

着物

The Beauty of

Kimono

Styles · Patterns · Symbolism · Meaning

A journey through Japanese textile artistry

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Naomi Consolla-Kutsuna

- ❖ Born in Tokyo, raised in Saitama.
- ❖ Tokyo → Saitama → London (10 months)
→ Tokyo → NJ (10.5 years and counting!)
- ❖ Married to an American, mom of two boys (17 & 13)
- ❖ Loves: Kimono, green tea, art, food, cooking, crafting & dogs
- ❖ My grandmother owned a kimono shop — that's where my love for kimono began.
Two years before moving to the US, I started learning how to wear and dress others in kimono. I've been in love with it ever since.
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What Is a Kimono?

The word kimono (着物) literally means *"thing to wear"*

Worn in Japan for over 1,000 years, the kimono is a T-shaped, straight-lined robe.

It is held in place by a wide sash called an obi and is made from silk, hemp, cotton, polyester, and wool.

Origin

Heian Period (794–1185 CE)

Meaning

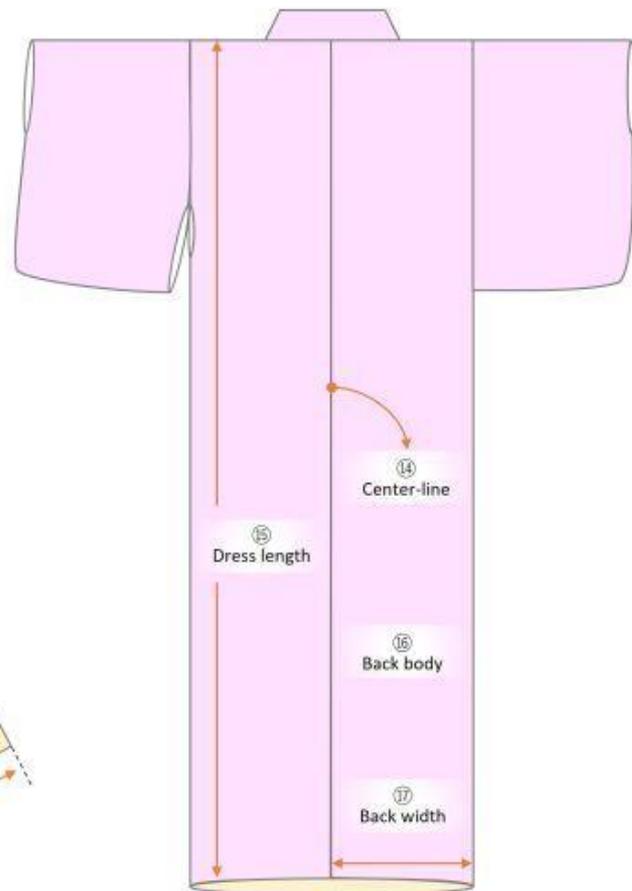
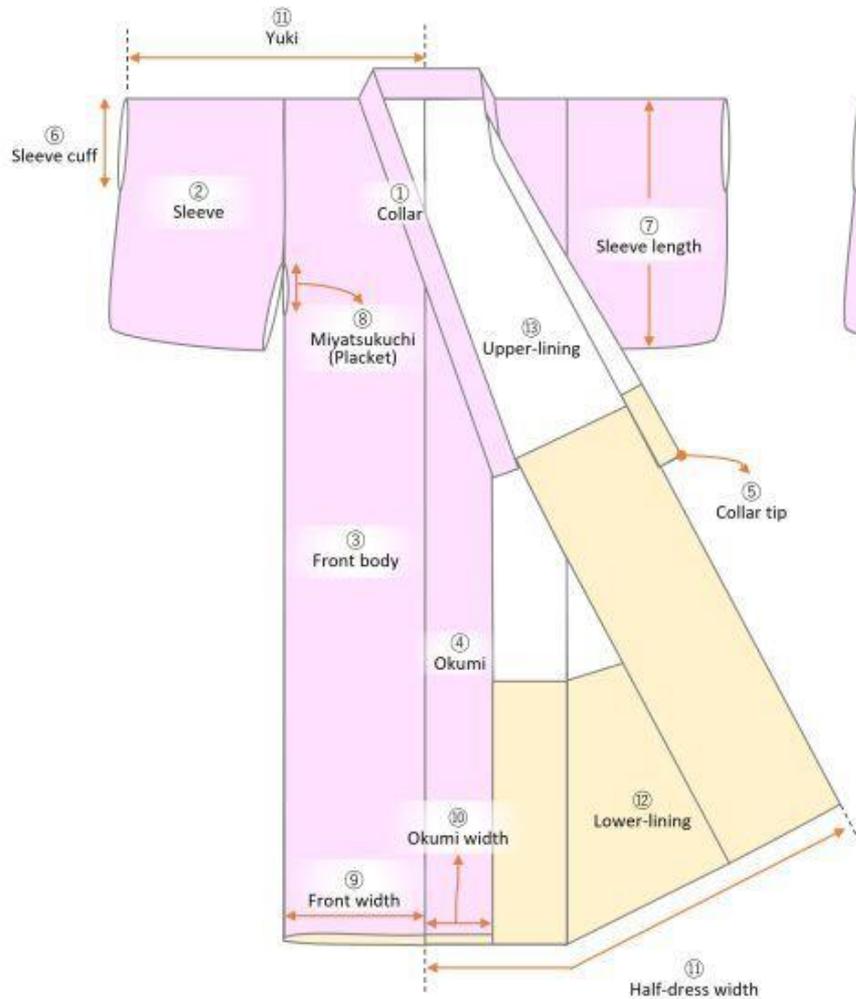
着物 — "Thing to wear"

Fabric

Silk, Hemp, Cotton, Polyester, Wool

Fastening

Obi sash (no buttons or zippers)





聖徳太子

Shotoku Taishi 574-622 CE
The first Regent



紫式部 Murasaki Shikibu 973? –1014?
Author of The Tale of Genji (源氏物語)



Current Emperor and Empress At their wedding (1993)



徳川家康

Tokugawa Ieyasu 1543-1616 CE
The first Shogun in Edo Period



Beauty looking back by Hishikawa Moronobu



Kabuki Actor Ōtani Oniji III as Yakko Edobei
by Toshusai Sharaku



Shin-Yoshiwara Kyomachi 1-chome
Kadoebiyauchi Yachiyo by Utagawa Kunisada



Kasamori Osen by Suzuki Harunobu



4 daime Ichikawa Kodanji and Kawarasaki Gonjuro I
by Utagawa Kunisada



Three Beauties of the Kwansei Period
by Kitagawa Utamaro



Woman with a Glass Noisemaker
by Kitagawa Utamaro



歌川国貞「十二月之内 師走 餅つき」安政元（1854）
Utagawa Kunisada “December: Rice Cake Pounding”



歌川広重『東海道五十三次』より「日本橋」
Hiroshige “The 53 Stations of the Tōkaidō” “Nihon-Bashi”



卯の花月（うのはなづき）歌川豊国（三代）画 嘉永頃（1848～1854）
“April” Toyokuni Utagawa

Types of Kimono

From formal to casual — there is a kimono for every occasion

Formal

Furisode

Long flowing sleeves — young unmarried women

Tomesode

5 family crests (mon) — Painted, Dyed, or Embroidered

Semi-Formal

Homongi & Tsukesage

Continuous pattern over shoulder and hem

Iromuji

Plain single color — can add 1–3 family crests

Dress Up

Komon

Small repeated all-over pattern

Tsumugi Homongi

Woven silk — dressed-up everyday elegance

Casual / Everyday

Linen Cotton & Wool

Practical, comfortable daily wear

Tsumugi & Yukata

Woven silk or cotton — festivals and relaxed occasions

Homongi



Komon



Tomesode



Iro-Tomesode



Tsumugi





Furisode



Iro-Muji

色無地5588



Iro-Muji



Furisode





Shichi-Go-San (753)









吉祥 文様

Kisshō
Monyō

Auspicious Patterns

in Japanese Kimono

Patterns are not just decoration —
they carry wishes and meanings passed
down through centuries.

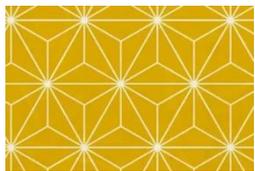
"Kisshō" means auspicious or fortunate.

Each motif brings a blessing: long life,
prosperity, protection, or love.

Choosing a pattern for a kimono is a
deeply personal act — a silent prayer
woven into the fabric.

Geometric Patterns 幾何文様

Timeless shapes that repeat endlessly — symbolizing continuity, protection, and prosperity



麻の葉

Asanoha

Health & Growth

Hemp grows 4m in 4 months. Symbolizes a child's healthy, rapid growth. Often Used on baby kimonos as a protective charm.



唐草

Karakusa

Longevity & Prosperity

Vines spreading endlessly in all directions represent the vitality of life and long-lasting prosperity.



市松

Ichimatsu

Expansion & Legacy

Checkerboard squares continuing without end. Named after Edo-era kabuki actor Sano Ichimatsu. Represents descendants multiplying.



鱗

Uroko

Protection & Rebirth

Triangles like fish or snake scales. Snakes that shed their skin symbolize rebirth. “3 uroko” family crest is used by Hojo family. (famous Samurai family)



亀甲

Kikko

Longevity

Hexagonal tortoise-shell pattern. The tortoise lives 10,000 years in legend — the ultimate symbol of long life.



扇

Ogi

Expanding Fortune

The fan spreads outward, never narrowing — symbolizing an ever-expanding, prosperous future. Popular at weddings and other celebrations.

Geometric Patterns 幾何文様

Water, waves, and woven shapes — each pattern carries the prayers of generations



青海波

Seigaiha

Peace & Eternity

Overlapping waves extending to the horizon. Wishes for a peaceful life that continues forever, calm as the sea.



流水

Ryusui

Purification

Flowing water washes away misfortune. Running water never stagnates — symbolizing clarity and protection from fire.



紗綾形

Sayagata

Eternal Prosperity

Linked swastika (manji) pattern. The endless interlocking design represents unbroken family prosperity through generations.



工字繋ぎ

Kojitsunagi

Long Life

The character 工 (work/craft) linked together endlessly. Represents longevity and eternal vitality — similar to Sayagata.



矢絰

Yagasuri

Straight Path Forward

Arrow-feather shapes. A fired arrow never returns — in Edo times a bride would bring a kimono with this pattern to the new family signifying that she would never 'return home'.



七宝

Shippo

Harmony & Bonds

Interlocking circles spreading in all directions. Named for the seven Buddhist treasures. Symbolizes harmony in relationships.

Nature Patterns 植物・動物文様

Flowers, trees and sacred creatures — Japan's deep connection with the natural world

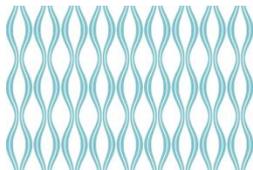


鳳凰

Ho-oh

Nobility & Rebirth

The phoenix appears only in times of peace and virtuous rulers. Symbol of grace, the sun, and imperial dignity.

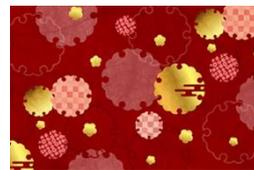


立涌

Tatewaku

Rising Fortune

Two curves like rising steam. An aristocratic court pattern since the Heian era. Among the most prestigious of all patterns.



雪輪

Yukiwa

Good Harvest

Snowflake crystal rings. Heavy snowfall was believed to bring a rich harvest — snow was called 'the spirit of the five grains'.



松

Matsu

Immortality & Dignity

Pine trees stay green all year and thrive where others cannot survive — representing indomitable spirit and eternal life.



竹

Take

Resilience & Purity

Bamboo bends in storms but never breaks. Its hollow core represents an honest, open heart. Phoenixes eat its fruit.



梅

Ume

Hope & Perseverance

Plum blossoms in the cold winter — a symbol of strength. Loved by the scholar-deity Tenjin.

Flower Patterns 花文様

Every flower is a season, every season is a prayer — the poetry of kimono



菊

Kiku

Longevity & Health

Chrysanthemum arrived as medicine from China. The Imperial Family's crest. Drinking chrysanthemum sake was said to grant immortality.



四君子

Shikkunshi

Noble Character

Bamboo, plum, chrysanthemum and orchid — the 'Four Gentlemen'. Each represents a noble virtue: integrity, hope, longevity, subtlety.



桜

Sakura

New Beginnings

Cherry blossoms announce spring after the cold. Once, hanami was a prayer for a rich harvest. Bloom suddenly, fall beautifully.



牡丹

Botan

Wealth & Honor

Peony — the 'King of Flowers'. Arrived as medicine, became the symbol of prosperity and power. Favored by samurai clans.



宝尽くし

Takarazukushi

Good Luck & Fortune

A collection of lucky treasures: magic mallet, wish-granting jewel, rolled scroll, and more — each granting a different blessing.



菱

Hishi

Good Health

Diamond shapes rooted in Jomon-era pottery. Named after the water chestnut plant, highly nutritious and fast-spreading.

Special Patterns 特別文様

Rare and precious motifs — luxury craftsmanship, protection, and sacred symbolism



籠目

Kagome

Ward Against Evil

Bamboo basket weave forming six-pointed stars. A repeating hexagram pattern believed to ward off evil spirits. Many "eyes" were thought to watch over and repel negative forces.



宝相華

Hosoge

Noble Grace

An imaginary flower with five petals, blending peony, lotus and pomegranate. Found in Shosoin treasures — the height of elegance.

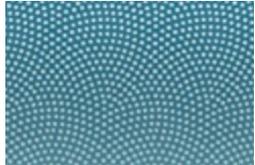


鹿の子

Kanoko

Luxury & Elegance

Spotted like a fawn's back. Made by tying tiny knots in fabric before dyeing — incredibly labor-intensive, a mark of luxury.



鮫小紋

Same Komon

Ward Against Evil

Tiny dots like sharkskin. Favored by the Kishu Tokugawa clan. One of the prestigious 'three komon' of Edo formal wear.



朝顔

Asagao

Strong Bonds

Morning glories climb with strong vines — symbolizing unbreakable bonds. Said to store the sun's energy and bring good fortune.



橘

Tachibana

Eternal Life & Legacy

Japan's own native auspicious pattern. The tachibana citrus grew in the immortal paradise described in the Kojiki and Nihonshoki.

春

Haru

Spring

Seasonal Flowers & Patterns

Spring 季節の文様

The season of new beginnings — kimono burst into bloom

March 弥生

Magnolia Canola flower Cherry Blossom

3月-弥生-

木蓮

-MOKUREN-



気品と高潔さ

菜の花

-NANOHANA-



春の兆しと生命力

桜

-SAKURA-



日本を象徴するお花

April 卯月

Peony Wisteria Cherry Blossom

4月-卯月-

牡丹

-BOTAN-



百花の王

藤

-FUJI-



優雅さと品。女性らしさ

桜

-SAKURA-



日本を象徴するお花

May 皐月

Peony Wisteria Iris

5月-皐月-

芍薬

-SHAKUYAKU-



女性的な慣ましさ

藤

-FUJI-



優雅さと品。女性らしさ

菖蒲

-SHOBU-



「勝負に勝つ」「魔除け」

夏

Natsu

Summer

Seasonal Flowers & Patterns

Summer 季節の文様

Cool colours and flowing yukata — nature in full bloom

June 水無月

Clematis

Hydrangea

Lily

6月-水無月-

鉄線

-TESSEN-



初夏の代表
蔓植物の女王

紫陽花

-AJISAI-



みずみずしさは、
梅雨時期にぴったり

百合

-YURI-



純粋さ、無垢

July 文月

Morning Glory

Bellflower

Chinese
Lantern Plant

7月-文月-

朝顔

-ASAGAO-



咲く夢さの象徴

桔梗

-KIKYO-



誠実・永遠の愛

鬼灯

-HOZUKI-



魔除け、無病息災

August 葉月

Dianthus

Hibiscus

Pampas Grass

8月-葉月-

撫子

-NADESHIKO-



可憐な日本女性の象徴

芙蓉

-FUYO-



夏の終わりを告げる

ススキ

-SUSUKI-



豊作、長寿
移ろいゆく季節の趣

秋

Aki

Autumn

Seasonal Flowers & Patterns

Autumn 季節の文様

Rich crimson and gold — the most poetic season for kimono

September 長月

Bush Clover Chrysanthemum Patrinia

9月-長月-

萩

-HAGI-



秋の七草のひとつ
秋の訪れ

菊

-KIKU-



不老長寿、無病息災
縁起の良い吉祥文様

女郎花

-OMINAESHI-



女性的な美しさや優さ

October 神奈月

Maple Chrysanthemum Grape

10月-神奈月-

紅葉

-MOMJI-



季節によって色を変える
変化に対応する

菊

-KIKU-



不老長寿、無病息災
縁起の良い吉祥文様

葡萄

BUDO



豊穡の象徴

November 霜月

Maple Winter Camellia Snowflake

11月-霜月-

紅葉

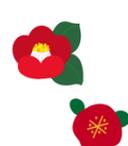
-MOMJI-



季節によって色を変える
変化に対応する

山茶花

-SAZANKA-



秋の深まり

雪輪

YUKIWA



冬の訪れ

冬

Fuyu

Winter

Seasonal Flowers & Patterns

Winter 季節の文様

Auspicious motifs for the new year — pine, plum, and sacred plants

December 師走

Nandina

Daffodil

Sarcandra

12月-師走-

南天

-NANTEN-



「難を転ずる」縁起物

水仙

-SUISEN-



寒さの中の美

千両

-SENRYO-



富や豊かさを象徴

January 睦月

Pine

Plum

Nandina

1月-睦月-

松

-MATSU-



「不老長寿」「永遠の命」

梅

-UME-



「希望」「忍耐」

南天

-NANTEN-



「難を転ずる」縁起物

February 如月

Plum

Camellia

2月-如月-

梅

-UME-



「希望」「忍耐」

椿

-TSUBAKI-



冬から春への橋渡し

松、梅、椿は冬は
いつでもおすすり。
特にカジュアムを場所なら
あまり及しすぎないことも
着物を楽しむコツです！

The Art of Wearing a Kimono

Dressing is a ritual – it can take up to an hour with a professional dresser (kitsuke)

01

Undergarments

Hadajuban (undershirt) and susoyoke (half-slip) are worn first to protect the kimono.

02

The Nagajuban

A white under-kimono worn beneath – its collar shows at the neck.

03

The Kimono

Always wrapped left over right (right over left is reserved for the deceased).

04

The Obi

Wide decorative sash tied at the back – dozens of tying styles exist.

05

Accessories

Tabi socks, zori sandals or geta wooden clogs, and a small pouch.

Kimono in Modern Japan

Ancient tradition meets contemporary expression

Traditional Occasions

- Coming-of-Age Day (Seijin-shiki, 20 years old)
- New Year celebrations (Oshōgatsu)
- Wedding ceremonies
- Tea ceremony & cultural arts
- Kabuki & traditional theatre
- Summer festivals (Obon, Tanabata, Fireworks)

Modern Revival

- Instagram & global kimono culture
- Contemporary kimono designers
- Casual 'modern kimono' styling
- Kimono rental tourism (especially Kyoto)
- Global appreciation & cosplay culture

Q & A

Dress, Style & Etiquette · 1 of 4

01

Neckline — how much skin is appropriate to show?

The chest is flattened and covered to the base of the neck, while the nape is deliberately left bare. Geiko and Maiko show even more of the nape as a distinctive part of their style.

02

What is the difference between a Geisha and a Courtesan in kimono?

Geisha (Geiko, Maiko) are performing artists. Yujo (prostitutes) and Oiran (high-ranking courtesans) wore more lavishly decorated kimono — and tied their Obi in the front rather than the back.

03

What can you carry in your kimono sleeve?

Anything! I carry a tenugui (thin cloth / handkerchief) and tissues. Wallet and valuables are best kept inside the Obi for safekeeping.

04

Is there a kimono taboo everyone should know?

Absolutely — never wrap the left side over the right (Hidarimae, 左前). That is reserved only for dressing the deceased. Right over left is always correct for the living.

Q & A

Collection, Seasons & Care · 2 of 4

01

How many kimono does a person typically own?

It is entirely up to the wearer. For year-round wear, at least three fabric styles are ideal: Awase (lined, Oct–May), Hitoe (unlined, Jun & Sep), and Usumono / Yukata (sheer, Jul–Aug). Different formality levels each call for their own kimono on top of that.

02

Did women traditionally wear underwear beneath a kimono?

Not in the Western sense. Women used a Yumoji, a simple wrap cloth worn beneath the kimono. Men wore a Fundoshi (loincloth) — a style still seen today at summer festivals and among Sumo wrestlers.

03

What about hair and bathing when wearing kimono regularly?

In Edo era, hair was washed roughly 1–3 times per month (more in summer) and always worn up so it would not touch the kimono. Public bathhouses were plentiful and accessible, so bathing was easy. People often had bath every day. Edo (Tokyo) was quite dusty.

04

Someone heard kimono can have 20 layers — is that true?

Heian-period court robes (Juni-hitoe) stacked 5–12 layers, weighing up to 15 kg. A story tells of a noblewoman attempting 20 layers and being unable to move — though no confirmed record verifies that exact number.

Q & A

Gifts, Costs & Accessories · 3 of 4

01

Are certain kimono patterns appropriate or inappropriate as gifts?

No strict pattern rules exist, but occasion colors matter greatly. Funeral gifts use black-and-white wrapping; wedding gifts call for red or gold envelopes.

02

Wedding kimono cost — what about the color-change kimono after the white?

Rental is the most common choice today, ranging from roughly \$1,400 to \$7,000. Purchasing a formal wedding kimono costs considerably more. Many families also cherish and pass down treasured pieces as heirlooms across generations.

03

What is the purpose of a Netsuke?

A Netsuke is a small carved toggle that men use to secure a pouch or medicine case (inro) to the Obi — a practical solution since kimono have no pockets. Women also wear them as elegant decorative accessories.

04

The rope used to tie the Obi?

The Obi is fastened with an Obijime cord and shaped with an Obiage sash. For casual Yukata, a half-width Hanhaba Obi without Obijime is used. There are a variety of knot styles (musubi)

Q & A

Footwear & The Commoner's Spirit · 4 of 4

01

Zori and Geta — what is the difference?

Zori are always worn with Tabi socks. Geta can be worn with or without Tabi, and were more common in everyday life when roads were not yet paved with asphalt.

02

Kimono & Commoners — the aesthetic of restraint (粋, Iki)

Beneath the glamour of samurai, nobles, and Oiran, Edo townspeople (chonin) developed a counter-aesthetic under strict sumptuary laws banning luxury. They channelled their spirit into subtle subversion — plain on the outside, exquisite within. Fine linings, hidden dyed patterns, quality over display. This 'negative aesthetics' (iki, 粋) echoes in modern minimalism: invest in what matters, let go of the rest. This spirit also lived in Yase Gaman (痩せ我慢) — the stoic pride of enduring discomfort, like walking barefoot in cold weather, without a word of complaint. Suffering in silence was simply considered cool.

03

What is the purpose of the tassel (fusa) on a Haori himo — and why is it so large?

The fluffy tassel (fusa) at the end of a Haori cord is more than decoration. It carries the meaning of warding off evil (a kind of charm against bad luck) and serves to elevate the overall elegance of the outfit.

着物

Thank You

ありがとうございます