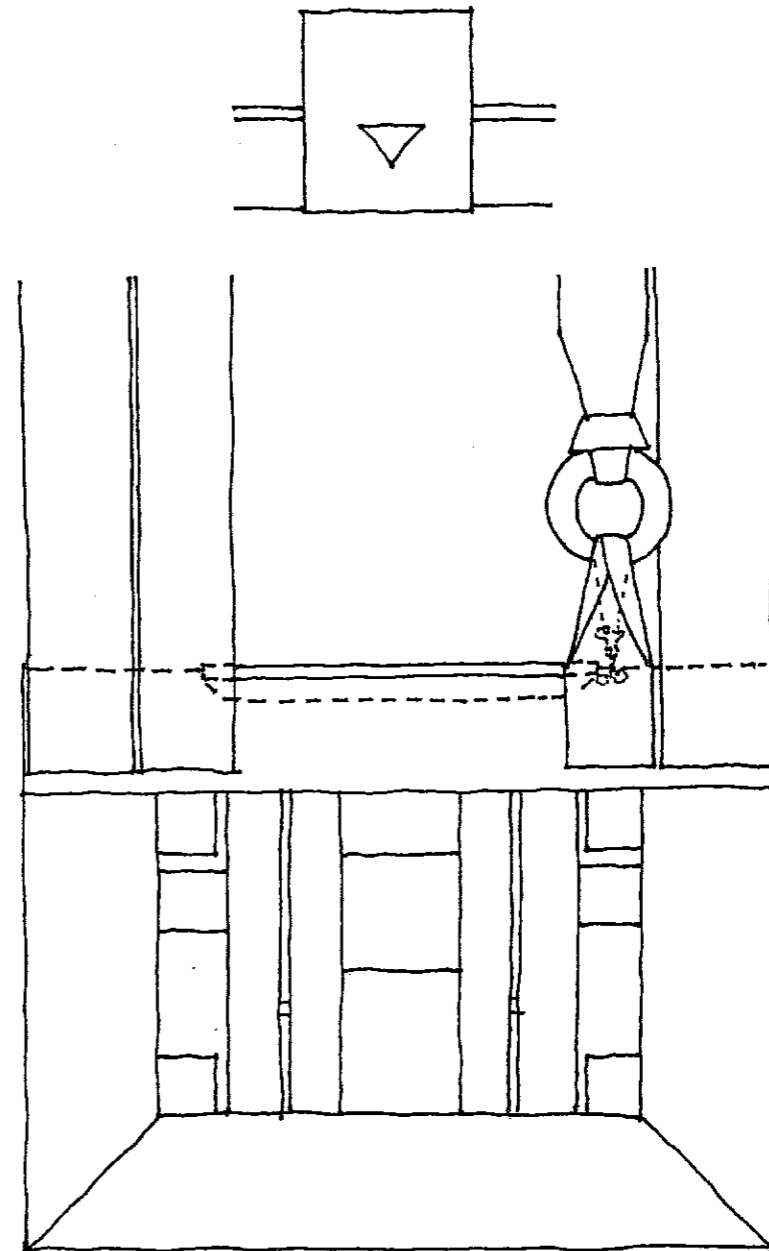
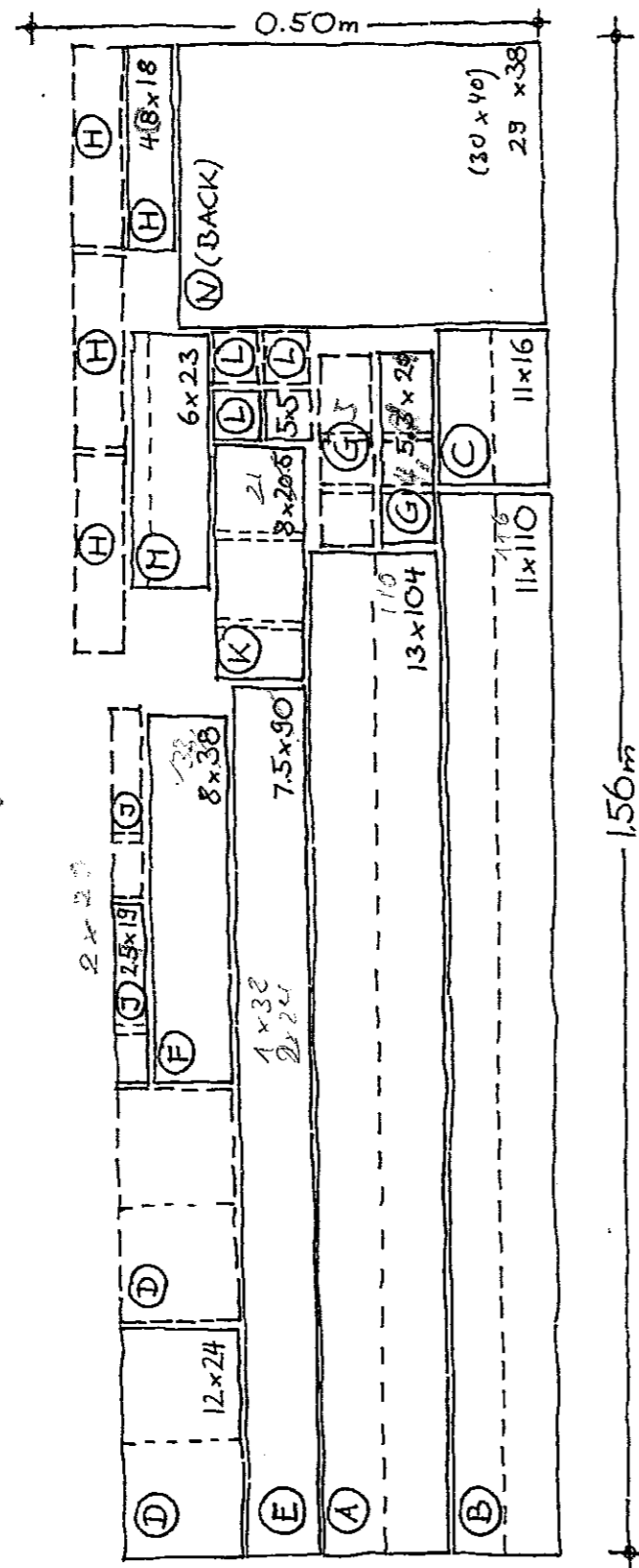


RAKUSU-MAKING



CUTTING-LAYOUT



What is needed:

- * a piece of (black) cloth 1.56 x .5 meters
- * a piece of stiffening fabric (called "interfacing" in English) 29 x 38 cm
- * a spool of (black) thread to match cloth
- * sharp scissors that can cut cloth
- * measuring tape (cm)
- * a straightedge or ruler
- * thin (tailor's) chalk for marking on fabric
- * pins
- * a sharp, thin needle for hand sewing
- * a short length of thick black thread, to sew the triangle at the back of the neck
- * a steam iron and ironing table or other surface to iron on
- * if desired, a sewing machine. Most (but not all) of the work in sewing the rakusu can be done using a machine.
- * it is helpful to have an already-made rakusu to refer to while sewing your own rakusu

Step 1:

Make sure the cloth is ironed smooth, with no creases or wrinkles. You may want to wash it ahead of time, especially if it may shrink.

Lay the cloth out flat on a smooth, flat surface. Using the diagram on the previous page, lay out each piece as shown. Measure carefully! Most pieces lie right next to each other, with no space in between.

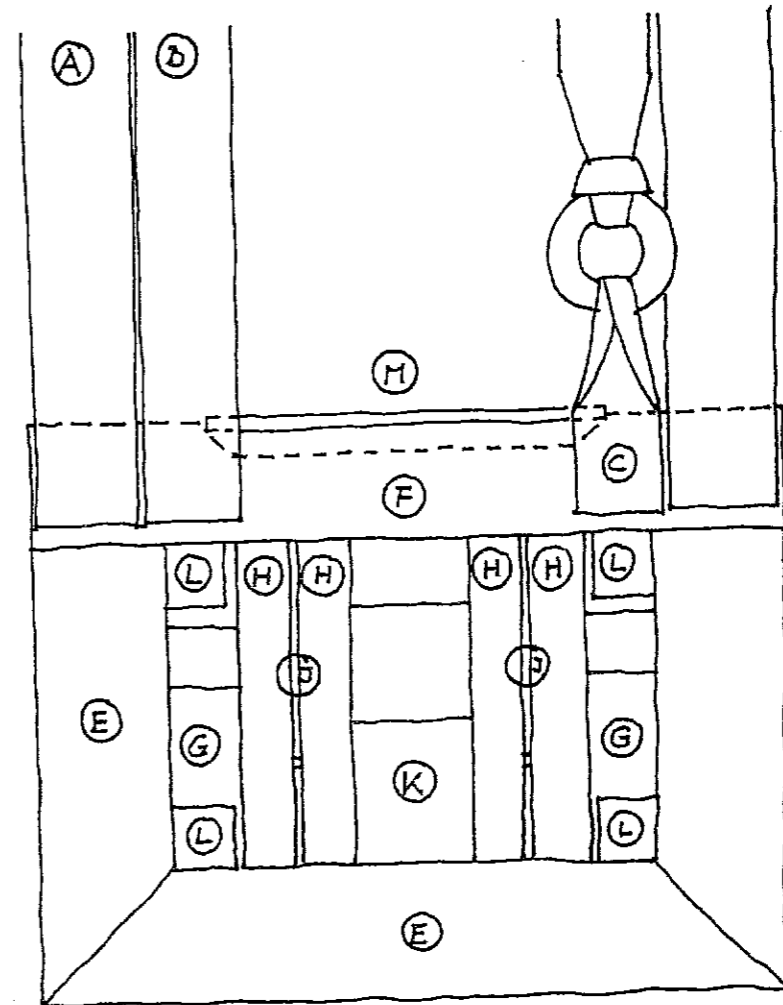
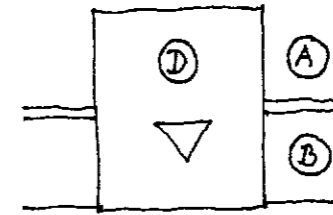
Cut out each piece carefully. Precision in measuring and cutting will pay off later. You may want to use the chalk to identify each piece. Mark fold lines with chalk.

Step 2:

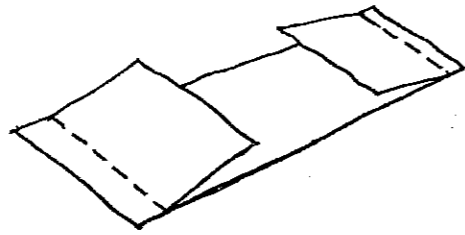
Begin with the nine strips of cloth that are sewn together to make the center part of the rakusu.

If you are using the pattern pieces at Sōgen-ji and have not yet marked the fold lines shown on them (and on the diagram for cutting) do so now. Again, the care with which you measure and mark will make the difference between a rakusu that goes together well and one that doesn't. The same goes for how accurately you sew the folds and sew the various pieces together.

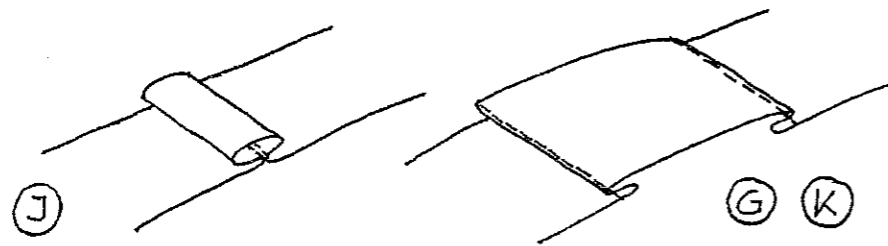
Carefully match the stitching lines in each fold on each strip and iron together, making sure sides of strip line up with each other.



Stitch across strips on stitch lines.



Iron once more. Note that the most narrow strip (J) is ironed differently and on the front side of the strip. IF YOUR MATERIAL HAS A FRONT AND BACK SIDE (i.e. if both sides are not identical) BE SURE THAT THIS STRIP IS SEWN ON THE PROPER SIDE. The other strips are ironed on the back side of the strip. Where there are pairs of strips (as in the two end strips) they should be ironed identically.



Step 3:

NOTE: It is important as you sew the strips together to make sure the fold seams stay flat and in the direction in which they were ironed.

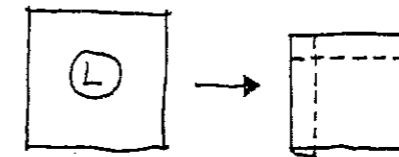
Begin sewing the strips together in the pattern shown in the drawing of the rakusu front, i.e., (G)(H)(J)(H)(K)(H)(J)(H)(G). Begin from the

center and work out towards the edges from both sides. The pattern pieces allow for a 1 cm "seam allowance," i.e., the line of stitches uniting two pieces is 1 cm in from the edge of the strips. Make sure strips line up across the whole piece!

As you are putting the pieces together, iron each time you sew a seam. Make sure the seam ironing direction from one side of the rakusu to the other mirror each other. Be aware that the pattern of seams falls in a particular way and that the skinny strip between each pair of plain strips faces the opposite way from the other folded strips.

Step 4:

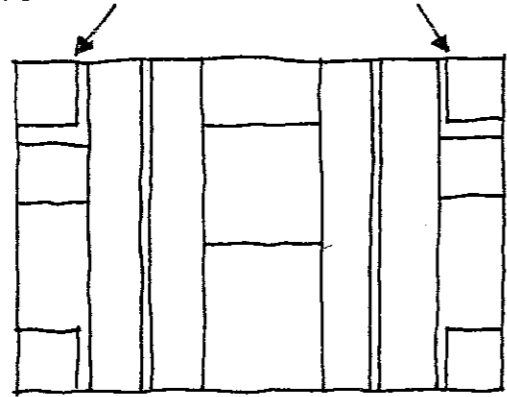
When all the strips are sewn together and given a final ironing, take the four corner pieces (L) and iron over a 1/2 cm fold on two adjacent sides.



NOTE: If you are using a fabric that has a pattern (for example, a diagonal weave, even if it's all one color) make sure you iron in the proper inside corners so they'll look right when sewn on the front of the rakusu.

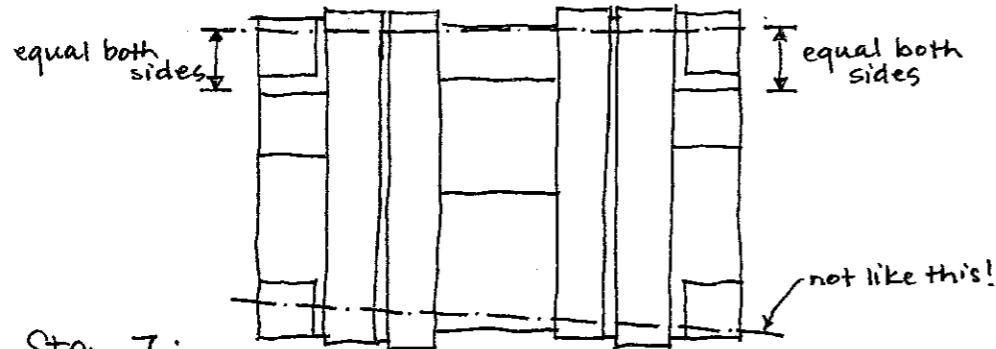
Step 5:

Pin the ironed squares in the four corners of the piece of sewn-together strips, with the folded sides facing towards the center strip and the unfolded sides along the outside edges of the piece of sewn-together strips. Here it is more important to line them up carefully on the inside edges.



Step 6:

Using the straightedge, measuring tape and chalk, mark across top and bottom of sewn together strip piece, MAKING SURE CHALK LINE IS PARALLEL TO FOLDED SEAMS. Trim excess.

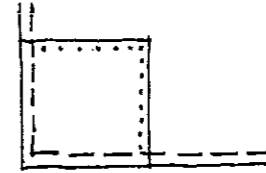


Step 7:

Carefully stitch all around piece, 1/2 cm from edge, making sure all seams are stitched down flat and in the direction they were ironed in.

Step 8:

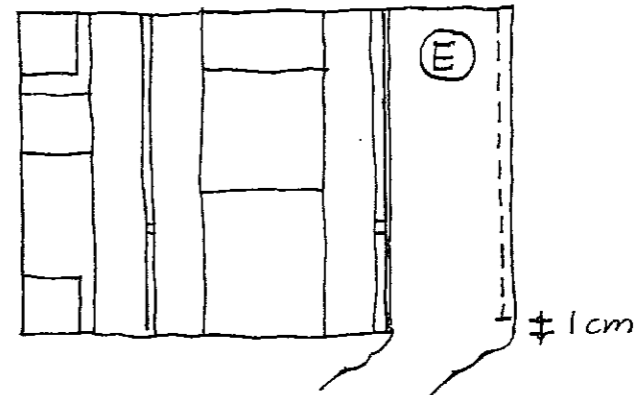
Hand sew the other two sides (the sides that will show when the rakusu is finished) of each corner square, with tiny stitches evenly spaced, that show on the top.



Iron the whole piece again.

Step 9:

Take the "bottom and sides frame" strip (E) and pin it, right side facing right side, along one side of the sewed together strips piece, so that the end of the strip lines up with the TOP of that piece. The piece itself should be as squared as possible, with top and bottom parallel and side to side parallel.

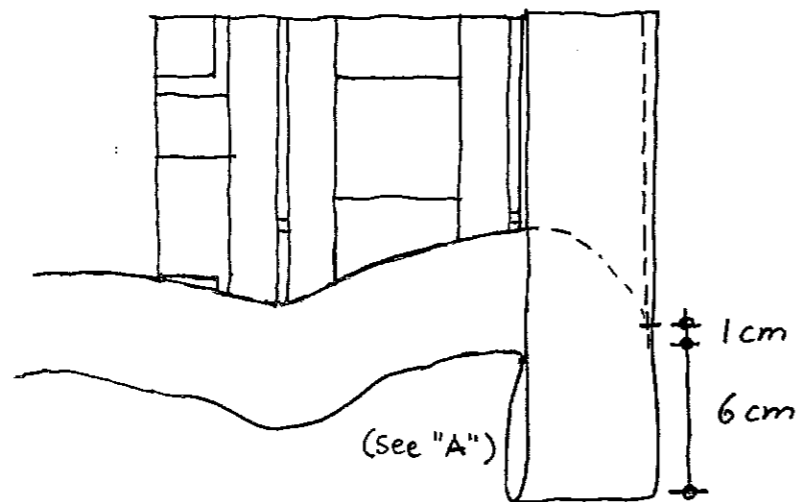


Stitch as shown. It is easier to stitch from the back side of the patchwork piece. The stitching should be 1 cm from the edges, and begin at the top and stop 1 cm from the bottom of the patchwork piece.

Step 10:

Measure 7 cm from the end of the STITCHING at the bottom of the patchwork piece, and mark that point with the chalk. ("Tailor's chalk" is used for marking wherever necessary during the making of the rakusu, as it can be brushed off the cloth easily and leaves no permanent marks.)

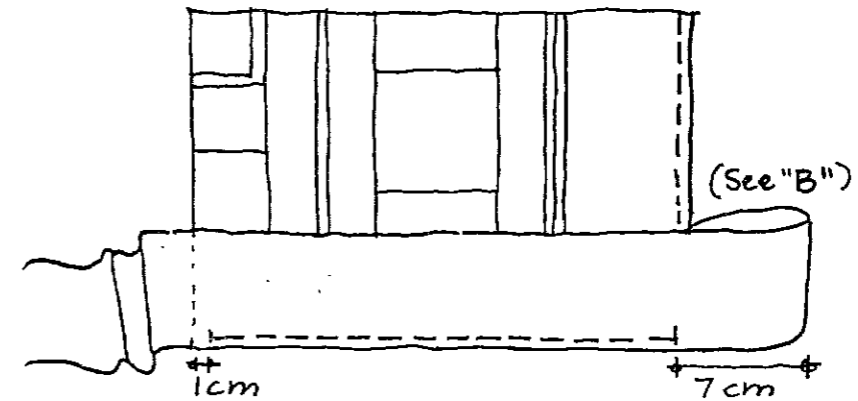
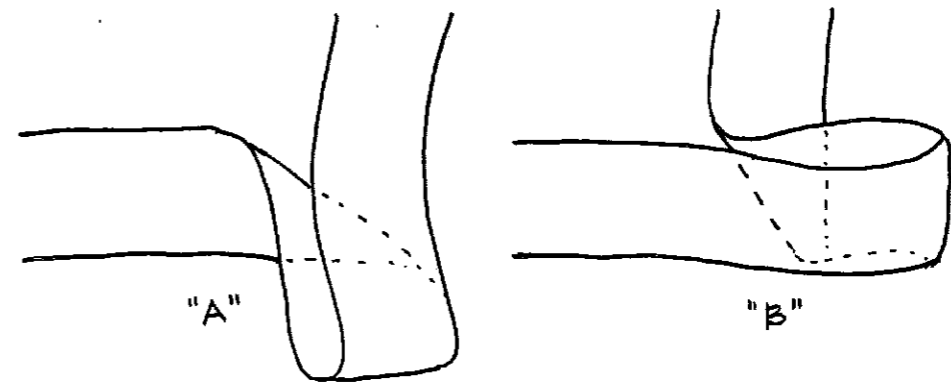
Next, fold the framing strip back on itself from that mark.



Step 11:

Flip the strip up and pin along the bottom of the patchwork piece, taking care to keep the 7 cm fold the same length as measured. Stitch from the end of the last stitching to 1 cm before the other side of the bottom of the patchwork piece.

NOTE: It is important to note before sewing any part of the framing strip to the patchwork piece that the patchwork piece has a top and a bottom. Be careful not to sew the framing strip to the TOP side of the patchwork piece!



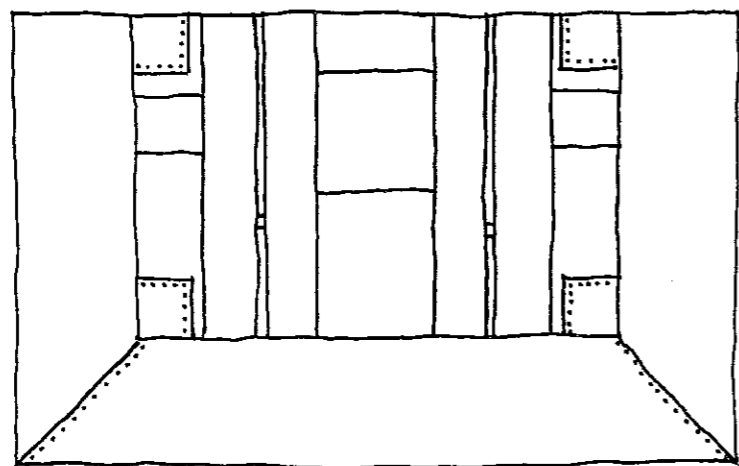
ALSO NOTE: Make sure the lines of stitching across sides and bottom meet exactly. This is easier to see if you sew from the back side. Be careful not to catch any extra material in the stitching; otherwise the corners won't work out right.

Step 12:

Repeat for the last side. When finished, iron so that all three sides are turned down and the two bottom corners are mitered (form a triangle).

Step 13:

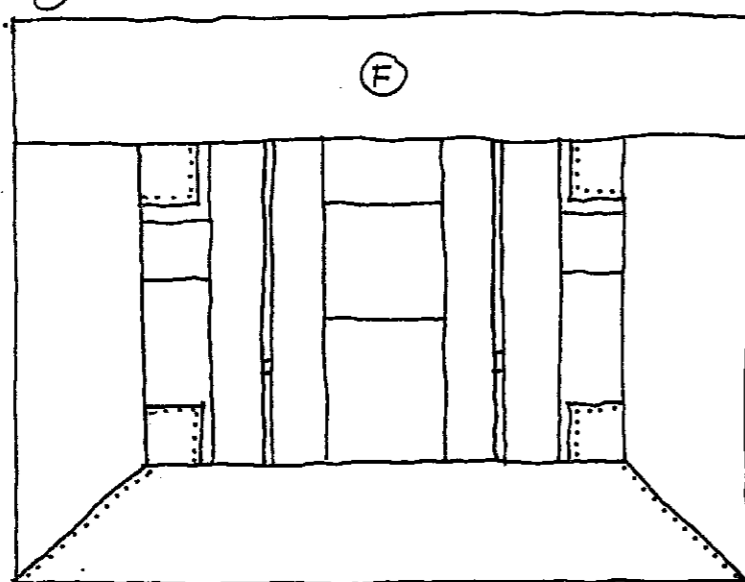
Hand sew, with tiny, evenly spaced stitches that show on the front, each corner miter. Sew close to the fold, then trim the back side about 1 cm from this stitching, the same each side.



NOTE: It is important to iron each piece at the corner so that they are mirror images of each other, that is, both towards each other or both away from each other, and to trim the excess equally.

Step 14:

Right side to right side, pin top frame (M) across entire top, including top of side frames, and sew 1 cm from edge of top. Trim 1/2 cm from edge (i.e., 1/2 cm from line of stitching) and iron away from patchwork piece.



Step 15:

Check work to see if everything lines up properly. (It's important to do this each step of the way.) Once the next step is taken here it will be impossible to go back and change anything.

Step 16:

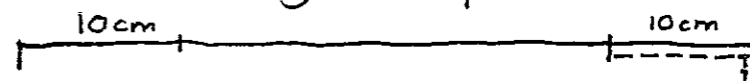
After you have made sure everything is lined up as you would like it to be in the finished piece, lay the work FACE DOWN on the ironing surface and place the stiffening, shiny side down, on top, matching sides and top and bottom. Steam iron slowly to fix stiffening to the piece.

NOTE: If your stiffening is not of the "iron-on" type, you will need to hand sew it in visibly to the rakusu, with tiny stitches that catch only the BACK of the piece and don't show on the face. These stitches can be spaced fairly far apart (2-3 cm) across the entire rakusu in several rows, to hold the stiffening to the rakusu.

Step 17:

Once the stiffening is attached, turn the piece face up. This is a good time to make sure none of your stitches show on the front if you stitched on the interfacing/stiffening.

Lay the back piece (N) over the front, face to face. Make sure it is even, and pin into place all around. Mark 10 cm from each upper corner along the top.

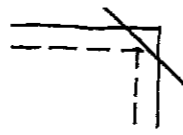


Begin stitching from the 10 cm mark and stitch towards the nearest corner. Turn and continue the sewing down the side, turning the next corner and stitching across the bottom, turning the next corner and stitching up the side, turning the next corner and stitching to the 10 cm mark. All stitching is 1 cm from the outside edge OF THE FRONT PIECE.

NOTE: It is very important that the bottom corners are turned precisely on the miter!

Step 18:

Trim corners diagonally.

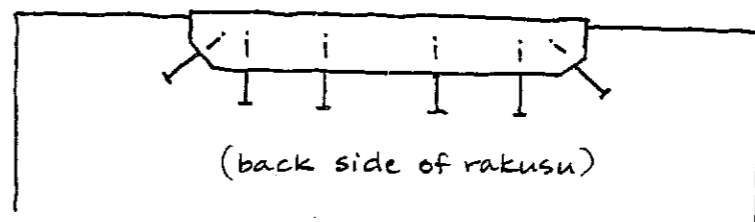


Turn piece right side out and check mitered corners. Re-sew if necessary. Then trim evenly to 1/2 cm all around. Turn again and iron. Be sure to turn all four corners out completely so they are not rounded. Make sure the unstitched top part is turned in and ironed even as well.

Step 19:

Center overlay (M) at top of rakusu, right side to right side. Sew 1/2 cm from top edge, beginning and ending 1 cm from each end of top overlay. Turn overlay up and iron so it extends above rakusu.

Fold in 1 cm at each end of overlay (or slightly more or less if it's not exactly centered after stitching. Iron. Fold over 1 cm on long side. Iron. (All folds are to underside, i.e., side that is right next to rakusu.) Fold over top and down back and pin to back of rakusu, folding in the corners on the diagonal. Iron and pin. It should look like this:



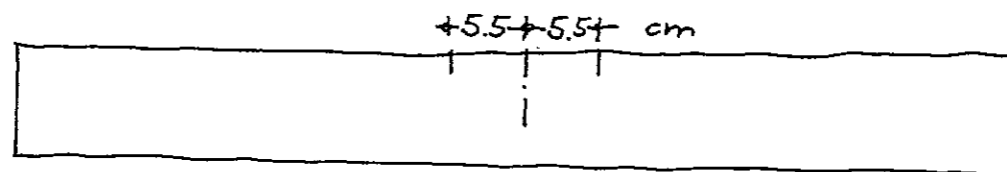
Step 20:

Hand sew overlay to back with invisible stitches UNLESS there is to be a calligraphy on the back which is already done. If there is a calligraphy already done, or if the calligraphy will be done after the cloth is sewn on to the back of the rakusu or no calligraphy but a white back, sew this on now BEFORE completing the overlay, so that the overlay is sewn on top of it.

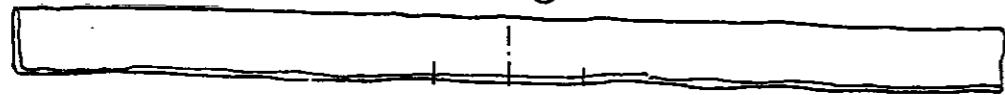
If there is no existing calligraphy and you would like to put a white back on the rakusu for future calligraphy, cut a piece of white cloth the same size as the back piece (N) and the stiffening piece (also N). Making sure it is smooth and taut, pin and sew in place by hand to the back of the rakusu, edges turned under.

Step 21:

Take the wider of the long straps (outside strap (A)) and fold in half cross-wise. Mark the fold (i.e., the 1/2-way point in the length of the strap) with chalk. Open the strap out again and mark 5 1/2 cm in each direction from the fold mark.



Then fold in half lengthwise. Pin across both ends and along length of strap, keeping strap smooth and edges even.



Sew across one end beginning from folded edge to 1 cm from corner; turn and continue sewing along length of strap up to first mark. Stop and move needle to last mark and begin sewing again up to 1 cm from corner, turn and sew to fold. The space between the two 5 1/2 cm marks is NOT sewn. All stitching is 1 cm from edge.

Step 22:

Trim corners diagonally, taking care not to cut stitching. Turn right side out and carefully iron flat, making sure sewn edges are not turned in. Iron unstitched part to line up with stitched edge. A chopstick is useful for turning the strap right side out, and a thick needle is helpful in pulling corners out fully.

Fold inside long strap (B) and inside short strap (C) in half.

NOTE: When sewing straps, fold with right side towards inside.

Stitch across ONE END ONLY, and along entire length. As usual, all stitching is 1 cm from edge. Turn right side out and iron flat.

Step 23:

Turn in open ends of narrow straps (inside straps) neatly and square across the ends. Iron, then hand sew together with invisible stitches. Take the short strap and fold over two adjacent corners of one end diagonally as shown. Stitch by hand all along diagonals with tiny, evenly spaced stitches that show on the front. Sew across the top with invisible stitches.



Step 24:

Sew hook part of hook (P) and eye (Q) to back side of narrow end; hook should face away from back of strap.



Step 25:

Stitch together, right sides facing, back neck piece and back neck lining piece along both long edges. Turn and iron flat. Take care that stitching lines are parallel!

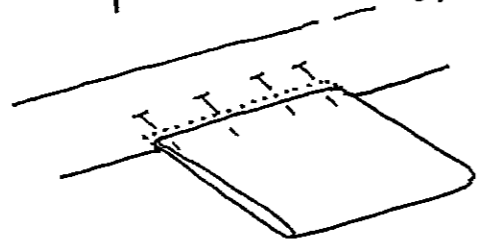
Step 26:

Fold in half crosswise and stitch raw ends together 1/2 cm from edges. If you have a sewing machine that sews zigzag or has an edging stitch, use one of these to stitch over the raw ends.



Step 27:

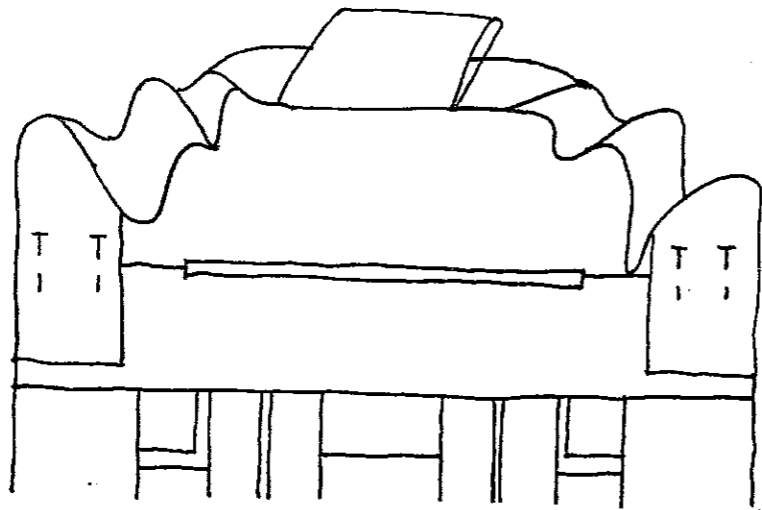
Take outside strap (A) and insert zigzag stitched edge of back neck piece into opening at middle of long edge of strap, about $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 cm into opening. Center on opening. Pin. Hand sew into place from both sides.



NOTE: Make sure back neck piece is exactly perpendicular to strap and that it is centered in opening! Use invisible stitches to sew in place, sewing opening to back neck piece on both sides of strap.

Step 28:

With seam side of strap towards inside, pin outside strap (A) to rakusu so that outside (folded) edges line up with outside edge of rakusu and bottoms of strap fall about $\frac{3}{4}$ cm above bottom of top band on rakusu.



17

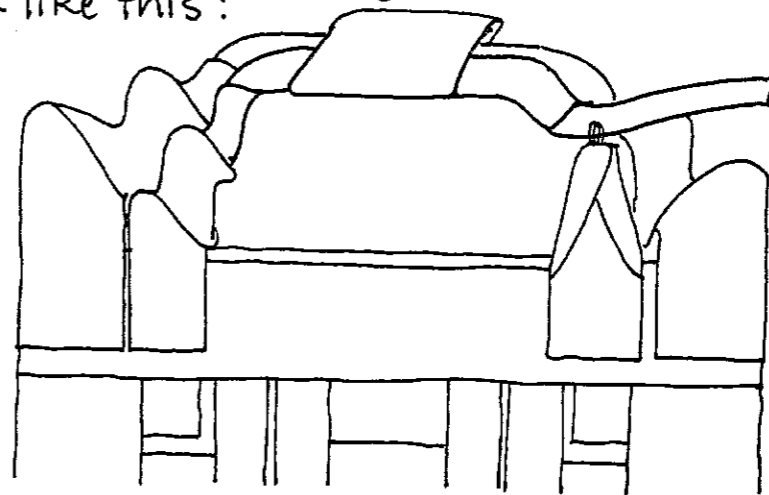
Hand sew in place with invisible stitches from back and again from front with tiny, evenly spaced stitches that show. This is the part of the rakusu that most rapidly and easily comes apart, and this is why it is stitched twice.

Step 29:

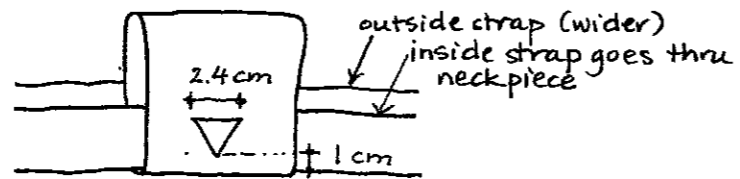
Pin one end of inside strap (B), with seamed long edge of strap facing center of rakusu, in a similar position right next to left side of rakusu front as you are facing it. Stitch as with outside strap. Run this strap thru the back neck piece. The end not sewn down goes thru the rakusu ring. This strap rides on top of the wider strap as it goes thru the back neck piece, which is folded back over the wide strap it is attached to.

Step 30:

Pin short rakusu strap next to right end of outside strap, with diagonal folds facing the front of the rakusu. Sew it on as you sewed the others. Your rakusu should now look like this:



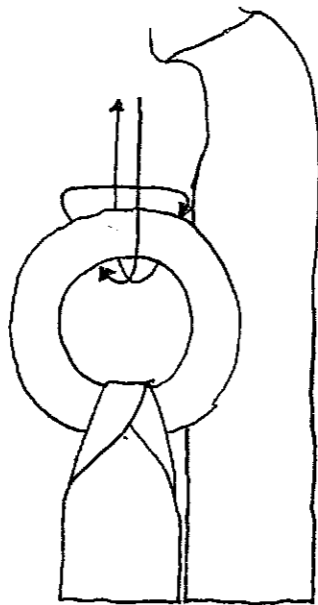
18



Step 31:

Sew eye part of hook and eye to back side of rakusu so short strap loops over and hooks into it. The rakusu ring is inserted before hooking.

Tie ring onto long inside strap after short strap is looped thru it and hooked. Short strap with ring and long strap tied thru it should be about the same length as the other strap and should lie flat — neither too long and too short, but just right.



Finally, with the heavier thread, sew an equilateral triangle thru all thicknesses, as shown, on the back neck piece, so it is identical above and below.