

DECODING THE KIMONO

Kimono are worn with the left side over the right, except when dressing the dead for burial.

This *obijime* (braided cord) holds the *obi* and underpadding in place.

Curved sleeves indicate the kimono is a woman's. Men's kimono have square sleeves.

The shorter sleeve length tells us the wearer is married. An unmarried woman would have long, flowing sleeves (*furisode*) covering her hands and possibly reaching the floor.

Kimono often rest at the wearer's ankles. For women, additional length allows for tucking some under the *obi*.



Obi (sashes) used to be tied in the front, but by the late seventeenth century were mostly tied in back.

This obi is tied with a *tateya musubi*, a decorative knot style known as “standing arrow.” Today, *musubi* (knots) are more decorative than functional.

Padding, undergarments, and ties make the human form cylindrical.

Patterning on the kimono (not seen here) can tell you the level of formality (free-style designs are more formal than all-over patterns) and the season (motifs can be unique to a time of year). Complex and fancy patterns are usually reserved for young women.