

# MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## A very auspicious graduation day

UTAS student Emerald King will receive her PhD in Asian Languages and Studies tomorrow (**Monday 17 December 2012**) and she will definitely look the part.

Emerald loves Asian culture so much she has decided to wear traditional kimono to her graduation ceremony.

“I’m really excited about graduation because I get to wear kimono,” she said.

Emerald found the garment while travelling around Nara, the ancient city of Japan, while teaching a summer school course with Head of the UTAS School of Asian Languages and Studies, Dr Barbara Hartley. Dr Hartley will also wear kimono to the graduation ceremony.

“We found this little shop and everything was red. That was where I found the kimono I will wear at graduation.

“I think it’s a wedding kimono as it has a padded hem, which means it is meant to trail on the ground, like the kimonos geisha and dancing girls wear.

“It is also covered in really auspicious symbols, such as gold metallic full moons, cranes, pine trees, bamboos and blossom.”

Emerald said the fabric also features chrysanthemums, which are interchangeable with daisies in Japanese iconography.

“As round flowers with lots of petals, the good luck and good will is supposed to go round and round.”

Emerald studied in Japan for two years and watched many of her friends graduate wearing kimono, as is the custom.

“Because kimono and hakama (traditional Japanese pants worn over kimono) are so expensive and most girls wear them when they graduate from university, people hire them, like academic robes.”

Emerald said the tradition of women wearing hakama for graduation dates back to the first female university students in Japan in the Meiji Period (1868-1912).

“They get their outfits the day before so they can have some official portraits done, which in Japan is almost as important as the graduation ceremony itself.

“March is the graduation season in Japan; it’s so beautiful to be there at that time, wandering round the train stations seeing these girls in their graduation gear.

“In Tokyo, there are people who wear kimono but it’s not something you see very often and it’s only in certain areas, so it is a special sight.”

Emerald’s thesis is entitled: *More than skin deep: Masochism in Japanese women’s writing 1960-2005* and investigates the use of masochistic imagery in the literature written by Japanese women authors and comic-book artists.

She is unsure yet if she will wear the traditional Tudor bonnet, the hat worn when receiving a PhD.

“It is traditional in Japan for women graduands to wear a big red bow on their heads, which is a custom from when women first started getting degrees- so I might wear the bow.”

**Media opportunity:** Emerald will be available for interviews before her graduation ceremony, at 10.30am outside the administration building (top car park side), UTAS Sandy Bay campus.

**Information Released by:**

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