Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

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Entrance:

Unknown maker, Japan
Fireman's parade leather coat (kawabaori) with Hon family crest, 19th century
Cloth: deerskin; smoked resist
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.121

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Curator's Statement

“Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan” centers on the importance of local resources for human survival and comfort. With the collapse of global supply chains during the Covid-19 pandemic, it’s an especially meaningful message now. This exhibition also debuts the Thomas Murray Collection at the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia). A well-known independent researcher and art expert with a fantastic eye for textiles from around the globe, Murray built his Japanese collection over nearly 40 years. In 2019, the museum acquired the entire collection of more than 200 outstanding textiles, which catapulted Mia to among the foremost collections of Japanese textiles in the world. After nine years spent in pursuit of this collection, I am very excited to share more than 120 textiles here with you now.

Textiles are an intrinsic part of life across all cultures throughout history. No other medium at once communicates social standing, cultural values, and aesthetics while also carrying out a functional purpose. Because these textiles were made to be worn and used, we refer to their creators as makers; nevertheless, their creations show pure artistry. This exhibition presents textiles made between around 1750 and 1930 that derive from three geographical areas belonging to present-day Japan: the northern islands, including Hokkaido, home to the indigenous Ainu people living in a climate comparable to ours in the Midwest; the Japanese mainland; and the subtropical Okinawan Islands, on the same latitude of the Bahamas. Showcasing regional craft traditions (mingei), these textiles are not the standard silk kimonos usually featured in displays as the typical clothing from Japan (though, in fact, reserved only for the upper classes). Instead, you will see a wide range of textiles for farmers, fishermen, and others made from local materials, including fish skin, paper, elm bark, nettle, banana leaf, hemp, wisteria, deerskin, cotton, and wool. Indeed, “Dressed by Nature” not only celebrates the resourcefulness of humans in general, but also the ingenuity of these makers, all unknown by name to us, who created beautiful, functional works of art.

Dr. Andreas Marks
Mary Griggs Burke Curator of Japanese and Korean Art
Director of the Clark Center for Japanese Art

Entrance: Nivkh people

Indigenous Textiles of Asia's Far North

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People native to Asia's far north include the Ainu and the Nivkh. They made intricately patterned and technically complex garments from materials close at hand or received in trade. These garments reflect intimate relationships with the natural and spiritual worlds, as well as with their neighbors, China to the west and Japan to the south.

The Nivkh people inhabited the lower Amur River region of Siberia and the northern part of Sakhalin Island, now parts of Russia. Their lives centered on hunting and fishing. Nivkh women used the skins of chum salmon and Amur carp to make extraordinary clothing for special occasions. The skin was removed in one piece and then dried, kneaded, and moistened until supple. The result is a lightweight, durable material that is also water- and wind-repellent. These women's festival coats (hukht) evoke Chinese and Manchu robes. They are richly decorated with appliqué and embroidery of abstracted,zoomorphic designs that represent masks, birds, serpents, and dragons of Chinese origin.

Unknown maker, Nivkh people, Russia
Woman's fish-skin festival coat (hukht), late 19th century
Cloth: fish skin, sinew (reindeer), cotton thread; appliqué and embroidery
Promised gift of Thomas Murray L2019.66.2

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Unknown maker, Nivkh people, Russia
Woman's fish-skin festival coat (hukht), 19th century
Cloth: fish skin, sinew (reindeer), cotton thread; appliqué and embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.31

This woman's festival coat is pieced together from fish skins. Its tapered sleeves and diagonal closure result from cultural exchanges with the Manchus and Mongols. The use of cotton thread and red- and blue-dyed areas likewise speaks to its maker's access to trade networks that reached the area.
Much of the surface, especially on the back, features curvilinear motifs that showcase the exacting skill and attention to symmetry of the woman, or women, who made it. Leather pieces line and are stitched to the surface. While highly stylized, many of the design motifs can nonetheless be identified: birds with outstretched wings, masks, and the sinuous lines of serpents or dragons. Some elements may derive from Nivkh traditions—for example, Nivkh people say the duck created their land from its own feathers—whereas others, like the masks and dragons, likely come from China.

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Galleries 1 and 2: Ainu

Ainu Robes

Old items carry the weight of the times with them. I could easily envision an Ainu woman spending many evening hours lovingly sewing clothes for her family by the light of a fireplace or a kerosene lamp. —Eiko Ota, Ainu, 2013

The Ainu are native to Japan's northernmost islands and parts of the Russian Far East. The garments in this gallery and the next were created by Ainu women for family members as formal attire worn at events, such as weddings and religious ceremonies.

Spirit beings, called kamuy, coexist with Ainu people and can both help and harm. Made in part from fibers harvested from elm bark or nettles, these robes feature elaborate embroidered patterns meant to please the eye and protect the wearer. Designs are placed where a person might be most vulnerable—the back, the robes' openings—to repel disease, violence, or harmful spirits. For the Ainu women who create the robes, the act of stitching is a physical way to invest prayers and love into the garment, for both the healing and protection of the wearer.

The Indigenous Ainu People and Japan

The Ainu people are native to Hokkaido (the northernmost of Japan's main islands), the Kuril Islands, and the southern part of Sakhalin Island, which today belongs to Russia. Japan first expanded its influence into Hokkaido in the 1400s by establishing trading posts, and its presence steadily grew over the centuries that followed. Until the middle of the 1800s, most Ainu people continued to maintain their own culture and language, but a growing number were persuaded or forced to work for the new Japanese-run fishing industry.

In 1871, during Japan's modernization under Emperor Meiji, the Japanese government banned some Ainu customs in an effort to assimilate them. Subsequently, their lands were appropriated through several governmental land acts. The Hokkaido Former Aborigines Protection Act of 1899 sought to fully integrate the Ainu into Japanese society by declaring them to be "former aborigines," removing Ainu from their traditional ways of life, recasting them as farmers, and demanding they learn the Japanese language.

It was not until 1997 that the act was replaced by the Ainu Cultural Promotion Law, which provides government financial support for the promotion and maintenance of Ainu culture. In 2019, a bill recognized the Ainu as indigenous people of northern Japan and banned

discrimination against them. In 2017, about 13,000 people identified as Ainu, but less than a dozen are fluent speakers of their native language. Relearning weaving and embroidery techniques is one way Ainu people are now reclaiming their culture.

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Attush robe with exceptional decoration of fish bones and tassels, 18th century
Cloth: elm bark fiber; cotton appliqué and embroidery, silk, wool, sturgeon scales, shells, bird bones, silk tassels, metal, stone; lining: cotton
The Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2022.6

This utterly unique robe is an exciting document of the cultural exchange between the peoples of Japan's far north and their neighbors. Unlike any other known Ainu robe, this one is decorated with objects: silk tassels and talismanic pendants created from sea creatures, mostly sturgeon scales. The garment itself can be dated to the 18th century, and the decoration was added later. The sturgeon scales originated in the Russian Far East; either they were traded south to Hokkaido or the robe made its way north. One theory is that this robe was owned by the captain of a Japanese merchant ship (kitamaebune) that sailed the trade route from Hokkaido south to Nagasaki. Such captains are known to have fancied rare, exceptional robes they picked up on their journeys.

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Attush robe with patterned collar, late 19th century
Cloth: elm-bark fiber; cotton appliqué and embroidery, katazome (stencil resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.24

Attush (elm bark) robes are made of plain-weave bast fiber made from the bark of the Manchurian elm (ohyō). Such robes were mainly created by the Ainu on Hokkaido, while those on Sakhalin predominantly worked with nettle fiber (irakusa). Harvesting the elm bark is a laborious and lengthy process for the textile maker. First, 5- to 6-inch-wide strips of bark are peeled off a young tree. After discarding the outer layer, the inner bark is soaked for around a week, then scraped and thoroughly washed. After drying in the sun, the fibers are carefully split, twisted, and tied into a skein. The resulting thread has a warm, yellowish-brown color. Like most bast fiber textiles, such as linen, these garments become more supple and soft with wear.

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Unknown maker, Sakhalin Ainu people, Russia
Attush robe with white stripes, second half 19th century
Cloth: elm-bark fiber with nettle fiber striping; cotton appliqué and embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.2

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Attush robe with light-blue stripes, late 19th century
Cloth: elm-bark fiber; cotton striping, appliqué, and embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.21

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Attush robe with light- and dark-blue stripes, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: elm-bark fiber; cotton striping, appliqué, and embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.28

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Unknown maker, Sakhalin Ainu people, Russia
Retarpe robe with detailed embroidery, 18th–19th century
Cloth: nettle fiber; cotton appliqué and embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.23
Ainu people did not cultivate plants for textiles; instead, they harvested them in the wild. Retarpe robes are made from plain-weave nettle fiber, a durable, warm, and light-colored material that offered Ainu women a neutral backdrop for their intricate embroidery and appliqué. The Sakhalin Ainu, a distinct group of people from the Ainu of Hokkaido, produced retarpe robes like this one. Because of their proximity to China, the Sakhalin Ainu were in contact with the Chinese government dating from the 14th century. They exchanged fur for Chinese silk, which Sakhalin Ainu women incorporated into their robes, along with Chinese textile design patterns. Simple garments that lack an elaborate design on the back were more regularly used and not confined to formal occasions.

Unknown maker, Sakhalin Ainu people, Russia
Retarpe robe, mid-19th century
Cloth: nettle fiber; indigo dye, silk, cotton appliqué and embroidery
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2019.20.22

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Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Red, blue, and white kaparamip robe, late 19th century
Cloth: cotton; cotton appliqué and embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.4
Kaparamip are robes made of cotton decorated with a large number of white appliqués in cutout patterns. In the early 17th century, merchants brought cotton cloth to the Ainu, who employed it as a thinner, lighter alternative to traditional materials. Cotton offered Ainu women new aesthetic opportunities, yielding patterns that were more fluid and organic than those found on other types of robes. In both kaparamip shown here, the pieces of white cotton are stitched together to form one large appliqué that covers the entire garment. The sleeve openings and the edges are embellished with pieces of red-dyed cotton, intended to ward off spirits.

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Kaparamip robe with red cotton fabric border, first half 20th century
Cloth: cotton; cotton appliqué and embroidery
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2019.20.27

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Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Ruunpe robe with red, white, and yellow pattern, early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; cotton appliqué and embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.8
Ruunpe are the most intricate and colorful of Ainu robes. Ainu women rendered Japanese trade cotton, as well as recycled silk textiles, into large, multicolored appliquéd designs. A close look reveals the sophisticated, intentional, and painstaking approach Ainu women brought to their work. In some examples, it is clear they viewed patterned cloth as an opportunity to add a vibrant design dimension, juxtaposing or interlayering it with embroidered lines and solid colors.

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Ruunpe robe, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; cotton appliqué and embroidery
Gift of Thomas Murray in honor of Georgia Sales 2020.100.1

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Chikarkarpe robe, late 19th century
Cloth: cotton; cotton appliqué and embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.6
Chikarkarpe robes are made of embellished trade cotton. First they are decorated with appliquéd dyed cotton, and then they are embroidered with intricate, yet open, linear designs. Approaches differed from one region to another based on individual and popular tastes and the availability of materials.

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Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Chikarkarpe robe with heart-shaped embroidery, late 19th century
Cloth: cotton; cotton appliqué and embroidery
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2019.20.16

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Chijiri robe with yellow embroidery, early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; cotton embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.26
Chijiri is a general term used for Ainu garments that are directly embroidered without appliqué. Absent the added layer of appliquéd cloth, the embroidery must stand on its own, demanding perfection. Ainu women selected thread colors, such as yellow, to contrast with, while also complement, the rich tones of these robes. They also considered various types of stitchwork—here, chain and couch—for the distinct visual qualities they offered. and then rendered stitches that are precise, small, and uniform.

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Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Chijiri robe with taupe embroidery, early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; cotton embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.7

Hayashi Kyokudō, born 1829
Portrait of an Ainu man, second half 19th century
Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
The John R. Van Derlip Fund; purchase from the collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark
2013.31.121

A dignified Ainu elder wearing an ornate attush (elm bark) robe is sitting on a cattail mat inside a dwelling, attending a ceremony. Above his right shoulder hangs a stick with a bundle of curly wood shavings (inau) used to attract and interact with spirits (kamuy). In fact, this painting, which may be based on a photograph, is packed with Ainu and Japanese objects; actual examples of some of them can be found in these galleries.
In the foreground are three lacquer bowls on stands, each with a ceremonial stick (ikupasuy) lying on top. These sets were used in libation ceremonies that included offerings of millet beer or sake. A typical Ainu dagger in a carved wood sheath and a Japanese short sword in a black lacquered sheath hang above him. Flanking him are large lacquered storage containers with three feet, called sintoko (Japanese: hokai). Highly treasured, these containers and the lidded bowl in the lower-right corner were traded from the mainland.

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Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Bag (ketush), second half 19th century
Cloth: elm-bark fiber; cotton appliqué and embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.10

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Sword (emushi) and holder (emushi-at), late 18th–early 19th century
Sword: metal (iron), wood. Sword holder: cloth: elm-bark fiber; cotton appliqué and embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.11a,b

The Ainu did not themselves manufacture steel; they obtained their blades through trade with the Japanese. Swords (emushi) were therefore rare and valued for social and ceremonial functions. Some swords were refitted with a new wood scabbard carved by Ainu men; here the sheath is covered with decorated metal pieces.
Contrary to the Japanese custom in the early modern period of carrying swords through the sash, an Ainu man used a fabric sword holder (emushi-at). Made by his wife or close female relative, the holder allowed the man to carry his sword across the back or over the shoulder.

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Carrying strap (tara), late 18th–early 19th century
Cloth: elm-bark fiber, cotton; braiding, twining
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.12

This head strap, or tara, was used by a woman to carry heavy items, such as a small child or a bundle of firewood, on her back. The ends were tied around the item, which was then lifted and suspended by the woven band placed on her forehead.
As Ainu society changed during the Meiji era (1868–1912), this type of strap lost its function in daily life; it was repurposed as a burial accessory.

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Pair of leggings (hoshi), late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; cotton embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.13a,b

All Ainu wore leggings, which were fastened by two textile strings: one at the top and attached under the knee, the other bound around the ankle. This pair is missing the strings. It is decorated like a chijiri robe with direct embroidery.

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Apron (mantari), late 19th century
Cloth: elm-bark fiber; cotton appliqué and embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.19

Worn by Ainu men and women, aprons were part of the traditional regalia and thus decorated with the same ornamental patterns as found on Ainu robes. Much like our aprons, they are a rectangular strip of cloth attached to two strips of fabric to fasten in the back. Aprons were worn atop other garments to keep them from opening and exposing the body.

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Pair of shoes for a deceased person (raiguru-ker), late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: elm-bark fiber, cotton thread with braiding
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.30a,b

These are not regular footwear, but shoes for the dead. Made from elm bark fiber twisted into thicker yarn than that used for Ainu robes, they are open at the ankle for ease of slipping on, leaving the threads visible.

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Unknown maker, Sakhalin Ainu people, Russia
Pair of sealskin boots for a woman (tukar-ker), early 19th century
Cloth: sealskin; sinew sewing, cotton appliqué and embroidery
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.33a,b

In temperate weather, Ainu typically went barefoot. Footwear was used for hunting on snow and ice. From late autumn to early summer, the Sakhalin Ainu hunted seals for fur, meat, and oil. This pair of boots is made of sealskin sewn together with animal sinew. Light, hard-wearing, and water-resistant, sealskin was an ideal material whose popularity and utility were shared by other Pacific Rim cultures, including the Nivkh of Siberia and the Inuit of North America.

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Figured mat, late 19th–early 20th century
Cattail, elm-bark fiber, cotton thread; woven
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.17

Mats made from cattail, a wetland plant with a thick, flowering spike, were used for several purposes. Hung on the wall, they formed a barrier to help insulate the house. During ceremonies, they were placed on the floor for sitting.

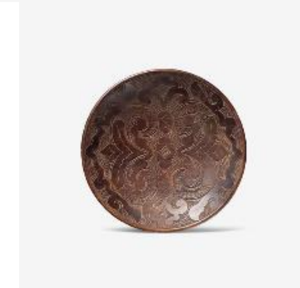
Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Woman's neck ornament with medallion (shitoki), late 19th century
Beads (glass), plant fiber, molded metal, lacquered wood
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.32

On ceremonial occasions, Ainu women wore necklaces (tamasay) made of glass beads. While fashionable, the necklaces also were believed to offer the wearer spiritual protection. The beads could have originated from Russia, China, or even Central Asia; medallions (shitoki) were imported from China and Japan. Highly treasured, especially those with medallions, these necklaces were passed down from generation to generation.

Likely made by Japanese craftsmen, this medallion is decorated with floral motifs—encircled triple hollyhock in the middle and bamboo leaves with gentian flowers on the rim—that are typical family crests in Japan.

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Oval plate, late 19th–early 20th century
Wood
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.36

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Round plate, late 19th–early 20th century
Wood
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.37



Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Ceremonial stick (ikupasuy), late 19th–early 20th century
Wood, pigment
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.38

Ceremonial sticks, or ikupasuy, were used by Ainu men in libation ceremonies that included offerings of millet beer or sake. After sprinkling the alcohol on the ground with such a stick to feed the gods and spirits (kamuy), the man used it to prevent his mustache from getting into the drink. All sticks are unique, and their central section is always carved—often with animals and floral designs, sometimes also with narratives or abstract elements. The simple designs at the ends represent the male bloodline, thereby identifying the owner to the gods and spirits.

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Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Ceremonial stick (ikupasuy), late 19th–early 20th century
Wood
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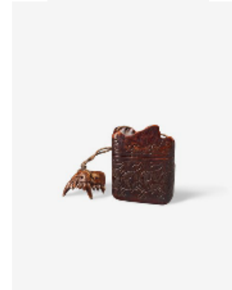
2019.20.39

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Single-case inro with bear-jaw toggle, late 19th–early 20th century
Wood; bear jaw; bead (glass); fiber
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.40



Ornamental boxes with compartments, or inro, were typical accessories of a Japanese outfit, commonly used for transporting medicine. The inro dangled from the sash with the aid of a toggle (netsuke) attached by a cord. Carved from wood, this inro has its upper end left raw and uncarved, contrasting dramatically to the regular, intricate surface pattern that covers the rest. The lower jawbone of a bear, its incisors prominently visible, serves as a netsuke.

Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Tobacco box and pipe holder (tanpakuop), late 19th century
Wood, deer bone plaques; bead (glass); wood; fiber
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.41

This smoking kit consists of a tobacco box and pipe holder, to which a pipe would have once been attached. Prestige accessories of Ainu men, smoking kits were prominently carried on the belt; the pipe holder was tucked through the belt, leaving the box to dangle. Records show that when Ainu men met for the first time, they exchanged their kits for a smoke and to provide an opportunity to admire each other's kit.

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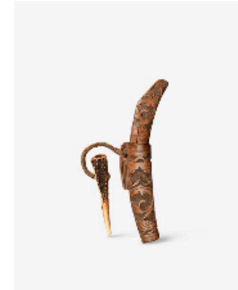
Unknown maker, Ainu people, Japan
Knife (makiri) with toggle, late 19th–early 20th century
Wood; deerhorn; fiber
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.42



Ainu men were woodcarvers. Used as a cutting tool as well as for defense, knives (makiri) were an essential element of an Ainu man's outfit. Men carved the sheaths themselves, choosing their own patterns. As a symbol of his carving skills, the knife was suspended prominently from the belt and fastened by a netsuke-like toggle, in this case a piece of deer horn.

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Gallery 3: Travel

Travel

Today we associate most travel with pleasure; however, in preindustrial Japan travel was not for the fainthearted. Long-distance travelers needed permission by the government, which sought to control the movement of people in great numbers to prevent uprisings by the feudal lords. Normal travelers navigated the unpaved roads on foot, while the more affluent could rent horses or be carried by porters or servants in sedans or palanquins. Food and shelter were expensive, making travel special and rare. These hardships called for simple, utilitarian clothes that were either durable enough to withstand the rigors of travel or cheap enough to be discarded when they inevitably succumbed to them.

Unknown maker, Japan
Traveling coat of paper (kamiko dōchūgi), late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: mulberry paper; hemp, buffalo horn, indigo dye, persimmon tannin
Gift of Thomas Murray 2019.91.28

Though it sounds strange today, paper raincoats (kamiko) were popular in premodern Japan for their affordability. They are made of sheets of thick paper sourced from the inner bark of the mulberry plant and treated with persimmon juice and a mixture of oils from perilla seeds and tung (also called China wood). This treatment makes the paper surprisingly resilient and sturdy. The sheets are carefully pasted together, then dyed with indigo. After rubbing the surface to add sheen and create some softness, the maker cuts and sews the cloth into this garment.
An inscription on the front of the coat might refer to Nishigō-chō 西郷町, a town on Osaka Bay. The name on the front seems to be Hama-Wakabayashi 濱若林 and the roundel on the back reads Hon-Wakabayashi 本若林. Both might belong to a business owned by a person named Wakabayashi. The coat was likely used by the owner or an employee to advertise the business while on the road.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Travel cape (bōzugappa), late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton and paper; yoko-gasuri (weft ikat)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.76

Travel capes are called bōzugappa in Japanese, which means “priest’s raincoat.” They were modeled on capes worn by Portuguese missionary priests, who arrived in Japan in 1549. While the prefix “bōzu” is Japanese in origin, “gappa” is derived from the Portuguese ”capa,” meaning “cape.” Between the outer layers of cotton cloth, these capes usually incorporate a layer of mulberry paper treated with persimmon tannin. Made from the fermented juice of unripe persimmon fruits, this substance is applied to the paper in successive layers, giving it a leathery toughness and flexibility. It also makes the paper waterproof. For a traveler on the open road, capes provided a measure of protection from wind and rain and also offered some warmth.

Unknown maker, Japan
Travel cape (bōzugappa), late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton and paper; yoko-gasuri (weft ikat)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.119

Essentially a circle of cloth with a slit opening and hole for the neck, a bōzugappa has a deceptively simple appearance. The cape’s multilayered construction includes an inner layer of waterproofed paper, resulting in a water- and wind-resistant garment. Its maker’s skill and eye for design is also evident in the clever piecing of the cloth. Made from triangular-shaped sections of striped cloth, the wedges converge at diagonals, creating a bold chevron pattern that directs the eye to the wearer’s face. The maker who cut and sewed this garment undoubtedly had this effect in mind.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Horse trappings (shiri-gake), late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; tsutsugaki (freehand resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.75

This type of horse trapping would have been used beneath a saddle. The large loop is placed under the horse's tail while the small loops secure it to the saddle. More elaborate than simpler travel trappings, ornamental examples like this one were used for celebratory processions. The side panels are decorated with a checkerboard pattern, and the center panel features a large crest known as "climbing wisteria," or agari fuji, a crest used by the Fujiwara clan. The crest is surrounded by characters that read fumi-uma gomen, or "pardon the passing horse," a common apology for any inconvenience caused by the horse.

Unknown maker, Japan
Traveling coat of kudzu fiber (kuzufu dōchūgi), 19th century
Cloth: kudzu fiber and cotton; wool, silk, bone
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.94

Men and women wore traveling coats (dōchūgi) over their kimono to protect them from the elements. The light, breathable fabric was woven with fibers taken from the kudzu plant (kuzufu), a vine also known as arrowroot. Excavations in China revealed that the use of kudzu cloth reaches back to the Neolithic era (10,000–4,500 BCE). The inner fibers of the vine were boiled in lime and then bleached in water. In this example, white kudzu thread was used on the weft and soft gray-dyed cotton on the warp. The lining, trim, and cording are made of silk; the black collar of wool. The material and ornamentation on the bone clasps suggest that this garment would have been worn by a wealthy merchant, village headman, or nobleman.

Gallery 4: Firefighters / Festivals "Community and Belonging in Japan"

Community and Belonging

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

In pre-industrial Japan, a person's public identity was largely defined by the class to which one was born, determining what one did and where one lived. This rigid stratification also governed which materials one could wear: by sumptuary edicts, silk was reserved only for nobility. Commoners wore textiles of cotton, ramie, and other natural fibers, which they made special in numerous ways, as each of these galleries lavishly shows.

Most commoners inherited their profession from their parents and lived and died in the community to which they were born, or in neighborhoods devoted to their trade. But in that certainty lay strength and belonging: a fisherman was part of a community of fishermen. An indigo dyer lived and labored among other indigo dyers, enjoying a collective sense of self and purpose.

Public festivals were important moments to express this collective identity. Various professional groups sponsored events, and their members would appear together, often in complementary clothing emblematic of their shared background.

Firefighters

During the Edo and Meiji periods (1603–1912), fires were a constant threat to the many thousands of people living in the densely populated cities of Tokyo (then Edo) and Osaka. Because buildings were made of wood, the use of indoor stoves and paper lanterns could cause local accidents capable of quickly spreading. To prevent conflagrations, organized firefighting brigades were authorized to fight fires and enforce rules designed to keep them from starting. These men were indispensable, considered heroes for their valor, strength, and loyalty.

Kobayashi Kiyochika, 1847–1915
Great Fire at Ryōgoku Drawn from Hamachō, 1881
Published by Fukuda Kumajirō
Woodblock print (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
Gift from the collection of Edith and the late John Payne 2019.139.77

Within two weeks in early 1881, two great fires devasted parts of Tokyo: on January 26 in Ryōgoku and on February 11 in Kanda, across the Sumida River. This print captures the Ryōgoku Bridge in the background. It is based on a sketch the artist Kobayashi Kiyochika made while the fire was ablaze. Occupied with drawing the light effects, the artist was apparently unaware that his own house and studio were also burning down.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, 1839–1892
A Celebration of Bravery, 1865, 8th lunar month
Published by Daikokuya Kinnosuke, carved by Matsushima Masakichi
Woodblock print (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
The Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation, gifts of various donors, by exchange, and gift of Edmond Freis in memory of his parents, Rose and Leon Freis
2017.106.64a,b

In Japan, firefighters were lionized as protectors of the city and its residents, and audiences never tired of dramatic portrayals of firefighters and their adventures. These are the rightmost two sheets of a set of seven portraying Kabuki actors dressed as firemen. Their exposed arms show tattoos, popular among firemen during the Edo period (1603–1868). In the background are standards (matoi), a form of placard, representing the various brigades that protected the city of Edo, today's Tokyo. On the left is Mo portrayed by the actor Bandō Hikosaburō V (1832–1877), and on the right Se by Nakamura Shikan IV (1830–1899).

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, 1839–1892
Moon in the Smoke, from the series One Hundred Aspects of the Moon, February 1886
Published by Akiyama Buemon
Woodblock print (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
Lee & Mary Jean Michaels Collection LMM.0524 L2021.311.1

This print, from Yoshitoshi's famous series One Hundred Aspects of the Moon, shows the moon behind a plume of smoke caused by huge flames that nearly cover the entire picture. He illustrated the dramatic situation faced by Edo (now Tokyo) firefighters in the early modern period, when all buildings were built of wood and could easily catch fire. On the left is the leader of the Nihonbashi district fire brigade, I-gumi, written on the back of his hood. He holds up his brigade's standard (matoi), a white sphere and cube made from wood and leather, to signal the location of the fire and command his men.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, 1839–1892
Appearing Bewildered, Behavior of a Fireman’s Wife of the Kaei Era, from the series Thirty-two Aspects of Behaviors (Fūzoku sanjūnisō), February 1888
Published by Tsunajima Kamekichi, carved by Wada Yūjirō
Woodblock print (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
The Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation, gifts of various donors, by exchange, and gift of Edmond Freis in memory of his parents, Rose and Leon Freis
2017.106.211

This woman is identified as a fireman’s wife during the Kaei Era (1848-55). The jacket of her husband, hanging on the wall behind her, has a single character in red: matoi 纏; it refers to a fireman’s standard, used to signal the location of a fire. Such a jacket would have been worn by a leader of a fire brigade. In fact, it appears to be the same one worn by the leader of the Nihonbashi district fire brigade Yoshitoshi depicts in the neighboring print, suggesting the woman here is that firefighter’s wife.

Toyohara Kunichika, 1835–1900
New Plays at the Meiji Theatre, Inferno Scene: The Actor Ichikawa Sadanji as Akiyama Kii-no-kami, 1894
Published by Akiyama Buemon
Woodblock prints (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
Lee & Mary Jean Michaels Collection LMM.0620a-c L2021.311.2a-c

This portrait shows the climactic scene of The Kōshū Strategy and the Takeda Clan Preparing for Battle (Kōshū-ryū Takeda no makubari). Set in the 1580s during a time of civil war, the kabuki play tells the story of the destruction of the Takeda clan. Kii-no-kami was a vassal of the losing Takeda clan, whose mansion burns in the background. In his right hand he grasps the blade of a short sword, the tip pointed toward himself. He has wrapped a piece of paper around the blade, the usual preparation for ritual suicide (seppuku). The artist sets his subject before a rippling curtain of flames, conveying the all-consuming power of these blazes.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, 1839–1892
Pine, Bamboo, and Plum: The Votive Picture at Yushima (Shōchikubai Yushima no Kakegaku), December 1885
Published by Matsui Eikichi
Woodblock prints (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
Lee & Mary Jean Michaels Collection LMM.0554a,b L2021.311.3a,b

Fire was so grave and destructive a threat to cities that the intentional setting of a building on fire was punishable by death. This print tells the tragic story of a misguided young woman who acted impulsively out of love—and caused terrible destruction.
Oshichi was the daughter of a greengrocer (yaoya) who fell in love with a temple page when she and her father sheltered there during the Great Tenna-Era Fire in 1683. Because she wanted to see the boy again, she set fire to the family house but was stopped in time before causing a catastrophe. At age 17, she was tried as an adult and executed for arson. Her story was dramatized for kabuki theater and became a popular motif for woodblock prints.

Utagawa Kunisada, 1786–1865
Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, 1839–1892
Utagawa Kunihisa II, 1832–1891
Utagawa Yoshitora, act. c. 1836–1882
Utagawa Shigekiyo, act. c. 1854–1887
Re, Troop 9; Nezu, the actor Kawarazaki Gonjūrō I as Kawabata Denkichi, from the series Flowers of Edo: A Compilation of Beautiful Places, 1863, 11th lunar month
Published by Katōya Seibei
Woodblock print (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
Lee & Mary Jean Michaels Collection LMM.0631 L2021.311.4

This print is part of a series devoted to the Flowers of Edo (Edo no hana), a term that describes the city's fires. Each print refers to a specific district and its fire brigade, showing the respective lantern and standard (matoi).
Five artists collaborated in the design of this print, which depicts a theatrical version of the story of Oshichi, a lovestruck young woman who committed arson. The complicated composition depicts many aspects of firefighting at this time. Yoshitoshi designed the acrobatic scene on the left, showing a fireman

balancing atop a ladder. Yoshitora designed the top frame, in which firefighters carry ladders and hooked pikes designed to tear down the walls of burning buildings to contain the conflagration. Kunihisa II created Oshichi in the watchtower, from which fires would be spotted. Kunisada designed the main element: the popular actor Kawarazaki Gonjūrō I (1838–1903) as Kawabata Denkichi, the fireman who stopped Oshichi from causing a catastrophic fire. Shigekiyo created the background.

Unknown maker, Japan
Fireman's kit, second half 19th century
Cloth: cotton; sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching), tsutsugaki (freehand resist)
Gift of Thomas Murray in honor of firemen 2019.91.27.1-4a,b

Firefighters' uniforms were composed of special, heavily quilted garments made of layered cotton cloth that was dyed with indigo, which conferred a degree of fire-retardance. Before the men headed into a blaze, their coats were soaked with water as a further safety measure; the wet coats weighed upward of 70 pounds.
This is a complete kit for a fireman. It consists of a quilted coat (hikeshi-banten) and hood, heavily padded gloves, and close-fitting trousers. All the pieces are made of indigo-dyed cotton, but the interior of the coat features the same design as the exterior, dyed bright red. The meaning of the single character on the back is unclear, but the background features a repeating stylized pattern of the character moto 元, which can have many meanings.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Set of fireman's short coat (hikeshi-banten) and gauntlets, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching), katazome (stencil resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.124.1; 2019.20.124.2a,b

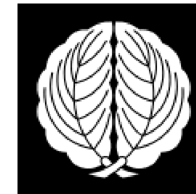
Firefighters' coats were not only practical; they were a sign of pride. When worn during processions and other celebrations in town, they would have been turned inside out to reveal the brighter and more detailed designs on the interior. This coat was patterned with a variety of auspicious symbols through stencil-resist dye. The symbols include fox spirits and Hotei (a Buddhist deity), both likely intended to offer luck and protection to the wearer during his dangerous encounters with the flames.

Unknown maker, Japan
Fireman's hood (hikeshi-zukin) with crest, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching), katazome (stencil resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.123

This hood of quilted cotton completely covers the head and neck, except for the eyes. It is designed to protect the wearer from both heat and falling debris. The exterior is dyed with indigo, and the interior is dyed red with a motif of undyed white squares.
The character centered on the forehead is karu 刈, meaning "cutting," which may refer to a unit charged with razing structures to prevent the spread of fire. While water and buckets were stored across the city, they were of limited use to stop large blazes. Often, firefighters would contain fires by flattening burning structures with long, hooked poles and grappling hooks.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Fireman's parade coat (kajibaori), 19th century
Cloth: cotton and silk
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.98



Kajibaori are short coats for firemen used in festive parades, staged to remind people to be cautious and to prevent fires. This example was made of a blend of cotton and silk dyed light brown. The material suggests it was worn by a samurai or a wealthy merchant who volunteered as a firefighter. Contrary to the usual construction of haori (short coats), this particular one has the lower half of the center-back seam unsewn to permit freedom of movement, similar to jinbaori, or coats worn by samurai over suits of armor. The weave of the fabric produces subtle horizontal stripes across the entirety of the garment, most evident on the lower back.
On the upper back, a crest that appears to be of embracing oak leaves is embroidered with white silk threads.

Unknown maker, Japan
Fireman's parade leather coat (kawabaori) with Ōhisa crest, 19th century
Cloth: deerskin; smoked resist
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.120

Due to the Buddhist tenet against taking life, and also its high expense, leather was not widely used for traditional clothing in Japan. Worn in festive parades, this coat would have been owned by a chief of a volunteer firefighting brigade. The round crest reads Ōhisa 大久,likely the name of a business or merchant who commonly gave such coats to men, who then wore them as advertising. The lower half features stylized characters that are unclear apart from the first: takara 宝.
To add these designs, artists drew patterns with paper stencils, resist paste, or ink on the leather before slowly smoking it over a low fire of pine needles and

rice straw. The exposed leather would turn a warm orange-brown, while protected areas would remain white.

Unknown maker, Japan
Fireman's parade leather coat (kawabaori) with crest, 19th century
Cloth: deerskin; smoked resist
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.122

The crest on the upper back of this coat is of an encircled triple comma oriented counter-clockwise. The repeated character in archaic seal script at the bottom reads hon 本. It can have many meanings, and it is unclear what was intended here. The name Itakura 板倉, also in seal script, appears on the collar; it was either the name of a merchant family or of a shop that likely paid to have these expensive coats created and then given to the firefighters. This very public investment in the safety of the community was also good for business, as many merchants and shops supported firefighters through gifts of parade clothing.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Festivals

Unknown maker, Japan
Dark blue-ground festival kimono decorated with sea creatures, first half 20th century
Cloth: cotton; tsutsugaki (freehand resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.62

Japan comprises over 6,000 islands, and many coastal communities depend on the fishing industry. Sea creatures and water motifs were particularly popular subjects for festive garments worn by men whose livelihoods were tied to the bounty of the sea. Such kimonos were worn during traditional festivals (matsuri) organized to solicit favor from the gods to ensure the well-being of local communities.
This exuberant indigo-dyed robe appeals for a fruitful catch. It features over 20 different fish, many types of clams and oysters, a lobster, and an octopus. The motifs were all hand-drawn using many dyes (pinks, gray, brown, and indigo) and a technique called tsutsugaki, which involves the application of rice paste through a narrow tube to protect certain areas from immersion dye, thus rendering the various hues.

Unknown maker, Akita Prefecture, Japan
Festival kimono decorated with carp ascending a waterfall, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; shibori (tie-dyeing)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.84

This spectacular garment was made in Akita Prefecture in the northern Tōhoku region, a mountainous area on the Sea of Japan. While the front is relatively plain, an elaborate pictorial design of a carp covers the back. The motif refers to a Chinese legend of a carp struggling up the “Dragon Gate” rapids in the upper Yellow River to be transformed into a dragon upon reaching the top. A motif

especially popular with men, the carp is a symbol of determination and perseverance.
The dyer was a master of the craft, achieving the design through the use of multiple tie-dyeing methods (shibori), carefully planned out and executed to produce the desired composition. Specifically, the carp's eye was created with bōshi shibori (capped tie-dyeing), the body features makiage shibori (winding tie-dyeing), the outlines employ orinui (folded and sewn), and the shading on the waterfall uses miura (looped) tie-dyeing.

Gion Seitoku, 1755–1815
People at a Festival, 1790s
Hanging scroll; ink and color on paper
Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture 2013.29.295

This painting represents the bustle of a festival, capturing the joyful loosening of social restrictions fueled by music and drink. A woman holds a sun umbrella next to a boy making faces; both are surrounded by forceful men with tattoos. Her heavily powdered face with bulbous nose and large green lower lip represents the typical characteristics of a beauty painted by Gion Seitoku. Seitoku is particularly known for making realistic portraits of geisha (dancers) in Kyoto's popular entertainment district, Gion, which is famous for the Gion Festival every summer. He uses shading to draw the focus to the physicality of these interactions: the men's muscles ripple and the lady's bunched kimono suggests a voluptuous form beneath it.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
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Utagawa Kunisada, 1786–1865
Boy's Festival, 1830s
Hanging scroll; ink and color on silk
The John R. Van Derlip Fund; purchase from the collection of Elizabeth and Willard Clark 2013.31.192

Utagawa Kunisada's painting captures a typical scene during Boy's Day, a festival expressing a community's aspirations for the health and well-being of their male children. Three children dance around a half-clad man, who holds up a puppet of a famous warrior placed on a black pedestal. Above and behind them is a large banner with Shōki, the Demon Queller; a similar one hangs nearby in this room.

Unknown artist, Japan
Hiyoshi Taisha Sannō Festival, first half 17th century
Six-panel folding screen; ink, color, gold, and gold leaf on paper
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Richard P. Gale 69.73

This colorful detailed painting illustrates the Hiyoshi Sannō shrine festival. Shintō deities associated with the Hiyoshi Taisha shrine are believed to protect nearby Mount Hiei, shown here in the third panel from the right. During the festival, participants carry seven consecrated mikoshi (portable shrines) to and from the shrine at Sakamoto, on the shore of nearby Lake Biwa, where they are loaded onto waiting skiffs together with the sacred shrine horses. A boat race ensues to the far side of the lake. This screen shows the race in progress, with the bell-shaped roofs of four lacquered mikoshi visible in the boats. Vibrant participants row the boats and beat drums while a crowd cheers them on from shore. The festival is still held today, from March 1 until the climax in mid-April.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Gallery 5: Festivals

Festivals in Japan

Festival garments are the finest clothes of common people, no less beautiful than their silk counterparts, which were reserved for nobility. Worn in public at festivals, they display the immense skills of the talented weavers and dyers who coaxed beauty and complexity from humble, affordable materials.

Japan is home to many festive occasions, either celebrated nationwide or localized. Local festivals, called matsuri, are often held in late summer or early autumn to coincide with the rice harvest.

Traditionally sponsored by a shrine or temple, they originated with the aim of soliciting favor from the gods to ensure the survival of the communities. At matsuri, merchants sell street food and alcohol, as well as amulets and other ritual items intended to bring health, protection, and prosperity to their owners. Community groups assemble under painted banners, dressed alike and marching together, sometimes carrying huge floats that convey their shared purpose and livelihoods.

Unknown maker, Japan
White-ground men's festival kimono decorated with pine, bamboo, and cherry blossoms, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; tsutsugaki (freehand resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.58

A man would have worn this kimono while performing folk dances at Obon festivals held in honor of the spirits of his ancestors. A large family crest on the upper back, representing a stylized tachibana orange, underlines the focus on family identity and connections to relatives both living and dead.
The large-scale motif must have been made custom order for a special occasion because the combination of pine, bamboo, and cherry blossoms is very unusual. Typically pine and bamboo are joined by plum blossoms to create the so-called Three Friends of Winter (shōchikubai) motif, representing longevity and happiness. Here, the addition of cherry blossoms speaks to the beauty and fragility of life.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

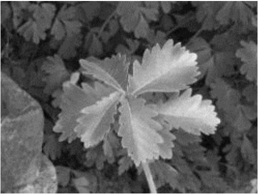
Unknown maker, Yamagata Prefecture, Japan
Safflower-colored kimono, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: hemp; safflower dye (beni)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.92

This plain-weave robe would have been worn by a young urban woman in summer, when the lightness and breathability of the hemp fiber would be most appreciated. It is dyed a vivid scarlet-pink hue called beni, or safflower, a plant originally used to dye textiles in vibrant oranges and reds. Introduced to Japan from China, the safflower plant (benibana) was widely cultivated, particularly in Yamagata Prefecture, in the northeastern part of Japan. One garment could require as much as 12 pounds of flower petals. Because the process was labor intensive and costly, the use of beni often fell under local sumptuary laws—legal codes that reserved the use of certain materials for the nobility. In the Meiji era (1868–1912), chemical dyes supplanted beni as the preferred scarlet dye.

Unknown maker, Japan
Light blue-ground festival kimono decorated with three oak leaves (mitsu-gashiwa) crests, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; tsutsugaki (freehand resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.81

Dyed an overall shade of light blue, this kimono is decorated with a crest known as mitsu Kashiwa, or three oak leaves, a stylized depiction of a Daimyo oak tree's leaves, which grow in clusters. Several famous families in Japan's history used this crest, and the number of veins can vary in each leaf depending on the family. An example of the freehand resist-dyeing technique (tsutsugaki), in which starch paste is applied to the textile from one end of a tube, the crest appears in multiple places on this single garment: in indigo blue on the upper left, in gray on the lower right of the back, and in indigo blue on the lower right of the front.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)



Daimyo Oak, *Quercus dentatata*
https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/quercus-dentata/

Unknown maker, Awaji Island, Japan
Short dark blue-ground fisherman's festival coat (donza), late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; sashiko (cotton thread quilting), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.108

Though of unremarkable materials, this embroidered fisherman's festival coat (donza) was precious, a high-status item undoubtedly worn with a great deal of pride. The skill of the embroiderer(s), who labored for months to cover the garment with small, even stitches, is self-evident. Unusual among extant textiles for its short length, the cotton garment is lined with wadded, quilted cotton and then embroidered with white cotton threads. This embroidery, called sashiko, literally "little stabs," is a style of quilting in which cotton is sewn in a running stitch through layers of fabric. Originated as a way to reinforce parts of textiles, it grew to have a decorative function as well. Its painstaking beauty is on magnificent display here: the shoulders and upper back are stitched with a zigzag pattern, while the body and sleeves feature staggered, vertical stitches.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Fukui Prefecture, Japan
Dark blue-ground fisherman's festival coat (donza), second half 19th century
Cloth: cotton and silk; sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.139

Donza are coats worn by fishermen throughout Japan for festivals and special occasions until the 1930s, when production of them largely ceased. Narrow sleeves and extensive patterns rendered in sashiko, a form of decorative reinforcement stitching that uses cotton thread, are characteristics of this style of coat. Here, remarkably small stitches were placed only a few threads apart, incorporating the contrasting thread to such an extent, and achieving such a degree of regularity, that the pattern almost looks woven into the backing fabric. Its sleeves are decorated with a lattice pattern in yellow cotton thread, and the body of the garment features a complex pattern of arrow-like feathers in light-blue thread.

Unknown maker, Japan
Short jacket for the Gion Festival (Gion matsuri happi), early 20th century
Cloth: hemp; katazome (stencil resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.135

A collection of stamps and characters on this short jacket (happi) reveals its wearer to be a participant in the annual Gion Festival in Kyoto. Spanning the entire month of July, the festival features elaborate parades with towering floats on wheels, presented by residents of various districts in the city. While some paradegoers ride the floats, many more march alongside or pull them, all in coordinated clothing to project their connection to their district and one another.
This jacket of plain-weave hemp has a repeating pattern of intersected triangles dyed with indigo using a stencil (katazome). A black triangle stamp on the left lapel, no longer legible, would have identified the group to which this individual belonged, while the red mark below was the festival participation seal. The five

hand-painted characters on the right lapel read "number 141" (百四拾壹號); this is the number of the group whose member would have worn the garment.

Unknown maker, Aomori Prefecture, Japan
Festive rain cape (date-gera), late 19th–early 20th century
Rice straw, bark, cotton; indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.44

This style of straw coat (mino) was worn by residents of northern Japan to protect themselves from heavy rain and snowfall. A man made this fancy rain cape (date-gera) as a gift for his wife or fiancée to wear with pride to festive occasions. He used rice straw left over from rice cultivation and cotton for the oval-shaped shoulder piece, attaching a fringe of shredded tree bark strands along the edge. Further north, on Hokkaido, the indigenous Ainu would refine and spin material like this from elm bark's inner layer to weave into cloth.

Unknown maker, Yamagata Prefecture, Japan
Festive backpack pad (iwai-bandori), late 19th–early 20th century
Rice straw, cotton; indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.43

Like the straw cape nearby, this garment is a more artful version of a simple tool. Backpack pads were utilitarian equipment made for both protection from the weather and to provide a soft layer between a person's body and a heavy load. Finely woven examples like this one, which uses cotton thread to bind rice straw in flat, decorative patterns, were made to mark a new marriage, specifically the moment when a bride's dowry is carried to her new husband's home. The indigo-dyed cotton designs reinforce this association: the slanted diamond-shaped pattern, called "arrow" (yabane) because it resembles the

feathered fletching on an arrow, communicates the idea of the bride's irreversible movement from her parents' house to her in-laws'.

Unknown maker, Japan
Dark blue-ground casual summer kimono (yukata) with wavy white line pattern, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; tatebiki kanoko shibori (rising fawn-spot tie-dyeing)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.54

This is a yukata, an unlined robe worn as casual summer clothing. The pattern of vertical undulating lines is appropriately called "rising steam" (tatewaku). A close look reveals the lines are composed of small white circles; this effect is achieved through a tie-dyeing (shibori) technique called tatebiki kanoko, literally "rising fawn's coat," as deer are born with spots that fade as they mature. The cloth is caught on a specially shaped needle and then wrapped two or three times with thread before dyeing. The horizontal seam along the waist indicates an alteration to shorten the garment. Though placing the seam in such a prominent place may seem counterintuitive, a customary sash worn to keep the garment securely wrapped around the body would have concealed it.

Unknown maker, Aichi Prefecture, Japan
White-ground casual summer kimono (yukata) with blue geometric pattern, early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; katazome (stencil resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.87

This unlined robe for a woman to wear during the hot summer months was likely created near Arimatsu, a town in present-day Aichi Prefecture famous for its indigo-dyed fabrics. It is decorated with a complex lattice pattern whose regularity was achieved by the use of a stiff paper stencil through which a starchy rice paste was applied. When dry, the paste created a barrier that masked the fabric and kept those areas white once the fabric was submerged in an indigo dyebath.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Utagawa Kunisada, 1786–1865**, and Utagawa Hiroshige**, 1797–1858
Odawara, from the series Fifty-three Stations by Two Brushes (Sōhitsu gojūsan tsugi), 1854, 7th lunar month
Published by Maruya Kyūshirō, carved by Yokogawa Takejirō
Woodblock print (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. 96.146.227

This print shows a young woman wearing a light, single-layer cotton robe, or yukata, a popular garment for summer. She is a traveler along the Tōkaidō, the most important road in Japan that connected Edo (today's Tokyo) with Kyoto. She chats with a woman selling souvenirs after taking a bath. A bold pattern of chrysanthemums adorns this yukata. Its uneven edges are the printmaker's visual shorthand for the tiny circles created by tie-dyeing, used to construct larger patterns.

Unknown maker, Japan
Sleeveless half-length undergarment (sodenashi hanjuban), late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; arashi hasu-ami shibori (diagonal diamond net tie-dyeing), katazome (stencil resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.116

Undergarments provided a second layer for warmth in winter or to shield outer clothes from sweat in summer. This sleeveless vest would have been worn as an undergarment in warmer weather. It is decorated with a combination of stencil-resist dyeing and tie-dyeing. The underlying fishnet pattern was achieved by binding the fabric tightly to a pole, leaving some areas exposed to absorb the indigo dye. The overlapping-circles motif depicts an hourglass-shaped drum (tsuzumi) with cords attached, lying on its side. This element was added in a secondary dyeing process involving a stencil.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Utagawa Hiroshige, 1797–1858
Tsukudajima: Sumiyoshi Festival, from the series One Hundred Famous Views of Edo (Meisho Edo hyakkei), 1857, 7th month
Published by Sakanaya Eikichi
Woodblock print (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.78.65.134

Tsukudajima is a manmade island at the mouth of the Sumida River in Edo (now Tokyo). Fishermen who settled there from western Japan constructed a shrine dedicated to the god of the sea. This print depicts the highlight of a festival held at the shrine every summer. The white banner in the center is emblazoned with the name of the god, Sumiyoshi Daimyōjin. Behind the banner, a procession of men carry a mikoshi, a portable shrine for transporting the spirit of the god. Onlookers would be wearing fancy festival garments, such as robes decorated with fishes; yet, these men wear little, if anything, at all. Straining and sweating to carry the heavy shrine, they may also be required to bare their bodies in a show of purity.

Shōka, 19th century
Festival banner (nobori) of Shōki, the Demon Queller, 19th century
Cloth: hemp; hand-painted pigments
Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture 2015.35.4

Originally, banners were used on battlefields for troop identification, but in the Edo period (1603–1868) they were used for more civic purposes. Banners became a central element of the display for Boy's Day on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. The special day was meant to inspire boys to be disciplined, brave, and honorable, and artists who created banners frequently chose subjects supporting that message. This unique hand-painted banner illustrates Shōki, the powerful demon queller who originated in China, where he became popular in folklore during the reign of Emperor Xuanzong (712–756).

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Festival banner (nobori) of four seated warriors, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; hand-painted pigments
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.99

This banner is decorated with a hand-painted scene of four samurai sitting on the ground carrying various weapons. The figure in front holds an iron folding fan (tessen) used to signal commands and, at close quarters, ward off an attack or be used as a blunt instrument. Beside him sits a warrior with a tall, cross-shaped spear (jūmonji yari) that extends almost to the top of the banner. The topmost figure holds a matchlock rifle. It is unclear which scene in Japanese folklore this scene references.

Unknown maker, Japan
Festival banner (nobori) invoking the deity Atago Gongen, 19th century
Cloth: cotton; tsutsugaki (freehand resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.89

This banner accompanied a gift of sake offered to the deity Atago Gongen, the Great Avatar of Mount Atago (Atago-yama dai-gongen). He is worshipped as a protector against fire, and many shrines are dedicated to him, particularly in the western part of Japan. The donors, the Kanai clan, are identified at the bottom, below a wooden platform tray used in Shinto rituals to hold offerings, on which two vases sit.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
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Gallery 6: Indigo

The Alchemy of Indigo

Indigo, a deep and vivid blue dye made from plant materials, was easily the most preferred color for cotton textiles in rural Japan.

The months-long process of rendering dye from indigo leaves harnesses the biological and chemical forces of fermentation and oxidation, resulting in a substance with many qualities beyond just color. In China and Japan, leaves and seeds were believed to help against fever, snakebites, and stomach disorders; Japanese farmers considered indigo-dyed work clothes to have a protective effect.

The dye reinforces the fabric and also has antibacterial properties, making it popular for undergarments that lie against bare, sweaty skin—even if it turns the wearer a distinct blue hue.

In the hands of a skilled dyer, indigo astonishes the eye. Because the dye sits on the surface of cotton fibers, repeatedly dyeing the same cloth can yield richer, denser, nearly black blues as the pigment builds up. By the same token, indigo-dyed cotton fades over time, with repeated washing and surface rubbing. Well-worn garments tell the stories of their use in the changing blue tones of their surfaces.

Unknown maker, Shōnai, Yamagata Prefecture, Japan
Vest (sodenashi), late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton and paper; sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.66

A sodenashi is a sleeveless jacket designed to leave the wearer's arms free while working or to provide additional padding when carrying loads on the back. They were common among the working class, as much a piece of equipment as a garment. The weft of this one is of a particularly fine koyori, a handspun mulberry-paper cordage, whose long fibers give it strength. The warp is of

handspun cotton thread. The fabric features vertical stripes dyed with various shades of indigo, showing the wide range of blues, from nearly black to slightly green, that can be achieved with this natural dye.

Unknown maker, Japan
Boy's summer sleepwear (nemaki), early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; mojiri (gauze weave), tate-gasuri (warp ikat), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.68

This is a child's pajamas, or nemaki. The cotton was woven in a type of gauze weave (mojiri-ori), which involved twisting the warp threads between the straight weft threads, resulting in a light, breathable fabric ideal for the hot summer months. A small pattern of double lines, arranged in sets of three and created by resist dyeing the warp threads, decorates it. The lighter blue edges of the undyed sections, where a small amount of indigo entered, give these white lines a luminous, almost flamelike quality.

Unknown maker, Japan
Boy's swordsmanship uniform (kendō-gi), early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.71

This garment is a uniform worn by boys when practicing kendo, a traditional Japanese martial art that descends from swordsmanship. Ease of movement is essential; hence its narrow sleeves and slits along the seams on the lower half. To reinforce the fabric and protect the wearer from the blows of opponents during practice, the upper half is embroidered with an interconnected pattern called asanoha, a stylized hemp leaf. On the back of the garment are three unique renditions of cherry blossoms placed within a lozenge shape, called matsukawabishi.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Bedding cover (futonji) with turnip motif, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; tsutsugaki (freehand resist), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.110

Two turnips arranged in opposite directions decorate this bedding cover, made from five rectangular cotton panels. The cover was likely made for a man as the word for turnips, kabu, is a homonym for kabu o ageru, which means improving one's reputation.

To achieve two shades of blue using indigo dye, the dyer required several stages of production. First, the dyer drew the original turnip design using tsutsugaki, a freehand resist-dyeing technique in which starch paste is dripped out of a tube, creating lines. Second, after dyeing the cloth once, he reapplied starch using the same technique, but not in all the same places, resulting in varying depths of blue, light to midnight.

Unknown maker, Japan
Bedding cover (futonji) with geometric pattern, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; tate-yoko gasuri (double ikat), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.106

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
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Unknown maker, Japan
Blue-ground child's kimono, late 19th century
Cloth: hemp and ramie (Ōmi-jōfu); kasuritate-yoko gasuri (double ikat), indigo dye
Gift of Thomas Murray 2019.91.29

This luxurious kimono is an example of double ikat. Ikat (kasuri) is a highly complex process that requires a great deal of planning and organization. Bundles of thread are selectively dyed at various places along their lengths. Once woven, the undyed areas come together to form a pattern. This masterful example is decorated with a repeating pattern that includes a phoenix, fans, and clouds. The double ikat results in some areas of bright white and other areas with half-tones, where white and indigo-dyed sections meet. The result is both vivid and subtle.
This garment is made of Ōmi-jōfu, a fine woven hemp and ramie fabric produced in Ōmi Province, today Shiga Prefecture, east of the former imperial capital Kyoto. In Ōmi, the production of fabrics from woven bast fibers dates from the Kamakura period (1185–1333). Because summers are long and humid in Kyoto, and this cloth is both breathable and moisture-wicking, it was popular among the wealthy samurai class for summer garments.
Unknown maker, Japan
Blue and white kimono with organic design, early 20th century
Cloth: bast fiber; cotton liner, katazome (stencil resist)
Gift of Thomas Murray 2019.91.18

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Half-length undergarment (hanjuban) decorated with tigers and bamboo, early 20th century
Cloth: cotton and silk; katazome (stencil resist), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.88

A woman wore this type of garment as a middle layer between her undergarments and her outer kimono. As the collar and sleeves remained visible, these clothes could offer some visual complement or counterpoint to the exterior garment. The tiger-and-bamboo pattern was created using a paper stencil and starch-paste resist technique called katazome. To accomplish it, starch was pushed through the stencil and allowed to dry. When the garment was placed in an indigo bath, those covered areas would remain white.

Unknown maker, Japan
Warming table cover (kotatsugake), late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton patchwork; zanshi-ori (leftover yarn), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.48

This is a cover for a kotatsu, a charcoal brazier that served as a heating source (today they are electric). Placed in the middle of a room under a low table, the kotatsu is covered by a cloth (kotatsugake) to form a tent-like structure; sitting with one's legs tucked under was a way to stay warm. A utilitarian item, this kotatsugake was patched together (a technique called boro) from repurposed, quilted cotton fabric. One side of it uses cloth woven from leftover indigo, brown, and white threads, an economical approach that results in an irregular but visually pleasing striped pattern (yatarajima). The other side is a patchwork of plain-weave indigo-dyed fabric. The maker of this kotatsugake made good use of her materials, creating an asymmetrical composition that nonetheless finds balance through the interplay of darker and lighter indigo tones.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Patchwork (boro) farmer's short coat (hanten), 19th century
Cloth: cotton patchwork; sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.109

This short coat, or hanten, was made of patched pieces of worn cotton—an early form of recycling. The resulting patchwork, known as boro, was then reinforced with even, vertical lines of decorative stitching called sashiko. The extended use of this garment is clearly visible, as is the artistry of the woman, or women, who made and repaired it.

Workwear (noragi) jacket made in Shōnai, Yamagata Prefecture, second half 19th century
Cloth: cotton and bast fiber; saki-ori (split weaving), sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.50

Aesthetics may have been a lower priority than covering the body with something warm, especially for individuals who could afford only the humblest of worldly possessions. Nonetheless, the harmonious gradations of blue achieved through the recycling and reworking of old indigo-dyed cotton cloths certainly has a gratifying effect. This jacket is the typical workwear (noragi) worn by farmers in the fields. The body was made of old, worn cloth that was shredded into thin strips and then rewoven as the weft alongside a warp of cotton threads (saki-ori, or split weaving). The dense, strong fabric was particularly useful in colder parts of Japan, where farmers need additional protection during the winter months.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Arimatsu, Aichi Prefecture, Japan
Half-length undergarment (hanjuban), early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; shibori (tie-dyeing), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.83

Shibori is a form of resist dyeing that relies on a collection of tying, folding, twisting, stitching, and binding techniques to render some areas of a textile inaccessible to dye when immersed in an indigo bath. Used skillfully in combination or succession, it can create precise, regular patterns or larger-scale motifs such as fish and flowers. Shibori arrived in the 17th century in the town of Arimatsu, where it became a production center. Because Arimatsu was on a main road, shibori quickly spread far and wide.
This undergarment shows the results of a wide variety of approaches, including tying (which creates rings), folding and stitching (which creates the lines of alternating white circles), and stitching around paper inserts (which creates the lozenge- or petal-like forms).

Yoshida Hiroshi, 1876–1950 (self-published)
Farmhouse, 1946
Woodblock print; ink and color on paper
Gift of the Clark Center for Japanese Art & Culture; formerly given to the Center by H. Ed Robison, in memory of his beloved wife Ulrike Pietzner Robison
2013.29.445

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Aomori Prefecture, Japan
Dark blue-ground kimono with partial kogin embroidery, early 20th century
Cloth: hemp with cotton thread; sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.136

Unknown maker, probably Tōhoku Region, Japan
Bedding cover (futonji) decorated with falling cherry blossoms, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; shibori (tie-dyeing), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.85

This bedding cover (futonji) consists of four large and eight smaller rectangular cotton panels. It is decorated with a vertical pattern of cherry blossoms carried by flowing water, a metaphor for the fleeting nature of life. Different types of shibori, a tie-dyeing technique, created the motifs: ori-nui shibori (folded and stitched tie-dyeing) for the water and makiage shibori (winding tie-dyeing) for the cherry blossoms.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Tōhoku Region, Japan
Woman's workwear (noragi) jacket with kogin embroidery, early 20th century
Cloth: cotton and hemp; sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching), katazome (stencil resist), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.70

Made of cotton and hemp, this jacket is a sturdy work coat for a woman handling the day's tasks. Both materials have been dyed with indigo, then embroidered, which serves to strengthen the fabric, reducing wear and tear. The embroidery is kogin, a special type of counted-stitch embroidery with white thread. Kogin is first mentioned in 1685 in a record of the Tsugaru clan, located in today's Aomori Prefecture in the Tōhoku region, northeast of Tokyo. Hemp was the predominant material in this colder climate, which was too cool to cultivate cotton; this material had to be imported from elsewhere in Japan.

Unknown maker, Japan
Farmer's short coat (hanten) for winter, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; tate-yoko gasuri (double ikat), sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.53

A farmer wore this coat to stay warm during the long winter months. It is made of two different cotton weaves: one is a plain-weave dyed with indigo for the side sections and the lower front section of the body, and the other is a double ikat (tate-yoko gasuri) pattern achieved by resist-dyeing sections of both the warp and weft thread prior to weaving, resulting in a pattern that emerges once woven together. While drawing on different techniques to add visual interest, one woven and the other embroidered (sashiko), the maker masterfully combined large panels and strips of the different textiles to create a harmonious and quietly dynamic garment.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Woman's vest (sodenashi), late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; patterned with plaid and katazome (stencil resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.80

This sleeveless vest is made of joined pieces of cotton with three different patterns, likely the fabric the maker had at hand. The collar and side straps that connect the front and back panels feature a blue-and-white plaid on an orange ground. The shoulders and edges of the back panel are of a fabric dyed indigo and black; it has a stencil-resist technique (katazome) and is decorated with a pattern of bamboo and clouds against a gridwork. The fabric used for the center of the back panel and both front panels shows a pattern of snowflakes and florals on light blue ground, also achieved by katazome.

Unknown maker, Japan
Light blue workwear (noragi) jacket, 19th century
Cloth: hemp and cotton; sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.103

A farmer would have worn this jacket while working in the fields. Made of hemp and cotton, the entire surface is covered with sashiko, a decorative stitching applied to reinforce the fabric. Its simplicity of form, construction, and decoration provides a showcase for the gradations of color. Through its distinct areas of fading, we can read the contours of a man's active body: the shoulders and outer sides of the sleeves are worn from sunlight and use. A lighter band at the midriff indicates the point at which a sash closure must have been worn, repeatedly loosened and tightened throughout the workday.

Gallery 7: Materiality / Techniques

Making Garments

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

In pre-industrial Japan, various natural materials passed through many specialists' hands on their journey from raw form to finished textile. Textile workers generally inherited their professions, skills, and tools, resulting in a profound depth of technical and artistic knowledge as well as a continuity across generations. Textiles were fashioned from a broad range of materials, including cotton, but also rice straw, bast fibers (thread-like fibers in the woody stems and inner bark of plants and trees), and paper. Dyers evolved techniques that are exceptionally complex and varied, from the intricate binding
and knotting of shibori (tie-dyeing) to the mathematically precise kasuri (ikat), in which threads are dyed individually so that a pattern emerges once they are woven together. Finally, techniques were developed to recycle well-used cloth into new textiles, from the cotton patchwork of boro to the shredded and rewoven textiles of saki-ori.

Cotton in Japan

The earliest evidence of the use of cotton originated from Mehrgarh in the Indus Valley, in today's Pakistan. Traders first transported cotton to Japan in 799 from the Kunlun Mountains in Western China north of Tibet. For centuries, cotton remained a luxury item because it had to be imported from China and Korea. The discovery in around 1600 of a cotton species that grew well in Japan's climate and soil rapidly expanded its cultivation. Because of its softness, warmth, and durability, cotton was vastly superior to the bast fibers previously available to the common people. During the Edo period (1603–1868), farmers were able to turn cotton into a cash crop. By the 1930s, Japan had become the largest exporter of cotton cloth, but that dwindled significantly after World War II (1939–45).

Unknown maker, Japan
White workwear (noragi) with dark blue appliqué, early 20th century
Cloth: fuji (wisteria), cotton, hemp; appliqué, sashiko (decorative reinforcement stitching)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.100

Material: Wisteria (fuji)
The plain, natural look of this garment from rural Japan makes it a typical design for workwear (noragi). The front opening has very little overlap to allow freedom of movement. The narrow sleeves have a triangular gusset, keeping the cuffs high, exposing the hands, and allowing for a full rotation and extension of the

arms. The fabric on the upper back is reinforced with sashiko (“little stabs”), an embroidery technique in which cotton thread is handsewn in a running stitch to reinforce or decorate a textile.
The cloth is partly made of bast fibers from the wisteria plant (fuji). Bast fibers are long fibers stripped from the inner bark of the plant. The fibers are removed from the bark, repeatedly split into thinner strands, and finally knotted end-to-end to form threads. It is a labor-intensive process—much more time-consuming than processing cotton—and thus fuji was not commercially used. Because these fibers were rough and prickly, other materials, in this case hemp, were included to render a softer cloth.
Unknown maker, Japan
Yellow-ground kimono with horizontal stripes, second half 19th century
Cloth: silk pongee (tsumugi) and cotton; twill weave
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.49

Material: Silk pongee (raw silk)
This kimono is made of tsumugi, or pongee, a soft, thin cloth woven from raw silk. Its threads come from cocoons rejected as inferior by the silk industry due to their irregularity. Making the thread is a time-consuming process: the maker spins the silk floss into yarn by hand, cocoon by cocoon, instead of spinning filaments of several cocoons at once. Because the silk filaments are of uneven width, the woven texture is not shiny and smooth as with most silk. It appears simpler, yet comfortable and light. The more such a garment is washed, stretched, and worn, the more its luster increases.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Niigata Prefecture, Japan
Dark blue-ground kimono with white ikat (kasuri) pattern, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: ramie (Echigo-jōfu); tate-yoko gasuri (double ikat)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.59

Material: Ramie from Echigo (Echigo-jōfu)
Bast fibers like hemp were frequently used for the clothing of commoners; however, the wealthy also wore bast clothing during the summer months. Called Echigo-jōfu, literally "superior cloth from Echigo," garments made from ramie—a form of bast fiber—were extremely fine. The earliest record of ramie fabrics produced in Echigo Province (present-day Niigata Prefecture) in north-central Japan dates from 749; production reached its height in the middle of the Edo period (1603–1868).
Ramie is a plant in the nettle family, its fibers twisted into threads before being woven by hand. After dyeing, the wet fabric was stretched across the snow-covered fields for over a week to be "bleached" by the sun and to tighten the weave. To demonstrate the fabric's fine quality, an ancient test required a 13-inch-wide bolt to be run through the square hole of a coin (less than half an inch).

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Dark brown-ground kimono with beige decoration, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: hemp; katazome (stencil resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.91

Material and technique: Hemp and stencil resist dye (katazome)
Occupants of Japan's diverse and geographically vast area have exchanged materials, techniques, and finished textiles for centuries, sourcing goods for reasons of both practicality and taste. Okinawan textiles, from the Ryūkyū Islands in the far south, were fashionable in mainland Japan, while wearing mainland fabrics was popular in Okinawa. Unlike other bast fibers, hemp was relatively rare in the Ryūkyū Islands, which added an element of exclusivity and

luxury. The fabric for this garment was likely woven and dyed in Kyushu, the southernmost of the four main islands of Japan, and then exported as a bolt. The construction is atypical for either region; the shorter length and long collar are typical for Okinawa, yet the detached sleeves without gussets are features of mainland robes. It was likely worn by a commoner woman on formal occasions.

Unknown maker, Tsushima Island, Japan
Gray-ground kimono with line pattern, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: hemp and cotton (Tsushima-asa)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.95

Material: Hemp and cotton cloth from Tsushima Island (Tsushima-asa)
Tsushima Island is located between Korea and Kyushu, the southernmost and third largest of the four main islands of Japan. Hemp cloth was produced there for centuries and traded for Korean cotton. Traditional Tsushima-asa was hand spun and handwoven in plain-weave from hemp and cotton yarns, resulting in a pliant and durable fabric. The cultivation of hemp, which is the same plant species as cannabis, was prohibited in 1949 when the United States occupied Japan under General Douglas A. MacArthur. The tapered shape of the kimono sleeves is common on garments worn by the working classes.

Unknown maker, Japan
Safflower-colored child's kimono, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: hemp; safflower dye (beni)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.97

Material: Safflower dye (beni)
This kimono, possibly worn by a child, is woven from hemp and dyed a vivid scarlet pink with beni, made from safflower. To create the hue, the dye maker removes the safflower petals from the flowerheads, crushes them, and leaves

them to ferment in the vat. In the process, the dyestuff turns from yellow to red. Finally, straw ash is added to extract the red pigment.
The variable colors of this kimono tell the story of its alterations. A tuck in the body indicates the length was shortened. Meanwhile, the sleeves were lengthened with additional fabric, dyed a more saturated shade of beni.

Unknown maker, Amami Ōshima Island, Japan
Dark blue-ground hitoe (unlined summer kimono) with white geometric pattern, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: silk pongee (tsumugi); tate-yoko gasuri (double ikat), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.133

Technique: Amami Ōshima Island ikat dye (Ōshima kasuri)
This unlined summer kimono, or hitoe, was made on Amami Ōshima Island, the largest island in the Amami archipelago. Located between Kyushu, the southernmost of the four main islands of Japan, and Okinawa, the island was known for elevating the refinement of traditional kasuri (ikat). Kasuri involves the selective dyeing of threads so that a pattern emerges once they are woven together. The tiny patterning characteristic of Ōshima kasuri was developed after 1868, when dyers adopted graph paper from Europe to plot out their patterns and transfer them to the threads. This example is made of indigo-dyed silk pongee (tsumugi). The diamond-shaped form is based on a kazamōsha, a children's toy of a handheld windmill, and represents human skills. The square-shaped form is a stylized fisheye (iyunmu) representing nature.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Sweat repeller made of paper cordage (koyori asehajiki), 19th century
Cloth: mulberry paper and cotton; spun or twisted
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.64

Material and technique: Mulberry paper cord (koyori) and macramé
Designed to promote air circulation to wick away moisture, this vest undergarment would have been worn against the skin under suits of armor. It is knitted of paper cord (koyori) that is hand-twisted from fragments of used paper. The paper is made from mulberry bark, whose long fibers bind to one another, forming a resilient and flexible material with cloth-like qualities. The cord was tied in macramé into an auspicious design called shippō tsunagi, a geometric motif of interlocking circles that refers to the seven treasures of Buddhism. An undyed cotton collar was then attached for comfort and to create a pleasing neckline, revealing the attention to aesthetics even in the case of an unseen, functional garment.

Unknown maker, Yamagata Prefecture, Japan
Snow hat (yuki bōshi), late 19th–early 20th century
Rice straw, cotton; indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.47

Material: Rice straw (inawara)
Heavy snowfalls in winter are common in the northern part of Japan, where people needed additional protection, particularly farmers who worked outdoors. This snow hat (yuki bōshi, or yuki botchi in the regional dialect) was made of rice straw (inawara), a byproduct in rice cultivation, joined with cotton thread. Rice straw has a hollow structure, making it an excellent insulator as it wraps the wearer’s head in a layer of warmed air. Snow hats were traditionally made by men, not by trained, professional artisans. In this case, the manipulation of the materials demonstrates the artistry and skill of the maker, who employed straight stitch, tying, and braiding.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Textile sample book (Yamato-gasuri mihonchō), late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; tate-yoko gasuri (double ikat)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.90

This is an example of a mihonchō, or sample book, that shows variations of textile patterns. In urban areas, cloth merchants kept sample books to show potential customers available patterns. In rural areas they also served as a record of the work of individual weavers, from whom merchants ordered cloth. The collection contains rectangular swatches of cotton featuring various patterns woven with resist-dyed threads on both the warp and weft, known as tate-yoko gasuri (double ikat). Double ikat is an extremely complex technique, requiring exacting eyes and hands of both dyer and weaver. This sample is likely a specific variable of kasuri called Yamato-gasuri, which was made in the Yamato area within Nara Prefecture.

Unknown maker, Aomori Prefecture, Japan
Multi-color blanket of Nanbu split weave, early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; Nanbu saki-ori (split weave)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.67

Technique: Nanbu split weave (Nanbu saki-ori)
This blanket is an extraordinary example of what we now call “upcycling.” The textile maker cut worn cloth into narrow strips and then wove them as the weft, with cotton or hemp threads as the warp. Because the textile that results is very dense, it is ideal for imparting warmth in winter. Peasants in what is today Aomori Prefecture in northern Japan were encouraged by the local Nanbu clan rulers to recycle their worn or damaged cotton garments; thus, this technique is known as Nanbu saki-ori (“Nanbu split-weaving”). Blankets like this one were used as bedding covers or as a cover for a kotatsu, a charcoal brazier placed in the middle of a room as a heating source.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Patchwork (boro) bedding liner (futon-uraji), 19th century
Cloth: hemp and cotton patchwork; shibori (tie-dyeing)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.141

Technique: Patchwork (boro)
Originally used as a bedding liner (futon-uraji), this textile was sewn to the underside of a bedding cover (futonji), between which cotton batting would have been inserted for insulation. Because such liners were not visible, they were typically made of rewoven fabrics or patchwork (boro) textiles, as is the case here. Most of these patches are made of undyed hemp, but some are also of cotton dyed with indigo.

Unknown maker, Japan
Dark blue felt rug (mōsen) decorated with roundels, 19th century
Cloth: wool felt; shibori (tie-dyeing)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.127

Material and technique: Felted wool and tie-dyeing (shibori)
Felt rugs (mōsen) of this size and shape were often used as a tea service mat (chagujoku) for the senchadō—literally "the way of sencha," a ritual using a specific type of loose-leaf green tea. This example is made from felted wool, offering a warm layer on which to sit during winter months. Felting is a process by which heat, friction, and pressure are applied to the wool fibers, causing them to lock together. Comparatively rare in Japan, felted wool was made in China and Mongolia and imported to Japan, where it would be dyed. Here, shibori practices of folding, masking, and tying off areas of cloth prevented certain areas from making contact with the dye. The prepared wool was then dipped in successive dye vats to achieve the desired pattern and hue.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Blue-ground senchadō tea service mat (chagujoku) decorated with white circles, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: paper; shibori (tie-dyeing), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.63.1

Material and technique: Mulberry paper and tie-dyeing (shibori)
This example of indigo-dyed paper features large circles created by kumo shibori, literally spider tie-dye, a technique that produces the spider web–like circles with radiating lines striped of white. It is a special type of mat (chagujoku or sagujoku) placed underneath tea utensils and charcoal braziers when serving sencha, a loose-leaf green tea, in a ritual (senchadō). Introduced from China by the Zen monk Ingen Ryūki (1592–1673) and popular in Japan by 1800, senchadō is a way of tea appreciation and social activity. During the ritual, the host would lay the utensils on a mat, which functioned not only as protection but also as an object for contemplation.

Torii Kiyonaga, 1752–1815
Women by an Iris Pond, 1785
Published by Kōzuya Isuke
Woodblock print (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.125

This is the right sheet of a diptych (two-panel composition) showing five women enjoying an excursion to an iris pond. The woman standing at left wears a sheer purple outer robe with a kasuri (ikat) pattern. Robes in black or purple with such patterns occur frequently in prints from the 1780s, suggesting they were the decade's popular fashion choice. Many more kasuri patterns are featured in the sample book nearby.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Cloth with blue gradated stripes, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton
Gift of Thomas Murray 2019.91.11

Unknown maker, Japan
Cloth of horizontal blue and white stripes, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton and bast fiber; katazome (stencil resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.78

Unknown maker, Japan
Cloth with diamond pattern, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; katazome (stencil resist)
Gift of Thomas Murray 2019.91.12

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Cloth with horizontal stripes, first half 20th century
Cloth: cotton; katazome (stencil resist)
Gift of Thomas Murray 2019.91.20

Unknown maker, Japan
Bedding cover (futonji) decorated with symbols of treasure (takara zukushi),
late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; tsutsugaki (freehand resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund
established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation;
purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.125

Technique: Freehand resist dyeing (tsutsugaki)
Women of a household generally made bedding covers (futonji) from textiles they purchased and then pieced together. The dye work on this large textile is expertly done, suggesting the hand of a professional. It was made using a starch-resist technique, in which a sticky paste was applied to mask certain areas of the textile, protecting them from immersion in the dye bath. Whereas some techniques involved a stencil, generating a highly regular pattern, with tsutsugaki the artisan applies the starch freehand through a tube; this application requires significant artistic skill and knowledge of how to handle the sticky material.
Likely part of a girl's marriage trousseau, this futonji is decorated with auspicious symbols of wealth and taste known as takara zukushi (treasure collection), which are associated with the Seven Gods of Fortune.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
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"Raincoat of invisibility" (kakuremino) belonging to Benzaiten, god of talent, beauty, and music. It is modeled after straw raincoats like the one in this exhibition.

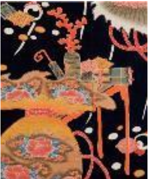
"Magic hammer"(uchide no kozuchi) belonging to god of commerce Daikokuten, which makes wishes come true.

"Hat of invisibility" (kakuregasa) belonging to god of fortune Bishamonten.

A pair of cloves (chōji), rare and valuable.

Rolls of brocade (orimono) next to a hat with deer antlers that belongs to Jurōjin, god of the elderly and of longevity.

Two merchant weights (fundō) and the inexhaustible bag (kinnō).



A table behind the bag has—from left to right—the key to the storehouse of the gods (hōyaku), a vase with red coral (sango), and a pair of scholar scrolls (makimono).

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Yellow bedding cover (futonji) or furniture cover (yutan) with pine-bark diamond (matsukawabishi) motif, 19th century
Cloth: silk; katazome (stencil resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.111

Technique: Stencil resist dye (katazome)
This textile was either used as a bedding (futonji) or a furniture cover (yutan). Futonji were draped over the coverlet at night and stored during the day, while yutan were used to cover chests or baggage first during the bridal procession and later in the couple's new home. This elegant example is made of silk dyed a golden yellow and decorated with the pine-bark diamond (matsukawabishi) pattern using a stencil and starch paste, which kept the dye from penetrating the silk. Named for its resemblance to the bark of pine trees, this motif consists of a zigzag pattern, which forms a series of lozenges.

Japanese Black Pine bark [Source: https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-close-up-of-japanese-black-pine-tree-trunk-and-limbs-detailed-bark-175893534.html]

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Okayama Prefecture, Japan
Cloth with vertical stripes and water well (igeta) pattern, early 20th century
Cloth: cotton; tate-yoko gasuri (double ikat), indigo dye
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.73

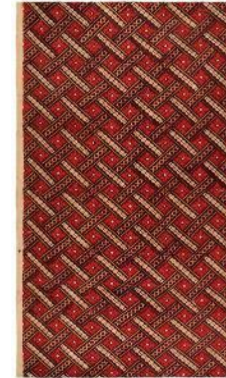
Technique: Double ikat dye (tate-yoko gasuri)
Okayama Prefecture, part of the Chūgoku region in the southwest of Japan's main island Honshu, has long been known for the production of cotton fabric dyed with kasuri (ikat) patterns. This length of fabric features vertical stripe patterns (tate-jima) achieved with double ikat (tate-yoko gasuri). Following pattern books, the dyer plots out the areas to be dyed on both warp and weft threads and, using paper and string, masks the parts to remain undyed. Carefully kept in order and position, the threads are dyed, rinsed, and dried before being stretched on the loom. When woven together, the intended patterns emerge. Here, the crosshatch design that looks like a pound sign (#) is meant to mimic the upper frame of a water well (igeta).

Unknown maker, Japan
Blue felt rug (mōsen) decorated with red circles, late 18th–early 19th century
Cloth: wool felt; shibori (tie-dyeing)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.128

Material and technique: Felted wool and tie-dye (shibori)
Most wool felt was made in China or Mongolia and then exported to Japan. This felt rug (mōsen) features large and small roundels in white, augmented with red dye. It is unknown whether the shibori (tie-dye) dye work was done before it reached Japan, but its fineness and saturation suggest a Japanese sensibility. Because of its relatively small size, it was likely used as a mat (chagujoku) for ritualistic serving of sencha, a loose-leaf green tea.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Red felt rug (mōsen) with lattice pattern, early 20th century
Cloth: wool felt; katazome (stencil resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.126



Material and technique: Felted wool and stencil-resist dye (katazome)
Felt rugs, or mōsen, were mostly used to achieve warmth and comfort during the winter. Businesses, teahouses, and homes laid them over the traditional tatami (rice straw mats) flooring. Wool felt was imported from China or Mongolia, where such rugs were used as flooring within yurts, the portable tent dwellings of nomadic herders. This example features an elaborate lattice pattern across the entire surface, dyed with a stencil resist (katazome). Between the latticework are stylized persimmon flowers.

Unknown maker, Japan
White-ground Japanese sarasa (wasarasa) rug with repeating pattern of foreigners and elephant amidst flowers, 18th century
Cloth: cotton and felt; katazome (stencil resist)
Gift of Thomas Murray in honor of Etsuko Iwanaga 2019.91.19

Material: Japanese sarasa / chintz
Chintz, printed or painted cotton cloth from India, has been an export good for 2,000 years. Considered exotic and beautiful from Indonesia and Egypt to Europe and North America, specific types were manufactured to satisfy the tastes of various world markets. Beginning around 1600, British and Dutch merchants imported chintz fabric to Japan under the term sarasa. Because of its great expense, only wealthy lords could afford it, prompting the establishment of a domestic industry that imitated the Indian originals, but used Japanese dyeing techniques such as katazome (stencil resist). The first handbook with pattern samples was issued in Japan in 1778.
This example is called a wasarasa, or Japanese sarasa. It features a floral background behind two foreign motifs: a European and a Chinese man, and a European man standing next to a white elephant with rider. The rug is backed with orange trade wool, a costly import that, when combined with the sarasa, made it even more valuable.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Unknown maker, Japan
Senchadō tea service mat (chagujoku), late 19th–early 20th century
Paper; hand-painted pigments, ink
Gift of Thomas Murray 2019.91.6

Material and technique: Mulberry paper and hand-painted pigments
Made of paper, this mat features a pattern reminiscent of a carpet from Central Asia. A luxury good attainable only by the nobility, it was hand-painted with a brush. Because it shows little wear, it might have been the design prototype for a line of identical mats.

Utagawa Hiroshige, 1797–1858
Narumi: Famous Arimatsu Tie-dyed Fabric, from the series The Fifty-three Stations along the Tōkaidō (Tōkaidō gojūsan tsugi no uchi), also known as Hōeidō Tōkaidō, c. 1833
Published by Takenouchi Magohachi
Woodblock print (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.75.51.528

The village of Arimatsu was founded in 1608 along the Tōkaidō, Japan's most important road, which connected Edo (today's Tokyo) with Kyoto. The area east of what today is the city of Nagoya was uncultivated, and robberies were frequent. Clay in the soil didn't allow for rice farming, but indigo could be planted. After a long period of military conflicts ended, people became more affluent and were interested in nicer clothes. Before long, tie-dyed textiles (shibori) became Arimatsu's main enterprise; by the 1640s, "Arimatsu shibori" was known all over the country as a special product purchased by many travelers.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
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Utagawa Hiroshige, 1797–1858
Kanda: Dyers' Quarter, from the series One Hundred Famous Views of Edo (Meisho Edo hyakkei), 1857, 11th lunar month
Published by Sakanaya Eikichi
Woodblock print (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
Gift of Louis W. Hill, Jr. P.78.65.133

Narrow strips of cloth in a variety of blues hang from wooden frames to dry and blow like banners in the wind. They are the work of indigo dyers, most likely destined to be cut into towels, tenugui, which men tie around their heads during autumn festivals. Hiroshige positions us in Kon'ya-chō, literally "blue stores quarter," a street dominated by professional dyers in Kanda, a neighborhood in Edo (present-day Tokyo) that was home to many craftsmen. In pre-modern times, it was common for artisans to cluster by trade, allowing for shared access to resources and some collective bargaining power when setting values on their wares.

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Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Gallery 8: Okinawa

Okinawan Textiles
A large part of the more than 160 islands that today comprise Okinawa Prefecture was once the Ryūkyū Kingdom (1429–1879).
Its location—midway between Kyushu and Taiwan, at the southernmost point of Japan's archipelago—was economically advantageous. Annexed by Japan in 1879, the kingdom's islands played a key role in the maritime trade between China, Vietnam, and Indonesia, which influenced its aesthetic vocabulary.
The hot, humid weather of these subtropical islands motivated Okinawans to develop uniquely light and airy textiles woven from ramie (choma), a nettle plant, and bashō, the leaf of the Japanese fiber banana. The finest textiles were reserved for the Ryūkyūan aristocracy, as were certain colors and patterns. These Okinawan textiles were also in high demand in the Tokugawa shogunate in Edo (present-day Tokyo) as an alternative to silk—equally luxurious but much more comfortable during the stifling summer months.

Clothing and Identity in Okinawa
During the era of the Ryūkyū Kingdom (1429–1879), sumptuary laws, which enforced social hierarchies by governing who could wear what fabrics, tightly regulated access to textiles, dyes, prints, and printing techniques. For example, kasuri (ikat) textiles, in which individual threads are dyed to form designs when woven together, was reserved for the nobility. Because they could not wear actual kasuri cloth, commoners replicated kasuri designs using stencils. Likewise, a complex system of laws inspired by those at the Chinese court governed bingata, the process of stencil dyeing with resist paste. What's more, color and design signified rank. Only the royal family could wear dragon and phoenix motifs, and the color yellow was restricted to royalty and high nobility.
Even the size of motif was regulated, with larger motifs reserved for high-ranked courtiers, while lower-ranked nobles wore smaller motifs. The Japanese annexation of the kingdom in 1879 marked the end of these restrictions, and luxury textiles could be worn by all who could afford them. Nonetheless, Japan imposed its own restrictions on Okinawans, pressuring them to dress in conventionally Japanese garments.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
June 25–September 11, 2022 (special exhibition in Target Galleries)

Katsushika Hokusai, 1760–1849
Japanese Fiber Banana Garden at Nakashima, from the series Eight Views of the Ryūkyū Islands (Ryūkyū hakkei), c. 1832
Woodblock print (nishiki-e); ink and color on paper
Published by Moriya Jihei
Bequest of Richard P. Gale 74.1.315

This scene shows Japanese fiber banana plants growing between houses in Nakashima, today in the western part of the city of Naha, Okinawa's capital. It is one of a series of eight prints that provide scenic views of the islands by print artist and painter Hokusai, who never traveled to Okinawa himself but used the illustrations in the Chinese book Abridged History of the Land of Ryūkyū (Ch. Liuqiuguo zhilue) as his source. Though the banana plants shown are of the same species from which textile makers harvested fibers, they are purely decorative here. Whole plantations are maintained to support the textile industry.

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Light brown-ground Ryūkyūan robe (ryūso) with dark brown stripes and alternating white-black pattern, early 20th century
Cloth: Japanese fiber banana (bashō) and cotton; two-color tate-gasuri (warp ikat)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.182

This robe is typical of Okinawan-style garments, which lack the long, detached sleeves of mainland Japanese kimonos. When Japan annexed the Ryūkyū Kingdom in 1879, renaming it Okinawa Prefecture, it required Okinawans to learn Japanese and dress in the Japanese manner. Still, garments like this continued to be made and worn. The light and dark brown sections are made of Japanese fiber banana (bashō), but the vertical stripes dyed white and black are cotton. This unlined garment would typically have been worn in summer; however, the integration of cotton into the fabric suggests fall.

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Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Light brown-ground kimono with connected double lozenge pattern, late 19th–early 20th century
Cloth: Japanese fiber banana (bashō); katazome (stencil resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.181

This kimono is a testament to the distances textiles sometimes travel and the creative transformations they undergo through the work of many hands. Woven in Okinawa from banana bast fiber, the light, breathable cloth was likely intended for export to the Japanese mainland, where such luxe fabric was prized. The connected double-lozenge pattern, a mainland motif achieved through a stencil resist-dyeing technique called katazome, might have been added there later. Ironically, the pattern imitates kasuri (or ikat)—an Okinawan technique. In the last step of its transformation, the cloth was cut and sewn into a form typical for Japanese kimono with long, free-hanging sleeves.

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Brown and blue plaid Ryūkyūan robe (ryūso), 19th century
Cloth: Japanese fiber banana (bashō) and cotton; tate-yoko gasuri (double ikat)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.184

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Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Striped fragment, 19th century
Cloth: Japanese fiber banana (bashō); striping, tate-gasuri (warp ikat)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.177

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Orange fragment with polychrome stripes, 19th century
Cloth: Japanese fiber banana (bashō), silk, and cotton; striping, tate-gasuri (warp ikat)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.179

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Dark blue-ground Ryūkyūan robe (ryūso) with pattern of irises in a flowing stream, 19th century
Cloth: cotton; ēgata (stencil resist with indigo)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.142

This outer robe for a Ryūkyūan woman was decorated using the ēgata paste-resist technique, which is similar to bingata except that only indigo dye is used, thus making it available to commoners. The limitation of a single color may have made it more difficult to make, forcing the dye artist to rely on shading for variation and distinction between the designs. Given the elaborate stencil work of this robe, it could have belonged to a woman of the warrior class. The stencil

work features irises, partly submerged baskets, flowing water, and weeping cherry blossoms, creating the impression of a picturesque, meandering river.

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Short, upper garment (dujin) with pattern of plum blossoms against swastika, early 19th century
Cloth: silk; bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
Gift of Thomas Murray in honor of Terumi Inoue 2019.91.31

This short upper garment is worn in combination with a skirt, called kakan. Together they comprise the formal attire of an Okinawan commoner; an aristocrat would have added a richly decorated outer robe. The pattern here is of plum blossoms against a swastika (manji) ground. The swastika, a symbol of divinity in Indian religions, arrived in Japan with Buddhism from China after 700CE. The left-facing form of the symbol represents the auspicious footprints of the Buddha. European pagan and North American Navajo traditions also adapted the swastika; in Pueblo culture, it represents wind. Its right-facing form, however, was appropriated by the National Socialist German Workers' (Nazi) Party, and for many people its spiritual origins are overshadowed by its associations with German ultra-right nationalism and white supremacy ideology.

This garment is arguably the exhibition's most outstanding example of bingata, the process of stencil dyeing with resist paste. The dyework is exceptionally detailed and fine, as seen in the sharpness of the swastika pattern and the delicate shading achieved in the colors of the plum blossoms.

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Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
White-ground Ryūkyūan robe (ryūso) with paired cranes pattern, mid-19th century
Cloth: cotton; bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
Gift of Thomas Murray in honor of his wife Kristal Hale 2019.91.34

A noblewoman likely wore this robe. Made of cotton, a costly imported fabric, it is identifiable as a ryūso (Ryūkyūan robe) by the gussets (triangular pieces of material) under the attached sleeves, the short sleeve length, and the long lapels. This garment would have been worn in the colder winter months, when temperatures dipped to the mid-50s Fahrenheit.
The complex pattern of swirling water, cranes, plum blossoms, and other plants was achieved through bingata, the repeated use of a stencil through which a resist paste was applied. The paste blocked the dye from entering the fabric, and these undyed areas were later colored in by hand.

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Yellow-ground kimono with floral pattern, late 19th century
Cloth: cotton; bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
Gift of Thomas Murray in honor of Jack Lenor Larsen 2019.91.35

Only royalty during the Ryūkyū Kingdom could wear bingata with yellow ground; after annexation by Japan in 1879, such restrictions were lifted. Still, these special garments were worn only for festive or ceremonial occasions. This garment has a kimono structure, visible in the detached sleeves and shorter, overlapping lapel. It has an intricate pattern of interconnected little flowers with accent colors in red, blue, and purple.

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Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Light blue-ground Ryūkyūan robe (ryūso) decorated with cranes, pine trees, and cherry blossoms, 19th century
Cloth: ramie; bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.146

This robe is made of unlined, plain-weave ramie, indicating a summer garment for a wealthy, aristocratic Okinawan woman. Larger motifs as seen here were reserved for high-ranked courtiers. Such garments were made to order in the workshops at the royal capital, and the dyers themselves were elevated to the status of lower gentry because of the high value placed on their skills.

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Light blue-ground Ryūkyūan robe (ryūso) with pine and snowflake motif, 19th century
Cloth: cotton; bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.147

The aristocracy used cotton for winter garments. The cut of this garment is typical for Ryūkyūan robes (ryūso): it has sleeves completely attached to the body with triangular gussets under the arms, a long neckband, and is wider and shorter than kimonos from the Japanese mainland. Here, a complex design runs riot over it: maroon-interlocking circles of bamboo, groups of pine boughs and plum blossoms, large stylized snowflakes filled with chrysanthemums, and small ones filled with turtles and cranes, depicted in red.

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Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Unfinished white-ground Ryūkyūan robe (ryūso), second half 19th century
Cloth: cotton; bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.175

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
White-ground Ryūkyūan robe (ryūso) with water, maple leaves, and cherry blossoms pattern, 19th century
Cloth: cotton; bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.145

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
White-ground Ryūkyūan robe (ryūso) decorated with maple leaves and florals, 19th century
Cloth: cotton; bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
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Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Fragment decorated with clouds and cranes, mid 19th century
Cloth: cotton; somewakeji bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.190

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Sample fragment with four different stenciled motifs, 19th century
Cloth: cotton; bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.174

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Wrapping cloth (uchikui) with directional floral design, 19th century
Cloth: ramie; tsutsugaki (freehand resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.143

Uchikui, like furoshiki on mainland Japan, are heavy cloths used for wrapping gifts and other goods. Typical for uchikui, polychromatic designs—in this case of chrysanthemums, peonies, and other florals surrounding a rocky outcrop—are set against a dark indigo ground. Three panels of plain-weave, heavy-grade ramie, a fabric made from the fibers of nettle plants, were joined together. Largescale uchikui woven from stiff and strong fibers were often used to cover furniture or other large household items.

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Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Wrapping cloth (uchikui) with circular floral design, 19th century
Cloth: ramie; tsutsugaki (freehand resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.144

Okinawan textiles sometimes incorporated design motifs from mainland Japan, a tradition that probably grew out of the maritime trade. Here, stylized depictions of pine, bamboo, and plum blossoms are arranged in a circle. Together they make a common motif in the arts of Japan, known as the "Three Friends of Winter" (shōchikubai), which symbolizes longevity, perseverance, and renewal. Both symbols of longevity, a crane and a tortoise decorate the center, thus suggesting that this uchikui was used to cover or wrap gifts for ceremonies such as weddings.

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Wrapping cloth (uchikui) with pine, bamboo, and plum (shōchikubai) motif, 19th century
Cloth: ramie; tsutsugaki (freehand resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection
2019.20.188

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Wrapping cloth (uchikui), 19th century
Cloth: ramie; tsutsugaki (freehand resist)
Gift of Thomas Murray
2019.91.32

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Yellow-ground wrapping cloth (uchikui) with pattern of irises in a flowing stream, late 19th century
Cloth: ramie; tsutsugaki (freehand resist)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.186

This wrapping cloth, or uchikui, is made up of two symmetrical panels of heavy-grade, plain-weave ramie. The panels are not identical because an artist created the design by hand using the paste-resist dyeing technique called tsutsugaki: motifs were made by squeezing sticky paste out of a tube, like icing a cake. Until 1879, government sumptuary laws regulated the use of colors and yellow ground, reserving them for the royal family; hence this piece likely postdates that year. The small size of this uchikui suggests it would have been used for gift presentation, and the use of a bright color indicates a festive occasion, like a wedding. Irises in a flowing stream is a motif borrowed from mainland Japan.

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Exit: Okinawa

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Yellow-ground fragment with motif of plum and bamboo covered in snow,
19th century
Cloth: cotton; bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund
established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation;
purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.165

The identical cloth was used for a robe of the Shō Royal Family of the Ryūkyū
Kingdom, which is now in the collection of Naha City Museum of History.

Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Light-blue-ground fragment decorated with plum blossoms, red maple leaves, pine trees, birds, and latticework
Pink-ground fragment decorated with red maple leaves, little flowers, and diagonal stripes, 19th century
Cloth: cotton; bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund
established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation;
purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.161, 162

A robe of the Shō Royal Family of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, now in the collection of
Naha City Museum of History, is made of these two cloths.

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Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Dark blue-ground decorative scarf (tisaji) with geometric patterns, second half 19th century
Cloth: cotton; floating relief warp and weft (Yomitanzan hanaori), yoko-gasuri (weft ikat)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.191

This decorative scarf is called tisaji in Okinawan. By Okinawan custom, a young woman would weave such a scarf from yarn she dyed herself and then present it as a token of her romantic interest to the man she wished to marry. Such scarfs were also believed to carry talismanic powers, and they appear in several traditional Okinawan dances.
Like the nearby winter robe, this scarf is made with the exclusive Yomitanzan hanaori technique, introduced to the Ryūkyū Islands from Southeast Asia via trade routes in the 1300s or 1400s. Sumptuary laws restricted the technique under Ryūkyūan rule.

Dressed by Nature: Textiles of Japan
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Unknown maker, Okinawa, Ryūkyū Islands, Japan
Dark blue-ground lined winter robe (watajin) with dog paw print pattern and yellow-ground lining with ivy, chrysanthemum, and bamboo grass pattern, second half 19th century
Cloth: cotton; exterior: floating relief weft (Yomitanzan hanaori), lining: bingata (stencil resist with applied pigments)
The John R. Van Derlip Fund and the Mary Griggs Burke Endowment Fund established by the Mary Livingston Griggs and Mary Griggs Burke Foundation; purchase from the Thomas Murray Collection 2019.20.192

Made from two luxury fabrics, this lined winter robe showcases the height of elite possibility for Ryūkyūan nobility before the kingdom's annexation by Japan in 1879. The indigo-dyed cotton exterior features a grid of thin yellow and red stripes, in which a stylized geometric motif called dog pawprint pattern is placed using the Yomitanzan hanaori floating-relief weft technique. People in the village of Yomitan originally executed the technique after its transmission from Southeast Asia in the 15th century. Sumptuary laws restricted textiles made with this enormously time-consuming technique to the royal family, noblemen, and, on special occasions, the people of Yomitan.
The interior is a yellow-ground cotton with interconnected ivy, chrysanthemum, and bamboo grass dyed with bingata, the process of stencil dyeing with resist paste.