

Matching Hijabs and Kimono in Kyoto

Two foreign women working in Kyoto have made Japanese kimono more universal and enjoyable to wear by introducing hijabs with traditional Japanese *wagara* patterns



Mansour and Aryanto wearing *wagara* hijabs to match the color of their kimono sashes. They also wear kimono when working as guides for Yumeyakata's walking tours around Kyoto.



Samar Mansour

Born in Paris, France, she became interested in Japanese culture through anime and manga, and after graduating from university, worked as an English-French translator before coming to Japan in 2015. She studied at a Japanese language school in Kyoto, and then started working at Yumeyakata in 2016. She takes part in many activities, including sales interpretation, kimono dressing, and photography.

Seftiana Aryanto

Born in Jakarta, Indonesia, she was first fascinated by kimono when she wore one as a member of a theater club at her university in Jakarta. She came to Japan in 2018 and studied at a Japanese language school in Kyoto. Around the same time, she started working at Yumeyakata, helping Muslim visitors. She is currently learning how to wear kimono, and is also responsible for dealing with customers mainly from Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia.



A hijab with *wagara* around the face to match the design of the kimono. All sorts of patterns and materials are used, such as lace, chiffon and cotton.

Kyoto, Japan's ancient capital, which draws over 50 million tourists per year, has seen a rise in the number of tourists from the Islamic world in recent years. It is there that the kimono rental shop Yumeyakata offers female Muslim visitors a rental service of hijabs adorned with traditional Japanese patterns using natural motifs known

as *wagara*. Two employees, Samar Mansour from France and Seftiana Aryanto from Indonesia, are involved in the endeavor.

To accommodate for Muslim customers, Yumeyakata brought in Muslim staff and set up a prayer room in 2018. Consequently, the store began receiving questions, on an almost daily basis, from Muslim women on how best they could coordinate their hijabs with a kimono. At first, the store asked customers to bring in their daily-use hijabs, which are typically plain, to be complemented with the colors of the kimono sash. However, to enable visitors to enjoy the pairing of the kimono and hijab much more, the shop has been providing specially-made hijabs since 2019, adorned with *wagara* that can be worn in combination with the Japanese kimono.

Mansour, who was inspired by

Japanese anime and manga, entered a Japanese language school in Kyoto in 2015. Then, the following year, she began working at Yumeyakata. Up until then, she had had little experience with fashion, let alone kimono. Even so, she started learning how to correctly put kimono on after joining the company, because she wants people from many different countries to enjoy wearing kimono with confidence. Mansour therefore joined the project of creating the *wagara* hijab with other Muslim staff.

The designs and fabrics are intended to fit easily around the head and match the pattern of the kimono. There are now more than 50 kinds of hijab available in the store. "Having received feedback from customers who have used the service, we began employing the pattern around the face to reflect the design of the kimono, with chiffon

to make it easier to wrap the hijab around the head," says Mansour.

Talking about its appeal, Aryanto, working as a staff member of Yumeyakata, who helps the customers choose and coordinate the well-fitting *wagara* hijab with kimono, and a Muslim herself, says "Kimono cover most of our body in the same way Muslim clothes do. Because of this similarity, hijab users can enjoy dressing the kimono stylishly together with the hijab." She goes on, "In Japan, everything to do with wearing a kimono has a meaning, and nothing goes to waste. Just wearing a kimono makes us feel graceful and takes us back to a traditional Japanese way of life."

Since the *wagara* hijab was introduced at Yumeyakata, more and more inquiries have come from Southeast Asia, as well as Europe, the United States and the Middle East. At Yumeyakata, Mansour and

Aryanto are now busy with many things, such as giving advice to customers on how to wear the *wagara* hijab and kimono, as well as providing guided walks around Kyoto dressed in kimono, and offering tea ceremony experiences. Speaking of her goal, Mansour says, "I want more

foreigners to enjoy getting dressed up in Japanese clothes regardless of where they're from or their religion, to understand the beauty of Japan that is so different from that of the West. It's because of this that I want to introduce the *wagara* hijab to a lot of people." ✿



The prayer room in Yumeyakata is used by many Muslim customers.



On this day, Muslim Women from Malaysia who learned about Yumeyakata's *wagara* hijab service on the internet visited the store. Mansour and Aryanto responded to feedback from these women who wanted softer material and a better shape around the head.