

Seeds of Japanese Embroidery  
August 2005

Ohiyo gozaimas, tomodachi? [*\*o-hi-yo go-zah-ee-mahs, to-mo-dah-chee*] (remember what that means?) Blessings on you and on your stitching.

This issue brings with it the end of summer and the approaching autumn, or the beauty of the scent of flowers and warmth of the sun yielding to the changing colors and cool gentle breezes.

As we stitch, I would like to share with you a little about a project that is near and dear to my heart – “Sake Boxes”. The original design is a copy of a *fusuka* [*fu-su-kah*] that lovingly encases an *okurimono* [*o-ku-ree-mo-no*]. Huh? An *okurimono* is the word for “gift”, and the *fusuka*, which always is at least as special as the gift itself, is the embroidered wrapping. (When I have purchased oriental items in the past – long before I began Japanese Embroidery – I always admired the boxes or bags they were packed in. *They are pretty enough to display, too.*) This is so appropriate for the design of the Sake Boxes, with its rich adornment of gold, the colorful noshi and chrysanthemums because, working the design becomes a gift of beautiful stitches and colors to the stitcher – just having done the work.

Let’s talk about the colors. Why are specific color combinations selected? In traditional Japanese Embroidery, colors are chosen to reflect a season or a feel – not to match your sofa or draperies. For example: for a winter feel, the colors might be white for snow, green for pine needles, blue for winter sky (cool colors) and, yes, red - for the fireplace that warms the home and family. Try to think up color schemes for the other seasons.

The Japanese are eloquent in their use of metaphor and imagery. I want to share yet one more from the “Traditional Japanese Embroidery Instruction” booklet. “When a pebble hits the surface of a pond, the pebble itself sinks to the bottom, but ripples reach out one after another across the whole face of the pond. It is my fervent hope that this manual will be a pebble sending ripple after ripple across the face of every embroidery tradition.” – Shuji Tamura

Next time, we will learn a bit about how our embroidery came to Japan from China, and blossomed into its own tradition.

Until then, I wish you *heiwa* [*hay-ee-wah*], or peace, in your stitching.

*\*note that in Japanese, there are usually no emphasized syllables; each has equal emphasis. Also, words like gozaimas would actually be spelled goziamasu, but the “u” at the end would either be pronounced as a schwa or not at all.*

Sayonara,  
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