

# Discoveries and Challenges of Conservation

## The conservation process

1. Thorough examination. Characteristics, construction, measurements, and damage were noted and recorded in writing and photographs.

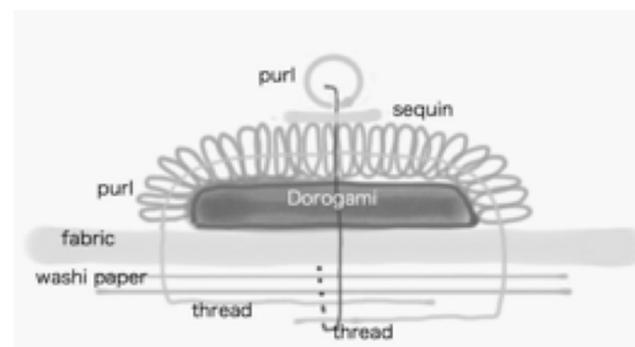


2. Disassembling the garment. The pleats were taken out. The train was separated into two parts and the altar cloth linings removed. This led to the discovery of reused washi papers backing the embroidery.



### Structure of the embroidery

To make the raised embroidery, the purl coils were laid over thick paper containing finely powdered earth (dorogami) that was secured on the fabric face. The fabric was placed on frames stretched with washi papers and the embroidery stitched through to the back of those papers.



3. Stabilizing the fabric with a support silk. To attach the fabric to the support, a couching stitch was used, thus securing the loose threads and averting further damage.

4. Re-affixing metallic embroidery that was loose or had fallen off. Nothing new was added.

Metallic threads: Conservation challenge. Securing the loose metallic threads was a painstaking job. Weak threads binding the strings of sequins broke easily. Passing the needle through the layers of material and paper required pressure and extreme accuracy. Since misplaced stitches from below would dislodge the delicate purls, all the work was stitched from above, rethreading the needle over and over. Finally, the loose threads were tied together on the reverse.



Before



After

### Reading the Writing on the Washi Support Papers

To support the heavy metallic embroidery, papers stabilized the embroidery on the reverse of the fabric. Rather than new papers, these were reused and had writing on them. Their discovery during conservation confirmed that the embroidery was done in Japan. Piecing together various characters on these papers it became evident that they were accounts of expenditures. The name of the light cruiser "Tenryū" and the mention of wooden parts indicated that at least in part the accounts related to the wooden cruiser that was built in 1878 in the Yokosuka shipyard and was launched in 1883.