

## **Important Cultural Property** Kosode (Garment with Small Wrist Openings), Design of **Mandarin Ducks and Waves on Black Figured Satin Edo Period, 17th Century**

The kimono is much more than a garment; it is a symbol of traditional Japanese culture. The kimono of contemporary Japan originated with the short-sleeved kosode in the Edo period (early 17th century to mid-late 19th century). Around this time, the kosode came to be worn by people from a wide range of generations, by everyone from court nobility and the samurai class to commoners, as an outer layer of clothing. The garments came to feature brilliant decorations with techniques including embroidery, shibori (shaped resist dyeing), and katazome (stencil resist dyeing). This article introduces one such kosode from the early Edo period (17th century), a time when the most revolutionary designs appeared.

**Important Cultural Property** 

Kosode (Garment with small wrist openings), Design of Mandarin Ducks and Waves on Black Figured Satin

Edo Period, 17th Century

(Collection of Tokyo National Museum)

A formal kosode garment featuring a design expressed with kanoko shibori and embroidery. Male and female mandarin ducks float in the water around the large wave patterns and take flight between them in a symbolic representation of harmonious marriage.

Photo: ColBase (https://colbase.nich.go.jp/)

## Oyama Yuzuruha

he garment features a design of waves making dramatic leaps in bow-like arcs against glossy figured satin¹ dyed jet black. Around them, embroidered mandarin ducks are depicted with beautiful coloration. In the early years of the Edo period, elegant and elaborate patterns that wrapped around the garments with embroidery, kanoko shibori,2 and other techniques were most common. Toward the mid-17th century, however, kosode designs underwent a striking transformation. In 1620, Tokugawa Masako, a daughter of Hidetada (1579-1632), second shogun of the Tokugawa shogunate, was wedded to the Emperor Go-Mizunoo (1596-1680) at the Kyoto Imperial Palace. She was later called by the title "Tōfukumon-in." She then placed orders for numerous kosode from Karigane-ya,3 a prominent Kyoto textile dealer. The garments she asked for were of entirely different designs than those of previous fashion styles in Kyoto. The patterns of flowers and birds of the four seasons are arranged in large size on the entire *kosode* like the composition of the painting. Then, by intendedly making a margin without patterns around the waist at the left side, and making the entire pattern arranged an arc, the kosode gained dynamic movement appearance. These innovative new designs came to be called



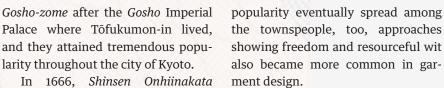
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Kosode (Garment with small wrist openings), Design of Mandarin Ducks and Waves on Black Figured Satin (Detail)

## Edo Period, 17th Century

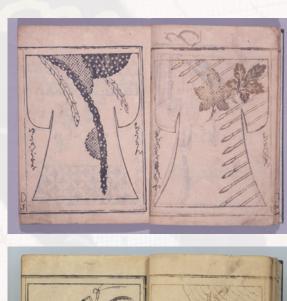
Detailed *kanoko shibori* patterns dyed in red and indigo are used to represent the large waves. *Tatsu-nami* motifs depicting spray from the cresting waves are embroidered with gold thread, adding gorgeous, glittering accents to the design.

Photo: ColBase (https://colbase.nich.go.jp/)



("A New Selection of Patterns"), the A new look at the kosode here first hinagatabon4 work dedicated to against the backdrop of the era's kosode patterns, was published as a fashion trends in fact reveals varihanpon⁵ woodblock-printed book. The ous playful touches in its design. In prevalence in this work of the sort of the wave design with its bold sense bold designs Tōfukumon-in preferred of motion, for instance, the waves is evidence of just how celebrated are given sharply pointed triangular the innovative, striking designs were. forms and are filled in with stitched The inclusion of playful designs that patterns featuring kanoko shibori hardly seem like they could be kosode designs in red and indigo. While patterns suggests that, as the style's appearing to be waves, they can in

fact be seen to represent fishing nets drying on the shore. Moreover, careful inspection reveals green, leafy forms embroidered around the netting, spaced at certain intervals. Just what might this be meant to represent? That expresses pointy-tipped bamboo shoots sprouting up out of the ground. By combining these various patterns, like pairing the bamboo shoot motif, representing a wish for children's thriving growth, with mandarin ducks, symbols of harmonious marital relations, this kosode had the meaning with auspicious significance.





Shinsen Onhiinakata ("A New Selection of Patterns")

Edo period, 1667

(Collection of Tokyo National Museum)

Hinagatabon books with more than 200 kosode patterns were published in the Edo period, the very first in 1666. Apparently quite popular, a second edition of the work appeared the following year. (Photographs here show the second edition.)

<sup>1.</sup> *Rinzu*: A type of textile with damask patterns woven into it using raw silk for both the warp and weft threads. Scouring the fabric to remove impurities from it after weaving creates a smooth, glossy white appearance. The most commonly used silk fabric used for making high-quality *kosode* in the Edo period.

<sup>2.</sup> A shaped resist dyeing technique featuring patterns of small, white dots like the spots on the back of a young deer, made by dyeing fabric with certain spots bound with thread.

<sup>3.</sup> The family business into which Ogata Kōrin was born. See "The Beauty of Kimono," September 2023.

<sup>4.</sup> A book of patterns featuring selections of miniaturized sketches and designs. They also functioned as fashion books and order books.

<sup>5.</sup> Books printed beginning in the early Edo period using woodblocks carved with text and illustrations.