the man who gazes through a fence or over a curtain at a woman who appears to be unaware of his observation. The looking is usually fired by admiration or longing for the woman, who remains unattainable at that point in the narrative. The "peeping through the fence" construct - or *kaimami* - operates on the conventional idea of unrequited longing. Looking, however, is not the prerogative of the male. In many prints, the onlooker is often female, though, interestingly, of a slightly lower status than the observed. Maids peep through screens at their mistresses, while in the illustrations of life in the Yoshiwara, *kamuro* and *shinzo* look and presumably learn from their "elder sisters" in the profession. This convention of the onlooking, admiring, lesser female, who experiences, vicariously, the emotions of the woman on the other side of the screen, or net, emerges as a variant of a concept, which also originated in Heian literature. Recognised by the term *nyobu sanbi*, it referred to the character construct of the lady-in-waiting who longs for an alliance with a male courtier, socially superior to herself. Prevented by the etiquette of her day from drawing herself to his attention, she resorts to gazing longingly through screens or curtains of state and to fantasising about receiving his attentions. ⁴ The slightly parted curtain, or the screen left marginally open, provided the onlooker with sufficient cover to mask his, or her, intent. Thus the material, be it silk, gauze, net or screen, which came between the looker and the object of the look, at once concealed and revealed - an apparent contradiction and yet the truth of the situation. Just such a situation is reproduced, repeatedly, in literary situations and in woodblock prints and paintings from throughout Japan's history. One such illustration, which pays tribute to the idea's Heian connection was produced as late as 1861, by the print artist Kuniyoshi (1798 - 1861). Entitled *Hyakunin Isshu no Uchi Suo no Naishi*, it shows two court ladies of the Heian era behind a brocade-edged, bamboo blind, which has been raised at the corner by a court gentleman in order that he can peep in at the two women. His hand also appears on the women's side of the blind, in what looks like an appealing

or beckoning gesture. The women take further refuge behind their clothing. The woman at the top of the print raises her sleeve to her face in a traditional gesture. The woman at the base of the print hides behind her unfurled fan. The idea, which comes across in this image by Kuniyoshi is one of successive "layers" of textile "protection". Although one "layer" of protective textile, the blind, has been breached, the women still have the protection of a secondary "layer" of textile in the sleeve and the fan.

The Removed Plane of Viewing.

Yet another plane of looking exists however, in both the printed and literary productions of the time and this is the removed plane of the print's viewer or the reader of the text. The reader and the viewer observe also, but this time they look at the observer and beyond him or her to the object of the look. When we read Sei Shonagon's "Pillow Book" we find ourselves observing Shonagon herself as she observes those luminaries she describes at court. The gazer within the print, or the pages of the book, becomes a surrogate almost of the "outside" onlooker – the Heian court lady who wishes she were Murasaki and the object of Genji's desire, or the Edo housewife who, arguably, wishes she were the courtesan so enviously observed by her *kamuro*. This is seen as more of a female inclination, in which there is a tendency to see the self as that which is meant to be the object of the look.⁵

An interesting example of this is to be seen in the illustrations produced in the late 17th century for Iharu Saikaku's prose work entitled *Koshoku Ichidai Otoko* (The Life of an Amorous Man) which was originally published in Ōsaka in 1682. In this first publication, the illustrations were executed by Saikaku himself. Its subsequent publication, in Edo, in 1684, was illustrated by Moronobu. One illustration, which is common to both editions, shows a woman bathing in a tub, aware of the fact that she is being spied

upon by a young man who is perched on a neighbouring rooftop and who is observing her through a telescope. The difference in the two artists' depictions of this act of looking is interesting and can be unravelled from observation of the two printed illustrations. Saikaku's woman fulfils the stereotypical concept of the cringing woman, who is embarrassed by the knowledge that she is being spied upon by the watcher on the roof (Plate 35 – left hand side). In this illustration, she raises her hands in a gesture of supplication almost that she be left alone. In Moronobu's illustration of the scene (Plate 35 – right hand side) the emphasis has altered subtly. The woman, who still is in no doubt that she is being observed, is no longer cringing in embarrassment, but seems rather to be offering herself to the observation of the young man on the roof, who, from his more secure vantage point in this print, has more time and leisure to scrutinise her through his telescope. However, Moronobu's woman invites not only the man on the roof, but a second observer, the viewer of the printed page. Just like the reader of the *Heian monogatari* who imagines herself to be the focus of Genji's observation, so the reader of Saikaku's prose work can imagine herself to be the object of the scrutiny of the man on the roof, but can also experience the pleasure of observing her observer, as it were. This "outside observer" effect can work well for the male reader too, as he can experience, vicariously, the supposed sensations of the young man on the roof in the print. As there is a lack of haste on the part of the rooftop observer and hence he has more time to look at the woman, this implied ease transmits itself to the male reader of the work, who feels also that he has the opportunity to watch her at his leisure. An added amusement is to be found in the reader's realisation that the woman is there to be observed whenever the book is picked up and opened. It's as though she awaits, literally, his pleasure.

Subsequently, Moronobu reworked this image for an *e-hon* or picture book entitled *Yamato – e no Kongen*. This publication places the bathing woman on one page, glancing over her shoulder at the spying young man, who peers over the rooftop,

complete with his telescope, on the adjoining page (Plate 36). The page with the woman has her positioned far more prominently towards the front of the image, with a *taga-sode* screen to our viewing right. The introduction of the visual game employed by the draped screen, added to the proximity of the naked woman, is rendered all the more appealing to the gaze of both the young man and the male viewer of the *e-hon* page by the, now familiar, woman's gesture. However, in the instance of this particular illustration, far from being a gesture of embarrassed supplication, the woman's hands have taken on the connotation of invitation, both to the young man on the adjoining page and, by the suggestive power of "outside" observation, to the overseer of the two-page scene. That the particular gesture employed by the woman in Moronobu's illustration had erotic overtones, can be seen from its inclusion in a *shunga* print by Okumura Masanobu (ca. 1686 – 1764). Of *aiban* format (9 x 13 inches) it was published by Nishimura Denzaemon around 1708 and is signed *Buko gashi Okumura Masanobu* (Plate 37). In this print, a kneeling man prepares to enter a woman who lies on her back, her gown open. The inscription refers to her " wanting a strong man " - *tsu-yohi otoko*- and to back up this inscribed desire, the woman employs the recognisable gesture of the two hands, palms together, raised in front of her. Another artist working at this time, Sugimura Jihei, uses exactly the same gesture in a print which was published around the same year, 1708 (Plate 38). This time of *oban* format, 10 x 15 inches, the print illustrates a young man in the company of three girls. On our viewing left, we are shown a girl having to make do with the young man's heel, but raising her hands in the inviting, joined palms gesture, as she suggests, visually, that it should be her turn next. The gesture, therefore, in the Moronobu images and in those of both Masanobu and Jihei appeal not only to the supposed prowess of the men in the prints, but also to the prowess of the male viewer of these images. The gesture of female invitation is directed at the external observer every bit as insistently as it is towards the young men in the images. Consequently, as a result of his being able to observe the naked women in the

scenarios depicted, the external onlooker is as titillated and as invited to participate in the delights of the "game" as are the imaginary men within the prints themselves. An important component of this "invitation into the game", I would argue, is the utilisation of concealing / revealing textiles.

Many textile conceits are employed to conceal and reveal, thus heightening the subsequent erotic game into which the viewer of the printed image is invited. In a book of prints, measuring 15cm x 10.5cm, ascribed to Utamaro, which forms part of the Rijksmuseum's collection, there is a print which shows a couple, half-seen through a partly open *shoji* (Plate 39).⁶ This is the right hand page of the book and the left hand page is completely taken up by the rest of the sliding panel. Across the centre of the panel there is the decoration of a band of growing irises. Crouching in front of the door is a serving woman, carrying a fan, wearing a plain grey *kosode* with blue undergarment and dark brown *obi*. She faces outwards, at the print's viewer, away from the couple on display on the right hand page. They lie on a grey patterned *futon*. The woman wears a purple *kosode* with 5-petalled flower motif with red centres. Her red undergarment is also visible. He wears a green and black pin-striped gown with black edging. She lies on her back with her left arm raised and her head and shoulders lifted off the *futon*. He lies to the back of her slightly, with his left arm and hand underneath her shoulders. Their heads are together as they both look out at the maid. The lovers are almost totally enveloped in an over-cover with green, red and purple patterning, which billows over his back, up to and almost over the back of his head. The purple semi-circle created by the bedcover's edge seems to emphasise the encircling quality of the quilt. The couple are so within the cover that they seem almost to be emerging from a burrow of bedclothes. They gaze questioningly at the maid, who gazes out at us, as we gaze into the print at the couple, who are only semi-revealed by the sliding *shoji* door and then further concealed from us by the covers. A veritable triangle of glances is set up. Their two

heads are turned, simultaneously, to gaze at the maid, as perhaps some command or request is issued from the courtesan. The maid, subserviently, looks away from them and in so doing seems to look more at us – the viewers – while we gaze inwards at the couple. The deep greens and purples, the floral pattern on the courtesan's gown and the insistent patterning of the covers, as opposed to the dull plainness of the servant's gown, ensure that our eyes are drawn to the couple in preference to the design on the *shoji* screen and the maid. However, having compelled and held the viewer's gaze, the artist then thwarts it by his use of the very textiles, which drew it in the first place. We are turned into voyeurs and recognised as such by the maid, but the game has a twist in that we are denied the full gratification of the gazing experience by the almost-totally enveloping qualities of the bedcovers. Our frustration is teasingly compounded by the device of the *shoji* panel on the left hand page, which, in its half-opened state, conceals half of the room beyond it and so we cannot see whether the encompassing textiles of the bedcover mask the couple's lower limbs or not. The suggestion is there, obviously, that the lovers are uncovered from the waist down behind that section of the *shoji*, but we cannot see and therefore the full realisation of the viewing experience is denied us.

Another two pages in the same book show, across both of them, a couple about to make love. She sits, facing outwards, with a green and white, 4-petal patterned robe loosely around her. The front of her body is completely naked, except for a trail of red undergarment draped over the top of her pubic hair. He sits, naked, with his back to us, about to enter her visibly open and receptive vagina. However, what turns this double-page print into an example of the teasing game played with textiles, is the fact that the entire two pages, with the exception of the left hand edge of the left page, is covered from top to bottom with green, mosquito netting, which at once reveals and conceals. The viewer can see, albeit indistinctly, into the print, sufficient to make out what is going on beyond the net. In this print, the image is of a couple

on the point of intercourse. Seconds after the glimpse captured in this print, they will, supposedly, have joined together. But for the viewer of the image, that culmination is denied. Even turning over the book's page to see what lies beyond will not alleviate the frustrated tension cleverly built up in the viewer by this double-page print. The net plays a game with the viewer, torments him almost, by reminding him that he does not belong in this scene. He is very much the outsider and is doomed to remain so. There is one area not covered by the net - the left hand edge of the left page - but this opening is, by imaginary implication, too small for the viewer to use and at the wrong angle to afford him a clear look. He is left in no doubt by the teasing net that he is the outsider, who can neither penetrate the screen, nor, by implication, penetrate the woman, or, in the case of the female viewer, be penetrated by the man. The print's viewer is permitted to glimpse, dimly, the action going on beyond the intervening screen, but is constantly reminded by it that he can never become part of its action. At this point, the game comes to an end for certain viewers, but for those with perhaps more experience of the sexual situation, or a more vivid imagination, the game continues by projecting the viewer into providing for him or herself the outcome of the encounter, complete with the viewer's own preferences.

There are several examples of this textile device being used to frustrate the viewer and force him into projecting his own imagined climax to the scene suggested. In the same collection, another print spread over two pages, repeats the idea (Plates 40 & 41).⁷ Print 704 shows a couple, she facially barely visible as she lies on her back, with her lover across and in front of her, his back towards her face. Her opened legs are pointed out of the print, as his right hand and arm reach over to enable him to insert his fingers in her vaginal opening. His left arm reaches from behind and over her left leg to keep it open. His right elbow and upper arm keep her right thigh open. The couple's pose is frank and uninhibited. He wears a dark and lighter blue vertical striped gown and they are surrounded as a couple by their personal clothing textiles,

the bedding and a landscape screen behind them, suggesting the boundaries of the sleeping area. The top and bottom of the prints are composed of stylised clouds. However, the interesting link in the game being played with the viewer is the material of the man's striped gown. If print 704A is considered, it consists only of the exterior of a screen, which protrudes about 1.5cm into the print from the left hand edge. On the ground, as it were, protruding in its turn from the bottom edge of the screen, are the folds of the bottom edge curves of a purplish-blue, dark and light blue striped gown. While it has to be said that the patterning of this gown does not match exactly the patterning of the man's gown in print 704, it could be argued that it is closely enough connected, in terms of stripe patterning and colour sequence to ensure that the series' viewer makes the connection. When you add the fact that 704A's textile issues from beyond a screen edge, the restrained outward design of which can be seen and you remember that the interior scene in 704 is bounded by a landscape screen, it is not too fanciful to suggest that the scene in 704A is suggestive of the exterior of 704, in the sense that the idea of "seeing beyond the screen" is implanted in the mind of the viewer. This idea, so redolent of the *tagasode* concept of earlier times and the images from Heian days of the edges of gowns trailing from behind screens to attract a possible lover, suggests a revisiting of the "whose sleeves" construct with its attendant cultural connections. Although on this occasion, the textiles, which are tantalizingly on show, belong to the man as opposed to his female partner, the stimulus this material provokes in the external viewer is identical. Just as the Heian courtier would have been intrigued by the material glimpse afforded him and fall to wondering about the owner beyond the screen, so too the viewer of this print, knowing what is taking place in the opposite print, is drawn into the game of wishing to see further into the concealed area beyond the screen. The frankness of print 704 reinforces the idea that beyond the screen lie scenes of increasing sexual explicitness and the interest in viewing such scenes, or, in more practical terms, of conjuring them up in the imagination, is engendered by the connection of the textile colour and

patterning employed in both prints. The artist plays a textile game with the viewer, who, in turn, plays a mental game with him or herself.

Textiles and Literature.

If textiles can be employed visually to engage a viewer, then they can also be employed by the written word to achieve similar effects. Consequently, it was not solely in the world of the *shunga* print where textiles were used to transmit messages. In the literary works of the period under consideration, we can see textiles being used as a means by which people judge others or by which they deceive others. The work of Ihara Saikaku, who lived from 1623 – 1693, describes many situations in which items of clothing, or entire outfits, are used in these ways.

Saikaku's world was that of the *chonin* of Tokugawa Japan and he is best known for his *koshokubon*, or erotic works and his *chonin-mono*, or townsman works.⁸ In his *koshokubon*, Saikaku considers the different effects that love exercises on human beings, while in his *chonin-mono*, he looks rather at the effects of having money, or experiencing the lack of it. His stories illustrate well the extravagances of the culture of the Genroku period (1688 – 1704) with its accent on frivolous living and a lack of concern about tomorrow or the long-term effects of lavish spending. Although he did write some pieces which dealt with the samurai class, between 1687 – 1688, it was essentially in the world of urban, merchant class life that he set his stories and from which he drew his characters.

Despite the rise of the merchant class in Edo, the status accorded these citizens was lowly. As, technically, merchants "made" nothing, but lived off the efforts of others, they were rated poorly by the society in which they lived. However, the incongruous situation arose, in which these lowly-regarded members of society became, in effect, the generators and holders of much of the country's wealth. Prevented by their

status from playing an official role in the fiscal or governmental affairs of their country, they sought to assert themselves by an ostentatious flouting of their wealth, which, in its turn, brought about several sumptuary edicts issued by the disapproving government, aimed at curbing the lavishness of their lifestyle. An attitude prevailed, however, fostered by the *chonin* desire to assert their worth by means of their material wealth, by which the trappings of that wealth, namely clothing and accessories, were seen as indicators of a person's value. The messages sent out by a person's clothes were picked up by other members of society and that person's social acceptability or sexual desirability was determined accordingly. People were what they wore, in the eyes of Saikaku's characters, not what they actually were. Again, there is a direct historical connection here to the 13th century *Towazugatari* of Lady Nijo, in which she describes, at some length, certain intimate luminaries at court whom she has not seen for some time. The reader is treated to several detailed descriptions of what each man wore. For her, as for Saikaku's characters, people are defined by their textiles, not by their personalities. Repeatedly, the idea of certain cultural attitudes hardly altering, especially with regard to cloth, asserts itself.

In Saikaku's work entitled *Koshoku Gonin Onna* "Five Women Who Chose Love", written in 1686, he moves outside the confines of the pleasure quarters and looks at the world of the town, where everyday people pursue liaisons and are attracted to members of the opposite sex. In the section entitled "The Almanac Maker's Tale in the Middle Part" Saikaku introduces us to four young men.

"... famous under the name of the Four Heavenly Kings, who stood out from the common ruck of men by the handsomeness of their features. Relying on their fathers' generosity, these men gave themselves over to enjoyment and from one New Year's Day to the next New Year's Eve, they did not let a single day pass without engaging in some amorous delight." ⁹

thoroughly bored with their sexual forays into the worlds of both female and male professional entertainers, they set out one evening to survey female passers-by and record those they consider to be in possession of true beauty. What is interesting about the comments that Saikaku puts in their mouths, is the fact that the details of what each woman wore far outweighed the details of actual physical attributes. Their facial features are commented upon, but in nowhere near such deep scrutiny as the details of their clothing. Also interesting is the realisation that these young men frequently find themselves completely convinced as to a particular woman's right to the accolade of true beauty solely on the evidence of her apparel. It is not until some small blemish appears, right at the last moment – some personality trait or awkwardness of demeanour – that they abandon their earlier preference. Had that tiny defect not manifested itself, these young men would have been persuaded totally on the basis of clothing alone.

It could be argued that this view of the people of Edo was a figment of Saikaku's imagination and that these characters were not representative of real people of that time. But Saikaku, like the vast majority of authors, wrote with a view to his works selling, thus ensuring his income. He would not have presented the reading public of Edo with characters so much at variance with their actual experience. Even had he been lampooning such characters, they would still require to be based on recognisable models for the joke to work. It is reasonable to assume therefore, that Saikaku was presenting characters to his public, whose views were extant at that time.

The first woman these four characters consider is assumed by them to be in her early thirties and they agree that her neck, her eyes and her brow are charming. After just three lines spent on her facial appearance, Saikaku then launches them into a

detailed description of her outfit and remarks on what may be concluded about the woman's personality from her clothing.

"This lady's undergarment was of white satin, above which she wore a kimono of pale blue and, over this, one of reddish-yellow, all these being lined with the same fine silk. On her left sleeve, painted in the classical style, was a likeness of the bonze Yoshida, above the words 'to sit alone in the lamplight with a book spread out before you . . .'. Clearly this was a woman of ingenious fancies. Her sash was of woven velvet with a chequered pattern and gracefully draped over her kimono was a cloak of the fashion favoured by court ladies. Her feet, encased in a pair of light mauve socks and shod with sandals of three-coloured braids, glided noiselessly over the street." ¹⁰

The young men seem to be completely captivated by this woman, based to a great extent on the quality and harmony of her clothing and they remark on how fortunate a man her husband must be. Unfortunately, just then the lady speaks to her attendant and they register the fact that she is missing a lower tooth. This is enough to evaporate their interest, which, up to that point, had been held totally by her clothed appearance. A few contenders further on, the young men encounter a woman in her late twenties. Other than the phrase "fair looks" ¹¹ no reference to her beauty is made at all and yet the men exclaim on seeing her

"Here, here she is – the woman we've been waiting for!" ¹²

Their total approval is based solely on a lengthy description of the woman's garb and hair accoutrements.

"Her triple-layered garments were of rich black silk; their hems were trimmed with crimson. The outer kimono was adorned with an informal crest in gold. All this was secured with a wide *Yorishima* sash, woven of *Nishijin* brocade in Chinese style and

knotted in front. Her hair, adorned with a pair of combs, was tied with a wide paper cord in a *Shimada* coiffure, so shaped that it fell down in the back; round it was draped a kerchief decorated with a delicately dyed pattern; and over this a *Kichiya*-style sedge hat, enlivened with four-coloured braid rested on her head – but lightly, so as not to conceal the fair looks of which she was so obviously proud." ¹³

What proves to be this woman's downfall is the fact that she has three children carried after her by attendants. Again, the promise of the woman's clothing has been negated by a personal fact. The final woman to be regarded by these young men seems to be the very paragon of female allure. The detailing of her attire reaches almost poetic proportions and indeed includes a quote from a poem by Hitomaru from the early 11th century anthology, the *Shuishu*.

"Next . . . came a girl barely thirteen years of age. Her long hair was combed out in back, turned slightly up at the ends and secured with a scarlet band. Her forelock stood out and was parted like a young boy's, the coiffure being tied with a paper cord of gold and decorated with a half-inch comb of immaculate beauty – all of which displayed such perfect grace that it would be idle to catalogue her charms one by one. Her under kimono was of white satin relieved with a black and white design; the outer garment was a silken veil of Chinese lace, elegantly contrived so that beneath it one could perceive the iridescent satin if the middle kimono, on which had been sewn a peacock pattern. All this was fastened with an unpadded sash of many colours. Her bare feet were encased in a pair of sandals with paper braids and one of her attendants carried her stylish sedge hat. In her hands she held a rich spray of trailing wisteria and her expression seemed to say that this was 'for those who had not seen the blossoms' ¹⁴."

presented as they are with this picture of sartorial elegance and allure, the young men feel no need whatsoever to comment on the girl's physical charms – "it would be idle to catalogue her charms one by one." This is not an attempt on their part to be brief in their singling out of this girl, as they proceed to describe her clothing in some considerable detail, taking almost voluptuous pleasure in its description. They speak of the outer garment being a "silken veil" and the middle kimono being of "iridescent satin" which could be glimpsed in a tantalising fashion through the outer layer of Chinese lace. There is no doubt but this voyeuristic effect created by the outer and middle layers of the garments was intended, as the under layer is embroidered with a pattern of peacocks, to make sure it shines through and is noticed by the observer. The young men all agree that this girl is the one most worthy of their accolades and yet Saikaku gives us a hint in what he writes of her that the men are deceived by her clothing into ascribing to her a worth that she does not possess. When they enquire of her attendants who she is, they are told that she is known as *Ima Komachi* "The Present Day Komachi". This reference is to the poetess Ono no Komachi of the 9th century, whose work appears in the imperial anthology, the *Kokinshu*. Renowned for her legendary beauty as well as her skill as a poet, she was reputed to have spurned, cruelly, all male advances after those of the Emperor Nimmyo, her life ending tragically, according to one legend. Using a quote from one of Komachi's poems, Saikaku tells us that the young men agreed on this woman's superiority to all the others. The phrase used is *hana no iro* or "colour of the flowers". The poem itself, which is capable of a double interpretation reads

Hana no iro wa

utsurinikeri na

itazura ni

waga mi yo ni furu

nagame-seshi ma ni

The colour of the flowers

alas, all faded away!

While aimlessly

the long rains

pour down outside." ¹⁵

In the period during which this poem was composed by Ono no Komachi, the word *itazura* connoted "idle" "fruitless" "aimless" or "vain" but in later periods it came to have the additional connotation of "immoral" or "lewd" ¹⁶. Using this double meaning for *itazura*, Saikaku is commenting on how the richness and costly voluptuousness of female clothing can be used to entice and thoroughly confuse men during this period. Being taken in by the colour, costliness and sensuous appeal of garments and accoutrements, men can draw completely erroneous conclusions about the women who wear such garments. This inability on the part of most men, to distinguish between the wearers of costly cloth, who, by implication, are deceivers and wantons, and women of genuine worth, contributes in no small measure to the disastrous lives that many of the young men who appear in Saikaku's stories experience. That our four young men are in no way different in this respect can be seen from their reactions to a previous passer-by. She is markedly at variance with all the other women described in that her clothing is poor and of inferior quality. Her physical charms, however are indisputable.

"Then came a girl of some twenty years, wearing a striped garment of hand-woven cotton. So threadbare was it that when the wind blew it back, one could see that even the lining was covered with patches and her shame was exposed to all. Her sash appeared to have been made from left-over pieces of a coat and was pitifully thin. On her feet she wore purple leather-soled socks, evidently the only type at her disposal and an unmatched pair of Nara sandals. An old cloth kerchief covered her head. The hair escaping underneath had clearly seen no comb for many a long day and its dishevelment was hardly relieved by an artless effort to tie it into a knot." ¹⁷

So completely enslaved by the concept that fine clothes denote fine women, these young men are oblivious to the fact that the woman walks along with a "lack of

coquetry". She is not conspiring in any way to be alluring. Rather, she seems to have a definite sense of her own worth, despite her lack of costly raiment and even although the young men agree that she is possessed of considerable physical beauty, she cannot be admitted to the ranks of successful beauties in their personal contest.

" ' Were she but attired in proper clothes' said one of them, ' she would surely capture some man's heart.' " ¹⁸

Saikaku's message is clear. His age is one in which the façade of elegance, fostered by the wearing of costly and sensuous textiles, masks a deeper reality. The tendency to judge people according to their textile-promoted appearance is a dangerous one and Saikaku's stories resound with the unfortunate outcomes to the lives of so many of his protagonists who are drawn into the deceiving game by the textiles on display.

Not only were relative innocents drawn into the deception game by the disposition of textiles in Saikaku's tales, but some of his more deceitful characters were only too willing to employ aspects of their own clothing to deceive. In the chapter " A Bonze's Wife in a Worldly Temple", one of Saikaku's female characters, who pursues a life of debauchery and eroticism, realises the need to appear as a young and virtuous girl. In order to achieve this apparent state, she unsews the seams of her sleeves.

It was the custom in Edo period Japan, for a woman, upon reaching the autumn of her 18th year, to sew up the sides of her long, hanging sleeves. In clothing terms, she made the transition from wearing the *furisode* of youth to the *kosode* of the older woman. This transition was effected whether the woman was married by that age or not. ¹⁹ If a woman wished to give the impression that she was younger than she was, or even to impute that she was still a virgin, then to return her clothing to *furisode* status, by unsewing the sleeve openings, would put that message across and because of the social assumptions made about this aspect of a woman's outerwear,

Saikaku's woman is able to deceive a prospective employer, who looks no further than her textile - assisted appearance.

Another incidence of clothing being used by a deceitful woman to achieve a particular end appears in the chapter "A Townsman's Parlourmaid". Feeling the necessity to obtain herself employment in a respectable establishment and to mask the fact that she has hitherto earned her living from prostitution, Saikaku's female character uses her clothing to bluff her way into the townsman's household. We are left in no doubt that the woman in question is thoroughly experienced in the ways of the world, because she admits herself

"I had already, I confess with shame, undergone eight abortions." ²⁰

However, realising her society's predisposition towards being convinced by the apparent messages sent out by clothing, she uses her personal textiles as well as her physical appearance to persuade her prospective employers that they are taking on a young, inexperienced girl.

"Much as I disliked having to tie my sash in the back, I now changed into the garb that fitted my new role. I made up a narrow sash of dark orange, tinged with black and embellished with a medium sized pattern scored with a fine zig-zag design. My hair I arranged in a medium *Shimada* with a low, flat chignon and in my coiffure I wore paper cords that I could throw away each time after I had used them. In every respect, I made myself look like an innocent, young girl." ²¹

She uses her obi to broadcast her assumed status. It no longer ties at the front, as would a courtesan's, but at the back, like that of a "respectable" woman. She also chooses darker colours with smaller patterning than she would have chosen normally. The image she is purveying is one of respectable innocence. She presents herself as in no way flamboyant, in no way assertive or suggestive in her dress and is successful

her deception as the townsman's household is taken in. Knowing the messages her textiles send out, she uses them in her game of deception and wins. Although, originally, Saikaku seems to have been a supporter of the mercantile capitalism that so characterised this period in Edo's history, with its attendant stress on the visible signs of its success, towards the end of his life he became increasingly disillusioned. He felt particularly for the plight of the ordinary townspeople who were not part of the merchants' success story and who struggled to maintain a decent standard of living. Saikaku began to see that, far from being the way for the *chonin* to advance themselves en masse, the rise of the merchant class simply created a new elite, based on the amassing of money, which successfully excluded those who were not able to find the necessary capital to compete.

"Things have changed. Now it is only silver that can produce more silver. In these times it is not so much intelligence and ready wit that bring a man profit, but simply the fact of already possessing capital." ²²

Published in 1694, a year after Saikaku's death, it is perhaps no coincidence that the title of a collection of two pieces of his later work, undertaken when his disillusionment had begun to set in and suggested to us by his use of deceptive textiles among other methods, was *Saikaku Oridome* "The Last Fragments of Saikaku's Cloth".

Sumptuary Regulations and Government Backlash.

That Tokugawa society set considerable store by textiles and their method of employment can be seen in the proliferation of sumptuary regulations which emerged from around the middle of the 17th century and continued through the next two centuries. The regulations, *ken'yakurei*, were issued in considerable numbers and to all classes of society, but the underlying resentment felt by the upper classes against the emergent financial power of the merchants and their flouting of this

wealth in terms of their clothing and accoutrements, caused these laws to be issued in direct correlation to status, thus attempting to hedge in the *chonin* and curb their ability to spend their gains on ostentatious, luxury items. Saikaku himself felt that many *chonin* presented themselves in a sartorial manner well beyond their station and that their wives and daughters were prime exponents of the practice of using their textiles to send out messages calculated to impress and overwhelm. In his book *Nihon eitaigura* "The Japanese Eternal Storehouse" published in 1688, Saikaku observes "Fashions have changed from those of the past and have become increasingly ostentatious. In everything people have a liking for finery above their station. Women's clothes in particular go to extremes. Because they forget their proper place, extravagant women should be in fear of divine punishment."²³ His books resound with examples of how his society is deceived, in a variety of ways, by its blind acceptance of the importance of dress. He continues in *Nihon eitaigura* by observing that merchants are upsetting the social order by this kind of dressing and that pongee is more suited to such persons than good silk. He compounds the class order view by adding that a samurai's status requires the wearing of fine garments and even a samurai who is financially less fortunate than others of his class and who may not be able even to employ retainers, should, nevertheless, not be dressed in a manner more suited to lowlier members of society.²⁴ Throughout Saikaku's writing, it can be seen that he believed, as did many others of his day, that if society determined what was perceived to be a logical division in the function of its members then it was equally logical that distinctions be observed in appearance also. To blur the edges between these distinctions in appearance by permitting the wearing of sumptuous materials regardless of position in society was to call into question the necessity for distinctions in society at all. In order to maintain the socio-political order, such a situation was totally unthinkable. Not only was the preference of the ruling military class to maintain this social hierarchy, but the government lent

the idea a certain religious validity by calling on Confucian precepts to back up this view.

During the reign of the shogun Tsunayoshi (1646 – 1709) an unprecedented number of clothing related regulations were issued by the Tokugawa Bakufu – the civil servants of the regime. In 1683 alone, there were at least seven laws enacted which concerned themselves with the clothing of urban dwellers. Embroidery, thin silk crepe and certain types of dyeing were prohibited for the clothing of townswomen and specified sums were laid down beyond which the price of certain materials should not go. That such laws were increasingly difficult to enforce can be seen in the wording of subsequent edicts, which recognised the difficulty of policing such regulations efficiently. The words of the original pronouncements were watered down so that, for example, not all embroidery was prohibited, but only especially elaborate embroidery. The increasing frequency and constant rewording of these regulations as the years went by is an indicator both of how difficult it was to patrol such edicts and also to what extent they were being flouted by the *chonin* themselves. The term which came to be applied to such laws, on the streets, was *mikka hatto* or " three day laws" indicating just how unimpressed the townspeople were with such attempts to curb one of their methods of expressing themselves and their desire for recognition as having " arrived" in their society.²⁵ The Bakufu did react harshly however to non-observance of the sumptuary laws on several occasions, as is recorded in its official chronicle, the *Tokugawa jikki* or " True Record of the Tokugawa". An entry of 1681 recounts that

" A wealthy merchant called Rokudayu (Rokubei) a townsman of Kurobune-cho, Asakusa, gathered with many other townsmen on the street to view the shogun's procession to the Kan'ei Temple on the eighth day of this month. The shogun noticed Rokudayu in the crowd, displaying his wealth in the magnificent dress of the women

of his household. For such extravagance inappropriate in a townsman, his houses and lands were confiscated and he was banished." ²⁶

Reactions to these Regulations on the part of the Chonin.

Certainly, some instances of the flouting of *chonin* wealth were ostentatious in the extreme. The ill-fated merchant Rokubei's wife seems to have been exceptionally prone to extravagant displays of the kind, which eventually cost her husband his entire fortune. On a visit to Kyoto with her husband in 1680, Rokubei's wife so stunned the inhabitants with her finery that the wife of a local merchant, Naniwa-ya Juemon, felt constrained to outdo her and appeared in a *kosode* on which were embroidered all the famous sights of her city. In retaliation, Rokubei's wife appeared in a costume of plain black *habutae*, with what seemed, on first inspection, to be an embroidered pattern of the *nandina* plant. However, looked at more closely, it was discovered that the red berries of the *nandina* were all set in coral. ²⁷

Why did these women and doubtless others unrecorded, go to such lengths to flaunt their ability to purchase expensive clothing, especially as such behaviour could bring punishment and disaster in its wake? Aside from the personal traits inherent in many people to indulge their own specialised extravagances, there were other messages being transmitted in these situations. We have no way of knowing to what extent Rokubei himself condoned his wife's expenditure on lavish outfits, but it is reasonable to assume that she did not act without his knowledge and approval, given that the expense would arrive at his door. It might be argued that she was an especially formidable woman who pleased herself as to her behaviour, but this could be discounted given the ideas of obedience in marriage that existed at this time. Also, the fact that she is not the only recounted incidence of this sartorial extravagance would argue that her behaviour was not peculiar solely to her as an individual, but that it was more widely practised.

so, what might these other "messages" be? Arguably, one message was being sent out by Rokubei himself, using his wife (and the women of his household) as an advertisement as it were. It is a message about his own wealth and how he perceived his standing in his society. He was stressing the fact that through his own endeavours and not through any inheritance or privilege of class, he had brought himself and those who depended upon him to the stage where he need spare no expense to realise whatever project presented itself. He was the epitome of the self-made man, with an attendant lack of concern for how his behaviour might look. There is a hint too of a challenge in the message, in that he chooses to assemble his household in a public street to witness the passage of the shogun. The 1681 account speaks of him " displaying his wealth". He is not caught unawares by the authorities – a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time – he has gone out intentionally, with his entire household, to send out a specific message, via his textile magnificence, to those very authorities. Arguably, he is telling the members of the class that prevents him from having any significant say in the running of his own country, that his wealth and the wealth of others like him, is actually that which is running his country, through trade and money lending. To be thus reminded of the fact that financial power lay with such men would have proved too much for the representatives of authority and the retaliation had to be swift and decisive. The fact that, in ruining such a man, they would be able to appropriate his considerable fortune and perhaps wipe out any debts he was owed would be an added advantage to such a punitive action.

There is also a territorial message being sent out. Rokubei was a merchant of Edo, while Naniwa-ya Juemon conducted his business in Kyoto. When Rokubei and his wife visit Kyoto in 1680, they made a conscious decision to impress. We are told that Rokubei's wife dressed in such finery that the inhabitants of Kyoto were stunned. The message is clear. They belong to the new capital city – the one that wields political as well as financial power. Kyoto may have been the traditional capital and may still be home to the imperial court, but it is now no more than an interesting anachronism.

The place to be – where the truly important things happen – is Edo and this is the message that Rokubei's wife transmits in her stunning clothing.

Naniwa-ya Juemon's wife retaliates with a territorial message of her own. She does not just try to outdo Rokubei's wife in terms of financial outlay, although what she wears would have been extremely expensive, but by choosing to have her *kosode* embroidered with all the famous sights of her city, she is saying to the Edo contingent that they may have money, but that is all they have. In Kyoto they have history and culture. She is asserting the pre-eminence of tradition over newly acquired wealth. Rokubei's wife, in her textile response makes the point, explicitly and so extravagantly that there seems to be no gainsaying it, that money will triumph in this new Japan of theirs every time. Using clothing, these merchants and their wives hurled messages at their society and the cities of others.

Textiles used to Transmit Wealth Messages.

The concept of transmitting messages about personal wealth, using textiles, is one which can be discerned elsewhere during this period. Although sumptuary laws were put in place to curb such displays and had been levelled at courtesans in the past, such displays came to be acceptable for them because of the nature of their profession and the need for sumptuous textiles to permit them to effect the fantasy they purveyed, as was discussed in a previous chapter. An example of this comes to us, once again, in the writings of Saikaku.

" First she (the courtesan Kaoru) commissioned the renowned artist Kano Yukinobu to paint a picture of flaming autumn on a plain white satin. Eight court nobles were next asked to inscribe vignettes in verse in black decorative calligraphy on this gorgeous design. The result was a picture of breathtaking beauty, admirably suited

for a hanging scroll. But Kaoru had no idea of putting it to such a trifling use. She had it made into a robe for herself." ²⁸

The reasons for Kaoru's commissioning of such an expensive garment will be discussed later on, but the idea of commissioning works of art to be used as garments was not one confined to her alone. The practice of treating the surface of a garment as a medium for a piece of painted art and, indirectly, as an intimation of the wealth of the person who commissioned such a garment, continued into the 18th century and beyond. Interestingly, the concept of using examples of visual art, printed or painted, in order to allow textiles to deliver messages, is neatly inverted in the practice of using the garments themselves on which to paint. Two of the greatest names of the Rimpa School, Ogata Korin (1658 – 1716) and Sakai Hoitsu (1761–1828) painted the surface of *kosode* for their wealthy patrons, as did Matsumura Goshun (1752 – 1811) and Gion Nankai (1677 – 1751) of the Nanga School. ²⁹

Now an Important Cultural Property and held in the Tokyo National Museum, a *kosode* painted with autumn plants c. 1707 by Korin (Plate 42) was commissioned from him by the Fuyuki family, who were lumber merchants in the Fukagawa district of Edo. ³⁰ Korin, although a native of Kyoto, had travelled to Edo in the tenth month of 1704, following his patron, Nakamura Kuranosuke. While in Edo, Korin had been commissioned by some members of the wealthy *chonin* merchant class to decorate such items as *kosode* and incense wrappers. To have retained the services of an artist of *Hokkyo* rank (Korin achieved this in 1701, three years before his visit to Edo) who also worked for such *daimyo* as the Sugaru and Sakai, would be seen by these wealthy *chonin* as a sign that they had "arrived". ³¹ They might not be permitted to figure in the running of their country, but they could command the services of artists who served the requirements of those who did and they were well aware that it was the power of their money that made this possible.

The *chonin* of Edo were not permitted any significant official standing in their society, but in terms of their ability to commission recognised artists, they achieved a parity with the ruling classes that they were denied elsewhere. By choosing Korin, the Fuyuki were also sending out a slightly different message simultaneously. His style was essentially Japanese, as distinct from the Chinese influenced style, which had traditionally been the preferred style of the upper classes and by placing their commission with him, the Fuyuki were stating that they were forward-thinking. There is the slight suggestion here, it could be said, that such *chonin* as the Fuyuki felt that their society might benefit from the admission of such "forward-thinking" men into the decision making of their country – men who were Japanese to the core and not influenced, however subtly, by Chinese inspired models and ways of thinking. One such way of thinking was the centuries-old, Confucian model of a hierarchical society, in which each "class" knew its place and the structure was adhered to rigidly. It has to be said however, that the Fuyuki were not representative of the *chonin* of Edo in their patronage of Korin. By and large, his style was not understood widely and by 1709 he had returned to Kyoto. This need not, however, take from the supposition that such men as the Fuyuki thought differently.

A painted *kosode*, which illustrates a different message, was produced by Matsumura Goshun, an exponent of the style of the Nanga School. This school produced work, which adhered to the traditions of the Chinese literati painters. This particular *kosode* shows a traditional Chinese-inspired landscape, of the kind more usually found on hanging scrolls (Plate 43). It becomes a "landscape in the round" as it were when the garment is closed around its wearer. Cleverly, the idea of the landscape-painted garment makes use of the Chinese concept of the place of Man within that landscape. In Chinese paintings, which depict a landscape with people, the people are shown as small, they do not dominate their surroundings but are simply one more aspect of the overall scene. They are important, but no more so than any of the other features and are components of the overall design, not the

major part. They are essentially "within" the landscape. Goshun's painted landscape shows two figures in just such a situation. Near the bottom of the central back panel, they cross a bridge in what looks like quiet conversation. Around them rise trees and mountains and they proceed through them but not in a conspicuous way. The clever conceit of the garment design is that once the garment is put on, the wearer illustrates that very principle of Chinese landscape painting. The wearer is also "within" the landscape, becoming a full-sized illustration of the principle that man's place is to be part of Nature and not to dominate it. The human being does not, in one sense, add anything to the beauty of the worn landscape, any more than the small painted figures do, but is an integral part of the whole. Without the body inside it, the landscape kosode is incomplete, does not achieve its full effect. Without the addition of Man, the natural world is incomplete. His contribution may be small, but he is part of the natural order.

What would the commissioning of such a garment say about the man who ordered it?

Certainly it would say that such a man was of cultured tastes and had an appreciation of literati traditions. It would also argue that such a person was capable of appreciating the subtle concept of the wearer becoming a walking example of the traditional Chinese idea of Man's place in the natural order. This kosode speaks of the power of the intellect present in art and the fact that money can also buy the illustration of cerebral suggestions and not just send out messages of power or wealth.

A kosode which does, however, send out wealth messages can be seen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and was created by Gion Nankai, another member of the Nanga School, who was also well-known as a poet as well as a painter. Part of the Harry G C Packard Collection of Asian Art and acquired by the museum in 1975 – acquisition number 1975.268.88 – the garment is composed of silk satin, painted with images of bamboo in ink and gold powder, the overall effect

achieving its quiet sumptuousness from the contrast of the sombre grey/black bamboo shoots and leaves with the highlighting in gold. (Plate 44). The robe was originally commissioned Karakaneya Okitaka, a merchant and literary man of Izumi Sano, in present-day Osaka. His connection with the literary scene would suggest that his choice of decorator for this commission could have been influenced by Nankai's involvement in the literary field as well as his reputation as a painter. The provenance for this robe was provided, in 1824, by the Nanga School artist Rai San'yo, who lived from 1780 – 1832. On the occasion of the wedding of one of Okitaka's great grand-daughters and the wearing of the *uchikake* as the family's traditional gown, San'yo produced a poem scroll, recounting the origins of the gown and praising his artistic forerunner for its creation. Not only does the gown send out messages about the not inconsiderable wealth of the man who commissioned it, but knowing that he was a man of literature himself and that his choice of artist was also an acclaimed writer, having studied with Kinoshita Jun'an, the gown tells us that merchants are not simply in possession of vast fortunes, they have educated tastes, appreciate learning and patronise those who are pre-eminent in this field.

However, perhaps the most eloquent of these painted garments came from the brush of an artist living over 100 years after the death of Korin. Sakai Hoitsu was born in Edo and studied several styles of painting, including the Kano and Ukiyo-e styles, the Tosa and the Maruyama schools and was a calligrapher as well as a poet. He eventually settled on developing the style which Korin had established and he brought it to a sophistication derived from the refinement of the urban society in which he lived. Now belonging to the Nomura Collection and exhibited in the Tokyo National Museum, this *kosode* is executed in white silk, overpainted with a design of a black plum tree, with red flowers and small plants in yellow and green at the base (Plate 45). The lining and bottom hem are scarlet, a fashion statement popular in Edo at that time. What makes the decoration of this *kosode* so much an indicator of the social conventions of its day is that it does not simply make a statement about the

wealth of the person who commissioned it. Certainly, like the Korin *kosode* before it, it broadcasts to all those who see it being worn by a woman belonging to its purchaser that this person must be an individual of considerable fortune. Hoitsu was a member of the *daimyo* class himself. He had studied with a variety of well-known schools, including those favoured traditionally by the upper classes. To have retained his services was to draw attention to one's taste and financial power. But, more than this, the garment's actual decoration sends out interesting messages too.

The *kosode* shows a flowering plum tree, the branches and trunk of which are executed using the technique known as *Tarashikomi*, in which the ink or pigment is dripped onto the surface rather than painted on. In Japanese iconography, the plum is seen as a distinctly male symbol. In Japan, the plum flowers very early in the new year, sometimes when the snow still lies on the ground and so it is seen as displaying great fortitude and endurance and hence its adoption as a masculine symbol. The problem then arises as to why a gown intended for a woman should bear a widely recognised male symbol?

Arguably, in the answer, lies an interesting occasion of using a garment's textile and its decoration to make a social statement. If the *kosode* was destined for a courtesan, then there is the possibility of the iconography being suggestive of the sexuality (and more particularly the loss of virginity) of the woman to whom it was gifted, but whether the garment was commissioned for a wife or a courtesan, the decoration of the textiles still conveys an interesting message. By clothing his woman in this garment, the wealthy patron responsible for its commission is making more than one social statement. As discussed previously, he is indeed broadcasting, by means of its uniqueness and its not inconsiderable expense, that he is a man of wealth, who can afford to clothe his woman in such extravagance. He can afford – and wishes it to be known that he can afford – to commission one of the foremost painters of his day. However, beyond the monetary consideration lies another, more subtle

communication. By wrapping his woman, wife or courtesan, in a symbol of male strength or power, the giver of this *kosode* sends out a warning to any other man. The decoration on the silk transmits the message that the woman who wears this garment "belongs" to the man who commissioned its design. His power (in the case of a wealthy merchant, derived from his fortune, his holdings and doubtless the influence he maintains through the medium of his money lending activities) encompasses this woman and removes her from the spheres of other men who might (in the case of a courtesan) seek to "acquire" her themselves. The *kosode* is a decisive assertion of the unavailability of its wearer and the very real power of the man who "owns" her.

The question might arise as to what extent the decision affecting the decoration rested with the person commissioning the garment or was it rather the prerogative of the artist, in this case Hoitsu. We cannot be sure who had the major say in the final decision, but it is logical to assume that the person who pays has the final say. As he would have approached the artist in the first instance, I would argue that he did so with a definite idea in mind. In all likelihood the garment was made to give around New Year, so the choice of the plum is seasonably acceptable, but there were other symbols suited to that time of year that were not quite so blatantly masculine. Also, as it was traditional for a wealthy patron to gift his favoured courtesan with extravagant clothing for the beginning of a new year and it would be known who exactly had gifted the outfit (indeed, courtesans were only too willing to show off garments gifted by patrons – especially ones which illustrated the patron's wealth) then the suggestion made earlier as to it being a mark of ownership becomes all the more feasible.

However, although this display of textile wealth, as Saikaku had observed elsewhere in his writings, might be considered acceptable in the world of the courtesan, it was not acceptable in the eyes of the authorities in a different stratum of society and such ostentation as that displayed by the merchant Rokubei's wife was bound to fall

foul of the government. That the unfortunate Rokubei was not an isolated case can be seen from the confiscation, in 1705, of the entire fortune of the Yodoya family of Osaka, on a charge of presumptuousness. It has to be suggested however, that such wholesale confiscations might have had something to do with the fact that leading members of the government owed such families vast amounts and the confiscation of their wealth cancelled out such debts as well as filling the local exchequer.³²

The Adoption of Subversive Measures using Textiles.

Faced with such curbs on the material expression of their wealth and consistently debarred from exercising any governmental power in their country, the *chonin* adopted subversive measures in the area of their apparel with which to outwit the regime, which was so intent on keeping them in their "rightful" place in society. It may seem like a small victory, but when faced with such opinions as that of Nishikawa Joken (1648 – 1724) any victory was one to be savoured. Nishikawa Joken, writing twenty years after Saikaku, said in his practical guide for townsmen, called *Chonin bukuro* " The Townsman's Bag"

" Townsmen are at the bottom of the four classes . . . Being at the bottom, they should not exceed their superiors. They should not be envious that others have prestige and majesty. They should keep to simplicity and plainness and be content with their status. Thus they can achieve lifelong enjoyment in the same way that oxen enjoy being with other oxen." ³³

He was not the only writer adjuring people to know their place in Tokugawa society. Ishida Baigan (1685 – 1744) was of the opinion that the *chonin* should be

" . . . grateful for these established forms"

and should

" . . . observe them strictly." ³⁴

He finishes with the injunction that such a person should

"Know the lowliness of oneself. It is good to observe these distinctions." ³⁵

In the face of such reminders, the resentment of the townsmen went underground as it were. Having witnessed the moves against such displays as those of the merchant Rokubei and the Yodoya family, they moved from ostentation on the surface to extravagance beneath and lavished attention on those clothes beneath the outer layer. Although the authorities were not fooled and responded with such laws as the one issued in 1718, which focused on expensive undergarments, the *chonin* sidestepped neatly and began using finer materials for *kosode* linings than simply for undergarments, thus apparently adhering to the rules and regulations. The game is one of cat and mouse, with the mouse cleverly outwitting the plans set forth by the cat and taking, one would be safe to assume, considerable pleasure in so doing. A further subterfuge developed on the part of the *chonin* was to have the lining of his outer garment painted by a leading name in the artistic community, or inscribed by a leading calligrapher – calligraphy being equally, if not more, prized. By so doing, the wearer could have the secret pleasure of flouting the regulations in relative safety while, at the same time, underlining his ability to spend considerable amounts of his money decorating his person. He could move about his daily life safely, secure in the knowledge that he was one up on the authorities who sought to keep him subject and rigidly in the place they had designed for him. The lack of overtness kept him safe and he could enjoy the joke without fear of reprisals.

Several instances of this practice are illustrated in woodblock prints of that time. One such is by the artist Kubota Shunman, who lived from 1757 – 1820 and who was also a noted poet. In a small *surimono* which he executed sometime around 1800, Shunman shows a man (possibly a self portrait) sitting drinking sake with a courtesan (Plate 46). Inscribed on the left of the *surimono* are five *kyōka*, composed by some

of the best-known poets of the time, most of whom were leaders of poetry circles. ³⁶
Shunman's own poem, written under his poetry name, Shosado, reads

<i>Yoru no ume</i>	"I'm going to look
<i>Metē modorishi wo</i>	at the plum blossom tonight
<i>Nyobo ni</i>	he said to his wife
<i>Iiwake kuraki</i>	now it's hard to explain
<i>Sode no utsuri-ga</i>	the perfume on his sleeve."

It was published in 1811 in *kyōka gohyaku daijū* "A Great Selection of Five Hundred Kyōka" as poem number 35 in the volume "Spring". This poem does not appear with the others on the left, but is inscribed on the lining of the man's outer jacket, which hangs, lining outward, on a clothes stand at the back of the room depicted. Both talents of the artist are displayed here, as two plum tree branches, illustrative of the words of the poem, are painted on the lining also. Although the device is used in the print to link with the poem and to give Shunman a vehicle by means of which to exercise his abilities as both poet and artist, nevertheless the practice of decorating the interiors of robes is highlighted also. There are other levels of meaning to be discerned here too. Shunman uses both his artistic and his intellectual abilities in the supposed decoration of this robe. Artists were proscribed in terms of what they could and could not make artistic reference to by the censorship laws of the time and the authorities were swift to clamp down on those who appeared not to conform to the restrictions, as Utamarō discovered to his cost in 1804. By choosing to illustrate the imaginary lining using his artistic skills, I would argue that Shunman was suggesting that art will find a way of expressing itself, regardless of the restrictions placed upon it by governments and ruling bodies. Perhaps more prudently, Shunman prefers to

convey his meaning obliquely and thereby saves himself from the fate awaiting Utamaro some 4 years later.³⁷ But he also uses his intellectual skills, in the form of his poem, with which he decorates the lining and arguably for a similar reason. The government may succeed in keeping the *chonin* class down in terms of their participation in their society's governance and its fiscal decisions, but it cannot restrain the power of their thoughts and their ability to formulate ideas and hold opinions. By choosing the locale of the brothel, Shunman highlights the accepted opinion that brothels were the places where dissention was aired and political opinions expressed.

Further evidence of this practice is illustrated in a woodblock print occurring in the series *Seiro juni toki tsuzuki* "Twelve Hours in the Yoshiwara". This series of oban prints, consisting of twelve images illustrating the twelve hours in the pleasure quarter of Edo, beginning with the Hour of the Rat, at midnight, was produced around 1794. Published by Tsutaya Juzaburo, each print bears the kiwame seal and is signed "Utamaro hitsu".³⁸ The particular print which illustrates the practice of lining decoration is entitled *U no koku* or "Hour of the Hare" (6am). It shows a courtesan helping her patron on with his *haori*, the lining of which is clearly visible (Plate 47). On it can be seen a portrait of Bodhidharma, the Zen patriarch, also known as Daruma, with the signature of the Kano school artist, Suzuki Rinsho, plainly visible on the viewing right of the lining.

It is totally appropriate that Utamaro should record such a subversive trend on the part of the *chonin* and make such a blatant gesture of so doing, as he himself fell foul of the authorities for his flouting of the censorship regulations. Around 1804, Utamaro was imprisoned for offences contravening certain proscriptions in force at that time. It was forbidden for any artist to identify, by name or by crest, any man famous in the history of Japan, especially those of particularly honorable memory. In 1804, Utamaro had published a triptych, showing Hideyoshi, the national hero of the 16th century, in

the temple gardens at Daigo, east of Kyoto, accompanied by his wife and four concubines (Plates 48a, 48b & 48c). These people were identified by means of thinly veiled names and by their *mon*.³⁹ For this contravention, it appears that Utamaro was called into question by the authorities, but it seems to have cowed him to so little extent that, the following year, he produced a series of single sheet designs illustrating other scenes from the life of Hideyoshi and making very little attempt either to be anonymous as regards their subject or to be respectful of him. One of these single sheets showed Hideyoshi in the act of fondling one of his pageboys (Plate 49). That the inscription purported to depict " Mashiba Hisayoshi" left nobody in any doubt as to the real subject of the printed image. In taking the decision to produce this print and others like it, Utamaro was reacting from exactly the same motives as the wearers of prohibited garments. He was refusing, as were they, to have his liberties circumscribed by a governmental pronouncement and, arguably, was reserving his right to express himself as he saw fit. The difference in his case however, was that his defiance was of a more obvious and blatant kind, by a man of some commercial artistic reputation in Edo, whereas that of the garment flouting *chonin* was by an altogether more discreet and anonymous group of people. It shows though, that such members of urban Edo society as Utamaro, merchants and poets had moved beyond the implicit obedience expected of them and were asserting their own rights to decide how they would conduct themselves (in the case of the *chonin* in sartorial matters) albeit in a tentative and underground manner. The right to dress as they pleased and the subversive measures they adopted to make themselves feel they exercised some control over that right, I would suggest, can be seen as a step away from their acceptance of their lot as the "oxen" of their society, as Nishikawa Joken and others would have had them believe.

Messages about Edo and the Way its Society was Evolving.

If the images and writings of the period under consideration sent out messages, using the medium of textiles, to the viewers and readers of that time and conveyed meanings that members of Edo society would have assimilated to varying degrees, I believe that it is also the case that depictions and descriptions of those textiles send messages to us today, both philosophical and political, about the city of Edo at that time and the way in which that society was evolving and forming opinions on its everyday experiences. Actual items of clothing were used by the people of Edo to show each other how aware they were of altering values in their society, or, in the case of those who were oblivious to change, or resistant to it, their garment choice showed their fellow city dwellers and still shows us today, the extent to which they were becoming anachronisms in their own society. The examples of clothing which have survived into our time, as well as the printed and painted images of them from their own time, help us to understand how important a pointer textiles were to the philosophical and political attitudes of those living in the closing years of the Edo period.

One such attitude, the concepts and progress of which can be traced quite noticeably through the clothing of the time, was the idea of *iki*. This was a train of thought which informed much of the way in which many of Edo's inhabitants conducted themselves and their lives.

The attempt to define and explain *iki* was made by Kuki Shuzo, who was born in February 1888, in Tokyo.⁴⁰ The divergence in attitude and sensibilities between his parents, Hatsuko and Ryuichi, was the fundamental cause of their incompatibility and illustrated perfectly the gulf between the Confucian-influenced samurai personality and the more sensitive Shinto-inspired demi-monde outlook. Shuzo's early years were made aware of this friction and he gravitated more towards his mother, feeling hardly any affection whatever for Ryuichi. However, this pull between the two provided the basis for the very different aspects of his later personal life. He moved to Europe in

1921, remaining there for more than seven years, where his lifestyle was one of diligent, stoic research, interspersed with an epicurean delight in pleasure. Shuzo's first draft on the subject of *iki*, "The Essence of Iki", was written in Paris in 1926. This evolved into "The Structure of Iki", which was first published in 1930. In order to arrive at an understanding of what *iki* implies, it must first be put in its geographic and historical context. Kuki states that

"From a historical point of view, *iki* is a word for taste born from the life of pleasure of the townspeople of the Tokugawa period (1615 – 1868) and not in the family but in the pleasure quarters and licensed brothel districts. Even the wealthy merchants – who could afford to visit such places – first learned of *iki* and trained in its appreciation only after accumulating a lot of experience in the pleasure quarters. Thus, *iki* is premised on wealth, pleasure and experience. Put simply, *iki* is born in the non-profit-making life of the rich man who has become accustomed to enjoying himself . . . thus *iki* could only flourish in the mature culture of townspeople. The word *iki* was mainly used in Edo; in Kyoto and Osaka the word *Sui* was used instead. In any case, *iki* became a symbol of the town culture of the Edo period; people of the other social ranks, like court aristocrats, samurai, farmers and fishermen had almost no connection with it. *Iki* was the ethos of townspeople." ⁴¹

An inference exists that *iki* was originally connected with the samurai code of behaviour, which stressed the importance of pride and a disdaining of anything unworthy or trivial. Many of the courtesans of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, who were regarded as displaying the signs of an *iki* outlook, both in real life and in the literature and theatre of the time, often behaved in a way which showed they were in possession of an "hauteur" of equal degree to that of a samurai warrior.

Perhaps the most famous example of a courtesan in drama displaying *iki* behaviour was that of Agemaki, of the Miura house, who was the lover of the bold and dashing Edokku, Sukeroku. Pursued by the aged samurai Ikyu, she disdains a liaison with him

and asserts her preference for the attractive Sukeroku. Agemaki is looked down upon as a courtesan in the play by others, but her defiant demeanour is one of the most laudable aspects of the drama and made her liaison with Sukeroku widely approved of by the townspeople of the day. Kuki believed that The Way of the Warrior was evident in the ways in which courtesans conducted themselves in the Yoshiwara, with its disappointments and many experiences of suffering. The expression used to describe the behaviour of such women as Agemaki was

"A chic personality, showing passion and brave composure".⁴²

iki is composed of several aspects, all of which require to be part of the whole in order for the idea of *iki* to be appreciated. The first of these aspects, or features, is *bitai*, which can be explained as "coquetry" towards the different sex. Subsequent to this, an *iki* topic or an *iki* matter implies that this relationship is not ordinary – it does not draw to its obvious, sexual conclusion. Instead, the essence of the *iki* relationship is that it preserves

"... its possibility as possibility."⁴³

The writer Nagai Kafu realised this and Kuki quoted him as saying in his story "Kanraku" (Pleasure)

"There is nothing more pathetic than a woman one has had after the successful attempt to have her."⁴⁴

Another aspect of *iki* is "chic" which is more correctly a translation of *ikiji*, meaning "brave composure". This idea reflected the spirit of Edo itself, which disowned the conventional and lauded the Edokku belief in a plucky dismissal of the hoarding of money. One of the maxims of the pleasure quarter was that

"You should understand the courtesan is not bought with money but with brave composure."⁴⁵

Many stories are related of *iki* courtesans who refused the advances of wealthy men in favour of penniless suitors who, nevertheless, were possessed of romantic dash. An illustration of this was the Yoshiwara courtesan who spent the night with a poor samurai who had little money to spend in the pleasure quarter, in preference to a wealthy merchant who lavished money on all concerned. The following day, when she was enquired of, derisively, why she had accepted such an impoverished lover, she acquired great status within her community by replying that she had preferred him because he was willing to give everything he possessed. This was totally in keeping with the idea, prevalent in the Yoshiwara,

"When you let yourself go, you make your reputation." ⁴⁶

The expression "to let yourself go" is a pun on "falling in love" and textile imagery is used, both here and in the continuation of the idea of one's "brave composure" being that which brings one acclaim within the pleasure community.

"This is the deep intent of the god who ties together the prostitute's undersash." ⁴⁷

The first part of the quote "When you let yourself go . . ." referred to a textile-based incident in which, famously, a certain courtesan dropped her loincloth during a procession in the Yoshiwara. ⁴⁸ The latter part relies on the imagery of the joining of the undersash in marriage or sexual union, to show the togetherness of the partners involved. The whole quote, therefore, suggests that, just as intimate pieces of clothing may be "dropped" thus suggesting acceptance, or may be "joined" thus suggesting the sexual union which is about to be consummated, so an *iki* courtesan might elect to accept or join with a suitor whose financial status might not be great, but whose daring and panache might have caused the courtesan to accept him above his wealthier, but less chic, counterparts. Having made this decision, the courtesan who displays *iki* will not rescind this decision, but will be faithful, in her heart, to this lover alone. (Given , however, the commercial demands of the brothels in the

Yoshiwara, it is as well that the concept accepts faithfulness "in the heart" as faithfulness in practice too might have posed considerable problems.)

Yet another feature of *Iki* is *akirame* or "resignation". The idea behind this is that personal indifference has arisen from an acceptance of one's fate. The nature of life in the Yoshiwara was such that there was more than enough opportunity to adopt an attitude of indifference to the constant disappointments with which the women of the Yoshiwara and their frequenters were faced. Kuki refers, using textile imagery, to the transience of relationships in the pleasure world when he quoted from the *Kiyomoto* (the narrative music of kabuki) that such liaisons were, in effect, a

"... tie thinner than thread, easily torn and rent." ⁴⁹

In the face of such fleetingness, kuki observes that

"A heart forged by distress experienced when sincere devotion is cold-bloodedly betrayed many times will eventually learn not to believe in the objective of which it is so easily cheated." ⁵⁰

It follows that this kind of experience is such that it is built up over several years and so the concept of *Iki* is one which applies to older women rather than younger ones. This can be seen neatly illustrated by comparing two prints by Utamaro – an artist who both understood women in general and courtesans in particular and who was well acquainted with the ephemeral nature of the world in which the latter earned their living. The first of these prints, from the series *Hokkoku goshiki-zumi* (Five Shades of Ink in the Northern Quarter) is entitled *Kiri no musume* (Young Woman from a Low-Class Brothel). It was designed by Utamaro between 1794 – 5 and was published by Ise – mago. (Plate 50)

The title *Kiri no musume* is short for *Kiri-mise no musume*, which means that the prostitute illustrated belongs to a brothel which had set fees for fixed amounts of time. These *kiri-mise* or low-class brothels became part of the Yoshiwara infrastructure from

1789 and consisted of rows of small rooms, side by side. The rooms measured 1 ken (1.82 m) wide by 1.5 ken (2.73 m) deep. Of all the types of brothels represented in the Yoshiwara, the *kiri-mise* was the lowest class, so if any of the women working in the Yoshiwara were to be disillusioned, then one working in a *kiri-mise* would be the most likely candidate. However, Utamaro's print shows a young prostitute reading her "morning after" letter. A practice derived from the romantic dalliance of the Heian court, the morning-after letter was part of the protocol of a visit to the Yoshiwara. The client would put together, according to his talents in written communication, a letter praising the woman of the previous night and stressing his romantic commitment to her. Seldom was the communication sincere, but was rather a required move in a game where the rules were to be followed and observed. Indeed, an indication of how little such a missive was likely to be believed is to be found in a well-known saying of the pleasure quarter, which asserted that there were two things that could be relied upon to be insincere – one was a prostitute saying she loved you and the other was a morning-after letter.

However, the young girl in this print displays emotions which are certainly not *iki*. She clasps the letter to her heart in a fit of enthusiasm and touching credulity, which tells us that, as yet, she does not possess a " heart forged by distress . . . cold-bloodedly betrayed." As yet, she has not learned " not to believe". She is too young and inexperienced to be *iki*. If her image is compared to that of Yosooi of the Matsubaya, in a print from the series *Seiro rokkasen* (Selections from Six Houses in the Yoshiwara) published in 1801-2 by Omiya Gonkuro, the difference is at once apparent (Plate 51). Unlike the poor girl from the *kiri-mise*, Yosooi was a courtesan of the highest, *yobidashi*, rank. In her day, which ran from the late *Kansai* era into that of the *Kyowa*, she commanded the highest fee of all the courtesans of the Yoshiwara. ⁵¹ Having arrived at this elevated state, Yosooi would have made her way through the ranks of her brothel, the Matsubaya, and would have experienced disappointment and disillusionment along the way. She would also be older than the girl depicted in the

kiri-mise print. Yosooi has arrived at the point in her life where she has learned "not to believe" and this is illustrated well by Utamaro in the letter which she is shown writing to a client. It reads, "I felt sentimental, so I am writing to you . . .". She knows that, in order to maintain her high status, she must hold the interest of her wealthy patrons and how better to do this than to make them believe that she harbours tender feelings for them. To be the object of the apparently genuine feeling of the most celebrated courtesan of the day would be of irresistible allure to the wealthy men who patronised the elite establishments of the pleasure district and Yosooi realised this. Although she may still wistfully dream of romance and a happy life, like Hanaogi in Utamaro's *mitate* print "The Dream at Handan", she knows, as did Hanaogi, that this will not, in all probability, occur. Consequently, she has accepted her fate and exhibits *akirame*, the resigned indifference of *iki*.

To be considered *iki* was to be seen as chic and unconventional, urbane and experienced as opposed to being countrified and lacking in knowledge of the ways of the city. In order to put across this message, the *iki* individual displayed mannerisms, in both posture and gesture, both of which areas of exhibition relied to a considerable extent on clothing, its composition and disposition. In the area of posture, an *iki* pose or stance was one which placed insistence on the curve rather than the perpendicular. In order to accentuate this posture and thereby reinforce the message that one was *iki*, the individual would wear garments in a particular fashion, so that their drape would lend itself to the curved outline, which was so sought after. Initially, the clothing of courtesans, with its emphasis on fullness and voluptuousness, lent itself to the creation of the curved pose and this pose, both standing and seated, can be traced from the early Kaigetsudo prints of courtesans and the paintings which preceded them, through to their much later depictions by a variety of Ukiyo-e artists.

As early as the 1660's, the Kanbun beauty paintings, *Kanbun bijun-ga*, show courtesans standing in what evolved into a typical *iki* pose. By 1682, in the early *kosode* pattern books, Hishikawa Moronobu was producing images of standing women and boys for the purpose of displaying particular textile designs. In his *Kosode no sugatami* (*Kosode in a Full-Length Mirror*) published by Urokogata-ya at Odenmacho san-chome, Moronobu uses the double page spread to show close-up details of the various patterns on the left-hand page, while the right page shows both young men and women wearing the latest in fashion design (Plate 52).

From early on in the social history of Edo, we can see that textiles and how to wear them and combine their patterns and colours was a determining factor in having oneself thought of as being chic and up to date and it is via this pathway of textiles that we can see how the idea of chic (of being truly *iki*) altered as the period under consideration in this thesis progressed. A commercial publication of 18 years later, known as *Keisei ehon* or *Shogi gacho*, this " Illustrated Book of Courtesans" or "Picture Album of Courtesans" decorated by Kiyonobu 1 and published by Hangi-ya Shichirobei, combined both the idea of the elegant courtesan and the display of up to the minute textiles displayed in what came to be recognised as an *iki* pose – the standing " S" curve. In this publication, the most illustrious courtesans of the Yoshiwara of that time were showcased wearing elegant *kosode* and *furisode* (Plate 53).

Painted in vibrant colours, the women are identified by name and by their crests and the elegant stance is very much to the fore. By the time the Kaigetsudo artists were working, at the start of the 18th century, both the painted pictures of standing courtesans and the printed ones depicted them in a standing " S" curve, which was further accentuated by the plain backgrounds against which they were placed, as well as the beautiful drape of the garments they wore. The message was clear. To be regarded by your society as a woman with urbane style – as a woman who had left any connection with the country far behind and who adopted the manners and

outlook of Edo – you looked to the courtesans of your day who epitomised elegant dressing.

A painting by Kaigetsudo Ando, c. 1704 – 16, in ink, colour and gold on paper, shows a standing courtesan against a gold background, holding her skirts in her right hand and glancing back over her left shoulder (Plate 54). A seated version of the pose can be seen in Kaigetsudo Anchi's " Courtesan Seated on a Bench" from the same period (Plate 55) executed as a hanging scroll in ink and colour on paper. Both these painted works provide evidence of the use of the elegant courtesan as the model for women of their time. The bold black outlines accentuate the ideal curve, which extends from the edge of the seated courtesan's hair comb, through her head, following her hair over her shoulder, then down through her *kosode* to where her raised right knee changes the curve's direction. The standing " S" curve was ubiquitous throughout the Kaigetsudo oeuvre and became one of the expected features of such prints, echoing as they did the tastes of their time. Kaigetsudo Anchi's " Courtesan with a Cloth Wrapper", dating from the early to mid 1710's, shows a courtesan standing, looking to our viewing left, with the edge of a *fukusa* in her mouth (Plate 56). Both the standing " S" curve pose and the coquettish quality with which she holds the edge of the *fukusa* between her teeth, combine to assure that the entire image is redolent of what became known, slightly later, as *iki* attitude. By the time approximately another 80 years have elapsed, we can see that the *iki* ideal is beginning to alter, at this stage, slightly. A hanging scroll, painted in ink and slight colour on paper by Utamaro, c. 1794 (Plate 57) shows a courtesan in procession and is also inscribed by the author and artist Santo Kyoden.⁵² The courtesan herself is assumed to be Hanaogi IV, because of the fan pattern on her outer robe, which is teamed with the double cherry blossom pattern around the edges. Kyoden describes Hanaogi – whose childhood name was Okado – as

" . . . a rare and extraordinary woman indeed." ⁵³

she held the house name of the Ogiya from 1787 – 1797 and Kyoden uses textile reference to stress her pre-eminence in the pleasure quarters when he writes of her that

"She would do justice to the formal silk robes of a noble woman." ⁵⁴

So, once again we have the fashionable icon of the courtesan, held up visually as a message of elegance and modernity, while at the same time she is being written about in terms which suggest that her elegance has *élan* – a certain style born of nobility. But there is a subtle change evident here in the presentation of the chic – the *iki* - ensemble. This scroll painting is somewhat different from the more typical Ukiyo-e paintings in that it is executed in grey/black ink tones with details picked out in shell white.

It could be argued that this was simply an experiment in colour on the part of Utamaro and that it had no deeper significance whatever, but I would suggest that this was not the case. As a colour combination it was not peculiar to Utamaro – was not an "experiment in colour" by him – as it had been used as early as the 1770's by Koryusai. In addition to this, when the colouring (the *iki* significance of which will be discussed later) is added to the idea contained in the superimposed inscription, the end result is *iki* in the extreme and, I would argue, wholly intentional on the part of Utamaro. The inscription reads

Nebiki no ogon wa

Amaya no kikusui o

Hakari tsukidashi no

Sakazuki wa Sumida no morohaku o kumeri. ⁵⁵

The idea behind the inscription is that of celebrating her debut or her ransom in drink. An allusion is made to the fabled river in China, which was sweetened with

chrysanthemum dew and conferred immortality on those who drank from it. This is contrasted with the more tangible and mundane Sumida river, which ran through Edo and bespoke commerce and hard reality. The inference is that any possible ransom from her indenture to her brothel is of little likelihood for the courtesan Hanaogi. When this is linked with the information that, in the same year as this scroll is assumed to have been produced, 1794, Hanaogi ran away from the Yoshiwara but was forcibly returned and that she continued to work on thereafter for at least another 3 years, apparently accepting her lot with dignified resignation, the entire package of this scroll denotes a woman of considerable *iki* sensitivity. She displays *akirame*, but also, her standing pose, accentuated by the sweeping "S" curve of her head and shoulders leading into the exaggerated forward curve of her obi, which then tails off into the backward curving sweep of garments and the tonality of the overall garment image, using colours acceptable to the *iki* palette, all combine to create an unmistakable *iki* statement. This message would not have been lost on the scroll's viewers, who, as citizens of Edo, would have known Hanaogi's story and would have observed her *iki* resignation to her fate and who, as experienced and urbane receptors of this image would have appreciated the significance of the scroll's colouring.

The standing "S" curve was regarded as an *iki* posture, but so too was its seated equivalent. Utamaro, once again, illustrates this pose for us in a print from his series *Toji zensei nigao-zoroe* "Array of Supreme Portraits of the Present Day" published by Wakasay Yoichi in 1794. It shows the courtesan, Hanazuma, who was of *yobidashi* rank in the Hyogoya brothel in Sumi-cho. The print also carries the names of her two *kamuro*, Sakura and Nioi (Plate 58). Hanazuma is shown in the print, seated with her knees drawn up and pointing to our viewing right. Her torso is twisted slightly more to the front, while her head completes the twist by facing away to our viewing left. The implied twisting spiral of her body is very cleverly echoed by Utamaro in the letter, which she is twisting in front of her and the implication is that this is a love letter which

she is destroying. Although the print employs colour, the relatively sombre nature of her clothing takes this image into the area of *iki* representation. Her outer gown, which appears patterned as a result of the weaving of different tones of the same dark grey, conforms very much both to the *iki* palette and the *iki* concept of suggesting pattern subtly by using tones of closely related colour. Kuki states

"The relationship of pattern to colouring is formed either when the dyadic quality of pattern is expressed by colouring as well, through the contrast of two or three colours in different tones – or when different tones of a single colour, or a single colour in definite saturation, performs the role of providing a specific mood in relational opposition on the basis of pattern."⁵⁶

The use of geometric patterning in her *obi*, where the use of line is noticeable against the predominantly self-coloured outer garment, also complies with *iki* principles of garment design and co-ordination.

But why is Utamaro setting up both an *iki* pose and a set of *iki* textile design features? What message would this print have conveyed to the experienced and attuned frequenters of the pleasure areas?

It could be argued that Utamaro, himself a considerable *tsu* or sophisticated Edokku, was sending out Hanazuma's own message in this print. She is shown destroying the letter, which we can reasonably assume to be a love letter. There can be two possible reasons for her to be doing this. Firstly, she can be angry and the letter is being destroyed in a fit of pique. But if her carefully arranged garments and hairpins are observed, allied with the controlled, curving *iki* pose in which she is seated, no element of wild emotion is on display here. It would also be wrong to suppose that the prints and paintings of this period did not display wild emotion but preserved a bland composure at all costs. There are many examples of emotional displays, for a variety of reasons, to be found in the images of this time, so to assume that her composure arose from some type of visual social conditioning would be erroneous.

The second interpretation is far more likely, that in a composed and controlled fashion she rids herself of the letter because she is indifferent to it. With a

"... heart forged by distress"

she has eventually learned

"... not to believe." ⁵⁷

and consequently the letter can be destroyed without a qualm, because she is indifferent to its contents and, by association, to its sender.

The Use of Colour and Design.

The actual design and colouring of garments was employed to send out messages that the wearer could be considered *iki*, or, as will be examined, considered to be lacking in *iki* attitude. Vertical stripes were regarded as expressing *iki* sensibilities, while horizontal stripes were not, except in a few cases. When a horizontally striped material was used in an *obi* for example, this was considered acceptable, because the horizontal stripes set up a contrast to the vertical stripes of the main garment. A horizontally striped garment might be considered *iki* if it were worn by a particularly slender girl. This is because her form is sufficiently *iki* in shape to allow the horizontal to contrast with it. Numerous examples of lines which are, or are not, *iki* exist, but in essence, complicated designs based on the use of line are not considered *iki*, nor are designs taken from the natural world. Despite the recognition of the standing or seated curve as an *iki* pose, curves within textile patterns are not regarded as exhibiting *iki* tendencies. As Kuki says

"... *iki* has a rigorous character which is inexpressible in a curve." ⁵⁸

As yet, I have not found any indication as to why the curve should be acceptable as a pose, but not as a design feature. In design, especially in the area of textile design, the *iki* accent derives from what Kuki describes as "cool disinterest" which he feels is

not expressed in ovals or curves. Why therefore the accepted curved pose should lend itself to displaying the detached "chicness" of its owner is not clear.

Not only is design indicative of an *iki* accent, but so is colouring and the *iki* palette is quite distinct. It operates, basically, on three colour systems – the grey, the brown and the azure. Within these systems are many shadings, but to move beyond these three systems, into the red system and its associated warm colours, is to move away from being *iki*. So, in terms of textiles, those garments which are dyed using colours from the grey, brown or azure systems and which make use of vertical, linear patterning, or apparently simple designs which derive from it and which eschew warm, bright colours with circular or curving patterns, or those derived from the natural world, speak of the chic and urbane sensibility of their wearers.

The Arbiters of Urban Chic and Changing Trends.

To be regarded as chic and wise in the ways of the city and its life was a quality that the Edokku prized highly. Their pride in their city and themselves as its citizens was considerable, resulting from the belief that they and their city were the way forward for their country. This attitude can be felt even today in the outlook of those who live in Tokyo. It was therefore important that the Edokku presented himself or herself as much up to the minute as possible and one way to achieve this was through fashion. If the garments worn spoke of the latest trends and were worn in the latest manner then the message sent out by that wearer was that he, or she, was a true urbanite. For many years, during and before the Edo period, the arbiters of chic had been the courtesan and the actor. However, while the image of the actor, when not in stage costume, continued to express the most fashionable trends, a change was under way, which can be traced in the messages sent out by the apparel worn by the courtesans of that time. While the *iki* ideal of *akirame* might still be found among the women of the high class brothels of the later Edo period, the associated ideals of

coquetry and chic dressing were shifting from the indentured princesses of Edo to the geisha of the city.

Geisha were not an invention of the later Edo period, but had always been a feature of the Yoshiwara and its sister areas in Kyoto, Osaka and Nagasaki. They were "arts people" – men and women who entertained musically or performed dances for an assembled company. They could also be employed as instructors in the arts of singing, dancing and playing musical instruments to the courtesans of the brothel areas and several prints exist which show them en route to engagements or instruction sessions, or in the act of instructing their courtesan pupils. Unlike their students, geisha were not required to remain within the Yoshiwara, but lived elsewhere in the city, travelling to and from their engagements. Also unlike their pupils, commercial sex was not their sole *raison d'être* and the two, courtesans and geisha should not be confused.

The Shift in Social Attitudes.

As the 18th century progressed, the social attitudes of the cities, particularly of Edo, began to change. Based on commerce instead of militarism, the city and its people began to have different perspectives from those of their predecessors. New values began to emerge and, increasingly, the courtesan began to be associated with the older days and ways. Linked with the rise of the urban middle class, tastes changed and began to veer away from the rituals and trappings of the court, mimicked to a great extent by the *yobidashi* and her sisters in the Yoshiwara. Their clothing, with its sumptuous use of heavily patterned textiles, dyed in glorious colours, their profusion of hair combs, their elaborate processions within the quarter, their curious figure-of-eight walk assisted by *kamuro* and attendants, even their idiosyncratic way of speaking and pronouncing their words, gradually came to be seen as outdated and as belonging to a time with different standards and expectations. The figure of the female geisha – and by this time most geisha were women – came to be seen as the

flag bearer of the new attitudes and fashions and it was to her, rather than to the courtesans of the time, that the townswomen of Edo turned when looking for a role model in the area of chic appearance and sophistication.

Woodblock prints illustrating the courtesans of the early 19th century onwards, principally those by Kikugawa Eizan (1787 – 1867) and Keisei Eisen (1790 – 1848) help us to understand, via the messages transmitted by the textiles worn, just how far from being the epitome of fashionable dressing these women were becoming in the eyes of the *iki* conscious public. The message begins to appear around 1800 and is neatly illustrated for us in two prints by Utamaro, from the same series, *Tosei bijin sanyo* " Three Amusements of Contemporary Beauties". This series was published around 1800 by Murataya Jirobei and the prints are *naga-oban* size. ⁵⁹ One of these two prints, which forms part of the Havemeyer Collection in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, shows a town geisha, *machi geisha*, from the Yanagibashi district, being lit on her way to an evening engagement by a woman from the teahouse in which the party is to be held (Plate 59). The geisha's textiles conform to the *iki* three colour systems, even allowing for fading and discoloration. The subdued use of patterning is noticeable and, judging by the drape of her head covering, her use of hair combs is understated. If this image is compared with another from the same series, entitled *Hokkoku* or " Northern Quarter" (i.e. the Yoshiwara) we can see just to what extent the messages are changing between the previous arbiter of style, the courtesan, and the emerging icon, the geisha (Plate 60). Again, allowing for fading and discoloration, the colour palette in this instance is not *iki*, in that it is based on warm red tones and associated colours. The use of patterning drawn from the natural world can be seen in the cherry blossoms, which decorate her lower textile edges and her hair combs are beginning to show the 19th century predilection for excess. Even her stance, holding her skirts with her right hand, tells us that this woman has not assimilated the ideals behind *iki* attitude. The left hand, not the right, should be employed to gather together the textiles worn if a woman wished to enhance her

overall suggestion of *iki* demeanour. It is surely no accident that the geisha of the previous print holds her umbrella in her right hand, while gathering her sleeve textiles together with her left and holding them to her face. It was merely one component of a recipe for being considered *iki* and from that and the other indicators in these two prints, we receive the message that the geisha is aware of *iki* dictates, while the courtesan is either unaware or disregarding.

By the time we arrive at the images of Eizan and Eisen, approximately 15 – 20 years later for Eizan and 20 plus years for Eisen, the extent to which the courtesan has ceased to send out fashionable messages is all too obvious. In the print by Eizan which shows the courtesan Azuma from the Tamaya with her *kamuro* Tsuman and Tsumai, produced between 1815 and 1818, the implication is quite clear (Plate 61). The colour systems are those of the warm hues, the designs are insistently naturalistic, ranging from dragons, through chrysanthemums, to pretty little *chidori*. Even where stylised design is employed, it makes use of curves and key patterns. The seated " S" curve is beginning to be lost in the volume of textiles worn and the hair combs are profuse. Another 10 years further on and the images of Eisen's courtesans reinforce the message that these women have been left behind, well and truly, in the fashion stakes, where social approbation now depends on the number and intensity of *iki* signals transmitted. Even the depicted stature of these women is about as far away from the *iki* ideal of willowy height as it is possible to get. Eisen's women are dumpy, with little fat feet - where the feet can be seen at all underneath the billowing layers of drapery which make their wearers look like over-dressed puppets. The majority of the seated images are considerably far from the " S" curve of *iki* seated posture. Instead, these women have heads placed on top of what resembles nothing more than a plumped up pillow of clothing. The *iki* ideal of wearing the back edge of the garment away from the nape of the neck is lost completely in the multiple layers of neck edges worn. Where a standing " S" curve is shown, because of the foreshortened bodies and the voluminous clothing, the pose resembles more a

hunched crouch than an elegant stance. This can be seen excellently well in an image of Hanaogi of the Ogiya, by Eisen, published by Moritaya, c. 1826 (Plate 62). Also illustrated in this print are the totally non-*iki* design features of tigers, dragons and feathered birds.

If this image is compared with two others from the same year, one by Utagawa Kuniyasu and one by Utagawa Kunisada, the message is driven home. In the oban-sized print by Kuniyasu, he depicts a geisha holding a bowl of water (Plate 63). The stance is far more willowy and elegant, even although the design feature of the dumpy feet still exists. The colour system which predominates is azure, even extending to the blue and white patterned bowl she is holding. The only visible red belongs to her undergarment, which is very much understated in the overall design. Although her outer garment's design is that of a stylised flower head, the use of the blue background produces a strong linear effect. Taking into consideration the fact that her hair is simply dressed as befits her ablutions, nevertheless the overall effect is of discreet artlessness. Kunisada's *surimono*, which also belongs to 1826, shows a townswoman – a wealthy merchant wife perhaps – standing in front of a *tagasode* screen, which uses the azure and brown systems in its decoration (Plate 64). She is wiping her hands on some tissues. This woman's image is a good example of the degree of the message transmission that was being experienced at this point. This fashion-conscious townswoman of 1825-26 had assimilated some *iki* ideals, but not all of them. Her hair combs show restraint, her outer gown conforms to both the design influences of the *iki* ideal and its colour palette. The stripes are vertical and the azure/grey systems are employed. The pose may be more upright than "S" curve, the figure may be foreshortened rather than on the willowy side and the adherence to the red system is obvious, but the backward glance over the left shoulder is typically *iki*. In short, the message conveyed is one of transition. This woman is almost chic, but still displays some of the, by now old-fashioned, principles.

The Use of Textiles in Transmitting Political Messages.

If messages are transmitted by textiles, which inform us of the social attitudes of the wearers of those textiles, especially with regard to ideas of behaviour and fashion, then so too are political messages transmitted by the design or disposition of clothing in the popular images of the 19th century. Nowhere is this seen as forcibly as in the work of Taiso Yoshitoshi.

Born in 1839, at the tail end of the Edo period, into a merchant family, which had recently bought itself samurai status, Yoshitoshi found himself, for most of his adult life, at the interface of two historical and political time periods. His first 29 years saw the closing decades of the traditional Japan, which meant so much to him and the opening decades of the Meiji era, which plunged his country headlong into a policy of westernisation. The title *Meiji* for the period, which began officially in 1868, meant

"Enlightened Rule"

but for Yoshitoshi there seemed to be very little enlightenment under the new regime. The closing years of the Edo period, from around 1860 onwards, saw great upheaval and social unrest throughout Japan. Inflation crippled those who lived in the cities and crop failure rocked the traditional way of life in the countryside. A severe rice shortage was experienced during the winter of 1866 and several cities saw rioting in protest. The established order, in which Yoshitoshi's father, Owariya Kinzaburo, had bought himself samurai status, was already reeling from the inroads made by western influences. The added strain of natural disasters and the increasing friction between the forces of the ever-weakening Shogun and those who sought to re-establish imperial rule, all combined to produce a climate of tension and civil unrest.

Yoshitoshi, who was fiercely patriotic, saw the Japan of old, the Japan of warriors and legend, gradually being eroded by dissention and foreign ideas and, like many others of that time, lamented the passing of the old ways and the (often enforced)

imposition of the new ones.⁶⁰ In May of 1868, Yoshitoshi and his student Toshikage, witnessed, first-hand, the horror of the massacre of the Battle of Ueno, in which the Shogunate forces were crushed by the Imperialist troops. The sights he saw on the battlefield seemed to establish, once and for all in Yoshitoshi's mind, that the old order, to which he was so committed, had been swept away. However, he found such political finality very difficult to accept and in many of his images thereafter we can see his transmission of this message of non-acceptance. What is interesting to this discussion is his use of textiles and its associated symbolism to assist him in making us understand the meaning being put across both to his original viewers and to us today.

One of his earliest works which supply us with textile evidence to suggest the slow strangulation of Japan by forces from within as well as from abroad, appeared in a series entitled *Azuma no nishiki ukiyo kodan* "Tales of the Floating World on Eastern Brocade", published in 1867 – 68. The 27 images, which have come down to us illustrate popular stories – *kodan* – filled with drama and violence. Print 25 shows Lady Masao from Osasahara, lying on the ground, supported on one elbow, being overwhelmed by a mass of writhing snakes (Plate 65). Although she is attempting to defend herself, it is obvious that her struggle is in vain and that, in a relatively short space of time, she will succumb. Her beautifully and ornately decorated outer garment is bunched up and crushed around the top half of her body, its patterning slowly being submerged in an onslaught of snakes. Her plain undergarments are exposed from approximately her waist down, where, around her right ankle, their folds are drawn together and constricted tightly – this constriction being highlighted by the tight coils of one particular snake. The resultant impression is that she is bound securely – a prisoner of some considerable force. Around her at least seven snakes rear their heads in a manner, which is both aggressive and triumphant. However, the aspect of clothing disposition which is the most distressing and unpleasantly symbolic, on several levels, is the fact that her undergown, although tightly bound to her right

ankle, has fallen away from between her legs and barely covers her left thigh and knee. The frailty and vulnerability of her flesh, in this most intimate of areas, is accentuated by the barely protective textile and the questing heads of several snakes, all intent on probing her exposed weakness.

The image of the beautiful and traditionally dressed woman, who finds herself the object of attack, is one, which is noticeable in the work of Yoshitoshi. Undoubtedly, his own questionable attitude towards women played a part in his adoption of this particular symbolism, there being considerable evidence of sexual sadism in his prints, but, arguably, the message in several of them was political. The traditionally dressed woman is Japan herself. Her textiles are the *nishiki* silks for which Japan was famous and her ornate hairstyles and ornaments are reminders of her culture and love of beauty. In the print of Lady Masao, she is beset on all sides by aggressive and deadly creatures who have brought her down, overwhelmed her and who will eventually cause her destruction. Her traditions will not save her, any more than the flimsy silk of her undergarments can protect her vulnerable areas and the beauty of her *nishiki* will be disregarded and crushed. Yoshitoshi's message is that she represents a way of life which is slowly being obliterated and whose passing he and others, such as his friends the two actors Ichikawa Danjuro IX (1839 - 1903) and Onoe Kikugoro V (1844 - 1903) so lamented.

A far more explicit piece of evidence to support this idea was published in 1886, part of a series produced between 1885 and 1889. The series is entitled *Shinsen azuma nishiki-e* " New Selection of Eastern Brocade Pictures" and it was published by Tsunashima Kamekichi. The particular illustration is an *oban*-sized diptych, entitled *Daininbo Umegae o satsugai no zu* " The Priest Dainin killing the Girl Umegae" (Plate 66). The entire series is based on episodes from *kabuki* plays, but the actual play behind this particular illustration is unknown. The diptych shows two characters, the priest Dainin, who straddles the prostrate body of Umegae, his left hand on her throat,

his right about to plunge in a knife. She struggles, again in vain, against her assailant, her left hand clutching his left forearm and her right helplessly stretched out in front of her. Only seconds from the image captured here, we are meant to assume that Dainin will follow through with his knife thrust and Umegae will be murdered.

The political message of this diptych is considerable and the use of textiles, once again, plays an important part. Here, once more, we have the figure of a beautiful woman, traditionally dressed in a set of highly decorative garments. Her outer gown is festooned with stylised flower heads in red, yellow and green against a lilac/faded purple background. Also present are traditional plum blossoms. These appear again on another textile layer, this time in white against a solid red background, while the main body of her kimono appears to consist of yellow flower outlines against a strong green ground. Her basic under garment is deep red. Her textiles billow out around her, one sleeve on the ground above and to the right of her head, but they are of no protective value to her at all. It appears to have been all too easy for Dainin to get a grip on her throat.

By way of contrast, the priest is dressed in a solidly black outer garment with a hint of a greyish-blue lining. His sword arm and shoulder are bared in the manner of a warrior, the better to permit ease of attack. If, however, his physical attributes are considered, he appears curiously not quite Japanese. His body is covered in thick black hair, far more in the manner of the Westerner than in keeping with Japanese physiognomy and his facial features are strangely hybrid, again hinting more in the direction of the foreigner. When his garments are considered again, in the light of the preceding observations, his outer gown begins to suggest more the 19th century, black top coat than traditional Japanese male/priestly attire.

When these two, fashioned textile suggestions, her *nishiki* gown and his composite Western/Japanese outfit are juxtaposed, the political meaning is, arguably, strikingly clear. Both the incoming foreigners and those within Japan who favour them and

support a move towards westernisation have Japan in a stranglehold. They are insistently crushing the life out of her, prior to delivering the final coup de grace. She, her hair tumbling down, her combs in the dirt, her brocades crushed and trampled, is powerless to fend off the attack. She has no weapon and her beautiful traditions cannot and will not save her. The added symbolism of the bamboo, which suggests male dominance and the willow, which represents female submission and obedience, completes the idea of traditional Japan being overwhelmed by external forces. One final textile detail, which is there to be noticed, is that there is a piece of cloth stuffed in her mouth. Not only is traditional Japan finished, but the protests of those, like Yoshitoshi, who would be heard, are silenced or ignored.

Another print from the same series, which presents a slightly different political message, is entitled *Kishin Omatsu Shirosaburo o korosu zu* "The Demon Omatsu killing Shirosaburo" (Plate 67). This diptych shows Shirosaburo fording a river, with Omatsu partly on his back, her left hand clutching the back of his collar, her right holding a knife which she is about to plunge into the back of his neck. The river flows swiftly over Shirosaburo's shins and two waterfowl can be seen flying away in alarm on the left hand page. There are several stories which concern Omatsu and their information about her can be contradictory.⁶¹ However, once again, the image could be regarded as a political allegory, only this time with very different messages being transmitted.

Shirosaburo is recognisably Japanese this time. He wears a traditional top knot and carries the two swords of the warrior. His textiles are traditional in both design and style. Although subdued in colour, a definite pattern of a small design between parallel lines can be distinguished in the weave. His lighter-coloured leggings have a small dot design. So, there is nothing this time of the foreigner about the male character. Once again, the female figure, Omatsu, is dressed very traditionally. Her gloriously decorated *nishiki* kimono is coloured red, blue, purple and green, with large

snowflake designs and smaller leaves. Her red and white obi is lavishly covered in leaves and curving spirals, almost like dragon coils. Her undergown is red. One sleeve hangs down over ShiroSaburo's left upper arm, while her other billows out from her knife-clutching arm, over his head. In this image, unlike the previous one, the *nishiki* garments overwhelm and dominate the more sombre textiles of the samurai figure. What message can be taken here? It could be argued that Yoshitoshi was directing his political comment, in this instance, to those among Japan's warrior elite, who peopled the government of the time and many of whom were intent on carrying traditional Japan off in a completely different direction politically. The traditional and beautiful woman, who has been carried, struggling, along with these innovators, may have been powerless to prevent herself being led in this direction initially, but she still poses a threat. She will not be carried across the river without a struggle and Yoshitoshi, arguably, is suggesting here that her struggle may prove to be very effective. However, this is not a message of hope. The artist's ultimate message is that the end result of this death struggle, between the pro-western Japanese and the traditionalists will be that both of them will be swept away and that Japan will have annihilated herself.

Two images which make use of the male image rather than the female, but which still rely on textiles to relay a political message, were produced in 1882 and 1883. They both depict Fujiwara Yasumasa playing the flute – the earlier executed in ink and colours on silk (Plate 68) the later a printed triptych (Plate 69). The original painting, from which the print derives, was submitted by Yoshitoshi to the *Naikoku kaiga kyoshinkai* an exhibition of traditional art, which the American, Ernest Fenellosa (1853 – 1908) had advised the government to organise in 1882. ⁶² Fenellosa, a champion of Japanese traditional art, had come to teach in Tokyo Imperial University in 1879 and in May of 1882, he published a lecture under the title *Bijutsu shinsetsu* " A True Opinion on Fine Art", which led directly into the organisation of this exhibition, from which Western art was excluded entirely. ⁶³

Fujiwara Yasumasa was a noble at the Heian court, who died in 1036 and who was noted as a poet and flute player of great skill. The story goes that, one night, when playing his flute alone on Ichihara Moor, he was waylaid by a bandit named Hakamadare Yasusuke, who was intent on murdering him. However, the would-be murderer was so enchanted by the power and beauty of Yasumasa's playing, that he gave up all ideas of killing him.

In both the painting and the print, Yasumasa stands centrally, with the crouching figure of the murderer to his left – our viewing right – in the print and behind him slightly to our viewing right in the painting. What is arresting, visually, in both of these versions, although perhaps slightly more so in the triptych, is the glorious colour and windswept quality of Yasumasa's clothes. In both versions, he wears blue/green, full leggings and a black court hat, but the eye is caught most surely by the magnificence of his upper garment, which, in both versions, blows quite violently to his right and our viewing left. The wonderful yellow of the printed version is highlighted by the dark, grey background of the night sky on the moor and it links well, visually, with the colour of the full moon on the left printed sheet. In the silk painting, because the background is yellow itself, the gown fades to a dullish mustard in contrast. However, in both versions, the elaboration of woven patterning and threaded silk ribbons is obvious. In both versions also, although once again more noticeably in the triptych, the figure of Yasumasa is resoundingly central to the overall image. The force of the wind, which blows from our viewing right to left, is stressed in the curve of the moor grasses and the disposition of Yasumasa's garments. His pose is resolutely upright, in marked contrast to the more soberly dressed Yasusuke, who crouches to approximately half the height of the central figure.

From the story concerning these two characters, we are told that Yasusuke's villainous intentions were thwarted because he was so overcome by the beauty of Yasumasa's playing. Once again, the political message is clear. Those with evil intent, who would

rob Japan of her traditions and glory – and what a glory Yoshitoshi makes it out to be, clad in the finest silk, woven in sumptuous colour and design, creating music unrivalled in time – they will be vanquished, forced into crouching submission in the face of a culture they cannot help but revere. When the fact that the original painting was created for a special exhibition which celebrated Japan's traditional art is taken into consideration, it is quite possible that Yoshitoshi's political message was one of unwavering belief in the strength of his own culture and a defiant assertion that no matter how strongly the winds of change might try to blow against it, like Yasumasa's *nishiki* silk, it might be ruffled, but, in essence, it will remain rooted and triumphant.

It could be argued that this was simply a design feature by Yoshitoshi, aimed at a traditional arts exhibition and therefore calculated to impress on a traditional basis and that there was no wider political message to be had from it. That this was, arguably, not the case can be deduced from the fact that when the image became more available to the public, in printed form, a year later, it received much critical acclaim.⁶⁴ Two months after its publication, its popularity was such that Yoshitoshi's actor friend, Ichikawa Danjuro IX inserted the scene into the kabuki play *Kokoru no koma ikenno hitofushi*. Along with the actor Onoe Kikugoro V, who was also a friend of the artist, Ichikawa Danjuro IX was a well-known traditionalist. It is logical to assume therefore, that Danjuro's adoption of the scene, linked with his recognition of its public acceptance, denoted a realisation that it projected a popular traditionalist message and as such would lend topical drawing power to his play. The theatre tried to mirror the times with messages that would be understood by audiences, regardless of the guises in which those messages were couched. By using Yoshitoshi's print, which hinged on the gloriously clad image of Fujiwara Yasumasa, the theatre acknowledged that this print too was a mirror of the times politically. Danjuro showed that the message was clear to him and was one he adopted in order to transmit it to an even wider audience, through the medium of *kabuki*. The colour of the silk – a

wonderful shining yellow – in stark contrast to the gathering clouds of night, shines out as a statement that what Japan, in Yoshitoshi's mind and in Danjuro's, had always stood for, would never be destroyed, robbed nor obliterated.

Notes on Chapter Three

- ¹ Philip Rawson. *Erotic Art of the East. The Sexual Theme in Oriental Painting and Sculpture*. Prometheus Press. New York. 1968. P. 281.
- ² As above.
- ³ "Miru : kodai teki chikaku" *Bungaku* 43. No. 4 April 1975. pp. 479 – 489.
- ⁴ Shinohara Yoshihiko. "Genji monogatari ni itaru nozokimi no keifu." *Bungaku gogaku* 68. August 1973. pp. 56-67.
- ⁵ Norma Field. *The Splendour of Longing in the Tale of Genji*. Princeton University Press. 1987. Chapter 4. pp. 251-257 & 269-276. As the psychoanalysis of viewing and looking is a wide area, the work done by such writers as Field, Shinohara, De Lauretis in film theory and Edith Sarra all provide in depth considerations of the identification of the female as both the seer and the surveyed, and the complex situation to be seen in that of the male voyeur. Sarra draws attention to De Lauretis who puts forward the suggestion that men may also identify the self with respect to desire and the wish to be the one who is desired and considers the concepts of passivity and activity.
- ⁶ Museum reference number RP – P – 1997 – 12b.
- ⁷ Museum reference number RP – P – 1991 – 704 & 704A.
- ⁸ Ihara Saikaku. "The Life of an Amorous Woman and Other Writings". Trans. & Ed. Ivan Morris. *Unesco Collection of Representative Literary Works*. New York. 1963. Preface p. xii.
- ⁹ Ibid. P. 77.
- ¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 78 – 79.
- ¹¹ Ibid. p. 80.
- ¹² Ibid. p. 81.
- ¹³ Ibid. p. 80.
- ¹⁴ Ibid p.306 Note 107.
- ¹⁵ Ibid. pp. 307 & 308. Note 109.
- ¹⁶ Ibid pp. 307 & 308. Note 109.
- ¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 79 & 80.
- ¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 80.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. Note 420.
- ²⁰ Ibid. p. 162.
- ²¹ Ibid. p. 161.
- ²² Ibid. Introduction. P. 28.
- ²³ Noma Koshin. Ed. "Saikaku shu Nihon koten bungaku taikei 48" (1960) 2.46 – 47. Trans. G W Sargent. *The Japanese Family Storehouse*. University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 3. Cambridge 1959.
- ²⁴ Shively Donald H. "Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. No. 25 (1964-65) p. 125.
- ²⁵ Dazai Shundai. (1680 – 1747) "Keizairoku" (1729) kan 9 *Nihon keizai taiten* (1928 – 30) 9.647.
- ²⁶ Yosoburo Takekoshi. *The Economic Aspects of the History of the Civilisation of Japan*. London. 1930. ii.209 – 210.
- ²⁷ Eijiri Honjo. *The Social and Economic History of Japan*. Kyoto. 1935. pp. 262 – 263.
- ²⁸ Saikaku Ihara. *Koshoku ichidai otoko* "The Life of an Amorous Man". 1682.
- ²⁹ Ogata Korin was born in Kyoto in 1658, the second son of Ogata Soken. His father owned the Kariganeya drapery firm in Kyoto. He was awarded the *Hokkyo* rank in 1701 and went to live in Edo from 1704 – 09, relying for help there on his influential patron Nakamura Kuranosuke, who had been posted there on official service. He returned to Kyoto in the third month of 1709, where among other outlets for his art he assisted his younger brother Kenzan by painting designs on ceramic pieces at the

Narutaki kiln. He died in 1716. Sakai Hoitsu was born in 1761, in Edo, the younger brother of Sakai Tadazane, Lord of Himeji. His formal name was Tadanao and his common name Eihachi. Hoitsu was his art name. In 1797, at the age of 37, using the excuse of ill health, he became a pupil of Bunnyo Shonin at Nishi Hongan-ji Temple in Kyoto and was awarded the rank *Gondai Sozu*. Shortly thereafter, he retired to the Asakusa district of Edo, then to Negishi in the Shitaya district, where he painted, practised calligraphy and composed *haikai*. In painting he was most impressed by the style of Ogata Korin. He collected together and exhibited paintings by Korin and published several volumes of his work. *Korin hyakuzu*, *Ogata-ryu ryaku impu*, *Kenzan iboku*, *Korin hyakuzu: kohen*. He died in 1828. Matsumura Goshun was born in 1752. He established a school on Shijou Street in Kyoto, which later became known as Shijouha. Goshun began as a Nanga artist under Yosa Buson. When Buson died Goshun turned to Maruyama Oukyo for inspiration. The Shijou School is similar to the Maruyama School in subject matter and technique but the Shijou School retained its freer, softer brushwork. One of Goshun's students, Okamoto Toyohiko, was the master of Shibata Zeshin. Goshun died in 1811. Gion Nankai was born in Edo in 1676 and studied Confucianism with the famous scholar Kinoshita Jun'an, becoming especially noted for his writing of poetry and prose. In 1697 he succeeded to the family headship receiving an annual stipend. In 1700 this was confiscated and he was exiled to Kii Province. In 1710 he was pardoned and in 1711 had a new stipend issued to him. He began to paint around this time. His work reflects the various styles of those painters he studied at different times. He is regarded as having great influence on the development of the Nanga School. He died in 1751.

³⁰ Yamane Naito & Clark. *Rimpa Art from the Idemitsu Collection Tokyo*. British Museum Press. 1998. Chapter 1. P. 30.

³¹ Hokkyo rank was the 3rd rank of honorary titles for Buddhist monks, but it could also be granted to artists.

³² Shively Donald H. "Sumptuary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*. No. 25 (1964 - 65) pp. 133 - 134.

³³ Ibid. p. 157.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 158.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 158.

³⁶ Japanese poetry comprises several forms of which *kyōka* is one. *Kyōka* are humorous poems which are composed of 31 syllables. They are the form of poem inscribed on *surimono*, or luxury prints, which were very often designed for *kyōka* clubs. Other forms of poems were *waka* or *tanka* which were also composed of 31 syllables. These syllables had to be arranged in lines of 5 - 7 - 5 - 7 - 7 syllables respectively. *Haikai* were poems of 17 syllables. An older form was the *naga uta* or "long poem" although by our standards they were not particularly long.

³⁷ In 1803-4, Utamaro designed a group of *oban* prints for the publisher Moriya Jihei based on *Ehon Taiko-ki* "Picture Book: Annals of the Regent". One of these showed "Mashiba Hisayoshi" a theatrical convention referring to Hideyoshi himself. As it was forbidden to make pictorial representations of important figures, Utamaro was arrested and sentenced to be handcuffed on the 16th day of the fifth month, 1804.

³⁸ A *kiwame* seal was a censorship seal used on prints from about 1790 - 1842.

³⁹ Hillier J. *Utamaro. Colour Prints and Paintings*. Phaidon Press. 1961. Chapter 20. p. 149.

⁴⁰ Kuki Shuzo was the fourth child of Kuki Ryuichi, who was Minister at the Japanese Legation in America when Shuzo was born and who, eventually, was awarded a baronage for services to the government. Ryuichi was acquainted with the philosopher and art critic, Ernest Fenellosa and his student Okakura Tenshin. Shuzo's mother, Hatsuko, is believed to have come from the demi-monde of the pleasure quarters and was regarded as a great beauty. However, the marriage of Shuzo's parents proved to be unhappy and his mother turned to Fenellosa's student, Okakura Tenshin, which caused an irreparable rift in her relations with her husband. (See "Reflections on Japanese Taste. The Structure of Iki". Trans. John Clark. Ed. Sakuko Matsui & John Clark. Power Publications, Sydney. 1997. Introduction.)

⁴¹ Ibid. Introduction. Pp. 11 & 12.

⁴² Saito Ryuzo. "Kinsei nihon sesoshi". Tokyo. 1925. p. 735.

⁴³ Kuki Shuzo. "Reflections on Japanese Taste. The Structure of Iki". Trans. John Clark. Ed. Sakuko Matsui & John Clark. Power Publications. Sydney. 1997. Chapter 1. p. 39.

⁴⁴ Ibid. Chapter 1. p. 38.

⁴⁵ Ibid. Chapter 1. p. 41.

⁴⁶ Ibid. Chapter 1. p. 41.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Chapter 1. p. 41.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Chapter 1. p. 41. Note 20.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Chapter 1. p. 42. Note 25.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Chapter 1. p. 42.

⁵¹ The method of dating from the earliest times to the present day is known as *nengo*. During the Tokugawa period there were 36 *nengo*, some lasting only a few years, others extending over several decades. The more illustrious *nengo* - *Kan-ei*, *Genroku*, *Kansei*, and *Tempo* have come to represent the characteristics of their times. The *nengo* spanned by Yosooi, *Kansei* and *Kyowa*, lasted from 1789 - 1801 and 1801 - 1804 respectively although, as stated, she only held her elevated rank from late *Kansei* into *Kyowa*.

⁵² These two symbols are recorded for us as belonging to Hanaogi 1V by Santo Kyoden in his *Keisei-kei* (Courtesan Gimlet) of 1788, which gives factual information about the more illustrious women of the Yoshiwara of that time.

⁵³ Clark Timothy. "Flowers of the Yoshiwara. Iconography of the Courtesan in the Late Edo Period". *Kazari. Decoration and Display in Japan 15th - 19th Centuries*. Ed. Nicole Coolidge Rousmaniere. British Museum Press. 2002. p. 65.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 65.

⁵⁵ Asano Shugo & Clark Timothy. *The Passionate Art of Kitagawa Utamaro*. Asahi Shimbun. 1995. Vol 1. p. 78.

⁵⁶ Kuki Shuzo. *Reflections on Japanese Taste. The Structure of Iki*. Trans. John Clark. Ed. Sakuko Matsui & John Clark. Power Publications. Sydney. 1997. Chapter 4. pp. 95 & 96.

⁵⁷ Ibid. Chapter 1. p.42.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Chapter4. pp. 94 & 95.

⁵⁹ Print size used from the later 18th century. About 20.25 inches x 9.00 inches. (51.5 cm x 23 cm).

⁶⁰ This resentment was not confined to those who worked in the visual arts. Writers too of the time displayed such sentiments. Ozaki Koyo, who lived from 1868 - 1903, wrote *Konjiki yasha* "The Golden Demon" which was probably the most popular Meiji novel. In it, the western-clothed main character, Kan'ichi, kicks away the heroine Miya, symbolic of the transition in Japan at that time.

⁶¹ Omatsu - always referred to as the "evil" Omatsu, features in a play entitled *Kinsei Suikoden* "The Contemporary Water Margin". She was a woman from an outcast class who used her beauty to escape her origins. The popular version of this play falls into the "poison woman" genre. Omatsu became a courtesan, met, seduced and married the blind samurai, ShiroSaburo, then murdered him. She became an outlaw and led a bandit gang.

⁶² Van den Ing Eric & Schaap Robert. *Beauty and Violence. Japanese Prints by Yoshitoshi. 1839 - 1892*. Society for Japanese Arts. P. 63.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 96.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p.63.

Chapter Four.

Conclusion.

"... some peoples are so concerned with getting through the layers of wrapping, that they may be missing some of the significance of the wrapping itself." ¹

In this thesis, the aim has been to examine some of the messages conveyed by Japanese textiles during the period 1660 – 1886. In the visual and literary fields and in cases of actual garments themselves, these uses have been varied and far-reaching in their influence and the initial impressions of the importance of textiles to the Japanese, which provided the impetus for this research, proved to be merely the tip of the iceberg, as more areas of possible investigation and relevance began to assert themselves. The observation of details within prints and paintings led to ideas concerning social and cultural attitudes, which, in turn, took the research away from the purely visual into the realms of those images conjured up in the imagination by literary works of the period and a consideration of the actual clothes worn by the people of that time. Although the period under consideration was 1660 – 1886, several references were made to writers outwith the period chosen. In the case of those writers of the Heian period, it was not my intention to suggest that their actual work influenced the writers or artists of the Edo period. The extent to which their works were widely known is debateable and in the case of Lady Niijo it is highly unlikely that her work was known at all, having only been rediscovered by Yamagishi Tokuhei in 1940, when working through the holdings of the Imperial Household in Tokyo. Instead, my inclusion of references to the works of this earlier period was to suggest a continuum of uses and responses to textiles born of Japan's long connection with weaving and cloth production. An instinctive reaction to textiles and their deployment was made obvious in writings of the Heian period and it was part of the remit of this thesis to see to what extent, if any, this reaction was present during the years 1660 – 1886. Having accepted that there might be a thread running from the

earlier centuries to the Edo period, it seemed logical, if I assumed the presence of such a continuum, that the thread would run on beyond the closing date of this research. To that end I considered the work of late 19th and early 20th century writers. If I could find evidence there too of an instinctive use of textiles and the textile related metaphor, then it would be illogical to assume that during the period covered by this thesis there would be no such use of textiles. The need to explore the reasons why textiles of many kinds, but principally silk, occupied, and indeed still do, such an important place in Japan's evolution led into socio-historic areas and into the consideration of folk and religious beliefs. Eventually, it became evident that Japan is so wrapped in a textile culture and enmeshed in its importance, that there seemed, finally, to be very few areas of Japanese life in which cloth, clothing, or items which used some form of textile (and in this is included paper) would not form part of any in-depth analysis.

The Japanese Concept of Wrapping.

A writer who has produced work on the idea of Japan being "wrapped" culturally in fabric, is Joy Hendry. Her book, " Wrapping Culture. Politeness, Presentation and Power in Japan and Other Societies" sets out to examine the ways in which groups of people use such symbolic forms to impress and manipulate one another. Her area of research, however, concerned itself also with the ways in which Japan's insistence on the importance of wrapping – and she goes beyond textiles to thoughts, constructions and gardens, seating arrangements and even language itself – could prove to be a source of misunderstanding for those in the West seeking to understand, not just Japan, but East Asia generally. It was not the intention of this thesis to move out of Japan itself, nor to consider the western interpretation of the various significances of the textiles being discussed, but some of the ideas put forward by Hendry lent themselves to the focus of my research. She writes

"Undoubtedly, what we need to do is to learn to value the wrapping as well as the wrapped and seek the meaning they together convey." ²

The aim of this thesis was to "seek the meaning" conveyed by the wrapping and the wrapped together, as the one lends an inference and an expansion to the other. There was obviously far more going on in the way of messages in the detailed and intricate depiction of textiles, whether visual or literary, than a mere love of the descriptive and the decorative. It became increasingly obvious, as the work progressed, that the idea of the "game of meanings" was not peculiar to the period under consideration, as the cultural effect of these textile suggestions can be felt in Japan to the present day.

The Importance of Silk Production, Its Rooting in the Beliefs of the Japanese People, the Concepts of Asobi and Iki.

One of the most difficult tasks associated with the work of this research was to look at the images and read the words, albeit in translation, not from a western viewpoint, but rather, especially in the case of the prints and paintings, simply as one of the original purchasers of these items. For this reason, it was of real importance to understand the historical background to silk's position in Japan's culture. So much of Japan's past has been so interwoven with the production of this textile, the economic implications of its import and export and the political and geographic involvement of people over the centuries in its cultivation and manufacture, that an appreciation of this all-pervasive presence in Japanese life was necessary. Equally, an investigation of the rooting of textile importance so deeply in the beliefs of the Japanese people and its enmeshing in folk memory with sex and things female, was absolutely

necessary in order to approach textile depiction with something as close as possible to the Japanese deep-seated and instinctive response to such images.³

The concepts of *asobi* and *iki* had also to be examined in some detail, in order to provide the necessary background against which to consider the use of clothing in these areas of human behaviour. Although the western equivalent of "chic" for *iki* and "playfulness" for *asobi* exist, some of the wider, Japanese implications of these concepts had to be considered before any attempt could be made to see in what ways the use of textiles or textile-related imagery helped towards a deeper understanding of what was being depicted and, in turn, towards an understanding of the social slants and changes taking place at the time under consideration.

The fact that all the research had to be carried out in English, although originally a cause for concern on my part, proved, gradually, not to be so significant. Although a piece of literature, in translation, usually loses something of its direct inference or its nuance, or sometimes has to make do with the nearest linguistic equivalent because an exact vocabulary equivalent does not exist, the quality of scholarship in the West, over the years, allayed my misgivings. Much excellent research and writing has been carried out and continues to be produced, predominantly in English, and this was readily accessible to me. In the case of the visual image, the language was more universal, given the degree of sociological preparation, which had been effected. Also, the existence of major collections of prints and paintings in western establishments, along with those scholars who dealt with them in a curatorial role, proved to be invaluable.

There were areas of research, which were clearly connected with the main thrust of this thesis, which were not examined. The whole question of colour and pattern, touched upon by Tanaka, was not one which figured significantly in this investigation, largely because, as was stated in the Introduction, the emphasis was more on

cumulative effect than on specific details. Some reference was made to pattern in "directional" terms when discussing the use of textiles in *shunga* and the consideration of *iki* looked at colour and patterning, but there was not an in-depth consideration of such concerns throughout. The use of particular dyeing processes, dyestuffs, embroidery techniques or weaving methods were not examined in detail for the same reason. This thesis was not envisaged as a consideration of how these textiles came to appear as they did, or as they were described, but rather to investigate the ways in which their deployment in visual and literary terms contributed to the "game of meanings" as specified in the title. The use of textiles in the voyeuristic situation opened up a wide area of psychoanalytical thought, which was only discussed briefly. As the area is vast, the decision was taken, not to be drawn into it too deeply as there was the possibility of the thesis becoming more a discussion of psychoanalytic theories rather than focusing on the consideration of textiles. This is not to say however that reference to such theories was not made where it seemed necessary and the excellent work of Field and Sarra in gender based voyeurism, De Lauretis in film theory, Shinohara's survey of the "surreptitious glance" *nozokimi*, and his formulation of three basic types of furtive looking and the work of John Berger in voyeurism in western art all helped in the understanding of the works under consideration.⁴

In this thesis, several questions presented themselves. Given that an artist can choose to deploy both people and their accoutrements in any way he or she chooses, in prints or paintings, and that it is not merely accidental which way a fabric folds or how several textiles are bunched together, the question was, why that way in this image? Similarly, a writer has numerous symbols and images to employ as well as an extensive vocabulary, so why so many textile-related images and references? What extra was the artist or writer trying to suggest? As the title of the thesis indicates, the observation of these images, concrete or mental, became a kind of "game" in which the attempt was made to see just how much of the extra information or "meaning"

could be gleaned from what was observed. To a certain extent I felt I had received the intended messages, but I was always conscious of the fact that I was not Japanese, nor had I been brought up against a predominantly Japanese-influenced background. No matter how much I read and learned of Japanese history, culture, religious beliefs and philosophical attitudes, I was always aware that the instinctive response to what I was observing, born of being Japanese, was not there. So, I feel there were, possibly, messages there still to be assimilated, had I the genetic wherewithal, as it were, to respond to them. However, I do feel that many of my original questions have been answered. The artists at work between 1660-1886 were employing textiles within their works to convey messages. There was too much insistence on specific methods of deployment of parts of clothing and associated cloth-related items for such use to be purely coincidental. To construct an entire series of prints, for example, around the metaphor of the fan, was an obvious indication of the usefulness of textiles in conveying specific messages. The insistence on sumptuary regulations, the recorded instances of the people's disregard for such laws, the documented evidence in the *Bakufu*'s own records of punitive action being taken against those townspeople who insisted upon dressing as they pleased and not as they were constrained legally to do, all combined to show Edo, during this period, as a place where textiles were far more than merely coverings for the body. Visual evidence of the *chonin*'s refusal to be curbed in clothing matters exists in the form of illustrations of painted garment linings and those garments, which have survived, like the *kosode* of Hoitsu and Goshun, bear witness to the aspirations and assertions of the people who commissioned them. A very large part of the expression of *iki* philosophy hinges on clothing, the decoration and method of wearing clothing and through the images of these changing fashions a clear message can be read as to the shift in social attitudes present in Edo from the early 19th century onwards. The textile evidence of inscribed pieces of lining material in the Nomura Collection are evidence of the Japanese belief that items of clothing retain a measure of the

essence of the people to whom they belonged. This idea is borne out too by the practice, prevalent well into the early 20th century, of weaving contract sashes in the Okinawan Prefecture, and harks back to the gifting of clothing in earlier centuries of Japan's history. In the work of Yoshitoshi, there is definite evidence of textiles being used politically, by an artist struggling to come to terms with the official westernisation of his country. The adoption of his images into the world of *kabuki*, the people's theatre, by well-known traditionalist actors, shows that they too had received the messages contained in his images and were prepared to send them out to a wider, theatre-going public. In short, in the period 1660-1886, it was evident that textiles continued to be used to convey messages, as they had done throughout Japan's history – some of those messages being determined by the requirements of urban existence in a Shogunate Edo, with its attendant social, philosophical and political constraints.

The Linking of Textiles with the Written Word or with Individual Characters.

One area of research only touched upon, briefly, in this research, but which would be both a highly interesting and rewarding one, as well as a natural follow-on from much of what has been examined here, is that of the noticeable linking of textiles with the written word, or with individual characters. The simple inclusion of textile reference or imagery in written works is not what is suggested by the idea of "linking". Rather, what is meant is the inclusion of actual written characters as part of the decoration of the textile, so that the wearer himself, or herself, is clothed or "wrapped" in, usually, poetic reference.

The idea of the Japanese "wrapping" themselves in language is one which Hendry takes up, although she approaches it from a linguistic angle. Nevertheless, the importance of the word in its own right, whether it be spoken, written or illustrated, is one which comes across most forcibly. In Chapter 3 of her book, she discusses the

idea that the Japanese use language itself as a form of clothing or "covering" – something behind which they can conceal themselves or which they can use to produce the correct impression of themselves in specific situations. This particular use of language is designated "respect language" – the Japanese term for which is *keigo*. This respect language can be divided into what Hendry calls "sub categories".

"The first, *sonkeigo*", a more literal translation of respect language, ostensibly raises the relative level of an addressee or referent, the second, *kenjogo*, or "humble language", lowers the level of the speaker and the third, *teineigo*, which is usually translated as "polite language", in its most straightforward form, raises the general level of the speech altogether. A new category, identified by some linguists, is *bikago*, literally "beautification language", which has an effect something akin to adornment of the language used." ⁵

Keigo is used, as Hendry says, as something in which to "... wrap one's communication". ⁶ It provides a covering, which enables the speaker to project certain messages about him or herself and also to make some inference about the person being addressed. It permits the real persona of an individual to be concealed while presenting a pre-considered persona to others – one determined by status, situation or surroundings. Its use can also denote distance or intimacy. Regardless of its end effect, *keigo* is a method by which one conceals or projects an image of oneself. This is not a recent linguistic phenomenon, but one which has its roots in the traditional culture of the country and which permeates all aspects of society. The Japanese, therefore, are a people accustomed to using language and linguistic forms with which to cover or exhibit certain aspects of themselves. When the Japanese love of poetry is taken into consideration, it becomes quite clear why this form of expression occupies such a position of importance in Japanese culture. In

poetry, especially in the more highly structured and stylised forms which are produced under the strict formulaic observance of syllables and lines and which make use of symbolism and such devices as *kotoba* and *engo*, the actual message of the poem is often hidden within a mesh of literary devices.⁷ The language and its actual deployment can be used to conceal meaning, reveal meaning or suggest meaning in a highly structured and often rarefied fashion. Arguably, it is no coincidence that a society so concerned historically with the use of words to hide or project messages about the speaker or writer, so concerned with the idea of non-overt messaging, should have extended that concept to one of its other traditional concerns - the way it disposed its textiles - and illustrated that disposal. The interweaving of textiles into the socio-historical and cultural life of Japan makes it such an intrinsic part of the way the Japanese express themselves, that it is only to be expected that another aspect of that expression, the skilful use of language, should appear alongside.

The Mixing of Poetry, or Poetry-Connected Symbols, with the Decoration of Clothing.

During this thesis, one aspect of mixing poetry, or poetry-connected symbols, with the decoration of clothing, that of the subversive expression of refusal to comply with the sumptuary regulations imposed by the government, was considered. The *surimono* c. 1800, produced by the print artist and noted poet Shunman, as was discussed during that consideration, utilises the lining of his garment to illustrate his non-acceptance of the regulation restricting the ostentatious decoration of clothing. However, his use of one of his poems, inscribed on the jacket lining, sends us yet another message and, interestingly, it is through poetry that this further message is conveyed. Just as traditional Japanese poetic forms produce levels of meanings and the "game" is to try to decipher what lies within the mesh of the words at various levels, so too in the depiction of the painted lining. There is more going on here than a message of

defiance to Shunman's government with its imposed and enforced social restrictions. The poem spoke of his having told his wife he was setting out to view plum blossoms and his discomfiture at having to explain how his sleeve is unexpectedly perfumed. There is the obvious symbolic use of the "blossom". He is indeed going to view the blossoms, but they are the female variety to be found in the pleasure areas and not the horticultural variety as he would, ostensibly, have his wife believe. So, at a primary level, the reader has the message of the simple, verbal deception that Shunman has played on his wife. At a deeper level, the message is one of Shunman's personal feelings. He is aware of the awkwardness that will ensue when he returns home, smelling of perfume. That he expresses his sense of embarrassment, or awkwardness, inside his garment, rather than on the surface, is indicative of the way in which he is experiencing these emotions, which are engendered by more than a lie about where he was going. Taking the verbal game to a deeper level, he speaks of knowing he will find it difficult to explain the "perfume" on his sleeve. The aroma belonged to the courtesan.

The perfuming of garments was widely practised in Japanese society and the blending of the incenses used was one of the many skills mastered by courtesans in their years of training. Painted evidence of the perfuming of a garment is to be found in a hanging scroll by Choshun c. 1720 (Plate 70). The entire connotation of the sensuality connected with the use of perfume is suggested beautifully in this painting. The perfumed smoke rises from the *koro* between the seated courtesan's feet at the bottom of the painting and emerges from the front folds of her clothing at neck level, with the implication that it has perfumed her entire body as it rises. Given the obvious sensual connotations of the use of perfume, illustrated in this painting of the early 18th century, the reason for Shunman's embarrassment becomes more evident. The perfume on his sleeve came, in all likelihood, not merely from the courtesan's clothing, but from her actual body. The actual cause of Shunman's awkwardness

arises from his knowledge that he has deceived his wife in order to indulge in sex with a courtesan from the pleasure area.

It could be said that the relationship between Japanese men and their wives was such that men could do as they pleased, that marriages were arranged as matters of practicality and that explanations would not have been required in such a situation. I would argue however that, regardless of culture or society, basic human emotions, like hurt and jealousy pertain to all peoples and, in any case, we have Shunman's own words, which state that he feels badly about the situation. By placing his emotions, couched in the game of a poem, inside his jacket, he tells us, if we are able to decipher his message, that his emotions will be kept internal. He will not express them openly. As the poem is contained within the garment, not for public viewing, so Shunman is telling us that his feelings will not be made public to those others he may encounter in the pleasure quarter, at home, or indeed to his wife herself. His outward shell, epitomised by the outer fabric of his jacket, will appear his normal, bland self. The uneasiness he experiences personally, will remain unadvertised, like the poem on his lining.

Virtually the opposite situation exists in another example already discussed, that of the courtesan Kaoru. The writer, Saikaku, tells us of her commissioning Yukinobu to paint an image of Autumn on a piece of white satin. However, she goes beyond this to have "eight court nobles" decorate this image with their own verses, executed in their own calligraphy. The resultant piece of fabulous artwork, both visual and intellectual, she makes into a gown and wears.

It was already accepted practice to decorate robes with individual characters and verses of poetry before Saikaku's time and there is ample evidence of this in both painted and printed images from the beginning of the 18th century. The practice can also be seen in the various *hinagata-bon* of the period under consideration in this thesis. In a painting by Kaigetsudo Anchi c. 1704-1716, a courtesan is illustrated seated on a bench. The letter, the corner of which she holds in her mouth, shows

some of its text and her robes have bold Chinese characters written in white against backgrounds of blue, white and yellow. The characters which are readable are those for "Asabune" and "Azuma" ⁸(See Plate 55). ⁹

Around 1715, a woodblock print by Torii Kiyomasu I, shows the actor Fujimura Handayu II as Oiso no Tora. The character of Tora wears a *furisode* decorated with scattered cursive writing. Some examples of *kanji* stand out against smaller examples of *kana* writing. The poetic words are suggestive, such as *hana-arashi* (flower storm), *nure* (love), *some* (infatuation) and *kasa* (umbrella) ¹⁰(Plate 71).

Another piece of supporting evidence shows, not only the use of characters and poetic reference, but the use of poetry cards by way of textile decoration. A print by Okumura Masanobu, it shows a standing courtesan dressed in a gown decorated with poetry cards representing poems taken from the *Hyakunin isshu*, (One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets) an anthology compiled c. 1235–41 by Fujiwara no Teika. This anthology was a popular text for the education of women and provided the subject matter for the One Hundred Poems card game – a particular favourite with the women of the pleasure quarters. ¹¹ There were 200 cards in the game, one set of 100 illustrating a poet and the first 17 syllables of his or her poem. The other 100 cards bore the closing 14 syllables and were spread out on the floor. One of the opening line cards was read out and the players attempted to match it with its closing lines. The player with the most correct sets was the winner. Not only does Masanobu's courtesan illustrate the practice of decorating clothes with poetic symbols, but also the fact that many women and courtesans in particular, were well-educated in their poetic traditions. When Kaoru commissions what develops into a gown bearing calligraphy as well as natural decoration, she is not acting in an unduly unusual fashion. What makes her case different, it could be argued, is the way in which this gown comes into being and it is this difference, which sends out a set of interesting messages.

The game Kaoru plays in this situation is, at the one time, apparently flamboyantly brash and subtly suggestive. Once again, the degree of message received will depend on the sensitivity of the viewer. Her turning such an amazing piece of artistry into a robe, instead of creating a wall-hanging or a decorative scroll out of it, as Saikaku suggests it was eminently suited to be, would appear on one level to indicate her opinion of herself as a worthy enough piece of artistry in her own right to be clothed in such beauty. She is a courtesan at the pinnacle of her profession, and as such deserves the best that can be produced. However, she has not just contented herself with the best of artistic representation, she has gone beyond visual decoration into the realms of poetic communication, transmitted by means of the most applauded calligraphers of her day. In so doing, she takes the game into a different dimension. By clothing herself in the words of others and not just any form of words, but words combined in specific, intellectual formulae, Kaoru sends out a very different set of messages to those who see her dressed in this robe. That she intended this to be the case can be seen from Saikaku's comment that it was she who provided the stimulus for the textile's decoration. It was done at her bidding and to her specifications. It could not be argued that she was merely the recipient of someone else's generosity or ideas, but it was demonstrably her own project. In this finished article, Kaoru is suggesting that, intellectually, she is the equal of those who have composed these pieces of poetry – she provided the impetus and appreciated, fully, the end-product. Had she not, she would not have clothed herself in it. It could be argued too, that to those clever enough to understand, she is suggesting that, just as these finished pieces of poetic art were composed according to strict and precise rules, using skills perfected over years of study and practice, so too has she, a courtesan of great note, produced in herself a piece of great art. She has studied the various aspects of her calling, including the practice of intellectual pursuits, until she has arrived at the top of her profession, bears the official name of her house and regards herself as the equal of any man who patronises her. She is an art object in

her own right and, as such, may surround herself, literally, with examples of poetic and calligraphic art from some of the foremost exponents of her day. A further amusement to be offered by this "game" could, arguably, be that afforded Kaoru in her observation of which of her male patrons was able to appreciate the suggestion and which not.

The Interdependence of Textiles and Poetry.

The interdependence of textiles and poetry would seem worthy of further investigation than that permitted by this thesis, as the interweaving of individual characters, poem openings or whole poems with the decoration of textiles for wearing has, arguably, a significance beyond that which it has been possible to explore in this work. Also, in order to do justice to such a line of enquiry, it would be necessary to have considerable linguistic Japanese skills. At this point, such skills are not available to me. However, while researching this area of textiles and poetry, a line of thought presented itself.

There is an interesting relationship between the construction of classical poetic forms and the actual weaving of silk. Classical Japanese poetic genres are constructed using a combination of 5 and 7 syllable lines. For example, the form known originally as the *uta*, now the *tanka* or *waka*, is constructed along the format of 5 lines, arranged in a sequence of 5 – 7 – 5 – 7 – 7 syllables. The *haiku* condenses to 3 lines, but it too makes use of a similar set of syllables, using a 5 – 7 – 5 format. These two forms stemmed from the even older form known as the *choka*, which literally translated means "long poem" because, essentially, that is what it was. Despite it being a much longer piece of poetic invention, it too relied upon a combination of 5 and 7 syllable lines to achieve its effect.

In the weaving of certain types of *nishiki* silk, the effects obtained in the weave were determined by the use of 5-thread and 7-thread warp and weft combinations. Just

as with poetry, where the interweaving of lines made up of 5 and 7 syllables in total produced a poetic "pattern" as it were, which in turn was the foundation for the overall piece of poetry, so in the manufacture of certain types of silk cloth, the weaving in of the 5 and 7 thread warp and weft combinations produced an overall decorative design. The area of the significance, if any, of these mathematical numbers to the Japanese in particular, or the religious significance of these numerical combinations, allied with an investigation into why the combinations of these specific numbers seem to figure quite so significantly in two such important aspects of Japanese culture, would seem to be worthy of further investigation which this thesis was not able to accord it.

Given the immense importance of textiles, principally silk, to the culture of the Japanese people over the centuries and their equally old passion for the composition of traditional forms of poetry, it cannot be mere coincidence that weaving patterns and poetic structures should bear such a close relationship to each other, and, in conclusion, this area of investigation would be both an interesting and a natural progression from the groundwork of this thesis.

¹ Hendry Joy *Wrapping Culture. Politeness Presentation and Power in Japan and Other Societies*. Clarendon Press. Oxford. 1993. Chapter 5. p. 122.

² Ibid. Chapter 5. p. 109.

³ Initially "female" but latterly the suggestion was more that of the feminine principle.

⁴ See Field Norma *The Splendour of Longing in the Tale of Genji* Princeton University Press. 1987. Sarra Edith *Fictions of Femininity: Literary Inventions of Gender in Japanese Court Women's Memoirs*. Stanford University Press. 1999. Shinohara Yoshihiko *Bungaku gogaku* 68 August 1973.

De Lauretis Teresa *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1984. Berger John *Ways of Seeing*. Penguin Books. London. 1977.

⁵ Ibid. Chapter 3. p. 52.

⁶ Ibid. Chapter 3. p. 55.

⁷ For a discussion of literary poetic devices, see *One Hundred Poems from the Japanese*. Trans. Kenneth Rexroth. New Directions Paperbook 147. New York. 1964. Introduction pp. xiv, xv, xvi, xvii.

⁸ Clark Timothy *The Dawn of the Floating World*. P. 213. Note 4.

⁹ Signed *Yamato giga Kaigetsudo matsuyo Anchi kore (o) zu (su)* "Lighthearted Yamato painting: this picture was done by the Kaigetsudo follower Anchi". Hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper. William Sturgis Bigelow Collection. 1911.

¹⁰ Clark p. 127.

¹¹ Clark p. 162. Notes 2&3.

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The Game of Meanings

**A Consideration of the Messages
conveyed by Japanese Textiles in Edo
from 1660 – 1886.**

Margaret Tatarkowski

**Submitted for the degree of MLitt(R)
at the University of Glasgow.**

Department of History of Art.

January 2007.

Volume 2.

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Yoshitoshi.

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61



12





上
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義

哥
一
盤
書





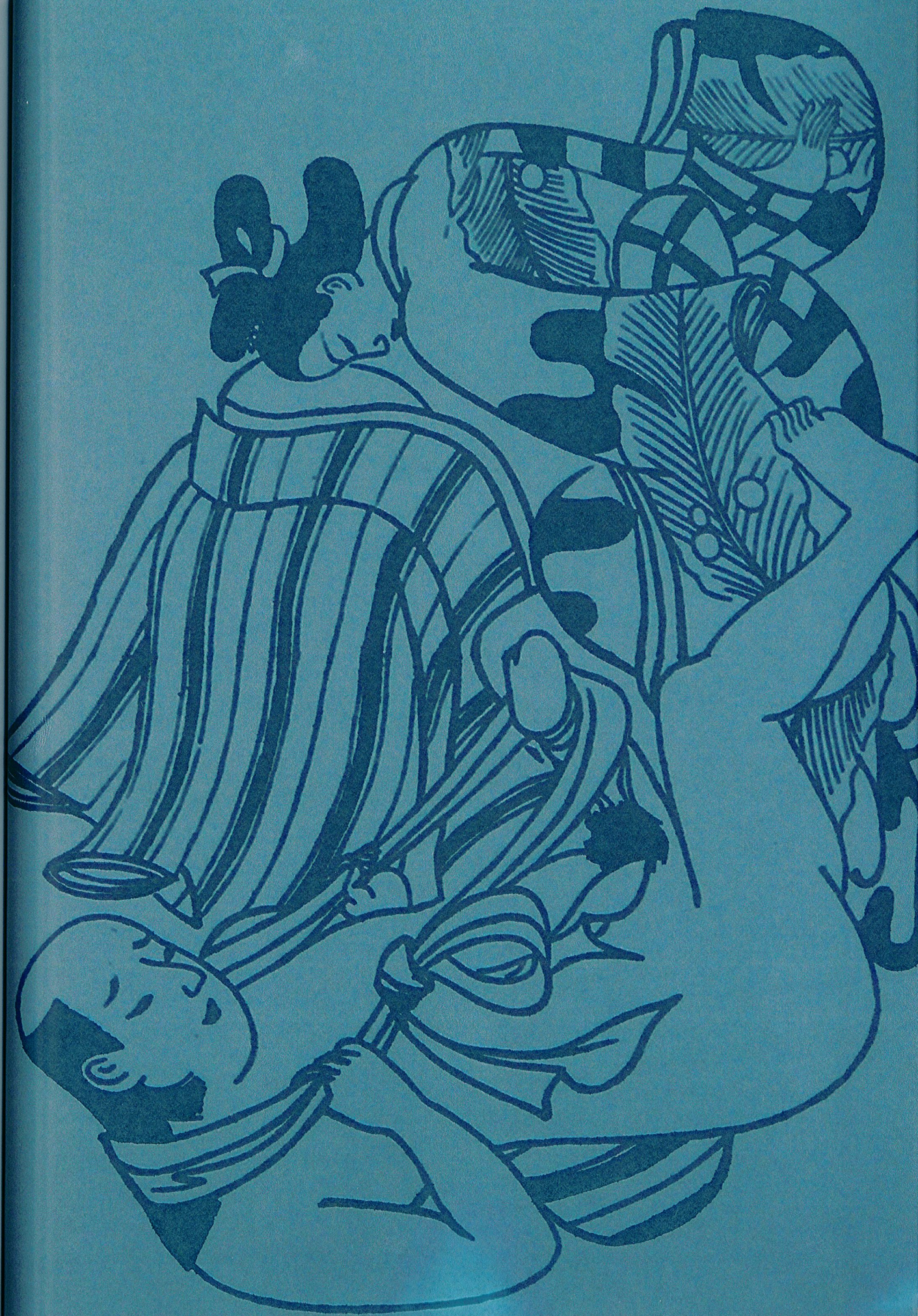




























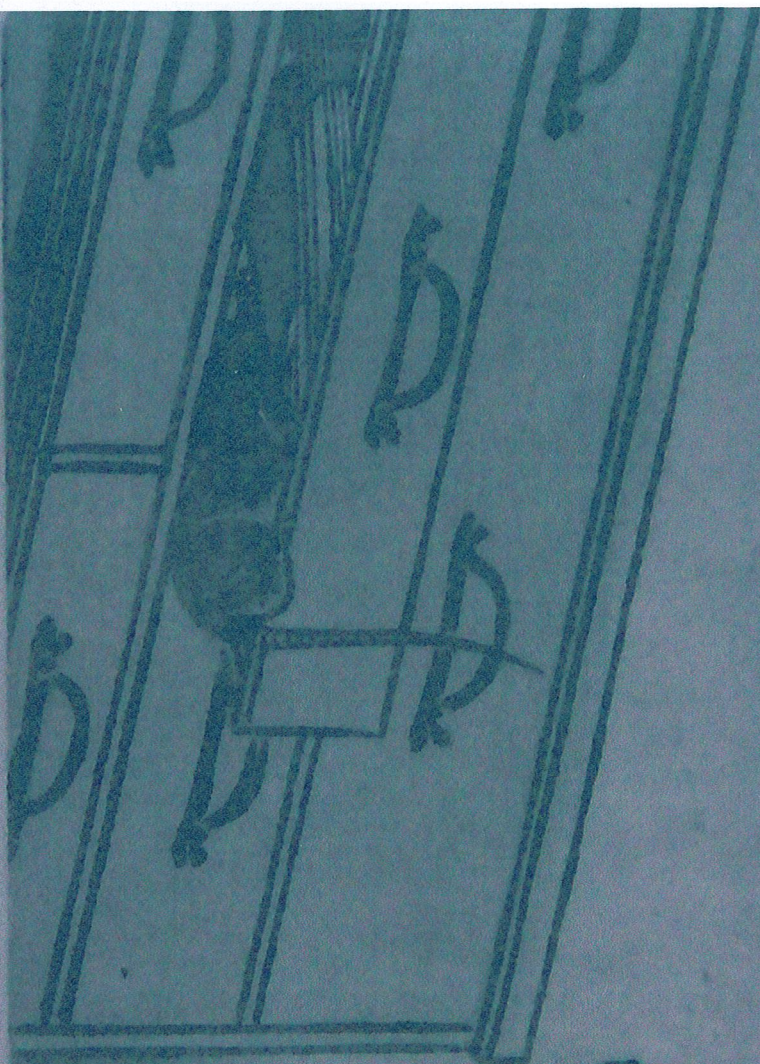




合性屋
合性屋
合性屋







Handwritten text in a script, likely Burmese, consisting of several lines of characters.

Handwritten text in a script, likely Burmese, consisting of several lines of characters.

Handwritten text in a script, likely Burmese, consisting of several lines of characters.

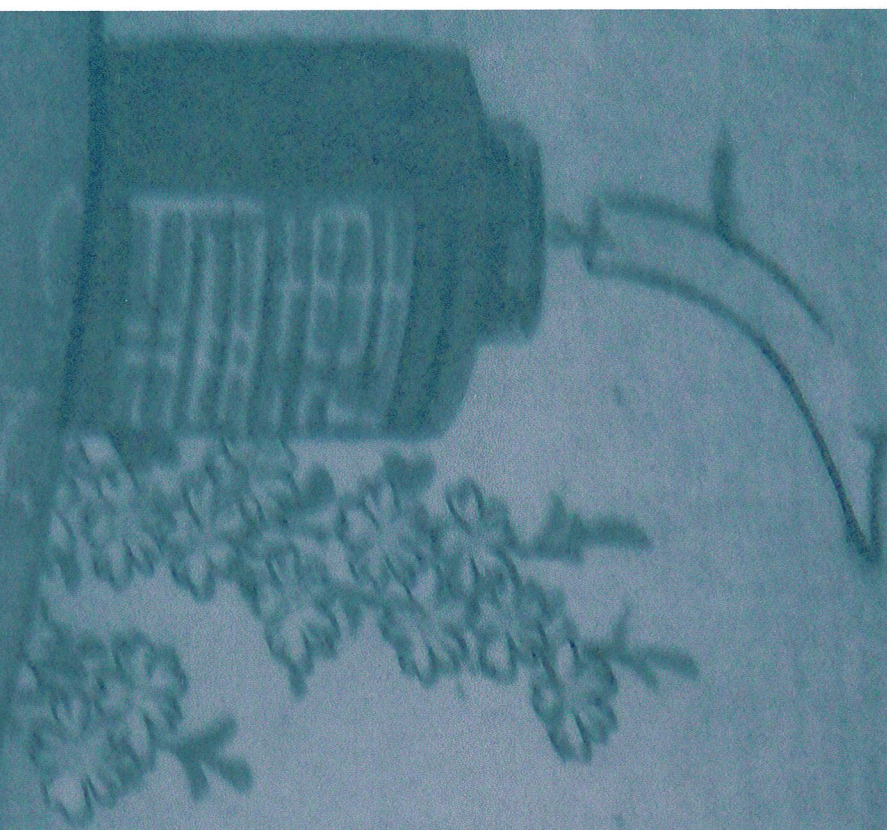
Handwritten text in a script, likely Burmese, consisting of several lines of characters.

Handwritten text in a script, likely Burmese, consisting of several lines of characters.



[Faint handwritten notes in Devanagari script, likely bleed-through from the reverse side.]





Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a list or description of items, possibly related to the illustration above. The text is arranged in several lines and is somewhat faded.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, possibly a signature or a date, located at the bottom of the page. The text is arranged in several lines and is somewhat faded.



Handwritten text in a script, likely Burmese, arranged in approximately 12 lines. The text is written in a cursive style with some characters appearing to be in a different script or dialect.

Handwritten text in a script, likely Burmese, arranged in approximately 3 lines. The text is written in a cursive style.

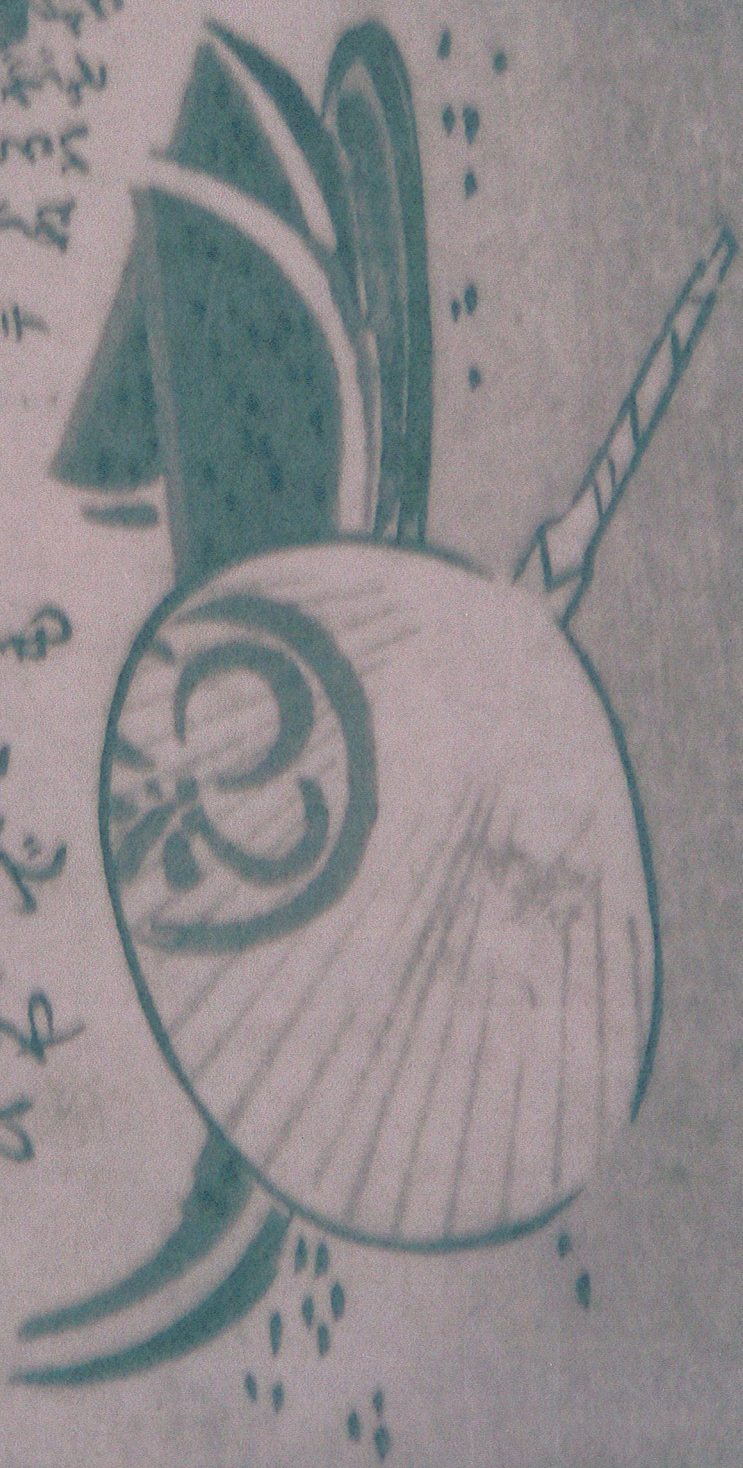
Handwritten text in a script, likely Burmese, arranged in approximately 3 lines. The text is written in a cursive style.



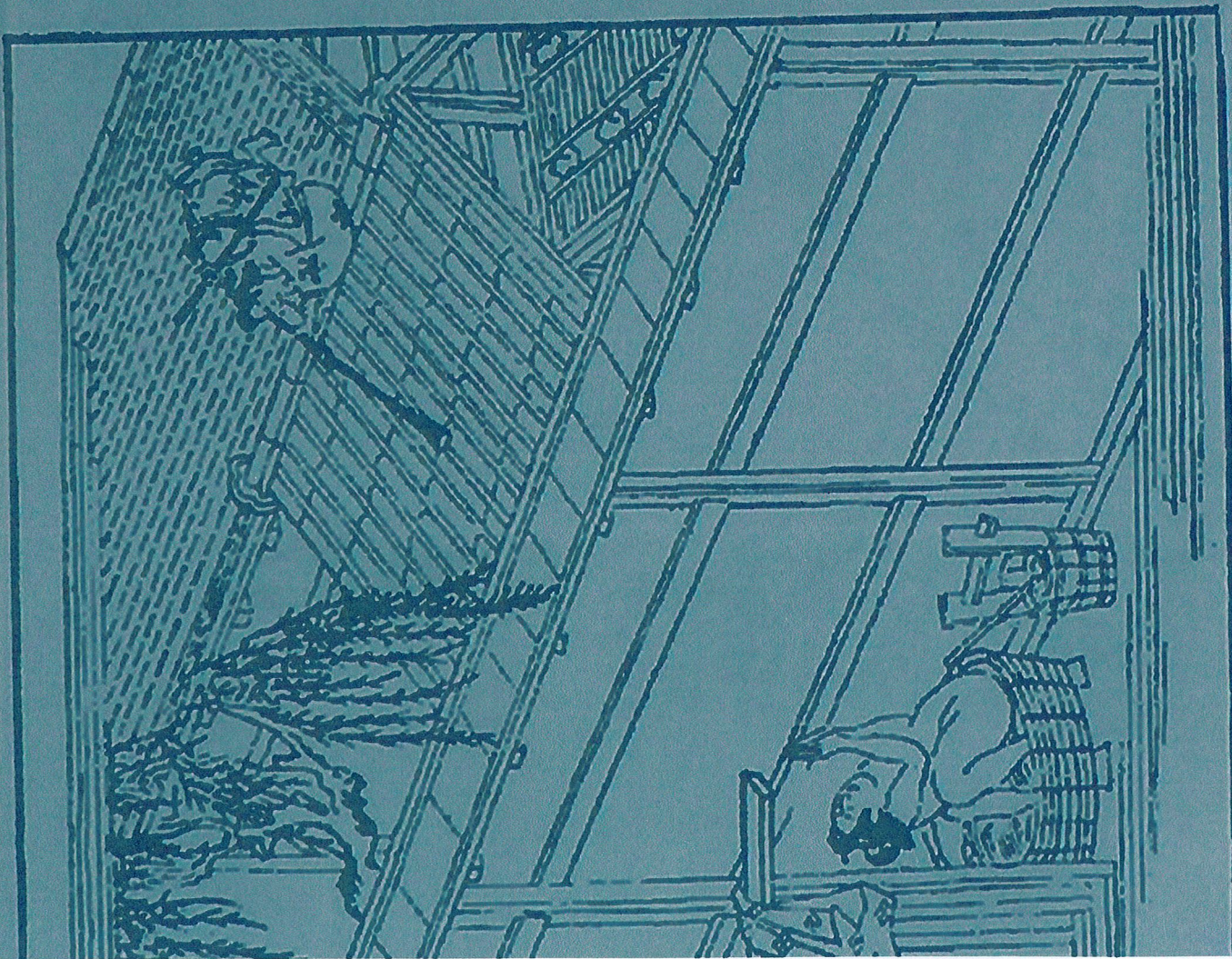
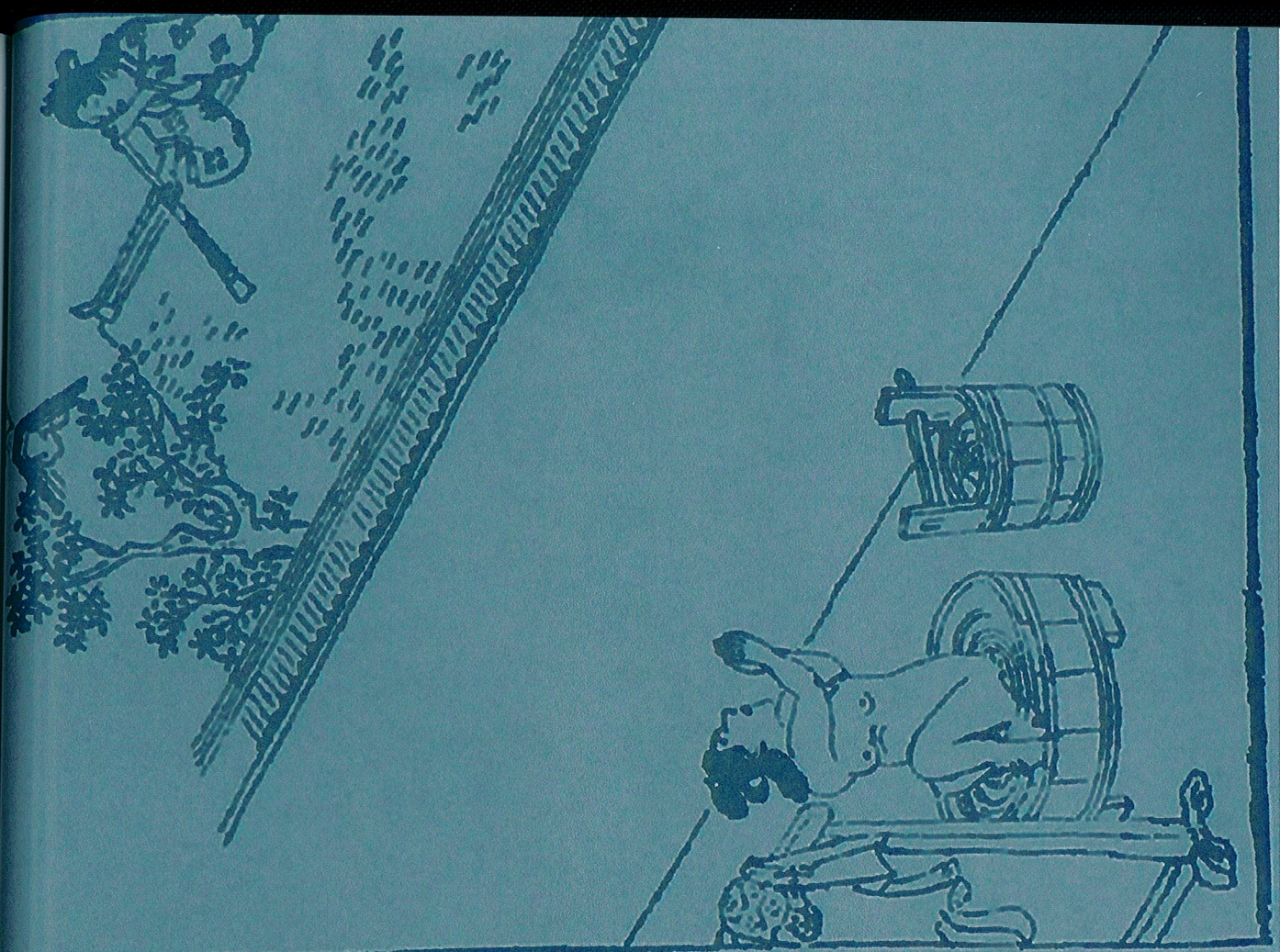


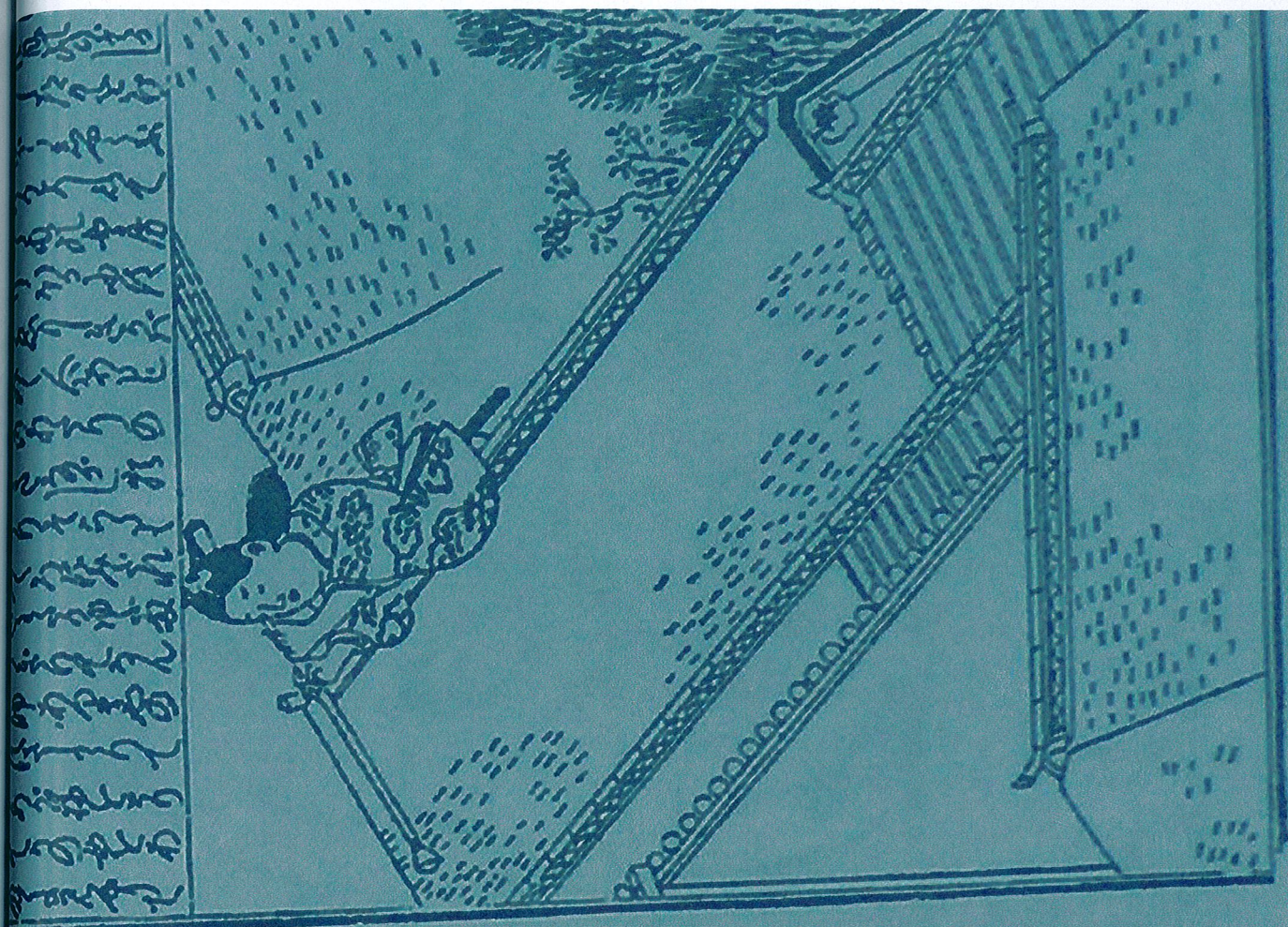
Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a form of shorthand or a specific dialect. The text is arranged in several lines, with some characters appearing to be stylized or abbreviated. The script is dark and somewhat faded, making it difficult to decipher precisely.

Additional handwritten text, continuing the script from the upper section. It includes some characters that appear to be more standard, possibly indicating a transition or a specific section within the document. The text is also dark and somewhat faded.



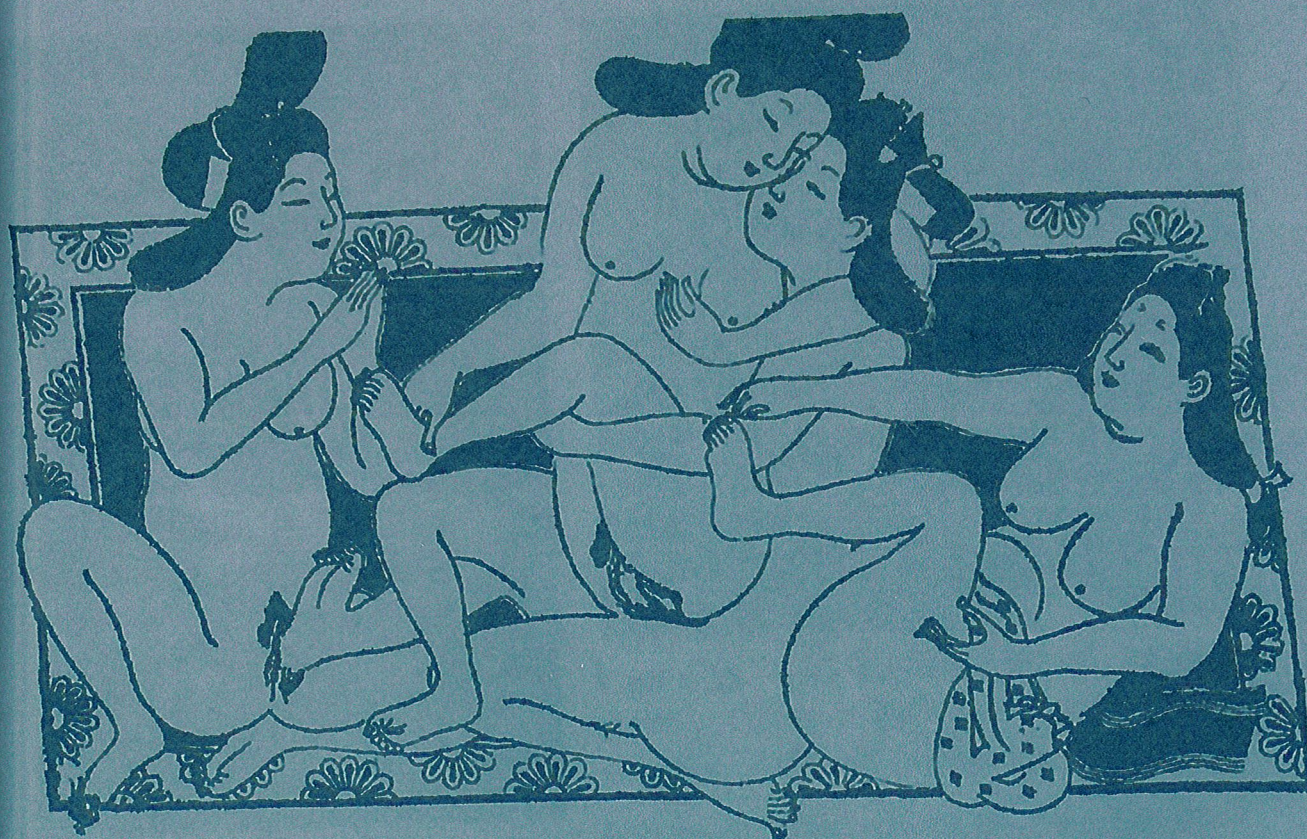








Okumura Masanobu, Erotic Print. Aiban format (9 × 13 in.). Ca. 1708.
Signed "Buko gashi Okumura Masanobu." Publisher: Nishimura Denzaemon.



Sugimura Jihei, Erotic Print. Ōban format (10 × 15 in.). Ca. 1708.





[illegible]











香名辨雅

楊子雲之稱爲の抽煙より程の多量の煙草を吸ふ

川甲
片樓十二時





太閤秀吉公

松の丸殿

淀殿

かき竹の方

仁



三條殿

かね殿



真柴久吉





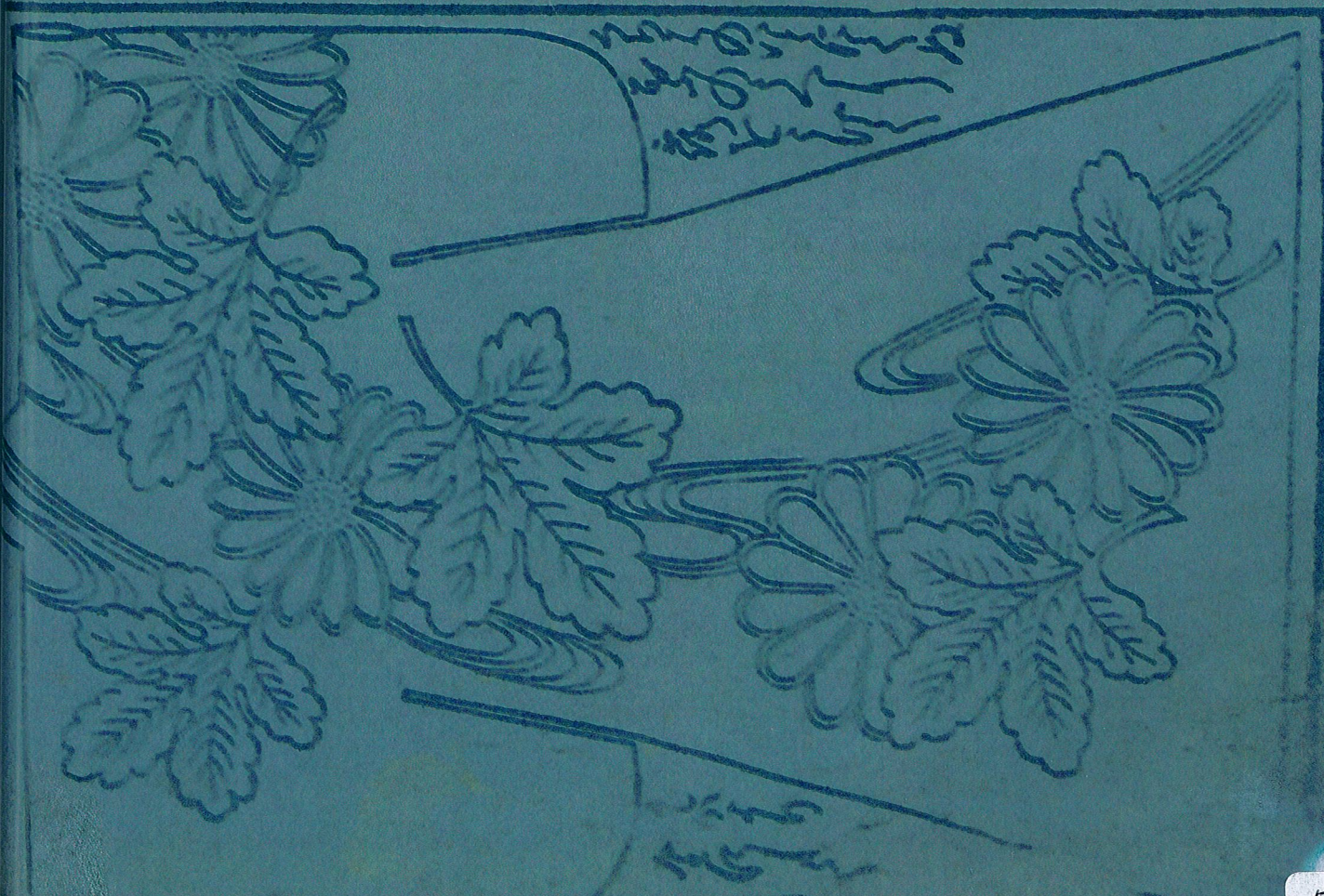
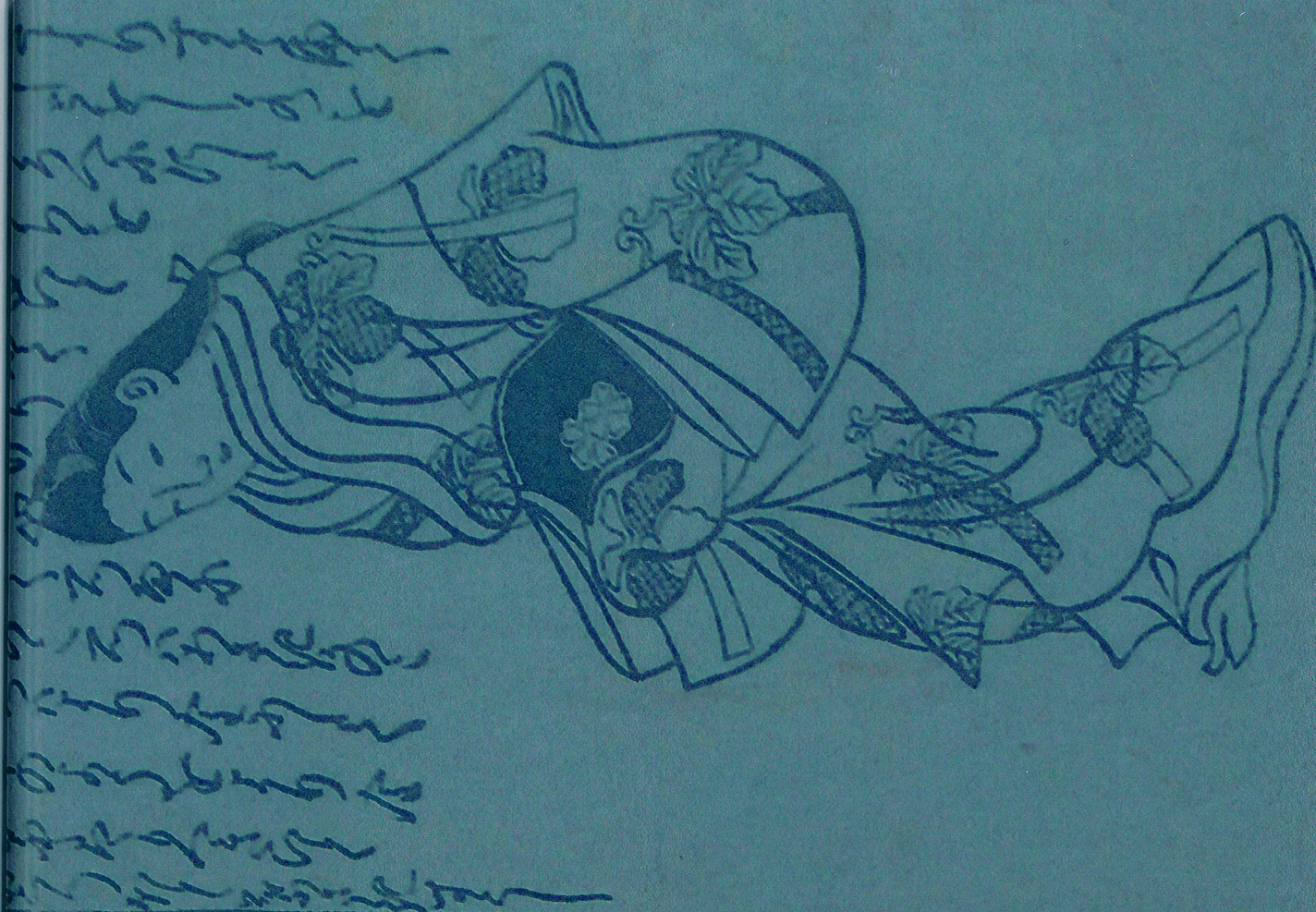
花菱小波紋

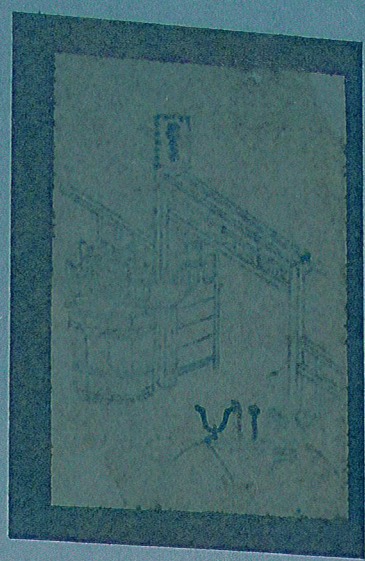
花菱小波紋

花菱小波紋

花菱小波紋













根引の黄香
甘谷の菊水
利実生一の
金も隅田の諸
今より

西行もすくも

茶の庵の家

茶の庵の家



茶の庵の家

當時全盛似顏柳

兵庫屋内

花妻

江戸



哥麻呂筆



當世美人三遊

北國

奇磨筆







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手取面加ふの裏梅芳さるふ似と
やそ 死な非道み組す 夜及 千尋を
帯い 鏡面梅の 背地の 青き 苦痛の
七 舞ハ 側 腹を 疾りり 小笹原 千里と 走る
馬車 の 條々 燃き なる 尾と あり けり 大
放散 と 装を 剥りし 五五
填詞 假名垣魯文記

小笹原政尾の局

鬼一齋
手筆









明月夜
何人
何人
何人







鳥居清信

