

## Krishnâ Riboud's textile collection at the Musée Guimet: study and preservation

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The Musée Guimet holds one of the richest collections of textiles in the world thanks to Madame Krishnâ Riboud (1926-2000).

Krishnâ Roy was born October 12, 1926 in Calcutta, the great grand-niece of Rabindranath Tagore, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. She later married the French businessman Jean Riboud, whom she had met through Henri Cartier-Bresson in New York.

Madame Riboud began her collection in the 1950s by buying Baluchar saris of Bengal, the region she was from.

In 1979, she founded the Association for the Study and Documentation of Asian Textiles (AEDTA), to which she brought an extraordinary collection of about 4,000 textiles. Constituting a large library and assembling a team of researchers, she created a center of study and research. In 1964, Jeannine Auboyer, then director of the Musée Guimet, asked her to study the textiles of Central Asia brought back by Paul Pelliot. For Krishnâ Riboud, it was the beginning of a very special relationship with the museum. So naturally she decided to bequeath her collection to the Musée Guimet. A 1990 initial donation of about 150 pieces was followed in 2003 by a verbal legacy comprising almost all of the collection. It illustrates the richness of the textiles of the entire Asian continent, with a predominance for India (1700 numbers) and about 600 artworks from Japan.

The arrival of this collection filled a huge gap. Actually, the Musée Guimet owned hitherto very few textiles, except those brought by Paul Pelliot, since Emile Guimet had not brought any textiles from his travels in Asia. The Asian collections of the Louvre, transferred to the Musée Guimet in 1945, hardly held more. However, many collectors, French or established in France, had since the nineteenth century been sincere enthusiasts for Japanese fabrics.

This craze coincided with the development of specialty shops that allowed them to obtain the pieces they needed. Many merchants opened shop, but two of them played a key role: Tadamasa Hayashi (1853-1906), who came in Paris in 1878 as interpreter for the World Fair, and Samuel Bing (1838-1905), collector and merchant.

Louis Gonse (1846-1921), collector and author of the seminal work *L'Art Japonais*, published in 1883, "owned ten Japanese robes each one more splendid than the other, all dating from the eighteenth century."<sup>1</sup>

Edmond de Goncourt (1822-1896), a writer and an avid collector of Japanese art, decorated his Auteuil house with textiles from the Far East. Some of these fabrics were used in unique ways. In "La Maison d'un artiste", a book he published in 1881 in Paris, we learn that the walls were "(...) covered with drawings from the eighteenth century, fukousas and kakemonos (...)" (La Maison d'un artiste, I, p.72).<sup>2</sup>

The collection of Krishnâ Riboud holds a few *fukusa* (including MA-9468 AEDTA-1447, purchased in 1983) in the spirit of those sought by collectors of the nineteenth century.

There are also *katagami* stencils which greatly influenced the decorative arts. The samples collected at the time and

reproduced in various books, such as Maurice Pillard Verneuil's *Etoffes Japonaises tissées et brochées*, published in Paris in 1905, were a major influence on the decorative arts. The preface, written by Gaston Migeon, creator of the section devoted to Asian art at the Louvre in 1893, shows us his admiration for the imagination of the Japanese and their mastery of technique, especially of stitched fabric. Those textile samples were purchased by Madame Riboud in large numbers. Her collection also numbers large sets of Japanese artworks assembled by the early French collectors, since these pieces were still available in Paris when she became interested in Japanese textiles.

Although fascinated by the study of Chinese textiles, Madame Riboud developed over the years a true spiritual connection with Japan. She made a dozen trips to Japan, especially to study, among others, the textiles held at the Shôshô-in in Nara.<sup>3</sup>

Japanese Textiles from her collection display a large range of all the techniques of weaving and dyeing used in the archipelago. Among the 600 Japanese textiles assembled by Madame Riboud, there are nearly 100 *Kesa*, the largest collection in Europe, beautiful *kosode* and silk kimonos, robes of banana fiber or ramie from Okinawa, elm fibers dresses from the Ainu people of Hokkaido, and a beautiful collection of cotton clothing that illustrate the use of indigo in Japan. Krishnâ Riboud did not try to cover all areas or all periods, preferring to focus on the Edo period (1615-1868), but choosing only pieces of high quality. “The costumes in the collection have been worn by many different social classes: rich citizens of Edo, aristocrats, eminent Buddhist monks, samurai, farmers, fishermen, peasants, [even] the Ainu of Hokkaido and residents of Okinawa<sup>4</sup>.”

To publicize the work of the AEDTA and its collection, Krishnâ Riboud developed an active policy of publications and exhibitions. In this context, she organized the *Manteaux de nuages* exhibition in 1991-1992, featuring Japanese *Kesa*, first shown at the Textile Museum in Lyon, then at the Musée Guimet in Paris, the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon and Finally the Museum of the Jôtenkaku Shokokuji Temple in Kyoto from October 23 to December 4, 1994.

Madame Riboud explained her interest in *kesa* in these terms: “[it] is not only the splendour and beauty of these textiles, but also the complexity of the techniques used and the rigor of their construction. (...) [It] varies according to the different Buddhist sects (that used various symbols and rituals), to which monks who make these *Kesa* belonged. (...)”<sup>5</sup>.

The collection gives us a broad overview of these different types. Among the different kinds of *kesa*, the 7 *jô* ones (MA 11630 - AEDTA 3788), *uttarasô* are used for formal occasions inside temples while those holding between 9 and 25 *jô*, the *sôgyari* (among others the MA 5783, AEDTA 1488), are worn during ceremonies.

Some works are distinguished by their very valuable iconographic, aesthetic or technical worth. This is the case with the *suzukake* (MA 11849 - AEDTA 4015) of raw hemp which was destined to be worn by *yamabushi* monks.

The *Noh* theater costume (MA 11492- AEDTA 3642) of silk gauze represents one of the masterpieces of the Japanese collection.

Aware that it would be difficult, for reasons both technical and human or financial, for AEDTA to survive her, Madame Riboud decided to leave her collection to the Musée Guimet. Indeed, Madame Riboud wanted her collection to be kept by a museum of art, not a museum specializing in textiles. Continuing her scientific approach

which saw the study of fabrics as essential to the understanding of the historical civilizations that had produced them, Madame Riboud guaranteed in this way the sustainability of her work. She did not want her collection to be dispersed, and especially wished it to remain accessible to both researchers and the public.

The library and all the documentation of the AEDTA were transferred to the Musée Guimet. They are now accessible, and make up a major collection of documents for researchers. The collection of Krishnâ Riboud is unique in many respects. It is remarkable, not only by the aesthetic appeal of its works, but because it is, both by its historical extent and its diversity in techniques, a collection of reference like no other.

## Introduction

The Musée Guimet has one of the richest collections of textiles in the world, thanks to Madame Krishnâ Riboud (1926-2000). Madame Riboud began her collection in the 1950s by buying Baluchar saris of Bengal, the region where she was born. In 1979, she founded the Association for the Study and Documentation of Asian Textiles (AEDTA), which now hosts an extraordinary collection of approximately 4000 textiles. Constituting an important library and assembling a team of researchers, she created a center of studies and scientific research. By 1964, when Jeannine Auboyer, then Director of the Musée Guimet, asked her to examine the textiles from Central Asia brought back by Paul Pelliot, Krishnâ Riboud began a very special relationship with that institution. That's why she naturally chose to bequeath her collection to the Musée Guimet. A first donation of approximately 150 pieces in 1990 was followed in 2003 by a verbal bequest that brought almost all of the collection to the museum. It illustrates the richness of textile arts in the entire Asian continent, predominantly India (1700 references) and about 600 works from Japan.

The arrival of this set filled a huge gap. Indeed, the Musée Guimet previously owned very few textiles, except those brought by Paul Pelliot. The Asian collections of the Louvre, transferred to the Musée Guimet in 1945, consisted primarily, for the Japanese side of large prints inherited collections of the first "Japonistes" and virtually contain no textiles at all. Emile Guimet himself had in fact not brought any textiles from his travels in Asia. Yet many collectors, French or established in France, had, since the nineteenth century, passionately collected Japanese fabrics.

### 1. The first collections of Japanese textiles in France

The trade agreements signed from the 1850s and the World Fairs allowed Japan to open to the Western world and to modernize.

In 1867, the Paris Exposition, the first to officially welcome Japan, displayed some Japanese textiles described in these terms by Mr. Aymar-Bresson in the book *General History of the Universal Exhibition of 1867*: "The Japanese fabrics are very nice; there is nothing more rich: silk, gold and silver are abundant, but they have the immense superiority on fabrics from Turkey and Asia Minor that they display ornate designs of true artistic value that our manufacturers would be at a loss to reproduce and that our ladies will be delighted to wear." [1]

It is difficult to imagine today the unprecedented interest felt by visitors who discovered the first fabrics from Japan, profoundly different from anything they had seen so far, from the Middle East or other countries in Europe.

## Japanese costume

Between 1860 and 1900, the kimono, well known in Europe as early as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (introduced by the Dutch who kept a trading post in Nagasaki despite the closing of Japan in 1639) had become very fashionable in France. The fashionable wore them as indoors clothing [2].

In *La Prisonnière*, Proust gives us a perfect example of the success of Japanese-style costumes in the 1900s. "Albertine came to me: she had undressed, she wore one of her charming crêpe de chine bathrobes, or Japanese robes of which I had wanted a description (...)" [3].

Artists are the first to be sensitive to the beauty of Japanese textiles, especially the costumes. The development of specialty shops allow them to obtain the items they need.[4]

In 1862, the shop "La Porte Chinoise", belonging to Madame Desoye, located at 220 rue de Rivoli, attracts lovers of Japanese art. In 1864, Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) complained that the French painter James Tissot bought all Japanese costumes from the shop, indicating that these works have aroused the interest of artists. In 1867, Claude Monet bought a kimono for his wife Camille and painted her dressed in this gorgeous dress in the famous painting *La Japonaise*. [5] He also wrote to the art critic Philippe Burty, inventor of the term "Japonisme", that he was painting "Japanese theatre dresses". [6]

The number of specialized merchants kept growing, but two of them will play a vital role: Tadamasa Hayashi (1853-1906), who came to Paris in 1878 as an interpreter for the World Fair, and Samuel Bing (1838-1905), collector and art dealer. The latter opened a shop in 1884 at 19 rue Chauchat in Paris. Raymond Koechlin said of them in 1914 "Hayashi was, with Bing, the most intelligent intermediary between Japan and Paris. They are the ones who revealed the true art of Japan. They were our taste, and are at the root of all our fine collections" [7]

Louis Gonse (1846-1921), collector and author of the seminal work *L'Art Japonais*, published in 1883, "owned ten Japanese robes each one more splendid than the other, all dating from the eighteenth century." [8]

In his article on the Japanese masks (Louis Gonse, « Les masques Japonais », *le Monde Moderne*, déc. 1900, p. 752-753), Gonse retells a party at Henri Cernuschi's home: "In a great costume party given by my late friend Henri Cernuschi in his magnificent mansion on the Avenue Velasquez, I put on a *daimio* costume and covered up my face with a smiling mask, a Démé-Jioman masterpiece. My friend Hayashi accompanied me disguised as an old beggar, brow wrinkled, jaw shaking. The effect was irresistible" [9]. On one of the photographs (p.750), his wife, to his right, "wears a *crème* satin gown adorned with a *treillage en or atténué*" (a grid of altered gold), decorated with multicoloured embroidery of paulownias flowers" (*Catalogue de vente de la collection L. Gonse, 5-11 mai 1924, Paris, Hôtel Drouot*) [10]. In the Louis Gonse auction catalogue, a sale held at Hôtel Drouot from 5 to 11 May 1924, the famous "*satin crème*" dress appears as number 955 (Ill.1).

Some collectors did not wear their Japanese kimonos. Edmond de Goncourt (1822-1896), a writer and an avid collector of Japanese art, decorated his Auteuil house with textiles from the Far East. Some of these fabrics were

used in unique ways. In “La Maison d’un artiste”, a book he published in 1881 in Paris, we learn that the walls were “(...) covered with drawings from the eighteenth century, fukousas and kakemonos (...)” (La Maison d’un artiste, I, p.72) [11].

### The *fukusa*

As this passage shows, the Goncourt home, like those of other collectors, boasted many woven or embroidered pieces: the *fukusa*.

Louis Gonse in “*L’art japonais*”, defined *Fukusa* in a footnote: “I already said that fukousa is a square-shaped fabric, more or less adorned depending on the rank and fortune of the people who owned it. It was used to wrap a gift or a letter in a small lacquer box. Of course, the fukousa was returned to the sender as an acknowledgment” [12].

In the catalogue of the Goncourt auction, held from March 12 to 13, 1897 at Drouot, the article on “Fouk’sa” (*sic*) compares the art of Japanese embroidery with that of painting: “Japanese embroiders are at struggle with painters, they endeavour to obtain on silk effects that should be exclusive to painting” [13] (Ill. 2). Major museums bought *fukusa* from merchants or during major sales. The Musée des Tissus de Lyon, opened in 1890, owns eleven *fukusa*. Among them, four were bought at the Goncourt sale in 1897 [14]. The one displaying “on a blue background, a rooster, a hen and her chicks embroidered in vibrant colour underneath black bamboo” figures in the sale catalogue under No. 1085 [15]. The Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, also acquired some *fukusa*, one of which was purchased from Bing in 1899 [16]. Gonse adds that the Parisian collections had managed to gather the most “beautiful fukousas in the world” (*sic*). He quotes Mr. Wakai, according to whom “there were no [*Fukusa* left] in Japan that can compete with some of them” [17].

The collection of Krishnâ Riboud holds a few *fukusa* (among which MA 9468 - AEDTA 1447, purchased in 1983, Ill. 3) in the spirit of those sought by collectors of the nineteenth century.

### Katagami stencils and samples

Among the first pieces related to textiles collected by the “*Japonisants*”, we find paper stencils (*katagami*), which played a major role in the spreading Japanese motifs into the world. There were very few stencils in the West before 1880 [18]. Bing published in “*Le Japon artistique*”, and calling them “*poncifs*” or *pochoirs poncés* [19]. Among Krishnâ Riboud’s collection, there are a number of katagami stencils but it is not known exactly when they were acquired (Ill. 4). Stencils have greatly influenced Japanese decorative art.

The diffusion of Japanese patterns was also made by samples bought by collectors and reproduced in various books, like M.P. Verneuil’s *Etoffes Japonaises tissées et brochées* (Paris, 1905). Gaston Migeon, the man who brought the Far East to the Louvre, creator of the section devoted to Asian art in 1893, wrote the preface to the book. He admired the imagination of the Japanese and their mastery of technique, especially of stitched fabric. He said “the art of textiles is not one of the less demanding, it really contains the epitome of this exquisite art in the past centuries. [20]”

In the book, several plates display fragments of cloth decorated with figurative and narrative patterns, which were probably used in the manufacture of *obi* and tobacco pouches [21]. Among them, those reproduced plate 32 (described as follows: top: *juros*; bottom: sword hilts, Ill.5), which, according to the notice, belonged to Henri Vever, are identical to two fragments belonging to Madame Riboud and now kept by her family (AEDTA 1871 - AEDTA 1874) [22].

The piece quoted as belonging to Mr. Bing, reproduced on plate 30 of Verneuil's book, is very similar to a piece of brocaded silk cloth in the collection of Krishnâ Riboud (MA 9905- AEDTA 1927), inventoried in 1984. It is probable that this piece comes from Bing's collection (Ill.6).

These samples of textiles were purchased by Madame Riboud in large numbers. They are kept in albums, and illustrate her desire to build a true collection of reference, combining the broadest techniques and patterns range possible. In 1994, the AEDTA's collections were enriched by several very interesting pieces: eight pieces of silk with figurative and narrative patterns for the manufacture of *obi* and tobacco pouches that were popular in the 19th century Japan[23].

The collection of Madame Riboud in a large part built from large sets of Japanese art collected by the early collectors. These pieces were still circulating in Paris when she began to collect Japanese textiles.

## 2. Krishnâ Riboud and its relationship with Japan

### Krishnâ Riboud

Krishnâ Roy was born on October 12, 1926 in Calcutta. Daughter of a renowned physician, she is also the great grand-niece of Rabindranath Tagore, the 1913 Nobel Prize for Literature. It is in this intellectual and cosmopolitan atmosphere that Krishnâ Riboud grew up, and has given her unique openness to the world. After studying philosophy in Boston, Krishnâ Roy married Jean Riboud, whom she had met through Henri Cartier-Bresson in New York.

Fleeing the pernicious atmosphere of McCarthyism, the couple moved to Paris in 1951. Jean Riboud joined the Schlumberger Company, soon to be one of the largest French industrial groups.

Krishnâ Riboud, who returned frequently to India, begins very early to gain an interest in the arts and traditions of her country and decided to start a collection of textiles[24].

Aware that her country's textiles, particularly from her home region, were a priceless but endangered heritage, she began by acquiring Baluchar saris from Bengal.

The pieces she bought from the 1950's are listed in the inventory opened in 1980. The first piece (AEDTA 1-MA 8158) is a sari from Bengal.

Following the 1962 exhibition at the Galerie Bernheim in Paris, which displayed her textile collection, she began her collaboration with the Musée Guimet. Jeannine Auboyer, at the time Director of Guimet, entrusted her in 1964 with the study of the museum's textiles, particularly from the famous collection brought back from Central Asia by Paul Pelliot [25]. This study helped Krishnâ Riboud to understand the crucial nature of technical analysis in the process of deeply understanding the works. Thanks to technical studies, they can be replaced in their historical, social and economic context. She once stated: "*I think the technical studies are of tremendous value because that is when you start thinking about the person who made it and the technical means employed. (・・・) You think of the person who has*

*spent the time and who has developed his art and skill using a vast knowledge but bringing every time something new to it. If you don't do technical study you really remain as a lone aesthete. Then you can only be a collector but you can't be a disseminator of information."* [26]

During this period, she temporarily ceased to enrich her collection. It was only during the 1970's that she started to acquire new pieces again. Her criteria of choice were now focused on the technical value of the works, not just on their aesthetic or iconographic worth. It is this new turn of mind that pushed Madame Riboud, without ever turning her back on Indian textiles, to broaden the scope of her research and take an interest in textiles from China and, later, Japan.

In 1979, she founded the *Association pour l'Étude et la Documentation des Textiles d'Asie* (AEDTA) situated avenue de Breteuil in Paris. There, she developed a centre of documentation and scientific research accessible to researchers and students, setting up a library and a photo-library. This association will soon become a key centre of scientific and technical study of textiles.

### Her ties to Japan

Madame Riboud went a dozen times to Japan, especially to study textiles preserved at the Shôsô-in in Nara [27]. Although fascinated by the study of Chinese textiles, she is profoundly affected by Japan with which she weaves a kind of spiritual connection [28](III.7). John Vollmer says that one day he went into the private office of Krishnâ Riboud to study Han textiles. She approached a statue of a Japanese monk, sat down and lit an incense stick and explained: "For 28 years, I have burnt some incense when we look at the actual Han period silks. [...] I am not superstitious, but in all that time we have not had an accident" [29].

Krishnâ Riboud maintained special relationships with many Japanese people including Mr Moto Tastumura, whom she met in 1985 in Japan. A descendant of Heizo Tatsumura (1876 -1962), who founded the textile factory that bears his name, he has a large collection and a weaving studio where ancient textiles were duplicated that Madame Riboud visited regularly to better understand the manufacturing techniques [30]. In 1989, Mr. Tastumura donated to the AEDTA several reproductions of antique fabrics, one of them a sample of a replicas of a Kesa Shôsô-in Kesa (MA 19927 - AEDTA 3047) [31].

Madame Riboud commissioned extensive technical analysis with her teams at the AEDTA. Nevertheless, she also used external experts, including Dr. Junro Nunome from the Kawashima Museum of Kyoto, who conducted tests of fibers for the association[32].

In order to publicize the work of the AEDTA and its collection, Krishnâ Riboud began developing an active policy of publications and exhibitions. The 1991-1992 exhibition *Manteau de nuages: Kesa japonais*, presented first at the Musée des Textiles in Lyons, at the Musée Guimet in Paris (III.8), then at the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon and finally at the Museum of the Jôtenkaku Shokokuji Temple in Kyoto from October 23 to December 4, 1994, was part of this policy. The organization in Japan was supervised by the Association of Buddhist temples of Kyoto, headed

by master Arima (Ill.9). Madame Riboud opened the exhibition along with the Prince and Princess Takamado and master Arima. Through this exhibition, Krishnâ Riboud wanted to publicize the Chinese and Japanese *Kesa*, approximately 100 pieces (80 at the time) of the collection. She said: "We want (...) for this unique work to allow the public to appreciate and understand these ritual clothes that played an important part in the religious history of Japan. [33]"

### 3. Major Japanese works from the collection

#### The *Kesa*

*Kesa*, a term derived from Sanskrit and Chinese *Kashaya Jiashi*, referring to the reddish-brown colour in the dress of monks, is the monastic shawl made of different pieces of fabric sewn together (a sort of patchwork) in bands or "columns". Originally, the Buddhist requirements recommended that monks dressed in rags collected from the dust [34]. *Kesa*, whose earliest examples are between the 7th and 9th century AD, consist of a central band, framed by an odd number of sewn side bands, named *jô*.

As Madame Riboud said in the interview she granted to Pamela Bensoussan in 1983:

"The *Kesa* are the most exquisitely worked objects in Japan. They date back to China, we find references of them in texts ranging from the 10th to 12th century (...) The word *Kesa* comes from Sanskrit. But what is its origin ? There are no *kesa* in India, we find references of them in Chinese but the earliest examples that I had the chance to see in Kyoto last year are in the collections of temples and museums. (...) Some Japanese *kesa* are from the 8th century (...). Over time, the *Kesa* became a Japanese phenomenon. [35]"

The Musée Guimet has, thanks to Madame Riboud, the largest collection of *kesa* in Europe. The first *Kesa* collection inventory (between 1980 and 1981 - 1st open inventory) includes 7 *jô* (8647 MA-AEDTA 512) from the nineteenth century (Ill.10). The backbone of the collection was assembled at the request of Madame Riboud by Alan Kennedy in 1982, when they met at the Asia Society in New York, where Alan Kennedy was giving a lecture on *kesa*. In 1978-79, Madame Riboud had in her possession a few pieces that she had bought at Spink's in London [36]. In 1983, sixty *kesa* of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century from the personal collection of Alan Kennedy, came to the AEDTA [37]. He had bought most of them in the United States, a country to which many pieces were exported during the reopening of Japanese borders. The *kesa* were sold by the Buddhist temples, forced to cede some of their properties, and were found in large numbers in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Many sales were organized. The Shojiro Nomura sale in 1914 in Boston numbered many Japanese works including *Kesa*. Many of them are now at the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

Interest in these pieces was such that the Japanese set up a specific production for export. This is probably the case of *kesa* (MA 5763- AEDTA 1699), whose label reads "1 piece. Blue. Priest's robe brocaded golden *Nishiki*, Product of Nishijin, Kyoto, Date 1780. Used by Tendai and Shingon sects". (Ill.11a b) This type of description is very close to those found in the catalogue of Shojiro Nomura [38].



Madame Riboud explained her interest in *Kesa* as follows: “[it] is not only the splendour and beauty of these textiles, but also the complexity of the techniques used and the rigor of their construction. (...) [It] varies according to the different Buddhist sects (that used various symbols and rituals), to which monks who make these *kesa* belonged. (...) [39]”.

The pieces of the collection provide a broad overview of these different types of rituals and customs. The 25 *jô kesa* (MA 5782 - AEDTA 2421), of woven *asa* (hemp or ramie), is distinguished by its sober appearance (Ill.12). Indeed, *Kesa* became over time more and more luxurious and increasingly made in woven silk. This one is closer to the main principles of the Buddhist doctrine, avoiding to use a material of animal origin[40], something that can also be observed in the 7 band *Kesa* (MA 5769 - AEDTA 1722), which illustrates the typical “patchwork” structure decorated with particularly original geometric shapes, (Ill.13). Or also in the slightly trapezoidal *Kesa* (MA 5771- AEDTA 2345) (Ill.14), different from most others that are rectangular in shape. In silk gauze, it is decorated with “Toyama”, (“distant mountains”), a term that refers to the pieces of tissue that make up the patchwork[41].

Among the various kinds of *Kesa*, the 7 *jô* ones, (MA 11630 - AEDTA 3788), called *uttarasô*, are used for formal occasions inside the temple while those with between 9 and 25 *jô*, or *sôgyari* (among others the MA 5783- AEDTA 1488), are worn during formal ceremonies. The *Kesa* is considered a kind of *mandala*, a symbol of the universe, the central *jô* being the axis of the world. The corners are usually occupied (see *Kesa* MA 11630) by squares of cloth (or *Niten kakuchô*), representing the four cardinal points [42]. *Kesa* can be draped over the left shoulder and wrapped around the body by the right armpit (in the *Hentan Uken* fashion), or draped over both shoulders (*tsuken* fashion). The *rakusu* (the small *Kesa* MA 5791-AEDTA 1054, Ill.15) is worn with a strap that goes over the back of the neck. Carried horizontally around the waist, the *yokogesa* (MA 5789 - AEDTA 1421) is suspended from a long strip of cloth passed over the left shoulder (Ill.16) [43].

Some *Kesa* are made from Chinese textiles. This applies to the beautiful piece (MA 5764 - AEDTA 1418) on a blue background whose *Shiten* and *Niten* only were woven in Japan (Ill.17). Such textile was used for Chinese Dragon robes. On the lining is an inscription that refers to a donation made in 1877. According to Chinese historical sources, satin rolls were used as gifts for foreign dignitaries[44].

### Other Japanese textiles

The collection of Japanese textiles assembled by Madame Riboud is not restricted to *Kesa* only. The 600 pieces collected allow us a fairly complete, though not exhaustive, view of the textile arts of Japan. The first inventoried Japanese piece is a cotton fabric dyed using the technique of *ikat*, dating from the 19th-20th century (MA 8518- AEDTA 377).

Krishnâ Riboud did not try to cover all areas or all periods, focusing instead on the Edo period (1615-1868): “The costumes in the collection have been worn by many different social classes: rich Edo bourgeois, aristocrats, eminent Buddhist monks, samurai, farmers, fishermen, peasants, [and even] Ainu from Hokkaido and residents of Okinawa” [45].

Among these pieces are beautiful *kosode* and silk kimonos [46]. These *kosode*, of the *uchikake* type, were worn over another *kosode*. One of those kept in the Musée Guimet (MA 5759- AEDTA 2632) shows a stylized view of the universe of Chinese inspiration (tortoise, sacred mountain and crane) (Ill.18)

One of the most beautiful silk kimonos (8694 MA - AEDTA 561) was engineered by the *kata yuzen* technique, which combines dyeing and painting. This process, invented by the painter Miyazaki Yûzensai in the late seventeenth century in Kyoto, was used for many costumes.

Madame Riboud admired “the use of humble materials, that the Japanese craftsmen have always been able to elevate the rank of a work of art [47]”. That is why we also find among the collection dresses made of banana fibre or ramie, a kind of nettle, from Okinawa. For example this summer dress (MA 10102- AEDTA 2130), banana fibre (*bashô*), introduced in Japan in the 14 or 15th century, whose shape is similar to traditional Japanese costumes. The patterns are made using the technique of double *ikat*, warp yarns and weft yarns dyed before weaving. The fibre is detached from the stem and then scraped with a shell or a metal scraper. Rolled on itself, it forms a thread that is dried and then cooked in a black juice to bleach, rinsed in cold water, woven and hammered (Ill.19). Another dress from the collection (MA 9737) is woven from the delicate fibers of *Bashô*, a fabric that is both transparent, lightweight and durable. The bark of sixty banana trees was probably necessary to create a fabric of this quality. The stencil technique, applied with rice paste, was used to design the patterns, which is typical of mainland influence on Okinawa clothing. The craftsmen usually took their pattern designs from official compilations called *miezuchô*.

The collection also owns elm fibre clothes from the Ainu people of Hokkaido. Ainu traditional clothes are made from the inner bark of elm (*ohiô*). Once the fibres are processed into thread, it is woven on a simple loom. Most recent pieces (MA 10197 - AEDTA 2239) mix cotton and *ohiô* (Ill.20).

Furthermore, a fine collection of cotton clothing illustrates the use of indigo in Japan. Most of the clothes made for corporations such as carpenters, firefighters or tradesmen, used to be made of cotton. A jacket, made for a carrier or messenger, in woven cotton rag, dyed with indigo and dating from the early twentieth century (MA 9749 - AEDTA 1766) is displayed near another jacket of dyed *shibori* (MA 9829 - AEDTA 1848) and straight quilted stitch to make it more robust. The magnificent *Maiwai* (MA 11614 - AEDTA 3767) named after the great festival of the coastal region, meaning “miraculous fishing”, completes the collection. It is a ceremonial costume worn by fishermen in the Bôshô Peninsula (Chiba). The center displays Ebisu, god of fishing, with his inseparable companion Daikoku, protector of crops (Ill.21). One of the most interesting pieces of cotton among the collection is a child's kimono (MA 5758 - AEDTA 1758), which illustrates the technique of *yuzen*, in a composition combining creativity and technical prowess (Ill.22).

Some samurai clothing using various techniques complete this very rich set. The *kamishimo* from the early nineteenth century (MA 5760 – AEDTA 2612 A and B) consists of a *hakama* and a *kataginu*. It was worn by samurai of high rank as ceremonial clothing, later by the musicians of Noh and Kabuki theatre. In addition, the collection features two *jimbaori* (MA 5761 - AEDTA 2800 et MA 11827 - AEDTA 3991) dating from the Edo period (Ill.23).

Some works are distinguished by their very valuable iconographic, aesthetic and technical worth. This is the case of the *suzukake* (MA 11849 - AEDTA 4015) of raw hemp which would worn by *yamabushi* monks. Renondeau says (in his book, *Le Shugendō, histoire, doctrine et rites des anachorètes dits yamabushi*, published in Paris in 1965), “the *yamabushi* monks wore to protect themselves from morning dew or droplets of water from falling branches, over their clothing, an hemp coat with wide sleeves.” (P. 179). The *yamabushi* ascetics were usually living as hermits in the mountains. The pilgrim who wore this dress had written his resolutions and ascetic vows within its neck. Many xylographied indentations and prints cover the piece [48]. This work came to the Riboud collection in June 1999. It is one of last three Japanese pieces to have been purchased by Madame Riboud (III.24).

As for the Noh theatre costume (MA 11492- AEDTA 3642) of silk gauze, it is one of the masterpieces of the Japanese collection (III.25). Destined to playing the part of an old woman (recognizable by its white colour), the *gilded lancés* draw a pattern of grasses in autumn [49]. This costume belongs to the category of *ôsode*, since the ends of its sleeves are not stitched. The *moiré* effect is an optical illusion, obtained through two layers of gauze-layered patterns that allow both sides of the costume to be visible simultaneously. It is the only Noh theatre costume in the Riboud collection[50]. A fragment, whose main pattern is a “Chinese lion” ’or *karashishi* (MA 9412- AEDTA 1379), may also come from a Noh costume.

#### 4. The preservation of these pieces, now at the Musée Guimet

Realizing it would be difficult for reasons both technical and human or financial, for AEDTA to outlive her, Madame Riboud decided at a very early date, to bequeath her collection to the Musée Guimet. This choice was not only dictated by her personal closeness to the institution but also by her desire to see her collection preserved in a museum of Arts, not a museum specializing in textiles. In the spirit of her scientific approach, whereas the study of fabrics was essential to the historical understanding of civilizations that produced them, Madame Riboud guaranteed with this decision the continuity of her work. Her wish was that her collection, one of the most comprehensive in the world, would not be dispersed and she wanted it to stay accessible to researchers and the general public both. Indeed, Madame Riboud stated that: “Any collection which is not institutional is based on the arbitrariness and vision of one individual, and belongs to one only. Initially, over forty years ago, the pieces gathered today at the AEDTA, their rationale and purpose, were unknown to Western audiences. [51]”

##### The moving of the pieces

The AEDTA had created storage spaces especially fitted for the pieces of the collection. In the major project of renovation of the Musée Guimet, a reserve had been set up for the arrival of 150 pieces from the textile collection, given by Madame Riboud in 1990. In 2003, in anticipation of moving a large part of the 4000 pieces of the bequest, the reserve was entirely remodelled. Its storage capacity was extended to better meet the preservation needs of these fragile works, with their formats differing from one another [52] (III.26).

To this end, several types of storage furniture have been built for the preventive conservation of the works, to facilitate their handling and allow access to researchers. The *Kesa* are being kept rolled because of their extreme

fragility (III.27). The different weaving techniques used, including the use of strips of gold paper (*kinran*), make the preservation of these works particularly delicate. They are regularly unrolled for students and researchers to study them. In addition, young curators wishing to specialize in Japanese techniques come and see them. This helps in better understanding the pieces and to provide a number of solutions for their better preservation.

The library and the entire documentation of the AEDTA were transferred to the Musée Guimet. They are now available for study, thereby constituting a major collection of documents for researchers. Preserved in the museum's storage, only Indian works are presented by rotation in the Galerie Jean and Krishnâ Riboud, at the first floor of the museum. Japanese works may be displayed only during temporary exhibitions. The "Lumières de Soie" exhibition [53], organized at the Musée Guimet in 2004 as an homage to Madame Krishnâ Riboud featured many masterpieces from the collection (III.28). The Musée Guimet is now trying to preserve this priceless heritage and to enrich it through new acquisitions. For example, until the purchase of this particular piece in 2007, the Musée Guimet possessed only one Noh costume (III.29).

## Conclusion

The collection of Krishnâ Riboud is unique in many respects. If it is remarkable, it is not only by of the aesthetic interest of the works it compiles, but also because it is, through its historical extent and its diversity in techniques, a true collection of reference.

Its Japanese textiles offer a broad overview of all the weaving and dyeing techniques used in the archipelago. The *Kesa* collection is one of the most unique outside Japan. Madame Riboud maintained an intimate relationship with Japan. She especially loved to walk in her garden, a garden she had designed after Japanese fashion (III.30).

The arrival of the Riboud collection at the Musée Guimet turned the museum into one of the richest institutions in the textile field, enabling it to establish itself as a leading resource for the study of Asian, and especially Japanese, textiles. The museum follows in the steps of the work initiated by Madame Riboud, who defined what she wanted to highlight through their collection in those words: "*One of the things I hope with the collection here is that people will not only look at the pieces for the delight of the eyes, which is important, but will start thinking in terms of the person who manufactured them. Textiles are very intimate things and people put a lot of themselves into their creation. This is also true for any traditional textile made today and is one of the things I want to emphasise.* [54]"

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