

Ohiyo gozaimas, tomodachi! Or, Hello, friends! Welcome to the end of summer and blessings on you and on your stitching.

(This column of our newsletter presents Japanese/stitching terms and symbolism, hopefully, making your stitching time more meaningful and fulfilling. Please, let me know if there is something you would like to know more about, and I will do my best to find out for you and all of us.)

How hot is it???? It is so hot that my #4 Gold is melting right on my silk! Just kidding – a little Japanese embroidery humor. . .

Let's see, what kind of fan should I use to cool off? An electric fan? A paper fan from the funeral home or church? How about a Japanese fan –

an *uchiwa* (oo-chee-wah) or an *ogi* (oh-gee)

The *uchiwa* is a fixed fan, more like the ones we were given at funeral homes/churches (if you're old enough to remember those). The *ogi* is the folding fan like the ones we have all done in our Japanese embroidery. Here's a little history of Japanese fans. They have much more purpose than staving off the heat and sweat (or glisten, as we southern belles do). According to one of my newer resources, Japonisme: Cultural Crossings between Japan and the West, "fans feature in a wide range of court and social activities; and were also used for the military purpose of making signals on the battlefield." Fans play important roles in theatre and dance as well as in the sumo wrestling ring. "The referee controls the bout using a folding fan known as a military fan, or *gumpai uchiwa*." They are still used today in this way. Another use of fans was for modesty. Japanese women are embarrassed to show their mouths when they smile or laugh; the fan helps them modestly hide their facial expressions.

Because of the growth of woodblock printing during the Edo period, artists experimented with designs for decoration purposes. In the 1870's, Japanese fans were inexpensive and readily available, so it was quite chic to use them to decorate walls, either geometrically or in clusters. All the famous European artists of the 19th century featured decorative Japanese fans in their works; it was the "thing" to do. For us, the Japanese fan, an exercise in many techniques, is one of the "things" to do, yet another thing of beauty, or *bi* (*bee*), in our exploration of this exciting art. The next time you stitch a fan, think of what its purpose might be – besides cooling off a young Japanese lady.

So, until next time, I wish you (*heiwa* – *peace*) and sunny days of stitching.

Sayonara!

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P.S. – a little tip: if you're fighting the urge to put on those pounds as I am, instead of grabbing that chocolate bar that is staring at you, sit down at your embroidery and you'll be happily saved from a few more hours of temptation!