

Kimono

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Kimono is a traditional garment, and Japan's national wear used to wear in any formal situation for both males and females. It is a long, loose robe with a wide sleeve, and the wearer uses sash, wide and long cloth, to roll the kimono west tightly. Japanese people have worn the Kimono since about 710. This garment is a significant cultural identity that relates closely to the lives of Japanese people. My mother is a fashion designer who runs her own fashion brand remaking Kimono into new fashion items. Since childhood, there were various Kimonos in my house, and I used to see my mother working on Kimono for her brand. Therefore, Kimono is not only a garment for me but also a symbol I feel familiar with. Also, as I am an artist and have interested in the fashion world, I am sure that Kimono is a part of my identity and I need to figure out what Kimono is to know myself as an artist. This research paper will mainly explore Kimono's past and present, how it has been inherited to today's society, and how Kimono has been globalized.

Kimono is derived from the Kosode, which was worn by Japanese people since the Nara period (710-794). Kosode is a garment with a body, sleeves, and a pair of collars that drape from both shoulders and cross over each other in front of the chest. It was initially worn as an undergarment and was the garment people mainly wore from the end of the tenth century through to the beginning of the eleventh century. Since Samurai, who were the hereditary military nobility holding a Japanese sword, began to appear, Taboso, a single tube-shaped costume, was a samurai's daily clothing (or formal public clothing) since the Heian period (794-1185). The shape of the garment was similar to Kosode. As Japan was engaged in warfare from the late Muromachi period (1336– 1573) to the Momoyama period (1568–1603), there was a shortage of textiles and clothing. That resulted the Kosode, the simple garment, became the formal outerwear for Samurai in the ascending class. Kosode was the main and common garment worn by Japanese people from the lower class to the upper class.

As economic prosperity increased during the Muromachi and Momoyama eras, and through to the Edo period (1603–1868), females began to wear more decorative garments than Kosode. The shape of the garment is based on Kosode. Patterns on clothes became larger, and loose clothes with longer sleeves, or length, became popular. From the Meiji period (1868–1912), Japanese leaders encouraged people to adopt a Western-style dress in order to demonstrate Japan's alignment with the modernizing movement which was taking place in Europe and the U.S. It gave people options to choose clothes to wear. Many Japanese people began to mix Japanese fashion styles, Kimono, and Western fashion styles. In 1923, the Great Kanto Earthquake was occurred in the Kanto area, including Tokyo, in Japan. That disaster led more than one hundred thousand people to die and more than three hundred thousand buildings to collapse and be burned. That disaster also boosted the modernization of the Japanese fashion style. As people wearing Western clothes survived more than people wearing Kimono at the disaster, people tended to choose clothes that are comfortable to move. Kimono is not appropriate to move quickly when there is a disaster. After the disaster happened, buildings were rebuilt into the western-style building due to modernization and durability. As people began to use a chair in their daily lives, western-style clothes are more appropriate while Kimono is not appropriate to sit on a chair due to the structure.

During the Showa period (1926–89), Japan had experienced high economic growth From 1955 to 1973. In Gross National Product (GNP), Japan ranked second in the world in 1968. Until that time, many people are still demanding Kimono as they could afford. However, after the economic growth, Japan's economy had collapsed, and the Kimono market was rapidly shrinking. As Kimono is expensive due to the high cost to create, people cannot afford expensive clothes and save money. Also, there is a shift in consumer attitude that they buy less and keep recycling. According to the survey by Kimono Houshoku Company, the market scale of Kimono, which was about one and a half trillion yen in 1989, has been shrinking, to less than 300 billion yen in 2018. Western-style dresses were more worn by the general public. Kimono is considered formal attire to wear at ceremonies, such as a funeral and the coming of age ceremony, a Japanese holiday to congratulate people who became 20 years old. According to the

survey about the frequency of wearing Kimono in 2011 by Mari Yoshida, an associate professor at Ritsumeikan University, 20% of respondent wore Kimono only once in their lives, 10% wear once every five years, 5% wear once every two years, and 50% have never worn in their lives. The kimono industry is at a critical stage nowadays, and Kimono is not relevant to many Japanese people's lives as compared to the Kimono market before the Meiji period.

As the Kimono market tends to shrink, it leads the Kimono craftsman and Kimono merchants to challenge maintaining their business. As my mother was born in a family operating Kimono store in Japan, she experienced the Kimono shop's prosperity and decline. In the 1980s, when she was a child, the Kimono store was always full of customers. As Kimono is a luxury good and purchased by many consumers, its business performance was in good shape. However, as she gets older, customers gradually stopped coming to the store, and her parents decided to close their store when she was 25 years old. She realized the cruelty of society at that time, she said. The closure of Kimono stores also influences craftspersons who create Kimono to quit their business. They can maintain their business as there is a Kimono store in which they deliver their products. Also, as machines and inkjets became popular to produce Kimono, Kimono, which is more affordable than handmade Kimono began to be provided to consumers. That also boosts the shortage of craftspersons because the Kimono they create is at a high price. Due to the low frequency of wearing Kimono nowadays, people tend to buy cheaper Kimono or borrow Kimono from others or Kimono rental store. Decreasing craftspersons is a severe problem as the methods of creating Kimono are in danger of dying out. There are various types of Kimono, and each of them is made in different ways and processes. For example, of Kimono, there are Ryukyukasuri in Okinawa and Nishijinori in Kyoto. Maintaining the Kimono business is essential to inheriting the Kimono culture and creation method to the next generation.

The Kimono business is required to change the form to survive. As today's people do not wear Kimono on a daily basis, today's Kimono business is not only selling Kimono but also selling merchandise using Kimono fabrics. There is a Japanese fashion brand, Bon Bricolage by Reiko Hosonji, which utilize the antique kimono fabric to create fashion items. As Kimono is used to wear in any special events and been inherited

generation after generation in the family, the Kimono is a thing full of precious memories. Therefore, there is a struggle within people that they want to keep holding and wear Kimono, but they only wear them at ceremonies. The fashion designer, Reiko Hosenji, accepts the Kimono from customers and remakes Kimono into a new fashion item and returns it to them. Therefore, they can wear the Kimono, which is full of memories, as a different fashion item daily and keep holding and inheriting generation after generation. Also, there are Kimono businesses that sell Kimono items to visitors from foreign countries. There is Yamato Craft Gallery at Narita airport in Tokyo, a store selling kimono, general merchandise, and interiors made of Kimono fabrics. Foreigners at the airport can experience the Kimono culture at the store while seeing the products at the end of their trips in Japan. Kimono has been changed the form to be consumed and worn daily in today's people's lives.

In today's world, Kimono has been gathering attention around the world. Masao Hosoo is a Japanese business person who led Kimono to be more famous around the world. He is the CEO of HOSOO, a Kyoto-based textile company founded in 1688 and specializes in superior quality fabrics for high-end interior and fashion design. The company collaborated with high-end fashion brands, which are Dior, Chanel, and Louis Vuitton. HOSOO provided the textile of Nishijinori, one of the Kimono's brand in Kyoto, to these fashion brands and hotels for the interior. These works made HOSOO famous worldwide, and Kimono gathers more attention from various kinds of industries. It shows that there is still a demand of Kimono from foreign businesses.

In conclusion, the Kimono industry is at a critical stage of dying out, but there is still a high demand, especially from foreign businesses, and Kimono has possibilities to develop more. As society and people's lives have been changed dramatically, I understand that culture should change the form to meet today's people's demand to survive. People relevant to the culture need flexibility, not getting constrained by the idea of how the culture should be. Also, as I see the business of HOSOO, I am impressed by how culture builds the relationship between the country and foreign country. As Kimono attracts many people around the world, they can feel Japanese culture and Japanese lives from Kimono even though they are not Japanese. Besides, as a migrant, a Japanese living in the U.S., I realized Kimono is the object that reminds

me of Japan and my childhood even while staying abroad. That experience, realizing connection with Japan and feeling comfortable to see the design, shows Kimono is a significant part of my identity as a Japanese and an artist. To reveal more about Kimono, I am interested in what aspects of Kimono attract non-Japanese people. That question would lead to finding a new style of Kimono culture to develop and evolve.

Sources

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