During the Heian era, the most popular Japanese *ningyo* (dolls) grouped under the generic moniker of *Hina* dolls were the *Amagatsu* dolls, *hoke* dolls (meaning crawling child) and *hitogata* (dolls as amulets). All three are thought to have been derived from the *Hoke* doll in design where the *hoke* was the simplest in construction with just fabric and cotton for the body. The *Amagatsu* held the same shape, but also had wooden sticks inside to stiffen the body and give longer legs and arms, and the *hitogata*, one of the earliest forms of dolls and where the word *hina* derives from, was a talisman made from paper and silk string (Pate, 2013).

A *Hoke* doll was often given to a family upon the birth of a child, a young woman coming of age, or a pregnant women. The gift of the doll was for good luck to boys and girls. This doll, considered also a form of guardian for a young child to ward off evil, was the simplest form of doll in the early Heian era. The girls would keep their dolls, however boys had to give them up in a coming of age ceremony when they turned fifteen (Pate, 2013; Casal, 1967).

Based upon Chinese customs of over three thousand years ago, the celebration of the Girl’s Festival became the height of popularity in Japan during the middle of the Heian Era. It was during this time that the playing of dolls *Hiina Asobi* became popular among both young girls and women. *Hiina* refers to both the male and female dolls. When made as gifts, they were often created as a pair. The dolls were dressed in the height of current fashion, often replicating the maker’s own wardrobe and displayed until the end of February. It was believe if a young girls doll was displayed past February, that they would make a late marriage, although the dates for this were not strictly formed until much later in Japanese Culture (Baten, 2000, Pate, 2013, Morris, 1994).

The dolls were not only played with by children, but also by adults both at home and in court. The dolls were often used as part of poetry games, ways to entertain each other by playing out skits and even used to display the designs for new robes before they were made.
Left: Replica of late Heian doll, Kyoto National Museum, using plastic and rice to show the shape of the doll (Virtual Museum of Traditional Japanese Arts, 1016)

Right: Replica of late Heian doll, on stand, *Amagatsu* (Ecosdeasia, 2014)

L – Edo Period style *Hina* Dolls, R – Doll Display for Festival (Tadaima Japan, 2016)

Dolls were not designed for sitting until the 18th century (Pate, 2013)

Modern Japanese Geisha Doll (G. S. Scott, 2017)
During the Heian era the *Hiina* dolls *hoke-ningyro* were made out scraps of fabric, sewn into very basic shape with a head, body, arms and legs, and stuffed with cotton. The arms came to a point, and the legs were minimal making a ‘stand’ so that the doll was upright (Pate, 2013; Ecodeasia, 2014).

Children would play with them unadorned, or dress them up in clothing often made by the women of their family (Pate, 2013). Toward the end of the 11th century, the head of the doll became separate and there is thought that they might have added hair, although no extant are available nor is the hair mentioned in any of the primary sources. At the time, they may have been termed *hoke* dolls (stuffed dolls), and today are also referred to as *amagatsu* (scarecrow doll). In the diaries, these terms seem interchangeable until the late 12th century at the end of the Heian era when male dolls suddenly were called *amagatsu*.

In Kamakura, the period after Heian, the dolls were constructed in three parts, using wooden dowels covered in silk for the body and arms, and either wood or paper Mache for the head (Pate, 2013).

Unfortunately due to the extreme lack of extant examples we only have simple descriptions to guide us in the construction of the dolls and many mistake the Edo period woodcuts of the Heian era to be accurate depictions instead of educated extrapolations of how they may have been.
Dolls in the Literature of the time (Primary Sources)

One of the best things about the time period is the abundance of primary sources available. While they are not extant physical items, they still classify as primary resources. Without these, much of the Heian era would be completely unattainable and any attempt at Experimental Archeology and Anthropology in the form of re-enactment, re-creation or as Living History would be near impossible. Because we are piecing together fragments of information these in period written accounts play an extremely important part filling in the gaps in the material record.

In the form of diaries (Nikki), novels like The Tale of Genji, the observations of Sei Shōnagon in The Pillow Book and all of the books of poetry written by both men and women of the time, we are able to learn how things are made, used and culturally relevant. These works give us an intimate glimpse into a world that would have otherwise been a mystery as their interaction with other cultures off the Islands of Japan were minimal.

The dolls show up in these wonderful works of literature time and again:

Sei Shōnagon in The Pillow Book defined Hina as “beautiful and charming objects”.

In The Gossomer Years, also known as the Kagero Nikki (diary), the author goes into great depth describing how ladies of the court would design and sew the costumes, draw the faces and style the hair, as well as make doll houses, furniture, screens and so forth for their dolls (Morris, 1994; Seidensticker, 2011).

Emperor Murakami (926-967), depicted the Hina dolls in his collection of poetry. He wrote of them in a poem on the Tanabata Star Festival Day, the seventh day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar (Morris, 1994).

Following are some quotes from diaries, The Pillow Book and The Tale of Genji where dolls were mentioned.

"It was decided that the little girl was to go on a pilgrimage that day, rain and all, and I saw no reason why I should not go along. At the suggestion of one of my women I had three dolls' dresses made of fine, stiff cloth for her to take as offerings. To the skirt of each I attached a verse-the goddess no doubt knows what I had in mind: ...” (Seidensticker, 1964).
“Cloistered Empress Fujitsubo said to herself and others that her elder brother’s middle daughter would only be joining a game of dolls, as it were, since she was the same age, whereas having someone older to look after him would be extremely welcome; and she told His Majesty what he had to anticipate. Meanwhile Genji, needless to say, missed nothing in the service of the realm, and he showed her such complete and tactful devotion at all times that she came to trust him implicitly. Fujitsubo could not easily attend His Majesty even when she went to the palace, since her health was poor, so that he urgently needed beside him a guardian somewhat older than himself.” (Shikibu, 2001)

“Things that make you feel nostalgic - … Things children use in doll play. “(Sei, 2006)

“She was already busy setting up her dolls, laying out her collection of accessories on a pair of three-foot cabinets, and filling the room with an assemblage of little houses that Genji had made her. “Inuki broke this chasing out devils, and I am mending it,” she announced solemnly.” (Shikibu, 2001)

“The maids-of-honour dressed their hair with saishi and bands. Lady Dainagon served the August Prince’s dinner at the east side — a little dining-table, plate, stand for chopsticks, with a central decoration representing a bit of seashore — all as small as playthings for dolls.” (Shikibu et al., 2003)

“Whenever she played with a doll or painted a picture, she pretended that the figure was Lord Genji, dressed it up nicely, and made a great fuss over it.” (Shikibu, 2001)

Third Day: Festival of the Snake. Wine cups are floated down the streams in the gardens of the Imperial Palace and of private households. As the cup passes each guest, he lifts it, drinks and recites a poem. In households having girl children, elaborately decorated dolls are displayed on shelves. (Morris, 1994).

He felt a sense of kinship as he watched a large doll being put into a boat and sent floating away: “I, sent running down to the vastness of a sea I had never known, as a doll runs, can but know an overwhelming sorrow.” (Shikibu, 2001)

“Why, when I might be playing with a beautiful child, do I spend my time with an ugly woman?” Genji kept on asking himself in bewilderment while they sat together playing with her dolls.” (Shikibu, 2001).
Hiina (Dolls) in Heian Japan, by JahanAra bint al-Yehya amat al-Hafeeza

For my doll, I have kept it simple, and created the earliest form of the cloth stuffed doll, dressing her in robes to match one of the *Kasane no Irome* that I am currently making. She is made of white silk, stuffed with cotton batting. Japan had access to cotton through trade with India (Dusenbury, 2004). Cotton fluff was used to protect flowers during the frost, specifically Chrysanthemums, and to pad robes or stuff dolls (Kyoto Costume Museum, 2002).

I used Dupione silk, because it is close to the more unrefined silk used at the time and what we used for the *kosode*, and dressed my doll in robes made from faux taffeta scraps of the robes for Fujinami no Kaede-hime (Lady).

My doll is wearing:

- Kosode – white silk dupione
- Nagabakama (long pants) – Red silk dupione
- Hitoe – Orange taffeta (faux)
- Kinu – Maroon robe lined with Rust
- Uchigi (outer robe) – Green lined with Maroon

These robes were inspired by the *Kasane no Irome* (layer of colors) of Japanese Maple Leaves, with more maroon robes added for our own flair.

Kasane no Irome: *Downy Maples*
*K. Griffin, 2008, Kyoto Costume Museum*
Appendix – A: Sewing Techniques

During the Heian Era, the Japanese used a wide variety of sewing techniques, many of which were simple, clean and often easy to remove. For the clothing worn, the most common stitch used was a very simple running stitch at basting length.

Traditionally these robes were sewn with what today we call a ‘kimono needle’. It is a strong needle, slightly flat, very sharp and good for going through silk and brocade and just a bit over an inch in length. You could make very even stitches to hold the outfit together, but the stitches were also easy to pick back out. However, it does not work well in faux taffeta as it shreds the fibers too much, so when we are not using silk, we use modern needles.

These needles were just a touch over an inch long and by using their length as a guide. This was done because if a robe needed to be washed, it had to be taken completely apart. There are only a few extant pieces of garments and screens left from the Heian era, so other than those pieces, we get much of our information on sewing techniques either from the Diaries written at the time both by the noble ladies and the tailors or royal masters of robes and from the Kamakura era that followed Heian, where more garments have been preserved and are described as having had used the same techniques (Dalby, 2001; Minnich, 1963).
### Appendix B – Periods of Japanese History

**Ancient & Early Medieval (C. E.)**

- **Kofun** (250-538)
- **Askuka Period** (538 – 710)
- **Nara period** (710 – 794)
- **Heian Period** (794 – 1192)

**Medieval Period**

- **Kamakura Period** (1192 – 1333)**
- **Kenmu Restoration** (1334 – 1336)

**Sengoku Period (Upheval)**

- **Muromachi Period** (1336 – 1573)
- **Momoyama Period** (1573 – 1603)

**Tokugawa Shogonate**

- **Edo Period** (1603 – 1868)

**Modern Period**

- **Meiji Period** (1868 – 1912)
- **Taisho- WWI** (1912 – 1926)
- **Showa** (1926 – 1989)
- **Heisei** (1989 – present)

The Kyoto Costume Museum’s Display of a Section of *The Tale of Genji* is done on small scale using dolls fashion as they would have been in the Heian Era. (Photo, Courtesy of Costume Museum, Kyoto, Inc., 2017)

**Different sources date the end of the Heian Era to either 1185, when Taira is defeated and Minamoto Yoritomo seizes power, or the beginning of the Kamakura Shogonate in 1192.**
Appendix C – Glossary of Doll Terms

haihai - 'crawling baby' a later form in the last half of Heian Era created in the same design of the earlier hoke and used by girls/women after coming of age. Represented fertility as well as continuing the tradition of warding off evil. Silk stuffed with batting and at the very end of the 12th century it may have had a rudimentary face, although not all did (Pate, 2013).

ningyo - broad term classifying all Japanese dolls.

hina/hiina - most common term used today, typically refers to dolls that are part of the HinaMatsuri (doll festival) however, can also be found as a general interchangeable work within period (in the diaries) for dolls in general. This term refers to both male and female dolls.

hoke - early form during Heian era of doll. Made from silk stuffed with raw cotton.

Amagatsu - nearly identical during the Heian era to the hoke, although eventually toward the end of the 12th century, sticks were placed inside the doll to make the legs and arms longer and more realistic compared to those of the hoke.

hitogata - amulet and talisman dolls, typically during the Heian era made from paper and string, sometimes straw

Hiina Asobi - the practice of playing with dolls, mentioned many times in several of the diaries.
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**Books**

**Museums & Photo Galleries from Museums**


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