

JAPANESE TRADITIONAL RAIMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF EMERGENT CULTURAL PARADIGMS

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Abstract: *The last decade or so has witnessed a quest for a universal model to suggest an integral conception of Japanese culture, its reigning stereotypes and underlying principles. One possible approach or model could be a study into Japanese raiment, which per se reflects shifts in cultural paradigms as changes to the costume itself, mode of wearing, its meaning and role, had been necessitated by changes in cultural values, perception of the meaning of life and one's aims in life, as well as lifestyles, aesthetics and zeitgeist.*

Keywords: *Japanese raiment, cultural paradigm, tradition, modernization.*

Modern research into Japanese traditional raiment tends towards a chronological treatment to the subject. This includes general surveys of the evolution of the costume as a whole, as well as that of separate garments and costume sets; studies into the development of weaving and dyeing techniques etc. Given the vast scope of literary sources, for the purposes of this study we shall limit ourselves to mentioning but the latest publications which include comprehensive works by Ando Hiroko¹, Kirihata Ken², Maruyama Nobuhiko³, Iwao Nagasaki⁴, Noma Seiroku⁵, Frances Blakemore⁶, Alan Kennedy⁷, Hugo Münsterberg⁸ et al. Alongside fundamental narratives in the history of the costume there have also appeared systemic studies with a regional focus, which combine Art History, ethnographic and culturological approaches to review ethnic peculiarities⁹ against the background of the evolution of the mainstream

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¹ 安藤宏子「日本の絞り」京都一九九三年九六頁。(Ando Hiroko. *Japanese shibori*. Kyoto, 1993).

² 切畑健「歌舞伎衣装」京都一九九四年九六頁。(Kirihata Ken. *Kabuki costume*. Kyoto, 1994).

³ 丸山信彦「友禅染」京都一九九三年九六頁。(Maruyama Nobuhiko. *Yuzen dyeing*. Kyoto, 1993).

⁴ 長崎巖「小袖」京都一九九三年九六頁。(Nagasaki Iwao. *Kosode*. Kyoto, 1993); 長崎巖「振袖」京都一九九三年九六頁。(Nagasaki Iwao. *Furisode*. Kyoto, 1993).

⁵ Noma, Seiroku. *Japanese Costume and Textile Arts*. New York, 1977.

⁶ Blakemore, F. *Japanese Design Through Textile Patterns*. New York & Tokyo, 1978.

⁷ Kennedy, A. *Japanese Costume : History and Tradition*. Paris, 1990.

⁸ Münsterberg, H. *The Japanese Kimono*. Hong Kong, 1986.

⁹ Mochinaga Brandon Reiko. *Textile Art of Okinawa: Collection of Okinawa*. Honolulu, 2004. P. 3-46; *Textile Designs of Japan: Volume III Okinawan, Ainu, and Foreign Designs* Japan. Textile Colour Design Center. Tokyo, 1980.

Japanese textile traditions¹⁰. A number of works are intended to cover the ornamental diversity of the Japanese costume including the compelling study by Iwao Nagasaki¹¹. A special tribute should be paid to the American ethnographer Liza Dalby whose involved studies have seen a number of editions¹².

Another significant corpus of subject literature includes catalogues of permanent and itinerary exhibitions and collections of the Japanese costume on display in various museums worldwide¹³. Detailed annotations to the latest editions as well as a growing number of the costume exhibitions testify for the broad interest in the kimono both in Japan and beyond¹⁴. Much of our kimono knowledge is owed to the copyright and brand name holders of the now extinct large kimono shops as well as reference books and manuals on the types of the traditional raiment and dressing instructions¹⁵.

The factual materials, however numerous, do not offer an explanation as to why and how the Japanese costume has evolved the way it has, what were the driving forces behind its evolution and what are the underlying factors behind its survival in a much globalized environment. The subject matter of this study is, therefore, the Japanese traditional raiment in the context of emergent cultural paradigms.

Such endeavor requires an interdisciplinary approach which necessitates the application of art analysis, culturological and comparative methods, and involves diversified sources, among them collections of the Japanese traditional costume, visual art objects containing 'costume message' from state and private museum collections in Japan, Europe and the USA; literary sources, field study materials and the researcher's interviews taken in Japan in 2005-2011 years, as well as private photographic archives.

I. Costume in Pre-Meiji Japan

I.1. The Evolution of the Traditional Costume: the Natural Body vs the Social Body. Let us consider, then, the kimono in the diachronic context of the Japanese culture. As was the case in other cultures, clothing as an 'exterior envelopment' of the body reflects the conception of the bodily and bodily

¹⁰ 切畑健、藤本恵子、泉要次郎「京の優雅」京都二〇〇五年二四九頁。
(Kirihata Ken, Fujimoto Keiko, Izumi Yodzhiro. *The elegance of Kyoto*. Kyoto, 2005).

¹¹ 長崎巖「着物と模様：日本の形と色」東京一九九九年三三三頁。
(Nagasaki Iwao. *Kimono and patterns (Japanese form and color)*. Tokyo, 1999).

¹² Dalby, L. *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*. Seattle, 1993.; Dalby, L. *Geisha*. University of California Press, 2008.

¹³ *Восток: Искусство быта и Бытия / Государственный Музей Востока. Каталог*. Москва, 2003. (*East: The Art of Being and Life*. National Museum of the East. Catalogue. Moscow, 2003); Jackson, A. *Japanese Textiles in the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London, 2000; Fujisawa Noryo, E. Sano, Y. Woodson, Kawakami Shigeki. *Four Centuries of Fashion : Classical Kimono from the Kyoto National Museum*. San Francisco, 1997.

¹⁴ Kubota, Itchiku. *Opulence: The Kimonos and Robes of Itchiku Kubota*. Tokyo, Kodansha International, 1984.

¹⁵ Motoko Ito, Aiko Inoue. *Kimono*. Higashiosaka, Hoikusha, 1998; 樋口清之「装いの文化」東京一九七三年一二二頁。(Higuchi Kiyoyuki. *The culture of the dressing*. Tokyo, 1973); Yamanaka, Norio. *The book of kimono*. Tokyo etc., 1986. P. 31-131).

practices, yet with a reservation for a hidden paradox. On the one hand, the bodily (or nudity) was not a taboo *per se*, which can be explained through the Shinto cult of nature and the natural. Suffice to recall the first mention of ‘nudity’ in Shinto cosmology, which was attributed to *Ame-no Uzume*, who resorted to it in order to bring back the celestial light embodied by the goddess *Amaterasu*.

On the other hand, the story of *Ame-no Uzume*’s nudity tends to disappear in later interpretations of the myth, which testifies for the shift in moral norms. Indeed, the spread of Confucianism with its hierarchical model of the world order and sanctified ritual piousness precluded manifestations of what could be defined as ‘orgiastic’. Thus, the costume was meant to conceal what is natural and emphasize what is socially-acceptable and meaningful.

It ought to be emphasized that a certain ‘closedness’ in raiment was intrinsic not only to Japanese culture but also that of China and Korea, whose example Japan followed for a long time. Significantly, all over the Far East, and in Japan in particular, the amount of textile used for the garment denoted the social status of the wearer rather than performed protective function. In other words, the higher the status, the less was open to other people’s eyes. In as early as the *Nara* period (710 - 794), notable for Japan’s close cultural liaisons with China and Korea, one could not fail to notice social segregation in clothing not only in compliance the Chinese dress-code with its strict regimentation of the colour scheme and textile quality but also with the ‘concealed/open’ principle. Noble ladies clad themselves into long (more than full-length) robes, with sleeves wide enough to hide the fingertips. More than that, the right way to touch things was with a hand wrapped in the hem of the sleeve. The ladies of the highest rank would hold semitransparent fans to shield their faces from inquiring looks. The Emperor, with his sacred status, would commonly grant audiences in the throne hall, sitting behind a screen and announcing his will in whisper, which was then announced by a herald. In the rare moments, as the emperor would make an appearance from behind the screen, the court ladies formed the passage for him by crisscrossing their fans on long handles to produce a screen of sorts for no one to see his face.

The further transformation of raiment into the well-known *Heian jūnihitoe* (794-1185), “12-layer robe”, was a logical continuation of the ‘hidden bodily’ concept, resulting from the dual status of clothing as the wearer’s protection from the evil spirits and outward manifestation of a social rank. Conversely, the lower the rank, the lower seemed the level of the body’s protection. The lowest rank was commonly allotted to those in physical labour. Their semi-naked bodies ‘signaled’ for both hard work and low-ranked social marker.

Thus, it transpired, the perfect beauty was only what was... concealed – the principle deeply embedded into the Japanese culture, the ‘concealed/open’ dichotomy acquiring stable connotations as ‘positive/negative’. But it was not just the body that was supposed to be concealed in social interaction. The thoughts were also to be wrapped in the ‘festive clothing’ of the courteous phrases, as well as presents had to be gift-wrapped prior to the delivery.

Another manifestation of the denial of the body’s natural beauty was the wide-spread tradition of tattooing, applied for ‘protective’, ritual or penitentiary

reasons¹⁶. As was noted, the *Edo* period (1603–1868) witnessed a tattoo boom with people from lower walks of life. Those included craftsmen, as well as fire-fighters and city guards, who, on the one hand, were not allowed to wear a costly array and, on the other hand, were often left with no choice other than perform their duties in their 'birthday suit', so to say. For its heyday the practice of tattooing, however, owed much to the publication of the Japanese translation of the Chinese novel *Simpfen Suykogaden* ("The River Sloughs") illustrated by *Katsushika Hokusai* (1760 – 1849) and *Utagawa Kuniyoshi* (1797 – 1862), featuring the characters as wearing most exquisite tattoos¹⁷. By their artistic merits, the body paintings could compete with the best textile patterns, at the same time giving the naked body a 'clad' look.

The build-up of the national culture brought forth new behavioral stereotypes, which, in turn, dictated new approaches to the costume's volume and silhouette. The sprawl of Zen practices, as well as *Bushido* samurai ethic norms, with its cult of a highly disciplined, loyal and courteous man of a special mould, necessitated a new dress-code, whereby the multi-layer, loosely-descending drapes yielded to a strict silhouette, the effect achieved through enveloping a kimono around the torso. The hectic pace of living in the *Meiji* (1867-1912) and *Taisho* (1912-1926) periods completed the development of a new dress-code, whose final touch seemed to be the costume's 'closed ness' which answered the 'bow low' etiquette completely.

The transition from the free silhouette costume to the tightly fitting envelopment did not transfigure it into the 'another perfect body', as was the case in Europe. The Japanese did not deem necessary to emphasize certain parts of the body or to shape the perfect figure. If in Europe, the cut, folds, darts, carcass, corsette, and/or decolette and other contrivances served to build up an illusion of the wearer's body looking perfect to the then beauty standards, Japan went its own path. The kimono cut still retained the traditional feature of two pieces of cloth sewn together at the right angle, which, together with the make-up 'dampened' not only the age differences, but individual physique as well, whereby the role of the body was reduced to that of a moving 'mannequin'.

Lack of interest in the bodily *per se* is well documented in Japanese visual arts, which knew of no nude models; nor did it glorify the beauty of the body to produce an image like that of Venus in European arts. The Japanese artistic experience is reflected in the perception of clothing not as a means of 'shaping' the body, but of enwrapping it.

To sum up, the costume in Japanese culture was intended to emphasize the wearer's social status at the expense of 'degrading' the natural body. This was achieved through the application of the strict dress-code, whose idea was borrowed from ancient China, which regimented the colour scheme, shades, type and quality of the fabric – all determined by the wearer's position and social rank.

¹⁶ Kitamura, Takahiro. *Tattooing from Japan to the West*. PA, 2004; Gulik, W. R. Van. *Irezumi*. Leiden, 1982.

¹⁷ Успенский М.В. *Из истории японского искусства*. СПб., Гос.Эрмитаж, 2004. (Uspensky MV. *From the history of Japanese art*. St. Petersburg., Gos.Ermitazh, 2004).

I.2. Medieval Japan: Traditional Raiment as a Quintessence of Artistic Experience. The minimalism of the interior of a Japanese housing reflected in the perception of the kimono as a costly and valuable item. When hung on a special stand the kimono was intended to serve as a changeable screen thus integrated in the interior décor. Similarly, the interconnectedness between architecture and the kimono could be traced down on the example of urban motifs in raiment adornment, *The Sights of Kyoto*, *The Sights of Osaka*, and *The Sights of Nagasaki* among them. Note worthily, such kimonos featured concrete known edifices, rather than imaginary architectural motifs.

The political isolation during the *Tokugawa shogunate* accounts for almost a 250-year long autochthonous evolutionary period in Japanese culture, which was marked by what could be described as ‘interosculation of arts’, with existing techniques being honed and projected onto other arts. In particular, the kimono, combining two pieces of material stitched together at a right angle, allowed for almost infinite room for experimenting with motifs and techniques from other arts. Noma Seiroku, who seems to have been the first to point out the phenomenon, studied a variety of common motifs used in traditional painting, lacquer techniques and in costume patterns¹⁸. However, the connection between traditional raiment and other arts is much deeper. Thus, the kimono ornaments of the *Edo* period widely capitulated on such genres as ‘mountain-and-water’, ‘birds-and-flowers’, all these being decorative elements more common to *shoji* screens. On the other hand, the kimono had a reciprocal influence on the contemporary pictorial genres, resulting, in particular, in an emergence of *tagasode-byobu*, i.e., screens with the motif of kimono on hanging racks.

Alongside the proven floral motifs, the kimono artists began to resort to incorporating a hieroglyphic script into the pattern, thus making a textual reference to an old legend or tale, a historical novel or a *No* theatre performance. In this case the hieroglyphic script not only enhanced the visual message, but also rendered the kimono’s décor into an intellectual puzzle awaiting solution. A special challenge in this technique lay in the aesthetic calligraphy, which can be explained through the special status of calligraphy in Japanese visual arts. Iwao Nagasaki’s explanation of the phenomenon links it to the long-lasting peace in the *Edo* period, which ‘whetted the taste’ for *belles lettres*, theatre, and calligraphy among the then urban population¹⁹.

The advent of xylography accounted for the growing popularity of certain motifs with city-dwellers. Prevailing in textile patterns became ‘direct quotations’ from the well-known etchings and ever-developing enhancement of patterns. For example, the best series of *bijinga* (‘pictures of beautiful women’), a principal genre in Japanese printmaking, with its sophisticated patterns was a source of inspiration for textile manufacturers. Interestingly, some of *bijinga* prints served as advertising for the ready-made textiles. Such was, for example, the series of prints, “Summer Clothing. Modern Beauties”, by the renowned *bijinga* master *Kitagawa Utamaro* (ca. 1753 – 1806), published, in 1804-1806, by the Izumi-ya

¹⁸ Noma Seiroku. *op.cit.*

¹⁹ Nagasaki Iwao 1999. *op.cit.*

Publishing House. It was a common practice as it set a stamp on the emergence of a stereotype composition as envisioning a back view of the beauty to secure a better display of the kimono ornament. In this connection, Yamada Tokubee finds the *vue arrier* in *Hishikawa Moronobu's* (1618 – 1694) etchings fairly understandable, as the artist came from a family owning a textile shop and the idea of how to show a kimono in the best possible light came naturally to him²⁰.

II. The Traditional Costume in the Time of Modernization: Sea Change in Paradigms

II. 1. Rejection and Rehabilitation. The acquisition of the values of the Western civilization during *Meiji* and *Taisho* periods put the issue of the national identity into question anew. The dialogue with the West gave an impetus to reevaluation of the own cultural heritage, clothing included. The period was marked by the quest for balanced solutions, formalization and canonization of a new dress code.

Whereas at the ‘dawn’ of the *Meiji* reforms the European clothing was hailed as synonymous to progress, the early XX century witnessed a sea-change in the attitudes, whereby the traditional Japanese clothing was no longer regarded as a sign of provinciality. The rapid transformation of the Japanese society with a concurrent industrialization and militarization of the country prompted a new male image, whose lifestyle was best suited by a European-style formal dress. Conversely, the image of a female as a keeper of traditional values, a devoted wife and a wise mother of the family was only enhanced, with the traditional kimono answering this image to the full extent. Undeniable achievements in the country’s economy, coupled with victorious wars with China and Russia, caused a tidal wave in national consciousness. The advertising campaigns of that time made a wide use of the traditional Japanese clothing against the background of all possible contrivances of the Western civilization.

II.2. Traditional Costume as Symbol of National Unity. A further development in the kimono design was closely linked to the idea of a solemn Pan Asian mission for Japan. Imagery of mighty aircraft, military materiel and ammunition seemed to best reflect Japan’s speedy transformation from feudal provinciality to the cutting edge of industrialization worldwide, putting Japan at the forefront of the Pan Asian resistance to European colonization. That is why not only men’s, but also women’s clothing was influenced by military motifs at the beginning of 1930-1940s.

The noticeable resort to the motif of *Momotaro*, a fairytale hero who intrepidly fights the demons, served the same purpose, the message being simple to interpret: a boy is a would-be warrior. Interestingly, the *Momotaro* imagery featured widely not only in children’s wear, but female clothing as well.

No less popular in children’s clothing were the images of *Yoshitsune* (1159-

²⁰ 山田徳兵衛「図説日本人形史」東京二〇〇一年二二二頁。(Yamada Tokubee. *The history of Japanese dolls in the pictures*. Tokyo, 2001.P. 222).

1189) and *Benkei* (1155-1189), legendary historic figures. Curiously, some contemporary designers placed the heroes of Japanese antiquity – clad in medieval armour and armed with ancient swords – into the modern environment, i.e. under the Navy's colours and against the background of aircraft, men of war, and falling bombs.

The warfare called for an ideological backup. Apart from fairytale and legendary heroes, the military wanted those in flesh and blood to serve as role-models. Before long, the heroes were found in the person of three private engineers of the 84th regiment, Takeji Eshita (1910-1932), Inosuke Sakue (1910-1932) and Yuzuru Kitagawa (1910-1932). During the battle of Shanghai in 1932 they perished while trying to blow up enemy barbed wire field, blowing up 34 enemy soldiers and opening the venue of approach for the friendly troops. The deed has been subject to discussion and the rumor has it, that there might have been accidental deaths of soldiers, who wrongly used the demolition device. However, what is important is that the propaganda exploited the death of the soldiers to picture them as folk heroes to go down in Japan's history. The incident (with the heroic death in the end) reflected in the motif of the "three soldiers" who made their way into history as the subject of songs, radio plays, cartoons, movies and stage plays. Naturally, the imagery was also made use of in the kimono design, featuring in everything from *jubans* to women's sashes and dresses.

Female clothing was favored by the designers to carry the patriotic message. The classical imagery of the *sakura* in blossom and Mount Fuji were readily complimented with the state and military colors. Certain lines from the state anthem, *kimigayo*, produced the necessary décor when combined with a chrysanthemum ornament, the combination easily interpreted as follows: the lines of the state anthem convey the message of praise of and faith to the Emperor, whereas the chrysanthemum symbolized the *mon* (coat of arms) of the Royal House. It would not be an exaggeration to note, that the national colors, or their symbolic representation, *hinomaru* fans were the most popular motif in the period from the first Sino-Japanese war to the Japan's loss in the Great Pacific war.

The economic situation in the country seriously deteriorated towards the year 1943. It was when the motto 'Luxury is our enemy' appeared. Silk clothing looked inappropriate and the so-called patriotic costume made of baggy pants and jacket alike came to become the symbol of the nation's unity.

The following year, Japan found itself in what seemed an economic deadlock. By 1944, the country's expenditure exceeded the income four-fold, causing the state to resort to the 'severe economy' measures, throwing all resources into the military. The high-quality silk then went into the production of parachutes and wearing a luxury kimono was looked on as bordering on the reluctance to support the Army. It should come as no surprise that costly kimonos went out of fashion to yield to austerity, not so much due to inconvenience in the wartime but out of moral scruples. *Yukio Mishima* (1925-1970) was precise in describing the attitudes towards the traditional raiment in times of the war, "There was a young woman sitting in the room who caught my eye. No surprise, for she was wearing a

luxurious kimono – impossible in the wartime! Any woman who would venture outdoors in such an improper array would be brought to shame by any passerby for lack of patriotism and driven back home to change.”²¹ Indeed, the contemporaries reminisced that in the capital the ladies wearing a silken kimono were warned with a “Luxury-is-our-enemy” card.

All these paved way for new clothing, *kokuminfuku* (lit. “national uniform”), envisaging a military-style jacket for men and a narrow-sleeved jacket and a *mompe*, a pair of baggy trousers, for women, the pattern taken from the special clothing of the Edo period, proved convenient in the wartime. From that time on, many women in Japan still wear a *kokuminfuku* when doing the home chores.

II.3. Democratization of the Society and a New Dress-code. The modernization of the country disbanded the social stratification of the Chinese dress code, with its rigid regimentation of fabrics, colors and contours, which arrived in Japan on the train of Confucianism. The code allowed for easy orientation in the ‘senior/junior’ and ‘superior/inferior’ dichotomy. The *Meiji* reforms meliorated the existing ranks making all items of clothing equally accessible to the entire society. *Hakama*, which initially was aristocratic clothing, became the official outwear of teachers and students. That is why the *Taisho* period reminds the Japanese of a woman in *hakama*.

However, the disbandment of the outdated social ranking system brought forth such new concepts as *reiso* (the appropriate, or polite, clothing) and *kimono-no kaku* (level of clothing). The new division classifies all clothing as *reiso* or “other than *reiso*”. Within the *reiso*, all kimonos fall into discernable ranks as to the color, kind of pattern and number of coats of arms in the given family.

The ‘level’ of a kimono must correspond to that of the event it is worn to, as a kimono per se, in Japanese culture, is one way of establishing tacit rapport and creating a harmonious atmosphere. As was observed by Yu. M. Lotman, ‘one feature of fashion is that it is always targeted at a certain addressee: either the wearer or the beholder’²². The latter is typical of the Japanese approach to clothing as recognizing the priority of ‘the other’. Therefore, the choice of clothing is not so much a matter of own preference but a dictate of the society, thus reflecting the image of one’s ‘self’ in the eyes of the others. As distinct from Europe, where clothing is a means of manifesting one’s individuality, in Japan it is a medium of establishing universal harmony.

As markedly distinct is the dress ‘conduct’ of heads of state. Such ‘masters of the world’ as *Napoleon*, *Hitler*, and *Stalin* practiced emphatic austerity in their clothing. This meant to symbolize that they were the ones who could afford to look down on others, or, as Yu. Lotman remarked, ‘the whole world was just a spectacle for them’²³. Following the European suit in clothing did not significantly

²¹ Мисима Юкио. *Избранное*. Москва, Терра, 1996. P. 176. (Yukio Mishima. *Favourites*. Moscow: Terra, 1996. P. 176.)

²² Лотман, М.Ю. *Непредсказуемые механизмы культуры*. Таллин, 2010. P. 82. (Lotman M.Y. *Unpredictable mechanisms of culture*. Tallinn, 2010. P. 82.)

²³ *Ibid.*, p.93

change the Japanese approach to it as an important constituent of social conduct, whereby adhering to the costume etiquette is compulsory for all members of the community. More than that, initiating changes to traditional dress code, the Japanese emperors themselves set example for the rest of the country.

II. 4. The Kimono Nowadays: a Spiritual Dimension. In the post-WWII period the European suit eventually established itself as a formal dress, while the kimono reserved the status of festive raiment. The author's survey of 2005-2006 showed that it was the kimono, which was held in highest esteem by the Japanese as a symbol of contemporary Japanese culture. At the same time, the transition of the traditional raiment from every day wear to the solely festive status brought about some certain incompetence, with the 'third generation', in the art of putting on and wearing a kimono. To meet this need, numerous schools run workshops in the art of putting on and wearing a kimono (*kimono kitsuke*).

However, another term, *sodo* (lit. "the way to put on a kimono") (similar to *sado* – tea ceremony, *kado* – the way of flowers, *kodo* – the way of **Incense** etc), has been gaining in popularity recently. The coinage is often attributed to Yamanaka Norio (1960s). It is worth mentioning, that all these terms come from "*bushido*" (武士道, **Way of the Warrior-Knight**) and appeared after the *Meiji* revolution, when the samurai class was abolished. Thus, the development of the "way" idea can be reviewed as contamination of the military ethics complex, which has always been the core of the Japanese upbringing.

The perception of the kimono within the above-mentioned context and the establishment of the notion '*sodo*' in the end of XX c. is a logical ending of the military ethics code transformation within the present 'cast-free' and demilitarized society. It is not hard to discern the military culture remains within the aesthetics of wearing a kimono, which is aimed not only at the celerity and rationality of the procedure and neat appearance, but also at achieving full concentration, or a state which the Japanese call "the spirit alert".

It is worth mentioning that although both *kitsuke* and *sodo* could be understood as "mastery in putting on and wearing a kimono" the latter implies not only the expertise in combining the right garments in the right way and putting them on quickly and neatly, but also observing a moral and ethical code and a way for self-development. The art of *sodo* has become an integral part of the kimono culture. *Yamanaka Norio* (born in 1928) can boast of numerous think-alikes, and his 'philosophy of clothing' has been developed in the works of other researchers in the traditional culture. *Higuchi Kiyoyuki* (1909-1997) describes *sodo* as follows. "Putting a kimono on is an act of general human significance and, before even beginning to study the kimono, one should comprehend why people wear kimonos in the first place. If it does not develop you spiritually, you can call it 'technique' and nothing else. Firstly, one should understand what a kimono is about, then – appreciate the beauty of the kimono, and finally - to begin to view the kimono as a manifestation of one's personal traits (*sodo*). We have to wear something, we have to eat and drink, but what if we could not develop ourselves spiritually, what if we removed the idea of a 'way', what is the value of a human being then? Dressing warmly in winter? Even

animals do so simply by hiding into their winter dens. It is the spiritual exploits that differ human beings from animals. They enrich your heart, and, thus, the society. If there is an idea of a 'way' to everything, even everyday activities, then there will be eternal peace and a way for development for a country.

To sum up the thoughts on *sodo's* role in the life of the Japanese, Higuchi Kiyoyuki determines its social, cultural and humanistic meanings. He writes: "If one is wearing a kimono, which destroys the balance within society, the society perceives the person as a lunatic. Dressing up in the same clothes, as the Chinese do, is also no appropriate for us. The idea of a 'way' cannot exist without education. The notion 'sodo' suggests a way for self-improvement as well as the melioration of the society we live in.

Thus, at the turn of XX – XXI c.c., the Japanese raiment seemed to transcend to a spiritual dimension, functioning not only as a means of national and cultural identity, but also as a way of moral and ethical upbringing. By changing oneself by way of putting on a kimono, one helps promote the spiritual in the country, and, hence, in the world²⁴.

Summing up, it ought to be emphasized, that the evolution of the Japanese raiment unfaillingly reflects the changes in historical-and-cultural paradigms. The classical period, prior to the *Meiji* reforms, was thus marked with the Chinese and Korean influence on philosophy of the costume as a multilayer robe set rejecting the natural bodily and elevating one's social status.

The establishment of the Japanese raiment coincided in time with the sprawl of Zen-Buddhism and Confucianism. The Zen practices, which regimented the aesthetics of the interior and the ethic code of conduct, could not fail to influence the emergence of a new type of clothing, namely that enwrapping the body.

The enhancement of the textile techniques and the special significance of the costume in the society's perception enabled the projection of the centuries-old artistic experience onto the raiment decor.

Paradoxically, the rapid modernization of Japan, which seemingly prompted the rejection of the national costume as synonymous to backwardness, not only accounted for its later comeback, but also for its 'revamp', both aesthetically and ethically. On the turn of the XXI century, the Japanese traditional raiment has come to serve not only as festive clothing, but also as an idiom of cultural identification and spiritual self-improvement.

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²⁴ Norio Yamanaka 2002, *op.cit.*

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