

The Artistry of Hand-Dyeing a Kimono using Kumo Shibori
Dominique Whelan
BUF 3246
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In traditional Japanese textile artistry, the Kumo Shibori method acts as evidence of the careful craftsmanship and artistic skills that define this ancient practice. Originating from the Japanese words for "cloud" (kumo) and "tie-dye" (shibori), Kumo Shibori is a naturally inspired design mixed with complex handwork. Imagine hopping on a journey where every fold, twist, and knot on a 2-yard piece of fabric becomes a canvas of imagination, each movement diffused with intention and admiration for the art form's rich heritage.

Embarking on the journey of transforming a plain cut of fabric into an elegant kimono through the Kumo Shibori technique is comparable to embarking on a voyage of personal exploration and artistic expression. Skillful hands delicately maneuver the fabric, each movement with purpose and precision. With each fold meticulously fastened with exacting precision, the fabric transforms into a canvas of anticipation, nursing the potential of vibrant colors and captivating design within its very threads. Through the mystical interplay of dye and time, the fabric undergoes a profound alteration, becoming a masterpiece of wearable individualized art—an enchanting kimono that not only drapes the wearer but also stands as a statement to the timeless appeal of traditional craftsmanship.

Materials that were used for this project were the following:

Lily Sugar n' Cream: Pink 100% Worsted Cotton Yarn (Amazon)

Ladyline: Plain Solid Cotton Solid Dyed Material DIY Craft (Two Yards) (Amazon)

Jacquard iDye: Dye for Natural Fabrics - Emerald Green (.49oz) (Amazon)

One Large Stainless Steel Pot

Hot Water

Fabric Scissors (Michaels)

Simthread All Purpose Thread Polyester 400 yards (Amazon)

Wooden Spoon

Rubber Gloves

Non-iodized Pink Himalayan Salt (1 cup)

1. The first step in this tutorial is fabric preparation and fabric folding.

- Lay out the 2 yards of cotton fabric used above, ensuring it's wrinkle and crease-free.
- Begin grabbing pieces of fabric in 2-3 inches at a time, creating finger-like structures.

This process creates the foundation for the craftsmanship of the Kumo Shibori technique.

- Once you've created finger-like structures, take your cotton yarn and begin tightly wrapping it around the finger structures. These yarn ties will serve as resist points in the fabric, preventing the dye from penetrating certain areas and creating distinctive patterns. Repeat this throughout your two yards of fabric.

2. Dye Preparation and Application:

- Put on rubber gloves. Ensure your workspace is covered in the case of dye spills. Fill a stainless steel pot with warm water, and leave it on medium over the stove until it reaches a simmer.
- While the water is heating up, rinse your Kumo-Shibori cotton over cold water, ensuring its purity.
- After the water has reached a simmer, drop your Jacquard iDye in Emerald Green into the water. Turn the heat down to medium-low and mix the dye with a wooden spoon until the packet is fully dissolved and submerged in the stainless steel pot.

3. Dyeing

- Carefully place your two-yard Kumo Shibori-tied fabric into the stainless steel pot of water and dye.
- In this step, also add non-iodized Pink Himalayan salt. Take a separate bowl of hot water and add your salt. This ensures before adding it to the dye, the mixture of hot water and salt will force it to dissolve.
- Allow the fabric to soak in the dye bath with salt for about 30 minutes, keeping a careful eye on the pot. The longer you leave your fabric in, the deeper saturation of color will exude.

4. Rinse and See the Magic Happen

- After the fabric has been submerged in the pot mixture for 30 minutes, carefully remove it from the pot, allowing drippage to release. Have a clean bowl ready to thoroughly rinse, removing all excess dye.
- After you have thoroughly removed all remaining dye, start by laying out your fabric and begin unraveling the resistant ties. Cutting the ties is the easiest way in this step, given the dye has covered them entirely.
- Visualize the Kumo Shibori technique in real life.
- Throw your fabric in the dryer or air dry it.

Step 5: Sewing and Hemming

- After dyeing, rinsing, and drying, the fabric is ready to be transformed into a kimono.
- Lay your fabric out and fold it in half, and then half again. Then cut out your arm holes by measuring out how long you would like them. After, open up the fabric so it's only in one half, cutting the front open, allowing the look of a kimono to be created.

- Begin by pinning all the surrounding edges around the kimono top, around half an inch, starting your hemming process.
- After the entire garment is hemmed, you're ready to start sewing and enclosing the garment. You will need to sew the sleeves shut, enclosing them to create an armhole. Flip the fabric inside out to sew the front and the back of the kimono top together. After this step, your hand-dyed Kumo Shibori Kimono is ready to wear!

My first observation of this project was the tedious, but fun process of tying the fabric with yarn. I specifically chose pink yarn to see if the color would semi-leak into my fabric, although it didn't work as much as I had hoped, I noticed the pale green color coming through more in the center of my resists with yarn. The synthetic jacquard iDye in emerald green produced a vibrant hue on the cotton fabric. The final color will vary depending on how long you decide to leave it in, next time I do this I would like to leave it in for one hour to see the color difference. After carefully cutting the yarn ties, I was pleasantly surprised at how gorgeous the designs came out. Each tie that was removed created unique designs and techniques. The patterns almost look like puckered lips throughout. As a new sewer, hemming, and sewing came with great pleasure in learning this new skill. Sewing, as a beginner, is all about patience, leaving frustration behind when it comes to creating something fairly new to you. The completed kimono showcased a seamless integration of Kumo Shibori motifs with classic kimono styling, highlighting the exquisite craftsmanship of Japanese textile artistry.

Overall, the prepping, dyeing, and sewing of this kimono allowed me to have an enlightening and rewarding experience. I never thought I would learn how to sew at all, this project allowed me to open my eyes to realize if you put your mind to anything, you can achieve

it. This project provided me with detailed information on how to traditionally complete Kumo Shibori. As a new sewer, I looked for help through YouTube videos and family members with experience. When this project was assigned, I took it upon myself to make a family day out of it. As a beginner, I will take all the help I can get to allow me to truly understand the art of sewing. My cousin has a room dedicated to her seamstress needs, with everything a designer needs. She taught me step by step how to make this kimono come to life. The dyeing process was extra fun, given the no-mess dye that just dissolves in water. Visually taking in the color from when it was initially dropped in the pot to its final stages, transforming from a bright green to an emerald green was beautiful. I am ecstatic about how my piece turned out and am looking forward to wearing it in the future.

Figure 1: Tyeing finger-like structures with cotton yarn on cotton fabric.



Figure 2: Cold bath before submerging



Figure 3: Dropping Jacquard iDye in Emerald Green in hot water.





Figure 4: Submerging the cotton fabric with Kumo Shibori inside the pot and watching the color change to Emerald Green.

Figure 5: The cotton fabric after 30 minutes.



Figure 6: Air-drying newly dyed fabric.



Figure 7: Sewing and hemming the fabric.



Figure 8: Final product of hand-dyed cotton using the Kumo Shibori technique. (Frontal View)

Figure 9: Final product of hand-dyed cotton using the Kumo Shibori technique. (Back view)

