

**Reduce, Reuse, Recycle:  
The Kimono Revival in Japan  
as a Strategy of Self-Orientalization**



Technische Universität Dortmund  
Fakultät 16 – Kunst- und Sportwissenschaften  
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# **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: The Kimono Revival in Japan as a Strategy of Self-Orientalization**

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## **DISSERTATION**

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*To Martín, Johannes and Michael, my parents in Venezuela,  
and my dear friends in Japan.*



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## **Author's Note to the Reader**

This thesis follows the Japanese convention that family names precede personal names. The transliteration of Japanese words is done according to conventions of romanization with macrons on long vowels. All technical terms not listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* are written in italics and small letters. Adapted English words are rendered according to Japanese pronunciation.



# Periods of Japanese History

Asuka	飛鳥	(538–710)
Nara	奈良	(710–794)
Heian	平安	(794–1185)
Kamakura	鎌倉	(1185–1336)
Muromachi	室町	(1336–1573)
Momoyama	桃山	(1568/1573–1615)
Edo	江戸	(1615–1868) (also called Tokugawa)
Meiji	明治	(1868–1912)
Taishō	大正	(1912–1926)
Shōwa	昭和	(1926–1989)
Heisei	平成	(1989–2019)
Reiwa	令和	(2019–present)



# *Introduction*

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## *Kimono: A Personal Encounter*

I started the formal research on a “new” kimono<sup>1</sup> revival in contemporary Japan based on the collection and analysis of documents such as newspaper articles in the Internet, magazines and, in particular, a textile object found in Kyoto, Japan in the year 2005. However, biographically I had started my encounter with kimono some years before.

I stayed in Japan for the first time in 1993: thanks to a cultural exchange program I lived for one year with a Japanese family in Kyoto. In the 1980s, Japan was envied in the world for its economic success, and Venezuelans were also amazed by the so-called “Japanese Miracle.” But when I arrived the “economic bubble” had burst and the Japanese economy was in decline.

Once in Kyoto I started to study in a junior girls’ high school and had the opportunity to take a course on fashion design that was given for girls who wanted to pursue this career after graduation. Like most fashion-design courses around the globe, including my home country Venezuela, a fashion course meant designing Western-style clothing, so the kimono, being considered a “traditional dress,” was not part of the curricula. During my entire stay in Japan I had very few encounters with kimono; the only chance to wear one came from my host family and some friends. It felt like a nice thing to do to exchange impressions on this special part of Japanese culture: they surely wanted to see me dressed in a kimono, and so did I. But also, I enjoyed very much strolling in the vicinity of the temples near the Higashiyama district where I used to live, and with a bit of luck I could see maiko<sup>2</sup> posing for a photo session for a journalist at the Nanzen-ji Temple.

As a foreigner, my associations with kimono were related first to the fact that it had to be worn by women, and second, mostly by a geisha or maiko. In 1993 I used to visit flea markets to find used kimono. But in comparison with other crafts like pottery, there were only few stands selling second-hand kimono, and most of the second-hand summer kimono available were yukata<sup>3</sup> for men. For a high-school exchange student these were too expensive to buy anyway. However, my experiences in the year 2008 while doing fieldwork for this thesis proved to be very different.

During the years 2001 to 2005 I lived in Japan, studying modern and traditional techniques for dyeing kimono cloth at the Kanazawa College of Art and Design in Ishikawa Prefecture as part of the preparatory course required for doing a Master of Fine Arts on textiles. I had chosen the dyeing department because it meant taking a more pictorial approach to the study of Japanese textiles, and so was related to my earlier studies in painting and the graphic arts. While studying for my MFA thesis in Japan I made regular trips to Kyoto, where I collected the materials needed for my artwork. In Kyoto, the latest in materials and products for dyeing cloth in the country were available, and I had the chance to see a wide variety of souvenirs and textile objects produced in the city. While searching for my dye materials I bought some textile objects. One of these became, years later, the main thematic source for this dissertation:

a small bag of artificial silk *chirimen*<sup>4</sup> adorned with a kimono pattern made into a modern handbag in Western style.

On this second visit to Japan kimono became more familiar to me. For my graduation ceremony on receiving the MFA and while attending a coming-of-age ceremony I wore a kimono as shown in Figure 1. A Japanese teacher who used to be the adviser of many foreigners in the city lent us her kimono for these occasions. Looking back, I remember that I had visited a second-hand kimono shop near Kanazawa Station in 2003 when a friend went to buy a kimono, together with *tabi*<sup>5</sup> and *obi*<sup>6</sup>, to wear at her graduation ceremony (she had a good acquaintance who used to work at the shop). Then at the end of my stay in Japan in 2005, just before I departed for Germany, a good friend of my ceramics teacher gave me one of her own silk kimono and a gorgeous brocade *obi* to take with me for my new life in Germany. In 1994 my host mother had done the same with her own *yukata* and one *haori*<sup>7</sup> jacket. It felt to me like I was taking part in rituals which were part of the common tradition of passing down a kimono within the family.



Figure 1: Visiting a coming-of-age-ceremony in Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture. For this occasion, some girl students are wearing a coloured formal silk kimono (*furisode*) with long sleeves. Prominent white boas-shawls were popular for this occasion in the year 2005. Article/Photo taken from *Hokkoku Shimbun*, 2005.

On arriving in Germany in year 2006 I wanted to continue my apprenticeship in the history of Japanese textiles and textile design, and started to do online research in web pages related to accessories and kimono design. I ended up finding out that the small *chirimen* bag I had bought was one of many different textile objects with the *wagara*<sup>8</sup> design—*wa*: Japanese, *gara*: pattern design—that were part of a fashion trend in 2005<sup>9</sup> around kimono and *komono*<sup>10</sup> design. Not only was I coming across articles on accessories made of kimono cloth, but some of these were also mentioning a “comeback” of the kimono as a fashionable alternative for

young Japanese women, especially “recycled” kimono: second-hand kimono that could be reused. Other articles were suggesting that kimono was being revived because second-hand kimono were now on sale and affordable. Others gave the name of kimono designers and activists. Suddenly I could see that an interesting field of study was growing in front of me. So at the institute I had just enrolled in, in Dortmund, Germany, I decided to write a work on the possible revival of the use of kimono and recycled kimono textiles in contemporary Japan.

## *The Kimono in the Modern World*

Even though in the West we think of the term *kimono* as meaning Japanese traditional dress, and normally associate it with the National Dress of Japan, the word itself is said to have started off as a generic term denoting the Japanese ethnic style of clothing during the first half of the reign of the Meiji Emperor (1868–1912), shortly after Japan was forced to open itself to the world by Western pressure:

The kimono became recognized as such only when presented with a categorical alternative. Clothing was called by many names, each defined in terms of the others by such characteristics as length, material, occasion when worn, and so on. The Japanese had little social or linguistic need for a single term that would conceptually gather its instances into one category of clothing—such a category had no meaning, because before Meiji it had no opposite.

From Meiji on, however, the nuances that distinguished the various forms of native dress paled in comparison with the greater difference between Japanese and Western clothing. In this shift of perspective, and no doubt in answer to the Western query as to what those long-sleeved front-wrapping garments were called, Japanese said *kimono*, “a thing to wear.”<sup>11</sup>

The anthropologist and kimono specialist Liza Dalby, cited here from her 1993 book *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*, explains how the word kimono “volunteered to fill the linguistic gap”<sup>12</sup> and name Japanese clothing during the Meiji era. According to her sources on Japanese literature:

Quite likely *kimono* is related to the ancient word *koromono* (gown) found in the *Nihonshoki* and other early Japanese texts. It would also have been understood as a gloss for the general term *yosōi* (clothing)<sup>13</sup> throughout the ages. Nevertheless, “kimono” did not become a standard term until the Meiji era.<sup>14</sup>

While *kimono* literally means “a thing to wear,” the specific type of Japanese wear that came to be named *kimono* and known as such throughout the world was previously known as *kosode*.<sup>15</sup> The *Kodansha Bilingual Encyclopedia of Japan* says that in Japan the term *kimono* only gained favour over *kosode* in the eighteenth century.<sup>16</sup>

Watanabe Toshio makes us aware that:

Various stories and anecdotes of “discoveries” of Japanese art in the nineteenth century have often distorted the actual situation and given the impression that almost nothing Japanese was available in the West before 1853. This is not so: a limited amount of Japanese works of art and artefacts was available in the West even during the long period of national isolation which was subsequently broken by the American squadron in 1853. Nor was Japan a totally unknown land in the West, as some nineteenth century writers have claimed.<sup>17</sup>

For example, we know from Derek Massarella’s research that already from 1582 to 1590<sup>18</sup> there was an official delegation of “South Japanese Christian lords to Europe, organized by the Jesuit Alessandro Valignano.”<sup>19</sup> This delegation “brought Japanese art objects to Europe as gifts,”<sup>20</sup> including Japanese costumes. Japanese lacquerware was the first art object to be

exchanged as merchandise and not just used as a form of souvenir, gift, or curiosity.<sup>21</sup> Within this evolution in the process of trading between Japan and the West, written documents, such as auction records of the East India Company dating from 1614, mention “Japan stuff” and the word “Japan” or “Japaning” “to represent lacquerware in general.”<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, some words indicating Japanese art objects entered the European vocabulary already in the sixteenth century. Words such as *byōbu*<sup>23</sup> meaning folding screen, *katana* meaning sword and kimono meaning costume were not just mentioned once in documents but were used afterwards repeatedly with spelling variations, often losing their association with Japan itself.<sup>24</sup>

In her essay “The Kimono and Parisian Mode,”<sup>25</sup> Fukai Akiko comments on the ambiguity in the use of the term “kimono.” Like Dalby, she maintains that the word, or at least its use in the West to denote Japanese clothing, is a modern invention of the Meiji period: “... the term ‘kimono,’ which became part of the Western lexicon at around the end of the nineteenth century, was itself an ambiguous one.”<sup>26</sup> According to Fukai’s sources, “kimono was being worn as a ‘robe’ in the West as early as the seventeenth century.”<sup>27</sup> She claims, like Watanabe, that during its period of seclusion, Japan, the Dutch East India Company and other traders continued their exchange, and that it was through this trade that “the kimono was first introduced to European men as luxurious loungewear.”<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, she explains that in the mid-nineteenth century and soon thereafter Japan started its participation at the international World Exhibitions, which allowed Japanese artefacts to enter the European and American markets. Subsequently, the image of kimono, and the kimono-clad Japanese maiden, began to appear around the 1860s in European paintings. She observes that at the Paris Exposition of 1867:

The Japanese government built a teahouse where three Japanese women in kimono served tea for their guests. Most likely for the first time, at this event the Western world directly encountered Japanese women in kimono, and this had an immediate impact on fashion....

In the following year, in 1868, Ernest Chesneau, who played an important role in popularizing *Japonisme* in the West, wrote an interesting article entitled “Japan and Japanese Art” for the November issue of *Le Journal de Mademoiselle*. He praised the kimono, still referred to as a “robe” in his article....

According to the *Le Grand Robert* dictionary, the word “kimono” had been in use in France since 1876, yet it became more common around 1900. Beginning around this time, the term “kimono” was frequently used in women’s magazines. Soon the use of the word spread throughout the West, acquiring a more general meaning of “loungewear” along the way....

Furthermore, dressing gowns called kimono began to appear in the catalogues of Sears, Roebuck & Co. from around 1903. These documentations show that the so-called kimono had taken a meaning distinct from the original Japanese sense of the word, and it had been absorbed into the general Euro-American lexicon to signify loungewear, that is, a robe or a gown worn casually in the home.<sup>29</sup>

Hence at the beginning of the twentieth century in the West, the term *kimono* acquired a distinct meaning (loungewear or gown worn casually in the home) which was different to the meaning in Japan. There:

The word kimono is usually used in the narrow sense for the traditional Japanese wrap-around garment. The word is occasionally used in the broad sense as a term for clothing or for the native dress in general as opposed to Western-style clothing (*yōfuku*).<sup>30</sup>

With the modernization of the country and with Japan's participation in the World Expositions, kimono and the image of the kimono-clad maiden, already known as motifs in artworks such as *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints and in souvenirs and craft objects, started to represent more and more the image of "traditional Japan" as "an alluring and largely unknown spectacle of the Orient to occidental minds."<sup>31</sup>

Kojima Kaoru elaborates on Fukai Akiko's explanation: "Kimono-clad women were 'exhibited' as part of Japanese displays" and were sent to work "as female receptionists dressed in kimono" in Japanese pavilions at successive World Exhibitions:<sup>32</sup>

Images of Japanese women in kimono prevailed in Europe and the United States during the age of *Japonisme*. As Toshio Watanabe has noted, in the 1870s and 1880s British painters regarded kimono and *byōbu* (folding screen paintings) not only as exotic ornaments but also as symbols of beauty....

In addition to pictures, other media also popularized the image of Japan as a land of women wearing kimono. Madame Chrysanthème by Pierre Loti is one of the most famous portrayals of this theme in literature....

According to Mabuchi Akiko, several comedies with Japanese subjects were performed in Paris as early as the 1870s.<sup>33</sup> She points out that the motif of the Japanese woman was quite appealing to European men but not to women....

Images of Japanese woman in kimono were readily associated with sexual fantasies dreamed by male Europeans. Love stories about European men and young Japanese women who were in most cases geishas reflected the gendered structure of the relationship between the modernized West and the undeveloped land of Japan.<sup>34</sup>

In the same essay, Kojima cites Hashimoto Yorimitsu, who argues that Sydney John's operetta of 1896 entitled *The Geisha: A Story of a Tea House* helped to popularize the word "geisha" in Europe.<sup>35</sup> Saeki Junko points out that "sexualized images of *oiran*<sup>36</sup> (the highest rank of prostitute in the Edo period)" were commonly confused by Westerners with geisha.<sup>37</sup> Another cultural classic reflecting the gendered structure between ancient Japan and the modern West was recreated in the opera *Madama Butterfly*.<sup>38</sup> In this work Puccini recirculates the various markers of Japanese identity: the main female character is called "Butterfly," and as Dorinne Kondo argues, "Butterfly as geisha, that quintessential Western figuration of Japanese woman" and of traditional Japan. Furthermore, highlighting the Orientalizing stereotypes for Japan used in the opera, in the opera the predictable happens: "West wins over East, Man over Woman, White over Asian."<sup>39</sup>

## ***'Japan' and the 'Kimono'***

Existing in relative isolation for almost two-and-a-half centuries, Japan emerged on the international stage in the late nineteenth century. Like the new flag, the kimono was one of the nation's most visible symbols. In those years, Japan managed to remain the only non-colonialized country in Asia.<sup>40</sup>

Japan's isolation ended when Commodore Matthew C. Perry sailed into Edo Bay in 1853,<sup>41</sup> thereby forcing Japan to open its ports to American ships. By the 1870s, Western tourists had started to visit Japan in large numbers, eager to experience a country that had only recently opened up to visitors.<sup>42</sup> In the 1860s, the first shogunal embassy departed for the United States.<sup>43</sup> Parallel to the reception of foreign tourists, one of the practices of Japan visual modernity emerged, souvenir photography.<sup>44</sup> As in *ukiyo-e* prints, in souvenir photography images of women and young girls in kimono were the most popular theme of representation.<sup>45</sup> These women were also a source of inspiration for European painters, and from 1860 the kimono began to appear in their art works.<sup>46</sup> In addition, second-hand kimono purchased on trips to Japan were brought to Europe as souvenirs and used as loungewear by high society ladies in Europe and by the models for the painters in their studios.<sup>47</sup> Kimono was an export item that was craved by consumers in Europe, Britain and America, functioning both as costume and as clothing.<sup>48</sup>

Within Japan, photography was the best medium for capturing convincing visual images of the country.<sup>49</sup> Claudia Delank argues that the imagery of females clad in kimono was the most prominent category in terms of the number of images produced,<sup>50</sup> while Wakita Mio points out that women pictured in Japanese souvenir photography "were predestined to signify the alleged 'national' femininity, or even the symbolic identity of Japan itself."<sup>51</sup> Under the classification "country types" were images of Japanese young girls in kimono,<sup>52</sup> *bijin*.<sup>53</sup> The girls posed in scenes created in the ateliers of the photographers, performing domestic activities: washing their hair, bathing, or after bathing, playing a musical instrument; or as sleeping beauties in their beds,<sup>54</sup> futon.<sup>55</sup> These constructed images, both exotic and erotic, were disseminated through souvenir photography in the form of postcards or photographic albums, thus intensifying the view of Japanese women in the West that so much attracted the Western male tourist to Japan.<sup>56</sup> Other iconic sites of Japan (Mount Fuji, gardens and temples, famous bridges) were also motives of the pictures.<sup>57</sup>

But it was perhaps at beginning of the twentieth century that the kimono-clad female figure started to help to shape the sense of Japan as a country, and kimono came to represent the nation's dress:

Ultimately, then, kimono today and the right wearing of them are redolent of the ever-present issue in Japan of being authentically Japanese. The cultural and historical roots of the shape and function of modern kimono are clear. They are embedded in the post-Meiji path trod by the Japanese in building a modern society. Along with other concrete manifestations of new, national values—standard language, education, beliefs about

women's social role, and so on—kimono took its unifying inspiration from the ex-samurai elite who ruled Japan in the later nineteenth century.<sup>58</sup>

While Dalby emphasizes that kimono took its “unifying inspiration” as Japan’s traditional dress from the ex-samurai elite, Terry Satsuki Milhaupt’s critical evaluation uses the word “manipulation” to highlight how Japan as a nation used kimono in “its quest to establish a recognizable national identity”<sup>59</sup> and as an “iconic marker of Japaneseness,”<sup>60</sup> especially as women’s dress. Kojima Kaoru points out that kimono served “as a Japanese icon abetted by nationalism and imperialism in the age of the Japanese Empire.”<sup>61</sup> This is an argument also shared by Mori Rie, who dedicates an essay to the study of the forced use of kimono by women in Japan’s colonies, China, Korea and Taiwan.<sup>62</sup> She argues that kimono became famous thanks to the trend of “Japonism” in the nineteenth-century Western world, that this trend created “the discourse of connecting ‘Japan’ and the ‘kimono’,” and that “the discourse began to be used strategically by Japan during the national mobilization,”<sup>63</sup> linking the image of kimono as a symbol of nationalism.<sup>64</sup> According to Dalby, after the defeat of Japan in the Second World War, the ensemble that emerged to best represent the national costume of Japan was that of the silk kimono and brocade obi, a woman’s kimono that can be used both for attending ceremonial activities or as a formal attire “to impress foreigners when abroad.”<sup>65</sup> She argues that “Its cultural mission is to reflect constructed yet traditional notions of genteel femininity,” and is thus a kimono which is intolerant of variation and experimentation.<sup>66</sup>

### *The wa and the yō in Kimono*

For the Japanese, distinguishing what is Japanese from what it is non-Japanese (the latter normally originating in the West, that is, America or Europe) is a way of constructing their own identity. In the Japanese language, the syllable “*wa*” as an adjective signifies “Japaneseness,” whereas the contrary is marked by the syllable “*yō*,” which denotes something of Western origin:

Clothing in Japan is broadly categorized as either *wafuku*<sup>67</sup> (Japanese style) or *yōfuku* (Western style). KIMONO is the modern designation for the traditional Japanese robe-like garment, but this garment was historically called *kosode*. The history of Japanese clothing is in large part the history of the evolution of the *kosode* and the Japanization of imported styles and textiles.<sup>68</sup>

The pre-modern Japanese society of the Edo period (1615–1868) had its own indigenous textile tradition. The ancestor of the kimono, the garment known as *kosode*, produced through the labour of textile artisans, the weavers and dyers of Japan, came from a long tradition of handicraft skills that combined indigenous with foreign artisanal technologies, with the textile dyeing and weaving methods and materials imported into Japan at different times, mainly from Southeast Asia, Korea and China.

With the opening of Japan to the West after 1868, many things started to change in the country, including in the economy. The efforts to modernize the Japanese textile industry in



accordance with the Western model were only possible thanks to the exchange of ideas and technologies between Japan and the West.

While in Japan the search for innovation in textile design and kimono fashion continued its development under the cultural and aesthetic influence of the Avant-Garde movements in the arts, in fashion, and in the capitalistic consumerist culture of the West, the form of the modern kimono stood almost invariable. Textile design continued its evolution and modernization, but with the kimono format as the frame of investigation. The unchanging form may have been a condition for the kimono to come to represent Japanese-ness, but it is also perhaps the fact that it could stay unchanged while at the same time its textile design and techniques were always changing, influenced by foreign imported styles and textile techniques arriving at different times in history, first from Asia and then also from the West, that represents a phenomenon which in its extent is particular to Japan.

Furthermore, the influence of the Western style in the fashion business of the time, together with the already existing “organization of clothing production in Japan from as early as the seventeenth century,”<sup>69</sup> as well as the creation of the Japanese department stores, contributed to the promotion, under nationalistic ideals, of kimono as the “National Costume” of Japan:

Tokyo fashion changed markedly after the Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895....<sup>70</sup>

The operators of the Mitsui Kimono shop in Tokyo were the first to perceive the “victorious” mood of Japanese people and they launched a new marketing campaign to tap this sentiment. Their promotion of luxurious kimono for urban bourgeois women contributed to a historical process of constructing “national dress” in modern Japan.

The Mitsui Kimono shop established the Mitsukoshi Company and in 1904 opened the first Japanese department store. Mitsukoshi aimed to produce newly designed kimono as formal dress for Japanese women.<sup>71</sup>

It was within this period at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries that the first kimono revival can be said to have taken place.

## *Revivals of the Kimono in Modern Japanese History*

Valued as a ceremonial garment and national costume, [the kimono] continues to be worn in its traditional form for special occasions. However, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, women from a new generation have started to be drawn to it for less formal, more fashioned-oriented reasons....

In contrast to their grandmothers, who favoured newly manufactured, classic kimono fashions, some of today's younger generation prefer vintage, second-hand kimono.<sup>72</sup>

At the very beginning of Terry Satsuki Milhaupt's most recent publication *Kimono: A Modern History* (2014), the specialist on Japanese textiles and kimono historian opens the discussion on the way a young group of Japanese women are approaching the use of kimono as a fashionable and casual garment, especially in its vintage second-hand form. She also dedicates the last chapter of her book to the revival of kimono in contemporary Japan. She locates this revival, as cited above, at the turn of the twenty-first century.

From Milhaupt we learn that kimono has experienced at least **three important revivals** in modern Japanese history. The study of these different waves of revivals of kimono in modern and in contemporary Japan is at the centre of my dissertation. To understand the specific socio-historical moments at which kimono has experienced a revitalization<sup>73</sup> it helps to use the concept of "fashion revivals." As Barbara Burmann Baines (1981) has argued, in terms of dress, "fashion revivals" have a lot to do with historical memory and most of the time are concerned with nostalgia for a better past:

[They] stem from historical memory or visions of how things used to or ought to have been. They are, we should be thankful, overlaid with fresh style and rearranged by affectionate nostalgia.<sup>74</sup>

Almost parallel to Milhaupt, in 2015 Heike Jenß dedicated her new book to the study of fashion,<sup>75</sup> memory, and vintage styles. In a short passage, she shares some important facts on the theme of "fashion revivals." She starts by citing Georg Simmel (1901), who, writing on the meaning of fashion, highlights change as the foremost concern, but also recognizes "the particular appeal the past can hold in the present":

As soon as an earlier fashion has partially been forgotten there is no reason why it should not be allowed to return to favour and why the charm of difference, which constitutes its very essence, should not be permitted to exercise an influence similar to that which it exerted conversely some time before.<sup>76</sup>

Jenß associates Simmel's description of the "charms of difference" with nostalgia, understanding nostalgia "as a specific mode and mood to engage with or relate to the past."<sup>77</sup> While nostalgia emerged as a word defining a homesickness experienced by soldiers away from their homes,<sup>78</sup> its meaning expanded during the nineteenth century, losing with time its military and medical connotations and, as she argues, then becoming "directly interwoven with modernity and the expansion of consumer culture, including fashion."<sup>79</sup>

Jenß then goes on to describe the work of Nancy Martha West (2000) on the effect of the Kodak advertising campaigns in the 1890s,<sup>80</sup> taking her results further to argue that the evocation of nostalgic feelings becomes closely interrelated to advances in new socio-technological practices, such as the modern invention of photography and its influence on the market of new commodities.

Important for the study of the historicity of kimono revivals in modern Japan is the fact that modernity in Europe, the creation of institutions such as museums, and fashion itself as a phenomenon all had a tremendous impact on Japan's own process of modernization and building of a nation state.<sup>81</sup>

Certainly, for Japanese modernity, the principal change in the disposition of aesthetic sensibilities was the classification of forms into specific temporal abstractions such as traditional, Japanese, enlightened, modern, Western, and so on, and applying hierarchies to these abstractions. The way in which Japanese society and identity had been formed by the past, and so acquired a sense of continuity and belonging, was challenged by the sudden arrival of modernity from alien sources.<sup>82</sup>

One meaning of the term “revival” is: “An instance of something becoming popular, active, or important again.”<sup>83</sup>

The revival of kimono in modern history, that is, since the Meiji Restoration of 1868, happened as a response to “the sudden arrival of modernity from alien sources.”<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, as Toby Slade argues in *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History* (2009), in Japan modernity and the Enlightenment arrived at the same time:

Modernity is thus more precise than simply everything since the industrial and French revolutions, and something less narrow than a mere politically neutral term for capitalism. It refers to things both intangible and undeniably material: the look and the feel of modern life through eyes that were seeing it for the first time. The welcome experience of newness becomes a transformation to which all premodern societies must adjust.

Elisabeth Wilson notes that central to modernity is a paradox: the Enlightenment, the series of intellectual movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that allowed for advances in technology and reform to social organization—and that Japan evoked in the early Meiji period to inspire the same effect of overturning tradition, obscurantist superstition and baseless, wasteful customs—has as its core values of scientific method and rationality. However, it emerged in tandem with, or as a precursor to, industrial capitalism, which has been theorized as irrational, out of control and unstoppable.

... While in Europe and revolutionary America the Enlightenment came before these areas' industrial revolutions, for Japan the twin parts of modernity, the two halves of progress, arrived at the same time.<sup>85</sup>

In my work, I define “Kimono Revival” in Japan as the process by which the kimono has become popular, active and important again at specific socio-historical and political stages of Japanese modern and contemporary history. Since the term kimono is “the modern designation for the traditional robe-like garment”<sup>86</sup> that used to be known as *kosode*, and since the word started to become more common in the West after Japan opened itself to the rest of

the world in the Meiji period (1868–1912),<sup>87</sup> this work studies the revivals of the kimono in modern and contemporary Japan, within the time frame of 1868 to 2010. Its main focus is on the contemporary kimono revival, which has hitherto not received much academic attention, hence on the years between 1990 and 2010.

In the literature on the kimono, scholars such as Helen Minnich (1963),<sup>88</sup> Liza Dalby (1993), and Margot Paul (1984)<sup>89</sup> place the **first revival** of the kimono in modern Japan between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Dalby argues that the trend in kimono aesthetic was influenced by the recall of past designs inspired by the *kosode* of the *Genroku* era (1688–1704) of the Edo period; the *Genroku* style was especially pushed by department stores and their wholesalers.<sup>90</sup> This thesis is shared by Kojima Kaoru (2006) and Terry Satsuki Milhaupt (2014). Margot Paul, on the other hand, claims that nationalist tendencies within the Japanese aristocracy and the sense of loss of identity might have influenced the revival of the kimono around 1912.<sup>91</sup>

A **second revival**, first referred to by the Japanese scholar Shimada Tomiko in 1962,<sup>92</sup> was mentioned later by Liza Dalby (1993),<sup>93</sup> then more recently by Milhaupt (2014). Shimada's essay gives an account of changes in the clothing habits of the Japanese, concentrating on the years following the Second World War. She notes the new popularity of the kimono, and refers to it as a "Kimono Revival" which came about with the introduction of the "New Kimono" in 1950 and 1951 by the designers Tanaka Chiyo and Otsuka Sueko.<sup>94</sup> Even though the kimono was modernized during this revival, Western-style clothing had started to be the clothing used for work and everyday life. Silk kimono and brocade obi, the making of "author's kimono,"<sup>95</sup> became a form of exclusive fine art, while Western clothes were what most Japanese wore on an ordinary day:

This shift, in turn parallels the evolving role of the kimono designer from nameless artisan to celebrated artist. By the mid-1950s, the country's economic recovery and the establishment of government-sponsored programmes such as the Living National Treasure system created an ideal environment for emerging individual kimono designers.<sup>96</sup>

The **third kimono revival** has been reported in both Japanese and international newspapers, magazines and web sites. Milhaupt (2006, 2014) and Van Assche (2005)<sup>97</sup> argue that a new wave of "kimono revival" started at the turn of the twenty-first century. Van Assche locates the contemporary kimono revival in Tokyo, and Milhaupt (2006) refers to the fact that a special kimono aesthetic of "Taishō Romanticism" from the period between 1912 and 1926 serves as a source of nostalgic inspiration for the designers of today's kimono revival.<sup>98</sup> So vintage kimono and new printed kimono with designs of past kimono fashions are the kimono making the young generation interested in the appropriation of kimono in contemporary Japan. Stephanie Assmann's essay of 2008 refers to the re-discovery and reinvention of the kimono in contemporary Tokyo at the turn of the twenty-first century as its redemption by men.<sup>99</sup> The fact that kimono experienced a revival then is connected to the fact that the dress of other Asian women was also being revived. Ann Marie Leshkovich and Carla Jones (2003) have called this phenomenon the "Globalization of Asian Dress," and give an account of the

process.<sup>100</sup> Together with Sandra Nissen and other scholars, the authors report how the popularity of Asian dress is “profoundly Orientalizing and feminizing”: how Asians choose their fashion and what to dress is strongly influenced by colonialism in its Orientalist form.<sup>101</sup>

## *State of the Art*

### *Kimono Revivals in Modern Japan*

The basic problem in my study on a contemporary kimono revival was the fact that this is a contemporary phenomenon and the written academic data on it is very limited. It was only through literature that I found separately on the themes of kimono and its history and on the history of recycling kimono cloth, together with the articles that I collected in printed media and the Internet, that my dissertation started to take shape. Since then, the subject of the contemporary kimono revival has been studied in a chapter of the dissertation thesis of Sandra Cliffe (2013).<sup>102</sup> She associates the revival with the use of the Internet and the creation of kimono-wearing groups that meet especially in Tokyo. The participants exchange ideas relating to the study and appropriation of updated casual kimono in social networks, in personal meetings and at fashion shows. Milhaupt (2014) demonstrates through her analysis of contemporary magazines that kimono and obi combinations proposed in these magazines assert a less formal and more “light-hearted way of wearing kimonos.”<sup>103</sup> She argues that “wearing kimonos has become another way for younger generations to form their own fashion ‘tribes’ and identify with a particular social group.”<sup>104</sup>

In the existing literature, the history of kimono revivals in modern Japan is generally not treated as a distinct theme of a monograph (at least not in English, Spanish or German). Instead, it has been integrated as part of the history of the modern kimono, such as in the work of Shimada Tomiko (1962) or of the anthropologist Liza Dalby (1993, 2001). In this dissertation, I evaluate Dalby’s thesis on the renaissance of kimono at the end of the nineteenth century and the characteristics of this phenomenon in the re-construction of what is called “the first kimono revival.” The contemporary kimono revival can only be analysed taking into consideration the frames provided by early revivals. As well as the first revival at the end of the Meiji era (1868–1912), Dalby also refers to a second kimono revival after the Second World War (1950–1960), but does not explore their connection or compare the latter with its predecessor. The results of the earlier work of Shimada Tomiko discussing the revival of the kimono in the 1950s reinforce the thesis of this second wave of kimono renaissance reported by Dalby. While her study is invaluable for showing that there was a revival and for the information it provides, her work is an essay and not a comparative history of the phenomenon. Milhaupt (2014)<sup>105</sup> also gives an account of what she calls a “reactionary revival” which she sees as having taken place between 1948 and 1950, but unfortunately has not written more extensively on the topic.

### *Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle, the Concept of Mottainai, and Second-Hand Kimono*

In the title of this thesis, I have used the Japanese concept of “Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle” captured in the term “*mottainai*” or “What a waste!” This concept appears in some

contemporary articles in journals and magazines on Japan and Japanese culture and on fashion and Japanese fashion design.<sup>106</sup> Most articles connect the concept of *mottainai* with practices of sustainability and the recycling of textiles and other items during Japan's pre-modern era, in particular in the feudal Edo period.<sup>107</sup> Other articles highlight the potential of the kimono as a recyclable item, through its structure, cut and the material used for its production.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, it is necessary to emphasize that the words "Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle" are used in this work neither to proclaim Japan as a country to be emulated in its environmental and in ecological practices, nor as an expression of the nature of Japaneseness.

As Thomas R. H. Havens writes:

For more than a millennium Japan's leaders usually have been conscious of the need to guard water, timber, and marine resources from overuse, but the new age of spatial modernity that accompanied imperial state formation after 1868 radically recast the relationships among the people, their government, and the nonhuman environment by introducing capitalism, industrialization, social integration, and the concept of public space.<sup>109</sup>

Modern and contemporary Japan is notorious for the damage caused to the environment for the sake of the progress, modernization and industrialization required to catch up with the economic powers of the West. During the times of affluence from the late 1950s, Japan's economic miracle and the rise of a new middle class, its citizens began to be known for their compulsive consumer behaviour, a throwaway culture, and the tendency to over-package everything.<sup>110</sup>

Nevertheless, for my thesis it is important to know the background of second-hand clothing in Japan in order to understand the rise in sales of second-hand kimonos, the initial opening and then popularization of so-called "recycled kimono" shops today, and the use of recycled kimono cloth for the making of souvenirs and accessories that is taking place in contemporary Japan.

Tanaka Yūko, a prominent cultural historian and a specialist on the Edo-period (1615–1868), argues that during this time of seclusion in Japanese history resources were limited and things were made to last; artisans were proud of making tools, cloth, paper and buildings that would still exist a century or two later.<sup>111</sup> In her essay "*Boro*,"<sup>112</sup> she explains that Japanese people in pre-modern Japan did not regard what the contemporary Japanese commonly call *boro*<sup>113</sup> (rags or old, worn-out clothing) as rubbish, instead they were considered valuable resources to be appreciated, preserved, or reused for other purposes. Furthermore, women in the Meiji and Taishō periods were trained in sewing so that they could repair their family clothes themselves, since for most of them it was rare to sew a completely new garment.<sup>114</sup>

In his book *The Stories Clothes Tell: Voices of Working-Class Japan*, Horikiri Tatsuichi observes that scholarship on Japanese history has paid little attention to the clothes worn by people in lower social strata or by working-class people (peasants, fishermen, miners, factory workers, soldiers, prostitutes, travelling entertainers) during the Edo, Meiji, and Taishō periods. In fact, a large proportion of the population then had to cloth themselves with very

little resources, often using recycled old and worn-out kimono and other scraps of cloth. As a textile collector himself, he highlights how this kind of clothing, which could be considered to be just “rags,” were meticulously mended, “assiduously washed and carefully folded up for storage,” and treated with respect by their owners.<sup>115</sup> Horikiri argues that the clothes he has collected have *kokoro*,<sup>116</sup> “heart,” “emotions,” “feelings,” or “story,” and that they connote the memory of “lived human experience.”<sup>117</sup>

Asaoka Kōji’s book<sup>118</sup> on the history of “*furugi*,”<sup>119</sup> second-hand clothing, in Japan also tells the history of Japanese worn-out clothing, with the creation of (mompe,<sup>120</sup> *subon*<sup>121</sup> and *sukaato*<sup>122</sup>) in Western style made of recycled Japanese kimono. She writes about the second-hand network of markets and recycling shops that used to sell second-hand cloth during the Edo period and its evolution into shops in modern times, specifically in Tokyo. Other subjects of Asaoka’s book are concerned with the re-design of kimono into Western-style dress in the so-called “reformed dress” and, under “other topics,” the recycling that is done in the production of folk clothes.<sup>123</sup> In the case of regional work clothing, *noragi*,<sup>124</sup> Liza Dalby writes that while patchwork garments created in Japan were a measure of economy, they also generated wonderful folk costumes; like Horikiri she emphasizes the meticulous way in which the recyclable material was treated.<sup>125</sup>

The term “second-hand kimono” is used in Japan as a modern expression to associate kimono and the process of recycling and selling recycled and antique kimono. The recycling of Japanese clothing, specifically of *kosode*, has been analysed by some academics in relation to religious, artistic and textile votive practices, as in for example Milhaupt’s 2005 essay “Second-hand Silk Kimono Migrating Across Borders.”<sup>126</sup> In this publication, the term “second-hand” is used to describe how in Japanese history old silk kimono have often been recycled and how they have acquired new identities in religious, artistic, sentimental or fashionable contexts as they have travelled across borders. But even though Milhaupt’s excellent essay gives insights into the history of recycling silk kimono in Japan, she does not ask whether there might be a different concept, originating in Japan, through which to understand the meaning of recycling.

### ***Revival of an Invented Tradition***

The concept of “kimono” and the history of its creation as a modern term to name clothes or the form representative of the native dress in the Japanese language have been analysed or taken into consideration as an important point of reflection in the history of modern kimono by the academics Terry Satsuki Milhaupt (2006), Liza Dalby (2001) and Stephanie Assmann (2008).<sup>127</sup> The three authors agree on the thesis that the use of the word “kimono” to designate the traditional robe-like garment that symbolizes the dress typical of Japan can be interpreted as an “invented tradition” of the Meiji reign, an opinion also shared by the art historian Toby Slade (2009).<sup>128</sup> Here they draw on Eric Hobsbawm’s<sup>129</sup> definition of tradition as associated and identified with super-structural institutions and with the elites, as opposed to custom,



which he identifies as being popular and able to be mobilized by groups at the society base.<sup>130</sup> The lack of literature on the modern history of kimono in English has been remedied by the publication in 2014 of Milhaupt's *Kimono: A Modern History*, already mentioned above, which reinforces the individual theses of many scholars—Jennifer Craik (1994), Gabriele Mentges (2004), Carlo Belfanti (2008), Gabriele Mentges/ Gertrud Lehnert (2013), Chen Buyun (2013), and Penelope Francs (2015)<sup>131</sup> on the revision of the concept of “fashion” regarded as an exclusively Western phenomenon. Milhaupt's book shows how just a “piece of cloth” worked and still works as a tableau on which the Japanese could “inscribe, describe and absorb the effects of modernization” and Japan's social and political quest in the formation of its national identity on the world stage.<sup>132</sup>

In contrast to the lack of literature related to the modern history of kimono, several books have been written about the development of the *kosode* or “small-sleeve robe” into kimono: Yamanobe Tomoyuki, Kitamura Tetsuro, and Tabata Kihachi, *Kosode* (1963); Noma Seiroku, “The Kosode Revolution” (1974); Amanda Stinchecum, ed., *Kosode: 16th–19th Century Textiles from the Nomura Collection* (1984); Dale Gluckman and Sharon Takeda, eds., *When Art Became Fashion: Kosode in Edo-period Japan* (1992).

In their introduction to *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress*, Jones and Leshkovich write:

Four of our authors (Niessen, Leshkovich, Ruhlen, and Bhachu) take as their point of departure the rediscovery of Asian women's so-called traditional dress, either by Asian women themselves or by interested external parties. One way to interpret this trend is to understand these fashions as continuations of ancient traditions... The authors find that cases of apparent tradition are in fact strategic rediscoveries and remaking of traditions.<sup>133</sup>

One example of such “remaking of traditions” is the comeback of the yukata worn as a casual kimono at summer festivals; As one online article from 1998 points out, the new styles of the summer kimono known as yukata “made a Splash in '89.”<sup>134</sup>

The article describes the yukata and its use at the time of writing:

Modern-day Japanese women rarely wear kimonos except on special occasions. Over the past few years, however, casual light cotton kimonos known as yukata have made a comeback as everyday dress during the summer. Yukata are expected to be just as popular this summer, with several new variations, including those resembling a slit skirt with matching tops, and yukata made of sheer fabric (worn with slips, of course).

as well as its original use:

Traditionally, yukata had been one type of kimono that could be worn casually—after a bath or on steamy summer nights, for example. As Japan modernized, however, kimonos fell out of fashion for everyday use, and the popularity of yukata swiftly declined. Western clothes—T-shirts with jeans, tank tops with shorts—became the preferred casual wear.

Hence even before I started doing the fieldwork in Japan, a tendency to promote a contemporary wave or “kimono boom” as a “comeback” of “casual kimono” and as a fashion alternative “enjoyed” mostly by women could be observed in the online media. However, one

magazine, *Kateigaho International*, which originally targeted Japanese women,<sup>135</sup> began, in both its printed and online editions, to aim at introducing non-Japanese readers to famous traditional Japanese handicrafts, food, lifestyle and design, and in general to contemporary tourism in Japan. In 2004, this newly internationalized edition of the magazine, first published in 2003, had an article dedicated to men's kimono.

Since the kimono was, although mentioned, not studied in the publications on Asian dress by Niessen, Leshkowich, and Jones in 2003, they thought that only women were participants in the revivals in Asian dress. In the literature on kimono only Stephanie Assmann in 2008 emphasizes the re-discovery of the kimono in contemporary Japan as including its redemption by men. She does not refer to the publications of Niessen, Leshkowich and Jones, since she is analysing a local phenomenon which she had observed occurring in central Tokyo at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>136</sup>

Assmann establishes that during the contemporary kimono revival, men did indeed take part in the promotion, wearing, and production of kimono, thus refuting the thesis of Niessen, Jones and Leshkowich that the renaissance of Asian dress only re-orientalizes the way Asian women dress in the context of globalization.

While doing my fieldwork, I had the chance to spend an evening with a group of kimono wearers called "Kimono de Ginza." This was founded in the year 2000 by a group of men in Tokyo. Nowadays the group has grown and meets once a month in the vicinity of Ginza, a very famous shopping area in Tokyo. The group is no longer just for men, but currently also includes women of all ages, as well as men and women of different sex orientations, just as Assmann observed.

Hence my research also addresses the following questions:

Why has the Japanese traditional dress at the turn of the twenty-first century been attractive to both women and men? Is the role of men as consumers, unlike in other Asian societies and countries studied in the publications of Niessen, Leshkowich and Jones, significant in this revival? If yes, in what way and for what reasons?

### ***Re-Invention versus Revival***

As just mentioned, one of the most recent studies on kimono is the essay of Stephanie Assmann (2008).<sup>137</sup> She argues there that the kimono has been re-invented in contemporary Japan as an item of "Japanese Consumer Culture," and compares the rigid view on kimono that emerged after World War II, involving the creation of so-called "kimono academies," with the free and entertaining way a group of Japanese people (such as Kimono de Ginza) wear their kimonos in contemporary Tokyo. Her paper opens the discussion with the fact that now kimono is being re-invented and reinterpreted in a time of globalization. She signals as trend setters the magazines dedicated to the update of kimono which take advantage of the influence of Western fashion. For the discussion on the contemporary kimono revival I examine the following aspects of Assmann's thesis:

- The kimono: its purchase, training, education and experience are all related to consumption.
- The kimono is used as a communicative symbol to convey an individual's attitude towards societal conventions and national identity.
- Wearing a kimono in contemporary Japan is as much about displaying a sense of aesthetic sensibility as it is about consumption.

Assmann's data, obtained from the Yano Research Institute, suggest that there is "a tendency away from the kimono as a primarily ceremonial dress of conspicuous consumption towards a dress that is increasingly suited for daily life."<sup>138</sup>

The existence of these tendencies is proved by the many editions of kimono magazines for young consumers in the last ten years, the boom in shops selling recycled kimono and in kimono boutiques and chains, as well as by the number of kimono fans to be found on the Internet. The importance of new media such as the Internet and mobile phones for the promotion of kimono and the creation of kimono fan clubs in different social networks has been studied, as mentioned above, in the doctoral thesis of Cliffe (2013)<sup>139</sup> on the Japanese kimono and its relation to fashion.

I agree with Assmann that the present kimono revival is the consequence of the activities of diverse participants (designers, consumers, producers) localized in urban areas and of sub-groups of people interested in the re-discovery of the garment (Kimono de Ginza), as well as of magazines like *Kimono Hime* ("Kimono Princess")<sup>140</sup> that set new trends in the use of the kimono, reviving it in a more fashionable way while at the same time evoking past kimono fashions, mostly representative of Japanese modernity (1890–1930). In my view, it is in urban areas like Tokyo or Kyoto where the participants in this phenomenon primarily meet.

Even though Assmann does not seem to consider that this re-discovery can also be interpreted as a revival, and that revivals could have potentially taken place at other times in the kimono's modern history, I agree with her that the process of learning how to dress in kimono became a practice of conspicuous consumption after the Second World War, with the rise of the kimono academies.

While the intention of the kimono academies may have been the saving of a tradition "in danger of dying out," in contemporary society the approach of charging fees for this education and the fact that women who received it could later go on to establish their own academies does not show an effort to maintain the culture of kimono for the masses but instead for a select group of Japanese women who could afford this education. In the present kimono revival this is changing, as efforts seem to be being made to offer free courses which run parallel to the academies (Figure 2). Also, the Internet democratizes the way the culture of kimono wearing can be learned.



Figure 2: A postcard and invitation collected on the way to the event “*Kimono Tomodachi*” (Kimono Friends), in which people can learn for free how to dress or get better at it, and just enjoy kimono dressing and coordination. Kyoto, 2008.

### *The Context of a Contemporary Kimono Revival*

This third revival is most probably part or consequence of a more extensive revival that, as Suga Masami (1995) argues,<sup>141</sup> includes other Japanese “traditions,” a revival which has been taking place in Japan, beginning in the early 1990s, within the framework of globalization. The discussion on post-colonial states, ethnic dress, globalization and the influence of fashion is present in numerous publications on cultural studies and in fashion theory:

The so-called traditional costumes of many Asian countries—garments such as the South Asian sari and *salwaar-kameez*, Japanese kimono, Chinese *cheongsam*, Korean *hanbok*, and Vietnamese *ao dai* are experiencing a revival in those countries and their diasporic communities.<sup>142</sup>

The fact of parallel revivals of kimono and of various Asian traditional dresses within the process of globalization seems here to be regarded as a crucial aspect in the study of the

phenomenon. Nevertheless, I argue that the case of the kimono revival in Japan is above all a localized phenomenon with significant differences to other revivals of Asian traditional dress. I have therefore focused my attention on the study of the revival in Japan and have not made any comparative study with the revivals of other Asian traditional dresses.

### ***Re-Orienting Fashion and Postcolonial Studies***

In my work I examine the concept of “Re-Orientalizing fashion” proposed by Leshkowich and Jones as a tool within postcolonial studies<sup>143</sup> that can help me to understand and analyse the phenomenon of the contemporary revival:

Asian styles may be reorienting global fashion, but the very same globalization processes that have garnered international attention for Asian dress are re-Orientalizing Asia and Asians.<sup>144</sup>

In the introduction to their book *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress*, the social anthropologists Leshkowich and Jones remark that the decade at the end of the twentieth century was influenced by Asian fashion and Asian lifestyle in the West. They observe how fashion elites and celebrities (Princess Diana, Madonna) powered the passion for the so-called “Asian Chic” trend in the West by appropriating Asian traditional dress, a trend which also comprehended other areas such as film (for example, *Geisha* and *The Last Samurai*), literature, food, and sports. “Asian Chic” was marked by the interpretation, or gaze, of Asia and Asian-ness with an “Orientalist” look. This was Orientalist in the sense defined by Edward Said in 1976,<sup>145</sup> in a theory where “The Orient” is the intellectual product of Western scholars. In this case, however, it was the look of film makers and fashion designers who most of the time re-create or re-work an image of Asia as a feminine, exotic and ancient place which satisfies their own dreams of the exotic. At the same time, writes textile and culture anthropologist Gabriele Mentges, the idea of re-orienting fashions stands for another cultural phenomenon in “which some Asian societies—mainly from South Asia—have returned to or rather reinvented national and historical styles.”<sup>146</sup> She argues that this idea derives from a larger and growing debate on the use of the term “fashion” in relation to non-Western cultures.<sup>147</sup>

In their recent publication *Fashion and Postcolonial Critique*, Elke Gaugele and Monica Titton<sup>148</sup> make us aware of three divergent “modi of postcolonial fashion critique.” First, an epistemological critique of and urge for a revision of the term fashion. This was initiated by Jennifer Craik,<sup>149</sup> who inquiries into the division into Western and non-Western fashion systems. Second, the revision of the history of fashion within the context of globalization, based in world history and inspired by postcolonialism, a transdisciplinary research which was developed in the same time frame as fashion studies of the 1980s and 1990s. Third, a call for understanding fashion research within the analytic sphere of globalization, post coloniality and decolonization.<sup>150</sup>

The term “fashion” is related to the European style of clothing, which is why the kimono as a Japanese style of clothing stands apart from this narrow category.<sup>151</sup> In her book on the modern history of the kimono, Milhaupt also calls for a review of the term.<sup>152</sup> As Mentges points out, the idea that fashion—a concept that previously only connected to the West—also exists outside of non-Western contexts relies on the notion of change and innovation.”<sup>153</sup> For instance, in Japan, writes Milhaupt, the term *ryūkō*<sup>154</sup> has been used to examine the concepts of “styles” or “trends.” Furthermore, the term *imamekashii*<sup>155</sup> or “up-to-date” has already been used in Japan, as she reveals, for centuries, and in any case long before the English term fashion, *fashon*<sup>156</sup> came into being to refer to changes in clothing styles.<sup>157</sup>

### ***Re-Orienting Fashion and Self-Orientalization***

Gabriele Mentges has recently written that Orientalization in terms of fashion refers “further to issues of cultural property and national heritage claims and, above all, to strategies of internal and external segregation and the establishment of internal peripheries and centres.”<sup>158</sup> She agrees with Dorinne Kondo<sup>159</sup> that self-Orientalization or “auto-orientalization is not a playful or reflexive mise-en-scène of the self, but partaking in constellations of power relations by way of consumption and nostalgia.”<sup>160</sup> As Leshkovich and Jones put it:

[As] national discourses of internal Orientalizing allow Asian states to seize control over the process of defining who is Other, so can producing and consuming an exoticized image of one’s own cultural identity be a technique for asserting discursive control that can seem to turn the negative narrative of Western Orientalism on its head.<sup>161</sup>

In *Re-Orienting Fashion*, the authors emphasize how connections of “globalization as an Orientalizing and gendering phenomenon [become] apparent through an ethnographic focus on dress practices.”<sup>162</sup> They maintain that “Contemporary ways of knowing and representing the Oriental Other as timeless, exotic, untouched, dangerous, passive, inscrutable, or oppressed are the legacies of earlier Orientalist frameworks developed to understand and subjugate Asia.”<sup>163</sup>

They mention three ways in which forms of Orientalist logic rework stereotypes of the present that were already used under colonial oppression: First, Asian economic and military strength, the Asian masculine side in its aim to outcompete with Euro-America, is reworked so as to seem effeminate and androgynous. Second, the different Asian cultures and histories are reduced to mere stylistic forms, and hence feminized: “Asia as a source of exotic style.”<sup>164</sup> Third, Asian women are rendered passive and described as oppressed by their own traditions or by the influence of global capital.<sup>165</sup> For instance, “self-Orientalist narratives are often told by national male leaders to attract foreign investors by depicting female workers as having a racially and culturally specific ability to do repetitive physical work for long hours.”<sup>166</sup> In doing so, the rhetoric of Asian governments perpetuates the image of the docility of Asian women.<sup>167</sup>

## *The Case of Japan*

Nevertheless, and as the work of Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni in her study on the Japanese wedding industry reveals, it seems that Japanese women “play in enhancing their ‘mysterious and romantic aura’” by, she argues, “objectifying themselves.”<sup>168</sup> As Dorothy Robins-Mowry concludes in her study on women in modern Japan, this is as “symbols of Japaneseness.”<sup>169</sup> The Goldstein-Gidoni study highlights that we should not ignore the fact that Japanese women in general cooperate actively in the reproduction “of their own objectified image” and that “they actively collude in their own subordination.”<sup>170</sup> She cites Deniz Kandiyoti, who regards this subordination as “bargaining with patriarchy”<sup>171</sup> and as incorporating “the reproduction of the ‘Oriental/Japanese’ image of women in Japan, by women as well as by men.”<sup>172</sup>

In his essay on “Orientalism and self-Orientalization” in China and Japan, Beltrán Antolín reinforces this critical view, arguing that self-Orientalization is a phenomenon deviating from Orientalism that in the case of China and Japan can be understood as a strategy played from the side of the “Orientals” themselves (by women as well as men) in order to reach well-defined goals. These range from the justification of the perpetuation of the power of the elites, who are comfortable with the image received from the West, to the use of stereotypes merchandizing their own cultural symbols (cherry blossoms, Mount Fuji, the image of the geisha girl or the samurai) in the form of exotic objects (thematic parks, resorts, restaurants, art and craft objects, souvenir, accessories), especially in the context of tourism.<sup>173</sup> Moreover, as Arif Dirlik explains in his “Post-revolution Air,” self-Orientalization is a “conspiracy” established by European orientalists and Asian intellectuals together.<sup>174</sup> Beltrán Antolín also cites Dirlik, who maintains that: “In the long run, self-orientalization serves to perpetuate, and even to consolidate, existing forms of power.”<sup>175</sup> He also cites Iwabuchi, who uses the word “complicit” to point out that in the case of Japan hegemonic power is complicit with the exoticism given to Japan by the West:

The relationship between the West’s Orientalist discourse on Japan and Japan’s discourse on itself is characterized by a profound complicity. Both tend to use the Other to essentialise the Self and to repress the heterogeneous voices within. This perspective opens up a dimension of power/knowledge alliance *within* the nation and *between* nations; how the discursive construction of dehumanized Others has been subtly utilized by the power bloc to instil nationalist sentiment into people’s minds; how the heterogeneous voices of people within nations have been repressed through the homogenizing discourses of an imaginary “us” versus “them.”<sup>176</sup>

All the knowledge, discourses, written texts and visual images produced by colonization and the “complicity” of the gaze of the Asian elites have helped through research, “exotic travels,” and mass-mediated images as postcards and exhibitions<sup>177</sup> to disseminate and construct the image of Japan and its people that we now know so well.

## *Self-Orientalization and Nihonjinron*

Many studies show that Japan's national/cultural identity has been constructed in an essentialist manner through the country's conscious self-Orientalization discourse, a narrative that at once testifies to a firm incorporation into, and a subtle exploitation of, Western Orientalist discourse (see Sakai 1989; Iwabuchi 1994; Ivy 1995; Kondo 1997).<sup>178</sup>

The phenomenon of self-Orientalization, which in the case of Japan works with the concepts of Orientalism, Japanism,<sup>179</sup> Occidentalism, and self-Orientalism, has been studied in Iwabuchi Koichi's article "Complicit Exoticism: Japan and its Other."<sup>180</sup> I regard Iwabuchi's argument as the one most adequate for analysing the present kimono revival from the perspective of Japan's self-Orientalization. Iwabuchi takes into consideration the country's history and existing theories on the construction of a Japanese national/cultural identity in modern times, the so-called *Nihonjinron*.<sup>181</sup>

*Nihonjinron* is the term used generally for the discourse on Japaneseness. It refers to theories, discussions, reflections and thoughts which focus on questions of Japanese nationalism and cultural identity in various fields: from the arts, science, cultural and social studies, psychology to linguistics, and it stresses the uniqueness of the Japanese.<sup>182</sup> But as Shirley Andō elucidates, even though *Nihonjinron* is a genre of Japanese literature, most of the discourse takes place in the Japanese media, and most of the texts are written by business people, elites, and journalists. They describe how the Japanese practice their culture in a collective manner and how the *Nihonjinron* discourse permeates every inch of Japanese society.<sup>183</sup> "The theory is not based on research but on copious and often ambiguous observations regarding culture and tradition."<sup>184</sup> Moreover, as Goldstein-Gidoni explains,<sup>185</sup> *Nihonjinron* originates in Japanese nationalism, which in dictating the kind of community to be constructed or imagined (in the sense of Benedict Anderson) plays a central role in the carving out and promotion of Japanese distinctiveness.<sup>186</sup> *Nihonjinron* is a key factor in the creation of additional grounds for the continuing invention and production of tradition<sup>187</sup> and of products which emphasize Japaneseness. As Iwabuchi also argues:

Those Japanese cultural practices and materials that have been internationally exhibited or represented in the global forum have been predominantly officially sanctioned items of "traditional" culture which have little to do with contemporary Japanese urban culture. "Traditional Japanese culture" is a culture to be displayed in order to demarcate Japan's unique, supposedly homogeneous national identity.<sup>188</sup>

Iwabuchi explains that as a strong economic power Japan is used to playing with the Orientalist attributes or stereotypes by which it has become well known in the West, in order to be exotic for the others but especially for itself:<sup>189</sup>

The popularity of *Nihonjinron* has been inseparable from the discourse on *kokusaika* (internationalisation)<sup>190</sup> which has accompanied the impact of globalisation in Japan. In the discourse on *kokusaika* in Japan, Japan's "backwardness" in internationalisation has been repeatedly lamented and the necessity of promoting it strongly stressed. In so doing however, globalisation is subtly substituted for inter/nationalism, the other side of



nationalism. Japanese self-Orientalism transforms global homogenisation into domestic homogenisation by appropriating the Western gaze through which Japan's otherness is defined. It may be that "Japan" is now most fascinated with its own "exotic otherness."<sup>191</sup>

Based on Iwabuchi's thesis of self-Orientalization in Japan and conscious of the discourse of *Nihonjinron* and its permeability in the Japanese media, I have attempted to explore how the production, promotion and consumption of kimono in contemporary Japan have been taking place. First, how the dichotomy of the self-Orientalizing discourse and that of the uniqueness and homogeneity of the Japanese in the *Nihonjinron* discourse work in the production and promotion of newly created activities that are promoting the contemporary kimono revival and its related invented products (recycled or new casual kimono for rent, matching souvenirs and accessories). Second, how images are used in the advertising campaigns (puffy style, modern girl, samurai chic, geisha) and in the places for their consumption (specific areas in the tourist destinations in Japan such as Tokyo, Kyoto and Kanazawa) that are attractive for foreigners and Japanese alike. In addition to Iwabuchi, Suga Masami also points out how Japan is fascinated with its own "exotic otherness."<sup>192</sup>

### ***Popular Nostalgia***

Also related to the discourse on Japanese identity in the binary opposition between East and West is the interest in "things Japanese" and in *dento* (tradition) that appeared in Japan in the years of rapid change after Japan experienced the debacle of World War II—occupation, followed by recovery, industrialization, urbanization and the standardization of cultural norms. James L. McClain explains that these changes gave the Japanese a sense that "something valuable was about to slip from their hands and disappear forever"<sup>193</sup> and characterizes this phenomenon as one of 'Popular Nostalgia.'<sup>194</sup> This manifested itself in a wave of interest and longing for the values of the past, and began to spread across Japan during the 1970s, in several booms and marketing campaigns that were powered by the nationalist desire to preserve the "real" Japan.<sup>195</sup> Nostalgia, says Goldstein-Gidoni, "has taught us that in contemporary society—Japan included—waves of nostalgia are not 'innocent' or divorced from the interest of the state or other political and economic powers and the media."<sup>196</sup>

Within the nostalgic wave in the 1970s in the search for the "real" Japan, the kimono, Japan's "traditional dress," also recovered its place as ceremonial wear in the parts of the boom linked to "feminin" pursuits such as the art of *ikebana* (flower arranging), tea ceremony and *kitsuke*<sup>197</sup> (kimono dressing), emphasizing and popularizing the image of women as the consumers of "traditional" practices. For instance, in the conclusion of her book *Packaged Japaneseness* on Japan's wedding industry, Goldstein-Gidoni explains how the discourse on *Nihonjinron* and the idea of the "homogeneous" Japanese was translated into that of the "homogeneous" consumer.<sup>198</sup> With her study on the wedding industry, she shows how in the 1970s the robe known as *uchikake*<sup>199</sup>—formerly only worn by women of the samurai—became available for every woman.<sup>200</sup> Through her ethnographic work she reveals how the

wedding industry as “propounded by bureaucrats and politicians” used Japan’s new wealth after the war to spread the idea of democratization,<sup>201</sup> and argues that in contemporary Japan the consumer culture has grown to a point where it now shapes the national culture.<sup>202</sup>

## *Japanization*

Another important term in understanding both the discourse of self-Orientalization and that of *Nihonjinron*, how the image of a “homogeneous” Japanese culture works, is “Japanization,” as argued by Iwabuchi:

In prewar Japan Japanization was articulated in the term “*kōmin-ka*”<sup>203</sup> or “the assimilation of ethnic others (such as Ainu, Okinawans, Taiwanese, and Koreans) into Japanese imperial citizenship under the Emperor’s benevolence.” Japanization also referred to the indigenization and domestication of foreign (Western) culture.<sup>204</sup>

For instance, in Mori Rie’s essay “Kimono and Colony: From Testimonies and Literatures,” she offers a different view on kimono to the standard one, that of the beautiful Japanese National Costume. Her essay enables us to see the kimono from the perspective of the victims of Japanese imperialism.<sup>205</sup> To do this, she analyses the testimonies of women in the Japanese colonies who, used as “comfort women” for the military in Korea, Taiwan and China, were forced to wear kimono.<sup>206</sup> Mori argues that in the late colonial period around 1945 kimono was used in Japan as one of the symbols for representing the supposed harmony and unity of the Japanese (the colonizer) with the Koreans (the colonized), this “unifying” relationship between the two countries “promoted” of course solely by the Japanese.<sup>207</sup> Moreover, writes Mori: “the kimono evolved from an innocent cultural item into a nationalistic symbol of ‘Japanese women’; it was imposed upon the people in colonial and occupation areas.”<sup>208</sup> As Mori’s study shows, how the kimono (or any other item of material culture) is seen depends on the context—the moment in history, who is wearing it, where, how and why it is used—and so delivers complex signals determined by the particular body it adorns.<sup>209</sup> These influence how it is perceived, with its reception varying both within Japanese borders and outside, from people to people, according to their knowledge of both kimono and Japanese history, including the manipulation of its image for nationalistic purposes.<sup>210</sup>

The so-called “Kimono controversy” is an example of such a problem. In February 2016 the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston was criticized for a public program called, “Kimono Wednesday,” also known as “Claude Monet: Flirting with the Exotic.” For this event, the participants were invited to wear and to sense kimono. The critics of the event pointed out that this wearing experience included the possibility of performing and being photographed in kimono in front of Monet’s painting “La Japonaise.” They accused the museum, by appropriating the kimono as a symbol of the quintessentially Asian exotic, of perpetuating images of Asia with racist and orientaling stereotypes. Because of the protests, the museum changed the title of the exhibition to “Claude Monet: ‘La Japonaise’” and visitors could touch but not wear kimono. The ensuing polemics were accompanied by demonstrations pro and contra “Kimono Wednesday.” Those against protested in order to stop practices of racism,

sexism or colonialism inside museums, while the protesters for the event included kimono activists: women like “Etsuko Yashiro, 53, of Concord, who helped organize Boston’s Japan Festival, and said she was there to share the beauty of kimonos with an American audience, or Ikuko Burns, 79, who was born in Tokyo and had lived in Boston for fifty-three years, and explained how she used to bring kimonos to local schools as a consultant for the Children’s Museum teaching introductory lessons on Japan.”<sup>211</sup> Other messages of protesters against “Kimono Wednesday” included: “Not your Asian fetish” and “I have been assaulted, raped, harassed + stalked, denied my humanity repeatedly & you don’t want to think about me because I am just another Japanese woman.”<sup>212</sup>

On the one hand, “Japanization” meant the “assimilation” of other ethnic groups or minorities living in Japan as citizens of the Empire, regardless of their cultural “otherness.” The heterogeneity of the minority groups such as Korean or Ainu has consistently been and is still being suppressed, because it contradicts the unity and homogeneity for which we in the West know Japan, including the racial features in its portraits, for example in the images of the geisha girl and the “kimono-clad maiden.”

The myth that Japan is too unique to be understood by others exploits “the Western gaze”: how we are seen by “the West.”...

Japanese mass media repeatedly report on how stereotypical images of Japan circulate in Western countries. The most well-known image is a paradoxical combination of traditionalism—samurai, geisha etc., and high-technology.<sup>213</sup>

On the other hand, “Japanization” means the “domestication” of Western culture or, as Iwabuchi writes, “appropriation,” and not a simple “imitation,” and hence emphasizes Japan’s view of herself as equal to the West. Even though Japan was recognized by the West as a First-World country at the economic level, the cultural power and influence of Japan in the First World was underestimated after its economic recovery from War World II. Citing Nobel Prize winner Oe Kenzaburo, who uses the image of Japan as “a faceless economy,”<sup>214</sup> Iwabuchi argues:

No matter how strong its economy becomes, Japan is culturally and psychologically dominated by the West.

Edward Said (1993) makes a similar suggestion in *Culture and Imperialism* when he refers to Masao Miyoshi’s (1991) remark concerning the impoverishment of Japanese contemporary culture.... Nevertheless, the total absence of consideration of Japanese imperialism/colonialism in his analysis of imperialism and culture is striking to me.<sup>215</sup>

Iwabuchi’s critique of Said’s work on Orientalism is based on the latter’s treating Japan as a “non-Western, quasi-Third-World nation which has been a victim of Western (American) cultural domination.”<sup>216</sup> Said underestimates “Japan’s double status as an ex-imperial, lingering economic, and to a lesser extent, cultural power in Asia, on the one hand, and as a culturally subordinated non-Western nation on the other.”<sup>217</sup> Searching for more insights from Iwabuchi’s critique of Said’s view on Japan, I looked in the German literature for

“Japanbezogener Orientalismus,” [Japan-related Orientalism], and found a book by Eberhard Friese (1983). He comments:

One of the strongest drivers of the emergence of Said’s Orientalism in fact did not apply in relation to Japan: Western dominance over this part of the Orient. Until 1945 Japan remained an undefeated, militarily-controlled state that had never been defeated by foreign powers; furthermore, clearly no action to set up comprehensive control by the West had ever been seriously attempted....

Nevertheless, is not difficult, with regard to Japan-related Orientalism, to identify entirely unbalanced assessments of Japan within the European ethnocentric view, ranging from a Japan-specific brand of earthly paradise to its demonization.<sup>218</sup>

This tension found in the encounter between Japan and the modern West has also helped to create the mis-readings in perception and observation between the non-Western and Western worlds which have plagued the Orientalist discourse.

## ***Research Questions***

### ***What are the Reasons for a Kimono Revival in Contemporary Japan?***

My approach is to investigate the first two kimono revivals, endeavouring to identify their individual characteristics in order to compare and understand the causes and circumstances of revivals in the past. I then explore the similarities and differences in each case in order to better understand the complexity of the kimono revival being created today. The cultural meaning of the revivals will be analysed, focusing on the material culture of the kimono, its production, consumption and promotion.

### ***Is there a Cultural Relation between the Revival and Recycling of Kimono in the Search for National/Cultural Identity?***

One important characteristic of the current kimono revival is the “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle” aspect of modern kimono and kimono cloth. Already from the Meiji era, then in the Taishō and through the early Shōwa,<sup>219</sup> this may be an important facet in how kimono came to be revived today, and so I will pay special attention to this phenomenon. In particular, I want to know whether there is a cultural or symbolic meaning of recycling which is specific to Japan and different from its counterpart in the West.

## *Methodology*

### *Analysis of Objects, Magazines, Online Magazines, and Newspaper Articles (1990–2010)*

While analysing a textile object—a small bag made with recycled patterns of kimono cloth in a Western form—I asked myself: why have motifs of kimono cloth in *yūzen* design<sup>220</sup> and dye technique been recycled and printed on synthetic material, specifically, on synthetic *chirimen*-like fabric?

Using the Internet, I surfed at this point of my research (summer 2006) for random articles on kimono recycling. Most pages found on the web were advertisements for the sale of second-hand kimono and accessories made with kimono cloth. However, one article in the *Japan Times* also linked the fact that second-hand kimono were selling well in Japan around the year 2003 with the question of whether a “kimono boom” might not be taking place. In an interview in the *Japan Times* on a “Kimono Revival?” in September 2005<sup>221</sup> it was stated that the selling of recycled kimono had increased and ballooned to 34 billion yen in fiscal 2003 from 6 billion yen in fiscal 1999. According to numerous on-line articles, Japanese women aged between twenty and thirty were the ones enjoying this revival. The reports said that some new “Kimono Activist” designers and kimono coordinators were trying to get people to use the national costume in a casual and fashionable way, while students were taking an interest in kimono clubs at university. The kimono industry was also looking for new ways to establish the production and selling of modern kimonos in the market.<sup>222</sup>

As it was through the media that I had become aware of the possible revival and recycling of kimono, and since there had been little academic writing about a contemporary kimono revival, it was important to explore in detail the ways the phenomenon of the kimono revival and recycling had been portrayed in the media for an international audience.

Through the collection and analysis of documents—“understood here as written texts that serve as a record or piece of evidence of an event or fact,”<sup>223</sup> including pamphlets, postcards and flyers on kimono-related events, and through the analysis of randomly reported articles in online media—the *Japan Times* and other online newspaper articles, Internet web-pages, in particular <http://web-japan.org/trends> (from 1990 to 2008) and <http://int.kateigaho.com> (KIE: Kateigaho International Japan Edition 2003–2010), as well as books and other magazines, I was able to establish a referential frame for my research in such categories as:

*Location*: reported city or cities of the revival in Japan; *Producers and activists*: kimono designers, kimono-boutique owners, kimono coordinators and their place of work; *Consumer gender*: women’s kimono, men’s kimono; *Targeted group*: youth, elders; *Kimono categories*: casual kimono, recycled and antique kimono, rental kimono, digitally printed kimono; *Marketing campaigns/new forms of media coverage*: magazines, *mooks*,<sup>224</sup> booklets, mobile phones, the Internet, newspapers; *Dates*: when kimono boutiques had opened, when kimono magazines, *mooks* and pocket books had been edited and published.

The compilation and analysis of such articles over the last few years, both in the media and in academic publications on the subject, and of Japanese and international origin, serves as a valuable instrument of research for comparing the situation of the kimono revival as reported by the media with the facts established through field research, in order to answer my questions regarding this phenomenon. A direct observation of the participants in the field needed to be made. The field research took place in Japan in the autumn of 2008, thanks to a grant provided by the Rudolf Chaudoire Stiftung at the Technische Universität Dortmund, Germany.

## ***The Field***

As main field for my research I selected the city of Kyoto, which was said to be a place where the producers and consumers of the kimono trend interacted, and where a number of second-hand kimono boutiques had opened. Kyoto has a long history in the arts and crafts of Japan, including as the centre of kimono manufacture, and is a city of touristic fame and relatively small dimensions. It is easy to navigate using public transport or by bicycle, and was also where my host family as well as best friends and possible informants lived. My fieldwork took place during the months of October to December 2008. Kyoto was selected for the short period of stay of one month and ten days. Additional stays were in the city of Kanazawa (seven days) and in Tokyo (ten days). It was my aim to explore two more points of contrast for this research: to observe the current state of second-hand kimono selling, and to find out whether and to what extent it was taking place in other cities.

## ***Fieldwork Data: Observation, Photos, Interviews, Textile Objects***

### ***Observation***

During the fieldwork and the interaction with my sources in the field, non-participant and participant observation was combined with photo shoots and reinforced with short videos. An example of participant observation was carried out at the event “Kimono de Ginza” in Tokyo. The data of this participant observation were recorded in the form of a photo documentation and the impressions of the experience documented in a research diary. The experience in Tokyo is useful for understanding the different groups of individuals in Japanese urban areas who enjoy wearing their national costume in contemporary Japan.

### ***Photos***

Two thousand photos were taken and thirty-one short videos made on the theme of kimono revival, kimono culture and the reuse and recycling of kimono. During the photo shoots of people wearing kimono in shopping streets, or tourist areas such as temples, shrines, gardens and flea markets, no differentiation was made regarding the age or gender of the wearers. It was important to have an unfiltered record of all kinds of people wearing kimono in order to be able to understand the context in which kimono was worn, by whom, on what occasion

and for what purpose, and to recognize the different types of kimono through materials and patterns, as well as the hairstyles and accessories used with each outfit in contemporary Japan. The photo shoots of the participants in the revival (producers and consumers) and their places of work (shops, boutiques, flea markets, and kimono rental stations) in Kyoto are now part of a digital library. This library is digitally organized in folders by the date on which the data was collected. The most relevant pictures taken on one day have been serialized with a number and then sorted under the categories of kimono revival and kimono recycling. The method used to analyse the photos was that of Ulrich Hägele,<sup>225</sup> with a description, including theme, date, location, equipment used, comments, followed by the analysis of events and the connection with other events and locations.

### *Interviews*

Two qualitative expert interviews were recorded. In addition, informal face-to-face interviews (of two to five minutes duration) were carried out with people wearing kimono. Semi-structured interviews with owners of recycled kimono shops and antique kimono shops were also recorded.

### *Textile Objects*

Textile objects made of recycled kimono were collected at various shops in the city of Kyoto or given to me as gifts by some of my informants in Kyoto and Kanazawa. The objects were photographed and digitally documented. The origin, techniques and materials of the objects have been summarized, including their characteristics. For the analysis of the objects I have followed the system of gathering described by Annamarie Seiler-Baldinger.<sup>226</sup> The author emphasizes the importance both of the “technical ‘know-how’ of a society” and the manufacturing processes within the society in which the object was produced; and, especially significant for research on culture, insists on the importance of complementing the analysis of the structure of a textile with the analysis of the technique used in its production.<sup>227</sup>

### *Importance of the Time Selected for the Fieldwork*

It has to be mentioned that the season of the year in which the field-work took place (Fall/Autumn, October-December), in combination with the characteristics of Kyoto—a city with cultural and traditional attractions, as well as multiple tourist and cultural events, including flea markets, concerts, temple light-ups, and “*kōyō*”<sup>228</sup>—hunting for the changing of the colours of the trees viewed at gardens and temples, together with the *Jidai Matsuri*<sup>229</sup> and *Shichi-go-san*<sup>230</sup> Festivals on 22 October and 15 November—were crucial for the observation and documentation of the visual data referring to kimono and how kimono has been revived. Of course, some marketing strategies involving the rental of casual kimono at kimono-rental stations or at places in tourist districts where one can get dressed as a maiko (apprentice to a geisha) are part of the activities that run parallel to the events promoted by Kyoto’s tourist industry in the autumn.



## ***The Field and its Changes***

The area around the Shijo-Kawaramachi intersection,<sup>231</sup> well known for its department stores and shops, was initially planned to be a site for photo-shoot documentation. But it is no longer the most fashionable shopping area or the one most visited in Kyoto, at least not by the kimono-revival wearers. The quieter and pedestrian-friendly area around the Karasuma-Sanjo intersection,<sup>232</sup> on the other hand, is the new centre for shopping when it comes to contemporary trends in fashion and lifestyle, including kimono, especially for Japanese consumers, and so was used instead.

## ***Ethnographic Fashion Research***

Kaschuba argues that in ethnographic research the first field of study is that of the literature—texts, statistics, other studies, and all kinds of written books and economic and social data related to our theme of investigation. The next step is to determine the questions of research; only then can the specific way to answer these lead us in the development of a written text.<sup>233</sup>

Thanks to the scholarship from the Rudolf Chaudoire Stiftung I could conduct my fieldwork in Japan. For my research, I agree with the anthropologists Leshkovich and Jones that only by exploring how individuals dress at different times can one discover the relations between “individual choices, themselves subject to varying degrees of constraint or agency, and larger interests, such as nations, corporations, and markets, that are invested in individuals performing in particular ways.”<sup>234</sup> I believe that is how an evaluation and analysis of the contemporary kimono revival can be done best, and therefore I have chosen to use the Ethnographic Fashion Research Method<sup>235</sup> employed in our institute.<sup>236</sup> This method, based on qualitative research, takes an ethnographical approach towards the study of clothing and fashion, and allows the evaluation of costume as a historical phenomenon in each society. As in most field research employing this method, visual images are used as a first or second form of observation and then combined, depending on the aim of the research, with a palette of data-collection instruments, including in the case of my own research the collection of documents (flyers, postcards, pamphlets, books, and magazines), textile objects, interviews, video documentation and Internet sources in part already mentioned above.

## ***Triangulation Material Mix as Data***

After collection of the data in the field, I moved from the phase of observation and measurement of the phenomenon to the phase of interpretation. To prepare my data for analysis and interpretation I started off by sorting my sources into three categories:<sup>237</sup>

- Observational Data: Participant and non-participant observation, field notes
- Documentary Audio-Visual Data: Photo shoots and short video documentation, collection and digitalization of pamphlets and advertisements, collection of new literature, collection and digitalization of textile objects
- Oral Data: Semi-structured expert interview, informal face-to-face interviews

Combining the three different ways of gathering data used in the field, as per “methodological triangulation” after Uwe Flick,<sup>238</sup> the main methodological interest in the triangulation was to go deeper in the understanding of the contemporary kimono situation by giving consistence, backup and reliability to the experience in the field.

### ***Definition of Thematic Headings for the Fieldwork Evaluation***

More often than not, the ethnographer identifies categories and instance within the data by desegregating the text (notes) into series of fragments which are then regrouped under a set of thematic headings.<sup>239</sup>

In order to define thematic<sup>240</sup> headings for the analysis and interpretation of the mixed data (observational, documentary, oral) I re-read ethnographic notes, made notes on the occurred events, and made a first step in the analysis of the photo shooting through re-ordering them to form a serialized photo documentation of events. These two methods of re-reading written notes and re-ordering the collected visual data helped me to register the time and sequence of my movements, visits and experiences of work in the field. In this way, I could identify important “sites” and “key events,”<sup>241</sup> and evaluate my encounters with important “encultured informants”<sup>242</sup> that happened while doing ethnography for my research.

The thematic headings which became the theses of the research were a product of the first level of the analysis. For the first thesis on the theme of revival I asked whether kimono in contemporary Japan has undergone a process of commodification through becoming an article for day rental at train stations, a kit-set package to take away at souvenirs shops, or through recovering its function as casual/everyday/street wear with the help of fashion, in the form of fashion and/or tourist guides/magazines, and whether it has become a lifestyle item in contemporary Japanese consumer culture. On the theme of recycling I asked to what extent the phenomenon of recycling second-hand kimono and producing items (souvenirs and accessories) with either recycled kimono clothes or last year’s patterns has to do with an “exacerbation” of a certain nostalgia for an “unknown Japan,” product of the tourist campaigns that started with the campaign titled “Exotic Japan” in the 1980s. Could the process of commoditization and the use of nostalgia in advertising help to answer the question of the economic and cultural meaning of the contemporary revival?

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- 1 *Kimono* 着物: Term that can be used for clothing generally or for a traditional long outerwear.
  - 2 *Maiko* 舞子: Apprentice to a geisha.
  - 3 *Yukata* 浴衣: Unlined cotton garment typically worn for the bath or as informal summer wear. The term is an abbreviation of *yu-katabira*, an unlined bath garment.
  - 4 *Chirimen* 縮緬: A heavily textured silk crepe with characteristic puckered and ribbed surface. Favoured for *yūzen* dyeing. Produced by plain weave with untwisted warps and highly twisted wefts whose twist direction alternates with every two-weft shot.
  - 5 *Tabi* 足袋: Japanese-style split-toed socks.
  - 6 *Obi* 帯: Sash or belt worn with the traditional Japanese costume.
  - 7 *Haori* 羽織: An outer garment of varying lengths worn over the *kosode* 小袖, the precursor (discussed below) to the kimono and similar to it in cut. The front edges of the *haori* do not overlap but are parallel and are tied together by a pair of braided silk cords.
  - 8 *Wagara* 和柄: Japanese pattern-design.
  - 9 See Terry Satsuki Milhaupt’s analysis of modern kimono, published in 2006, where she gives an account of various exhibitions and newspapers articles on this trend around the year 2005: Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono: Reflection of Japanese Modernity,” 34–41.
  - 10 *Komono* 小物: Literally “small article,” “bits and pieces,” “belongings.”
  - 11 Liza Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*, 65.
  - 12 *Ibid.*, 69.
  - 13 *Yosōi* 装い: Clothing
  - 14 Dalby, *Kimono*, 350.
  - 15 *Kosode* 小袖: The principal outer garment for all classes since the Muromachi period; ancestral to the modern kimono, and similar in cut and proportion. Both sexes wore the *kosode*, but men usually wore other garments over it. The word *kosode* (small sleeves) refers to the relatively small wrist opening, not to the width or length of the sleeve itself.
  - 16 *Kodansha Bilingual Encyclopedia of Japan* (print and online), 706.
  - 17 Watanabe Toshio, *High Victorian Japonisme*, 91.
  - 18 Derek Massarella, *The Japanese Embassy to Europe (1582–1590)*, 2.
  - 19 Watanabe Toshio, *High Victorian Japonisme*, 56.
  - 20 *Ibid.*, 57.
  - 21 *Ibid.*, 62.
  - 22 *Ibid.*, 63.
  - 23 *Byōbu* 屏風: Folding screen
  - 24 Watanabe Naoki, cited by Donald Lach, has a list of “Words of Asiatic Origin Introduced into the European Vocabulary” (sixteenth century). Jō Kazuo and Watanabe Naoki, *Japanese Fashion*, 63; Lach, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, 544ff.
  - 25 Fukai Akiko, “The Kimono and Parisian Mode,” 49–55.
  - 26 *Ibid.*, 50.
  - 27 *Ibid.*, 51.

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- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid., 51–52.
- 30 *Yōfuku* 洋服: Western-style dress. *Kodansha Bilingual Encyclopedia of Japan* (print and online), 706.
- 31 Anna Marie Kirk, “*Japonisme* and Femininity: A Study of Japanese Dress in British and French Art and Society, ca. 1860–ca. 1899,” 112.
- 32 Kojima Kaoru, “The Woman in Kimono: An Ambivalent Image of Modern Japanese Identity,” 3.
- 33 Mabuchi Akiko, *Butai no ue no Nihon (1): 1870 nendai Pari* [Japan on the stage: Paris, 1870s].
- 34 Kojima Kaoru, “The Woman in Kimono,” 3.
- 35 Hashimoto Yorimitsu, “*Chaya no Tenshi: Eikoku Seiki-matsu no Operetta ‘Geisha’ (1896) to sono Rekishiteki Bunmyaku* [The angel in the teahouse: Representations of Victorian paradise and playground in *The Geisha*, 1896].” Quoted in Kojima Kaoru, “The Woman in Kimono,” 3.
- 36 *Oiran* 花魁: “flower-leader,” meaning: the most beautiful of all flowers.
- 37 Saeki Junko, “‘*Geisha*’ no Hakken: ‘Tasha-ka’ sareru Nippon” [Discovery of ‘Geisha’: Japan gazed as the ‘Other’], 126–27. Quoted in Kojima Kaoru, “The Woman in Kimono,” 3.
- 38 With music by Giacomo Puccini and libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, based on a story written by John Luther Long. It first played at La Scala in Mailand on 17 February in 1904. Dorinne Kondo, *About Face*, 32.
- 39 Kondo, *About Face*, 34–35.
- 40 Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, *Kimono: A Modern History*, 63.
- 41 James L. McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, 119.
- 42 Luke Gartland, “Postcards from a Picture-perfect Japan.”
- 43 McClain, *Japan*, 115.
- 44 Wakita Mio, *Staging Desires*, 7.
- 45 Ibid., 46.
- 46 Fukai Akiko, “The Kimono and Parisian Mode,” 51.
- 47 See Kirk, “*Japonisme* and Femininity,” 112.
- 48 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 25.
- 49 Wakita Mio, *Staging Desires*, 7.
- 50 Claudia Delank, *Das Imaginäre Japan in der Kunst*, 46.
- 51 Wakita Mio, *Staging Desires*, 7.
- 52 Delank, *Das Imaginäre Japan in der Kunst*, 46.
- 53 *Bijin* 美人 is a Japanese term which literally means “a beautiful person.”
- 54 Delank, *Das Imaginäre Japan in der Kunst*, 48.
- 55 *Futon* 布団: is the Japanese traditional style of bedding.
- 56 Kojima Kaoru, “The Woman in Kimono,” 3.
- 57 Wakita Mio, *Staging Desires*, 7.

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- 58 Dalby, *Kimono*, 126.
- 59 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 25.
- 60 Ibid., 25.
- 61 Kojima Kaoru, “The Woman in Kimono,” 3.
- 62 Mori Rie, “Kimono and Colony: From Testimonies and Literatures.”
- 63 For more on the National Mobilization Law in Japanese history see James L. McClain, “In Pursuit of a New Order,” in *Japan: A Modern History*, chap. 13.
- 64 Mori Rie, “Kimono and Colony.”
- 65 Dalby, *Kimono*, 127.
- 66 Ibid., 128.
- 67 *Wafuku* 和服: Japanese-style cloth.
- 68 *Kodansha Bilingual Encyclopedia of Japan* (print and online), 702.
- 69 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 312.
- 70 Hiraide Kenjirō, *Tokyo Fūzoku-shi* [Lifestyle in Tokyo], 171–83.
- 71 Kojima Kaoru, “The Woman in Kimono,” 5.
- 72 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 7–8.
- 73 Revitalization: “Bringing again into activity and prominence; the revival of trade; a revival of a neglected play by Moliere; the Gothic revival in architecture.” See *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v. “revitalization” (online).
- 74 Barbara Burmann-Baines, *Fashion Revivals: From the Elizabethan Age to the Present Day*.
- 75 Heike Jenß, *Fashioning Memory: Vintage Style and Youth Culture*, 23–26.
- 76 George Simmel, “Fashion,” 307.
- 77 Heike Jenß, “Ethnographische Modeforschung [Ethnographical fashion research],” 24.
- 78 Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*; Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*; Jenß, *Fashioning Memory*.
- 79 Jenß, *Fashioning Memory*, 24.
- 80 Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia*.
- 81 Toby Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History*, 12.
- 82 Ibid., 12.
- 83 *Oxford Living Dictionaries*, s.v. “revival,” 2. definition (online).
- 84 Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 12.
- 85 Ibid., 3–4.
- 86 *Kodansha Bilingual Encyclopedia of Japan* (print and online), 702.
- 87 “According to the *Le Grand Robert* dictionary, the word ‘kimono’ had been in use in France since 1876, yet it became more common around 1900. Beginning around this time, the term ‘kimono’ was frequently used in women’s magazines.” Fukai Akiko, “The Kimono and Parisian Mode,” 52.
- 88 Helen Minnich, *Japanese Costume and the Makers of its Elegant Tradition*, 320.

- 89 Margot Paul, Preface to *Kosode: 16th–19th Century Textiles from the Nomura Collection*.
- 90 Dalby, *Kimono*, 100.
- 91 Paul, Preface to *Kosode*, 16.
- 92 Shimada Tomiko, “Changing Japan XX: Clothing Habits.”
- 93 Dalby, *Kimono*, 3.
- 94 Shimada, “Changing Japan XX,” 359.
- 95 Contemporary kimono may be classified according to the three primary methods by which they are produced. The first category includes those made with manufactured weave and dye products. The second consists of kimono made by hand in traditional, small-scale production centres, which have barely survived the pre-modern age. The third category comprises artistic kimono produced by “authors,” that is, artists. Ishimura Hayao and Maruyama Nobuhiko, *Robes of Elegance: Japanese Kimono of the 16th–20th Centuries*, 33.
- 96 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 190.
- 97 Annie M. Van Assche, ed., *Fashioning Kimono: Dress and Modernity in Early Twentieth-century Japan*.
- 98 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 40.
- 99 Stephanie Assmann, “Between Tradition and Innovation: The Reinvention of the Kimono in Japanese Consumer Culture.”
- 100 Ann Marie Leshkowich and Carla Jones, Introduction to *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress*.
- 101 Sandra A. Niessen, Ann Marie Leshkowich, and Carla Jones, eds., *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress*.
- 102 Sheila Cliffe, “The Role of the Internet in the Revival of Japanese Kimono.”
- 103 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 9.
- 104 Ibid.
- 105 Ibid., 240.
- 106 Felicity Hughes, “*Mottainai* fashion makes big strides.”
- 107 The most extensive discussion appears in the article “The *mottainai* Mindset” in the journal *Asia-Pacific: Japan + Perspectives*, where it is reported that Kenya’s Deputy Environment Minister Wangari Maathai “encountered” and embraced the term “*mottainai*” in relation to sustainability while visiting Japan in 2004. Mike Thuresson, “The *Mottainai* Mindset.”
- 108 Tanimoto Rieko, “*Mottainai*.”
- 109 Thomas R. H. Havens, *Parkscapes: Green Spaces in Modern Japan*, 187.
- 110 See Joy Hendry, *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation and Power in Japan and Other Societies*, chap. 8, “Politeness, Packaging, and Power,” 155.
- 111 Tanaka Yūko, “The Cyclical Sensibility of Edo-period Japan.”
- 112 Tanaka Yūko, “*Boro*.”
- 113 *Boro* ぼろ are a class of Japanese textiles that have been mended or patched together.
- 114 Tanaka Yūko, “*Boro*.”

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- 115 Horikiri Tatsuichi, *The Stories Clothes Tell: Voices of Working-Class Japan*, 7–8.
- 116 *Kokoro* 心: heart; mind; mentality; emotions; feelings.
- 117 Horikiri Tatsuichi, Introduction to *The Stories Clothes Tell: Voices of Working-Class Japan*.
- 118 Asaoka Kōji, “*Furugi (mono to ningen no bunkashi)*,” 114.
- 119 *Furugi* 古着: old clothes, secondhand clothing.
- 120 *Mompe/monpe* モンペ: Baggy working trousers worn in Japan, especially by women.
- 121 *Subon* スポン: The meaning has changed from “underskirt” to “trousers/pants.”
- 122 *Sukaato* スカート: Borrowed from English “skirt.”
- 123 Asaoka Kōji, “*Furugi (mono to ningen no bunkashi)*,” 114.
- 124 *Noragi* 野良着: “Regional work clothing (*noragi*) could have claimed the title of native Japanese dress with as much justification as did kimono, but it did not. Instead, *noragi* became extinct with barely any public notice. Modern Japanese regard old styles of working wear as they might snail darters—insignificant victims of inevitable progress.” Dalby, *Kimono*, 162.
- 125 Dalby, *Kimono*.
- 126 Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, “Second-Hand Silk Kimono Migrating Across Borders,” 67–82.
- 127 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono”; Dalby, *Kimono*; Assmann, “Between Tradition and Innovation.”
- 128 Slade, *Japanese Fashion*.
- 129 Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.
- 130 As opposed to the society superstructure. Stephen Vlastos, “Tradition Past/Present Culture and Modern Japanese History.”
- 131 Craik, *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion*; Mentges, “Überlegungen zu einer Kleidungs-forschung aus Kulturanthropologischer Perspektive [Reflections on clothing studies from a cultural-anthropological perspective]”; Belfanti, “Was Fashion a European Invention?”; Lehnert and Mentges, eds., *Fusion Fashion: Culture Beyond Orientalism and Occidentalism*; Chen Buyun, “Towards a Definition of ‘Fashion’ in Tang China (618–907 CE)”; Francs, “Was Fashion a European Invention? The Kimono and Economic Development in Japan.”
- 132 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 11.
- 133 Sandra A. Niessen, Ann Marie Leshkovich, and Carla Jones, eds., *Re-Orienting Fashion*.
- 134 “Old Look with a New Twist: Casual Summer Kimono Makes a Come Back,” *Trends in Japan*.
- 135 Regarding the original *Kateigaho*, in her essay “Japanese Women’s Magazines: The Language of Aspiration,” Tanaka Keiko writes: “Continuing economic growth marked the second half of the 1950s through to the late 1960s, and this third era witnessed the launch of larger women’s magazines which purveyed dreams of a richer life, magazines such as *Katei Gaho* (Illustrated Home Gazette 1958).” Tanaka Keiko, “Japanese Women’s Magazines,” 111.
- 136 Assmann, “Between Tradition and Innovation.”
- 137 Ibid.
- 138 Ibid.
- 139 Cliffe, “The Role of the Internet in the Revival of Japanese Kimono.”

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- 140 *Kimono Hime* [Kimono Princess]: *Antique & Chic* (Ten issues between April 2003 and October 2010, Tokyo: Shodensha mook, 2003–2010; “Kimono Hime: “Retro trends with antique kimono magazine” (website, Japanese language only); “Kimono-Revival-online” (website, German); Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 8.
- 141 Suga Masami, “Exotic West to Exotic Japan: Revival of Japanese Traditions in Modern Japan.”
- 142 Leshkowich and Jones, Introduction to *Re-Orienting Fashion*, 5.
- 143 Gabriele Mentges, “Reviewing Orientalism and Re-orienting Fashion beyond Europe,” 129.
- 144 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 145 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*.
- 146 Mentges, “Reviewing Orientalism and Re-orienting Fashion beyond Europe,” 129.
- 147 *Ibid.*
- 148 Elke Gaugele and Monica Tilton, eds., *Fashion and Postcolonial Critique*.
- 149 Craik, *The Face of Fashion*, 41.
- 150 Gaugele and Tilton, *Fashion and Postcolonial Critique*, 12.
- 151 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 23.
- 152 *Ibid.*, 23.
- 153 Mentges, *Reviewing Orientalism and Re-orienting Fashion beyond Europe*, 129.
- 154 *Ryūkō* 流行: Fashion, trend, vogue.
- 155 *Imamekashii* 今めかしい: fashionable, up-to-date.
- 156 *Fasshon* ファッション: fashion.
- 157 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 24.
- 158 Mentges, *Reviewing Orientalism and Re-orienting Fashion beyond Europe*, 136.
- 159 Kondo, *About Face*, 94.
- 160 Mentges, *Reviewing Orientalism and Re-orienting Fashion beyond Europe*, 136.
- 161 Leshkowich and Jones, Introduction to *Re-Orienting Fashion*, 28.
- 162 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 163 *Ibid.*, 18.
- 164 *Ibid.*
- 165 *Ibid.*
- 166 *Ibid.*, 28.
- 167 *Ibid.*
- 168 Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni, *Packaged Japaneseness: Weddings, Business and Brides*, 149–59.
- 169 Dorothy Robins-Mowry, *The Hidden Sun: Women of Modern Japan*.
- 170 Goldstein-Gidoni, *Packaged Japaneseness*, 149–59.
- 171 Deniz Kandiyoti, *Bargaining with Patriarchy*.
- 172 Goldstein-Gidoni, *Packaged Japaneseness*, 149–59.



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- 173 Joaquín Beltrán Antolín, “Orientalismo, Autoorientalismo e Interculturalidad de Asia Oriental [Orientalism, Self-Orientalization and Interculturalism of East Asia].”
- 174 Arif Dirlik, *Post-revolutionary Air*, 279.
- 175 Arif Dirlik, “Timespace, Social Space, and the Question of Chinese Culture,” 114.
- 176 Iwabuchi Koichi, “Complicit Exoticism: Japan and its Other,” 8.
- 177 Leshkowich and Jones, Introduction to *Re-Orienting Fashion*, 8.
- 178 Iwabuchi Koichi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*, 7.
- 179 Eyal Ben-Ari, Brian Moeran, and James Valentine, eds., *Unwrapping Japan: Society and Culture in Anthropological Perspective*.
- 180 Iwabuchi Koichi, “Complicit Exoticism.”
- 181 *Nihonjinron* 日本人論: A non-fiction genre of literature consisting of theories of “Japaneseness.” Most works are based upon the construction of binary oppositions between “Japan” and the “West,” particularly “the USA.” Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 2.
- 182 Shirley Andō, “A Look at Nihonjinron: Theories of Japaneseness.”
- 183 Ibid.
- 184 Ibid.
- 185 Goldstein-Gidoni, *Packaged Japaneseness*, 149–59.
- 186 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*.
- 187 Hobsbawm, and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.
- 188 Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 6–7.
- 189 Ibid.
- 190 *Kokusaika* 国際化.
- 191 Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 3.
- 192 Suga Masami, “Exotic West to Exotic Japan.”
- 193 McClain, *Japan*, 597.
- 194 Ibid.
- 195 See the essays listed in the Bibliography on the consumption of Japaneseness by Millie R. Creighton (1992); in Joseph J. Tobin’s book on Japanese department stores (1992); on objects for consumption and nostalgia by Marilyn Ivy (1998); on domestic tourism by Marilyn Ivy and Dolores P. Martinez (1990); on the local villages boom, “*furusato bumu*,” by Jennifer Robertson (1987); or on the boom in local festivals and the re-invention of local ceremonies “*matsuri-bumu*” by Theodore C. Bestor (1989); and on the growing interest in folk-craft reported by Brian Moeran (1984).
- 196 Goldstein-Gidoni, *Packaged Japaneseness*, 155. See also Fred Davis (1979), Christopher Lasch (1984), and Virginia Dominguez (1986), all listed in the Bibliography.
- 197 *Kitsuke* 着付け.
- 198 Goldstein-Gidoni, *Packaged Japaneseness*, 149–59.

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- 199 *Uchikake* 打掛: an ornate wedding coat with a long trail, which Japanese brides wear during the wedding ceremony.
- 200 Goldstein-Gidoni, *Packaged Japaneseness*, 149–59.
- 201 Ibid.
- 202 Goldstein-Gidoni, *Packaged Japaneseness*, 149–59.
- 203 *Kōmin-ka* 皇民化.
- 204 Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 9.
- 205 Mori Rie, “Kimono and Colony: From Testimonies and Literatures.”
- 206 Ibid.
- 207 Ibid.
- 208 Ibid.
- 209 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 25.
- 210 I myself used kimono for a coming-of-age ceremony, in 2005 (see Figure 1), and on other occasions in my previous long-term stays in Japan kimono were offered to me to try on by my host family and my Japanese language teachers, later also in Düsseldorf, Germany by Japanese friends living abroad. As an art-student majoring in painting and later in textiles, I was fascinated by the surface of the textiles and by the kimono that were hand-painted, as well as by the techniques used. My friends also enjoyed sharing with me the robes they kept at home. In fact, some of them were given to me to take home as I departed from Japan to return to Venezuela and then to move to Germany. But my knowledge of kimono history, especially its political, social or anthropological aspects, has become deeper, more critical, and more accurate while writing this thesis.
- How many of the people I knew were aware of how kimono may have been seen by the victims of Japanese imperialistic history? Looking back today, probably only my Intercultural Exchange advisor, who I knew was helping Korean University students (women) to settle down in Kyoto. Only a few Japanese textbooks refer, briefly, to the multiple war crimes committed by Japan during the period of Japanese imperialism, while in recent years Koizumi Junichiro and the current Prime Minister Abe Shinzo have prayed at the Yasukuni Shrine, where war criminals are honoured. Unlike in Germany, which has apologized for its war crimes to the victims, in Japan there is a strong tendency to suppress Japan’s imperialist history. See Kasahara Tokushi, “Reconciling Narratives of the Nanjing Massacre in Japanese and Chinese Textbooks”; Onishi Norimitsu, “Japan Leader Who Denied State Role in Wartime Sex Slavery Still Apologizes.”
- 211 Stephanie McFeeters, “Counter-protesters Join Kimono Fray at MFA.”
- 212 Ibid.
- 213 Iwabuchi, “Complicit Exoticism.”
- 214 Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 2–3.
- 215 Ibid.
- 216 Ibid.
- 217 Ibid.

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- 218 Eberhard Friese, *Philipp Franz von Siebold als früher Exponent der Ostasienwissenschaften: ein Beitrag zur Orientalismuskussion und zur Geschichte der europäisch-japanischen Begegnung* [Philipp Franz von Siebold as an early exponent of East Asian Studies: A contribution to the Orientalism discussion regarding the Europe-Japan encounter], 27.
- 219 See Horikiri, *The Stories Clothes Tell*, 5.
- 220 *Yūzen* 友禪: Popular stencils and paste-resist dyeing technique developed in Kyoto in the late seventeenth century.
- 221 Martin Webb, “In Sceptical Quest of a Boom.”
- 222 Matsumoto Chie, “Kimono Revival-Tokyo.”
- 223 Stephan Wolff, “Analysis of Documents and Records,” 284.
- 224 The “*mook*,” “a magazine-style book that is popular in Japan, is especially suited to attract a young target group. The style of the presentation and concept of these publications can be considered lighthearted and easy to read and understand. They are fully illustrated with pictures, maps, and short texts for the targeted consumer, mostly young people interested in the field of contemporary kimono culture.
- 225 Ulrich Hägele describes the method of photo documentation as follows, citing Hoffmann’s work of 1985 (my translation): “In more recent folklore studies, documenting photographs is the preliminary stage of source-critical work with photographic material, whereby ‘it’s what the researcher is seeking to understand with his questions which ... makes the photograph to a document for his posing a problem and/or his presentation of evidence.”” Ulrich Hägele, “Visual Folklore: Zur Rezeption und Methodik der Fotografie in der Volkskunde [Visual folklore: On the reception and methodology of photography in folklore studies].”
- 226 Annamarie Seiler-Baldinger, “Textile Strukturen versus Techniken: Die Systematik auf einen Blick [Textile structure versus techniques: The system at a glance],” 213.
- 227 “Es gibt nur zwei Möglichkeiten, Textilien systematisch zu erfassen, entweder durch Analysis ihrer Struktur bzw. Bindungsform im weitesten Sinn oder durch diejenige der Herstellungsverfahren. Beide Ansätze haben ihre Berechtigung und müssen sich notgedrungen ergänzen [In order to systematically record textiles, there are only two possibilities: either analysis of their structure/the way sets of threads interlace with each other in the broadest sense, or analysis of their method of production. Both approaches have their justification and must of necessity supplement each other].” Ibid.
- 228 *Kōyō* 紅葉: Autumn colours
- 229 *Jidai Matsuri* 時代祭.
- 230 *Shichi-go-san* 七五三.
- 231 Shijo-Kawaramachi 四条河原町.
- 232 Karasuma-Sanjo 烏丸-三条.
- 233 Wolfgang Kaschuba, *Introduction to European Ethnology*, 204.
- 234 Leshkovich and Jones, *Introduction to Re-Orienting Fashion*, 6.
- 235 Jenß, “Ethnographische Modeforschung [Ethnographical fashion research].”
- 236 Institut für die Kulturanthropologie des Textilen der TU Dortmund [Institute for the Cultural Anthropology of Textiles at Dortmund Technical University].

- 237 Stake defines triangulation as “a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation.” R. E. Stake, “Qualitative Case Studies.”
- 238 Uwe Flick, *Introduction to Qualitative Research*, 244.
- 239 Christina Goulding, *Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide for Management, Business and Market Researchers*, 28.
- 240 See Klaus Krippendorff’s chapter on the Components of Content Analysis, Part II (Unitizing): “According to Smith (1992a), “The term thematic...connotes the analysis of story-like verbal material, and the use of relatively comprehensive units of analysis such as themas (Murray, 1943), themes (Holsti, 1969),...combination of categories (Aron, 1950),” (p. 4), motifs (Thompson, 1932), imagery, and thoughts.” Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*, 108.
- 241 Key events: “A key event is where something happens that is likely to be revealing for your research.... Some researchers use a key event to frame all the discussion of one particular argument.” Karen O’Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods*, 27.
- 242 “Encultured informants” after J. P. Spradley (1979) “who are consciously reflexive about the culture in which they live and are either in a designated position where it is expected they will explain things to outsiders, or are people who simply enjoy sharing local knowledge.” *Ibid.*, 42.

# *Part One:*

## *The Historicity of the Kimono*

“The Japanese are loath to discard an idea once it has been perfected.<sup>1</sup>”

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In this part of the book I provide a brief history of the emergence of “*kosode*” and its evolution into modern kimono. At the same time, I examine the structure of the robe in order to better understand the functional and aesthetic characteristics of *kosode*-kimono.

## ***The Integral Robe: The Rise of the Kosode (from the Heian Period)***

In a chapter of his 1974 book *Japanese Costume and Textile Arts*, Noma Seiroku writes of a “*Kosode* Revolution,”<sup>2</sup> referring to the “revolutionary change” that *kosode*, literally “small sleeves,” experienced after the change of political power from the Heian nobility to samurai military rule.<sup>3</sup>

During the Heian period (794–1185), *kosode* used to be worn as an undergarment by the nobles of the Japanese court. The function of the garment was “to absorb the perspiration of the human body.”<sup>4</sup>

The garment was made of unadorned white silk and was part of the *jūni-hitoe*<sup>5</sup> costume (*jūni-hitoe* literally means “twelve-layered robes”) that was the style of dress of the Japanese aristocracy of that time. In contrast to its practical function as an undergarment, *kosode* was also worn as outer clothing for the main robe of commoners in Japan.<sup>6</sup>

The shift in power during the Kamakura period (1185–1336) from the members of the aristocracy to the samurai, as well as the Zen ideas of frugality, functionality and modesty that were assimilated by the Shogun, influenced the search for a new style of dress. This dress should allow freedom of movement but at the same time remain elegant. With these demands, around the middle of the sixteenth century *kosode* developed to become the outer robe of the elite.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Kosode: The Embryonic Kimono***

While women of samurai households’ of the Kamakura period (1185–1333) wore hakama trousers<sup>8</sup> over their white *kosode*, used still as an undergarment and probably influenced by the Heian courtly style, in the Muromachi period (1336–1573) women gave up wearing hakama, which allowed the *kosode* to appear as the outer robe. Liza Dalby has named this plain white *kosode* “the embryonic kimono.”<sup>9</sup> This shift allowed the *kosode* to become visible from top to bottom, reaching a respectable length perfect for the display of decorative patterning. However, with the absence of the hakama a new problem arose: The *kosode* was a loose garment with no fastening devices; how was it to be closed at the waist? This was solved by using a string, which became known as obi. The obi, or sash, became a fundamental part of the modern kimono outfit, growing in importance, and in width.<sup>10</sup>

Even though by the sixteenth century all classes wore *kosode*, distinction in dress was still clearly expressed: through the type of cloth, the complexity of design, and the colours and the

techniques used, differentiated for every class in society. Furthermore, the mixing of knowledge and the experimentation with materials and techniques of weaving and dyeing which were both foreign and native gave rise to different cloths being used for *kosode* in different parts of the Japanese archipelago.

### ***Gender, Class and Hierarchy***

During the Momoyama period (1568–1615), the *daimyo*, the rich merchants, and the courtesans, representing the three different groups in society, samurai, *chonin* (townspeople, or merchants and artisans) and entertainers, had already developed their own ideas of the beauty of the *kosode*.<sup>11</sup>

The freedom of wearing *kosode* with colourful designs was the privilege of famous military lords, who considered that the pleasure of wearing a great garment should extend to men's attire. Like today's kimono, the *kosode* is usually viewed by Westerners as women's clothing, but in fact was used as men's wear too.<sup>12</sup> Until the first quarter of the seventeenth century, both men's and women's garments were decorated with bright patterns, and the differences between the sexes in that respect were not so clear.<sup>13</sup>

Depending on the rank of the wearer, the most valuable of all materials, silk, was used by the aristocrats and by the military class, while the commoners had their cloth made of bast fibres such as *asa* (hemp), *fuji* (wisteria bark), *kuzu* (arrowroot), *koozo* (mulberry), or *shina* (Japanese lime). The hierarchy in the type of cloth for each class in society activated the commerce of cloth between the cities and the countryside.

Later, during the Edo period (1615–1868), the samurai, rulers of the government, extended the organization of society around a clearly defined hierarchy of classes.<sup>14</sup> Regulations were made dictating the association of certain patterns with privileged noble and warrior classes, while a growing prosperity among the lowest ranking class, the merchants, was expressed in increased extravagance of dress, which the government attempted to control with sumptuary laws.<sup>15</sup>

The Edo period is the time when most of the centres of textile production were established in Japan.<sup>16</sup> A system of trade, production and exchange developed along with the growth of civilian life in the urban areas of Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka. The bourgeois of these years and the various art forms, such as tea ceremony, theatre or *ikebana*, that were part of their rituals and amusements, and for which a precise style, material or colour of *kosode* was needed, stimulated the complexity in the system of production of textiles for *kosode*. Courtesans and especially playgirls (*asobime*) became, together with the nobility, setters of trendy fashion for *kosode*.<sup>17</sup>

By the middle of the seventeenth century, large pictorial patterns had become associated exclusively with women's robes, while men's garment had become increasingly subdued, with patterns limited to stripes or small overall geometric figures.<sup>18</sup>



## ***Kosode-Kimono***

The name *kosode* means “small sleeves,” and *kosode* have sleeves whose ends are sewn up and not completely open at the wrist. The *kosode*, like the modern kimono, is made from “a single piece of cloth,” known in Japanese as “*tan*,”<sup>19</sup> which is approximately nine meters in length and thirty centimetres in width for both women’s and men’s attire, regardless of height and weight.<sup>20</sup> From one *tan* of cloth all the pieces are cut and used. Alan Kennedy maintains that “this careful meticulous handling reflects the inherent Japanese sensitivity towards cloth” and that it is done this way so as not to waste fabric.<sup>21</sup>

The structure of the *kosode* is basically the same as that of the modern kimono:

Essentially, the kimono consists of four strips of fabric, two forming the panels covering the body and two the sleeves, with additions for a narrow front panel and collar.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless, compared to the kimono the “*kosode* appears rather short and skimpy sleeved.”<sup>23</sup> Below the wrist of the sleeves the *kosode* was sewn to make the sleeve rounded and the hand opening small. Slight differences in width made *kosode* look broader than modern kimono. The back of the sleeve was normally sewn into the *kosode*’s body and did not hang freely like in today’s kimono.

## ***Persistence in the Form, Evolution in Taste***

Looking back in history and from the perspective of the creators, the textile artisans, a *tan* of cloth for the design of *kosode* offered the perfect surface and structure with which to develop creative craft skills. For them, *kosode* was a canvas on which to concentrate their imagination and create garments of incredible complexity in terms of textile surface design and weaving techniques. The different styles in patterning designs for *kosode* of the Edo period are remarkable.

The desire for embellishment and evolution in taste regarding *kosode* decoration, painting and dyeing techniques is a characteristic of Japanese textile arts. In Japan, dyed kimonos are used for formal occasions and cost more than woven ones because the skills and craftsmanship that an artisan must attain to be able to complete a piece are sometimes extremely complex and refined.<sup>24</sup>

Kennedy argues that the Western approach uses the body’s shape as the base for the construction of clothes. By contrast, what mattered to Japanese textile artists was not to emphasize the body shape of the wearer but to flatten the shape of the *kosode*. “No form-accentuating pads or fastening devices are attached to the garment to give it shape when worn.”<sup>25</sup> This principal of construction ignores anatomical differences between the sexes. The shape of the body is not the centre of attention in cloth making and decoration, instead the challenge of the techniques and aesthetic values represented in the final piece, completed by the performance of the cloth with the body of the wearer, are more important:

Taste in dress was clearly regarded more as a component than as a mere enhancement of physical beauty. And the loveliness of clothing was felt to consist not in its tailoring but in its harmonies of colour and pattern.<sup>26</sup>

But why did Japanese costume design not change in the cut? Why were *kosode* cut from a single piece of cloth, taking more care to not waste material than to suit the garment to the shape of the human body? Is it only a matter of tradition and stagnation in dress development? Or are the shapes, materials and colours of the *kosode*-kimono aesthetically so perfect, so harmonious for the body and sense of beauty of the Japanese, that there was no need to discard the design of *kosode* and the continuity with it that is therefore maintained by kimono today?

### ***The Rise of the Obi***

So *kosode* were not made primarily to highlight the beauty of the form of the body; instead the body remains a second element to the ornamentation, giving the garment its expression. In the case of women, the neck was left open and visible, because to the Japanese this was considered the most erotic part of the female body. And it was up to the wearer to accentuate the erotic aspect of *kosode*, especially the courtesans and geishas.

The obi or belt plays an important role in the evolution of the *kosode* into kimono, including to accentuate the Japanese silhouette from the back. The rise of the obi can be traced to “the vogue for fluttering sleeves around 1770,” argues anthropologist Liza Dalby,<sup>27</sup> when the sleeves of *kosode* of adult women “had become as long as a maiden’s sleeve of yore,” with the sleeves “detached from the sides of the *kosode*,” thereby allowing space for the obi to grow, to expand; this form of the sleeve is preserved in the modern kimono.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, as the sleeves became longer and more fashionable the obi grew in proportion, to become “a fundamental element of Japanese costume.”<sup>29</sup> The original narrow obis which allowed for very little gender differentiation were adopted from this time onwards as the obi used for men’s attire.

This widening of the obi and its effect of distinguishing the attire of Japanese women from that of men took place most notably around 1800, a new step in the matrilineal history of kimono, when “a foot-wide obi covered a woman’s torso from pubic bone to sternum.”<sup>30</sup>

Originally, the obi was tied in the front, then at the side or back, and “by the late seventeenth century, the obi knot had generally moved to the back,”<sup>31</sup> only remaining at the front for everyday wear. The obi’s being tied at the back could have been related to the fact that in the early Edo period playgirls and courtesans favoured Chinese chignons. These trend setters were putting their hair up so that the neck could be shown. The tying of the obi at the back as the standard manner began in the early twentieth century.<sup>32</sup>

## ***Aesthetics and Functionality***

The design of some women's *kosode* needed space to be appreciated in full. When the wearer moved, one could follow the design that extended throughout the whole garment, and the colours and form could be seen from different angles. As the obi grew and became an important part of the *kosode*, the composition of *kosode* design was affected, dividing the surface of the garment into parts above and below the obi. But besides the aesthetic and functional relation between *kosode* and obi, the *kosode* itself was sometimes also used to enhance physical space: Notwithstanding its function as a wearable object, it was also used to make a place more intimate, while at the same time letting the observer know the taste of the wearer, their rank and sensibility.

The screen-painting genre “Whose sleeves...?”<sup>33</sup> displayed for example *kosode* hanging on a rack.<sup>34</sup> As a famous theme in Japanese painting, this reference to the way in which *kosode* was displayed makes clear the importance of the viewer in relation to the textile design of *kosode*. *Kosode*'s folding and expanding qualities makes it a garment of multiple uses and functionality.

What Noma Seiroku termed “The *Kosode* Revolution,” referring to the rise of the *kosode* as the main form of clothing of the Japanese, and especially of women's attire, has in fact strongly marked the history of Japanese costume, textile arts and design.

With the rise of the *kosode* and its evolution into kimono, “a simple piece of cloth” continued to be the basic layout in which pre-modern, modern and contemporary textile designers invented techniques for weaving and dyeing textiles, most of the time mixing native and foreign modes and reflecting in their work the influence of the political and economic conditions of each era and the taste of the people of Japan, indeed of all those involved in the process of designing, manufacturing and merchandising, together with the wearers in the various regions and islands of the country.

## ***The Robe in its Fragmentary Form: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle***

This brief overview of the rise of the *kosode* has shown that the basic construction of the *kosode*-kimono remains almost unchanged in contemporary Japan. I examined some of the aesthetic and functional characteristics related to the body, ornamental qualities and flexibility of the *kosode*-kimono in its integrity as a robe. In this part of the text, I examine another distinctive characteristic of *kosode*-kimono: its capability to be unstitched, reused and recycled. I argue that this characteristic of the robe is relevant to understanding why the persistence in form of the *kosode*-kimono can be associated with economic-symbolical and religious practices that are part of the tradition of recycling cloth in Japan.

### ***Partitions, Modules, Folding as the Basis for Textile Design***

Until the end of the Second World War the labour of sewing a kimono was common to most women in Japanese society.<sup>35</sup> Most of them were housewives who were used to buying a *tan* of new or second-hand kimono cloth to make their robes themselves.

The seven panels of cloth, or modules, which are the basic parts of the kimono are sufficient for construction of the robe. They were normally sewn together by hand, and could be separated or unstitched easily. They could then be washed and dried, to be sewn together to make a kimono again, or sewn just at the edges to form the *tan* (roll of cloth) from which all kimonos begin.

The panels of cloths where the design will be drawn—for *kosode* in the past and for kimono in modern days—challenge the textile artisan, who must think ahead and know how the completed garment will look when worn. The design is then transferred onto partitions that will be sewn together edge-to-edge. Working on a textile design by first taking into consideration the partitions that will make the costume at the end is a very important point in understanding the rules of asymmetry behind Japanese design:

Japanese design is noted for its use of asymmetry, which is sometimes confused with its fondness for diagonals. At some point the Japanese acquired a preference for bisecting rectangles diagonally instead of vertically or horizontally, which is the normal manner in the Western world. Diagonal divisions are not, of course, asymmetrical, for one-half is still the mirror image of the other. In Japanese design, however, diagonal divisions are often made unequal, with areas of pattern that wander over from one side to another.<sup>36</sup>

To understand the flexibility of a garment made by partitions of geometrical elements, as in *kosode*-kimono, it is perhaps interesting to know each step that must be taken in order to fold a kimono. In her essay “Kimono Memories: Personal Notes,” Reiko Mochinaga Brandon explains how her mother taught her:

Kneel before it, hem to your right, shoulder to your left. Fold the body forward, bring the front panel toward you; make the seal perfectly match.<sup>37</sup>

No wonder the kimono must be perfectly flat to fit into the traditional Japanese drawer known as tansu.<sup>38</sup>

## ***Recycling by Reusing***

There is flexibility in the reuse of kimono textile design and a wide capacity for the garment to be reused in the process of recycling. A kimono that has been damaged in various parts of its surface can be unstitched and thus brought back to its original form as pieces of cloth. Then from the panel of cloth affected one can cut out the areas that have been damaged; although this process will indeed end the life of the robe as a dress, it allows the further use of the part of the cloth that remains. Fragments of kimono fabric can be reused in the creation of new entities, collaged in other garment sections to create a new look, or refashioned into a totally different configuration, as in accessories or works of art.

For example, as in this small “*kinchaku*”<sup>39</sup> bag seen in Figure 3, made by combining a recycled piece of baby-cotton “*juban*”<sup>40</sup> (kimono lingerie) fabric with a cotton fabric in little dots in pink on black:



Figure 3: Textile object made by an amateur designer and bought at a Craft Fair at the Kyoto Museum. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

## ***Patched Garments***

As Milhaupt writes in her essay on “Second-Hand Silk Kimono,” the values of patched garments in Japan are multiple and rooted in the textile history of the country. In the past, silk *kosode*-kimono were made to last, and the value of the cloth lay in its being regarded as an item of possible payment, donation or reward.<sup>41</sup> The economic and symbolic custom of using silk as a material which was not allowed to be wasted and so should be reused rather than discarded<sup>42</sup> might have stimulated the mastery, efficacy and perfection in the techniques of weaving and dyeing cloth for *kosode*, as well as the elaboration of its design. Examples of the value of silk cloth given away in the past are provided by the sixteenth-century *Noh*-theatre robes known as *katami-gawari*,<sup>43</sup> which were made through the incorporation of material

taken from two different garments. In *Noh* theatrical costumes, embroidered crests of a robe were sometimes later attached to another costume.<sup>44</sup> As Milhaupt explains, sentimental value was attributed to fragments of silk kimono, which accompanied warriors on military campaigns as symbols of protection, or were transformed into inner garments. Another cultural practice related to *kosode*-kimono and recycling by reusing fragments of cloth is the process of making *kesa*<sup>45</sup> and altar votive cloths by Buddhist priests in Japan. Milhaupt shows that from the sixteenth century onwards there is more physical evidence documenting the practice of donating a deceased person's treasured garment to a Buddhist temple. As she establishes, Buddhist monks, nuns and believers acquired merit for producing *kesa*. Interesting is the fact that in Japan the robes of women of the elite were the ones used to make *kesa* and not the humbler pieces of cloth collected by the priests on their pilgrimages, as was the tradition in India.<sup>46</sup> From this context one can assume that the value of silk, and especially of silk *kosode*, was symbolically high when transformed into clothing worn by clerics. By contrast, donated robes other than *kosode* were kept intact at the temples and then sold to second-hand shops to support temple activities economically.<sup>47</sup>

### ***A Self-Sufficient Economy***

The isolation of Japan and its self-sufficient economy and society during the pre-modern Edo period might have been decisive in the almost invariable form of *kosode*. Together with the cultural approach to natural resources, a further aspect to take into consideration in the approach of the Japanese to the use of fabrics is the influence of the native Shinto religion, which emphasizes a "reverential attitude towards cloth."<sup>48</sup> Shintoism "stresses the sacredness of nature and its products."<sup>49</sup> The perfection of design in accordance with the Japanese canons of beauty accumulated during the years of partial seclusion from the outer world. The self-sufficient economy of the Edo period found its own process of recycling by "reducing" the production of waste while "reusing and recycling" materials.

## *How Kimono Became Kimono*

The opening of Japan to the West did not change the form of Japanese indigenous clothing, but did introduce a new challenge for Japanese society: after years of isolation, the “Other” (the West), together with its technologies, brought with it the new dress codes used among “the civilized countries” of the world.

### *Political and Cultural Responses: Westernization and Orientalism*

On the twenty-eighth day of the third month of the year 1869, Tokyo became the administrative capital of Japan, just one year after the declaration of the new reign with the Meiji Emperor as its sovereign.<sup>50</sup> With this re-location, the ancient city of Kyoto lost its status as capital of Japan, as well as some of its economic and cultural importance.<sup>51</sup> Tokyo became the centre of economic, political and social power.<sup>52</sup> However, Kyoto was not entirely left behind, as the government injected sufficient funds to revitalize the city’s industries.<sup>53</sup> As a result, the textile industry of the city revived<sup>54</sup> and research institutes to promote the textile and ceramic industries were established.

From 1870 the Chemical Research Institute of Kyoto began to receive foreign technicians and engineers, invited to the institute to teach the advanced technologies of the West.<sup>55</sup> In 1871, with the support of the governor of Kyoto, Makimura Masanao,<sup>56</sup> two weavers and a silk merchant were sent to Lyon in France to study the most advanced weaving techniques of the time,<sup>57</sup> in order to help renovate the native industry, and to purchase looms.<sup>58</sup> After returning to Japan, they constructed the first Jacquard loom ever made in Japan, and taught the techniques of the West to Japanese weavers. From this time on, people were frequently sent abroad for technical training from both the public and the private sectors. During the decade that followed, many travelled to Lyon and Berlin. Through these efforts, advanced Western technology, machines, and equipment were brought to Japan.<sup>59</sup> In these years, missions were planned by the Japanese government to discover and study the patterns of success of the Western nations. The most famous of all these missions, the “Iwakura Mission,” was charged with visiting the so-called “civilized” powers of the West in Europe and in the United States. The members of the group wanted to discover the “sources of Western power and wealth so that a plan for strengthening the Japanese state could be worked out.”<sup>60</sup>

Apart from wool and cotton spinning and weaving industries, the mission visited “Courts, prisons, schools, trading firms, factories, and shipyards, iron foundries, sugar refineries, paper plants,...silver cutlery, and glass plants, coal and salt mines.”<sup>61</sup>

As explained by the Japan historian Kenneth Pyle, a characteristic of the first years of the Meiji Restoration (1868–1912) was “the direct role that Westerners played in the development of the modern Japanese culture.”<sup>62</sup> As argued by Pyle, Westerners were likely to have

implanted Orientalist ideas of an exotic Japan, with “Saracenic themes and evocations of temples and pagodas in architecture, kimonos at court.”<sup>63</sup>

But the Japanese government knew that to be able to escape from Western control and complete colonization of their country, they had to proceed themselves with a policy of changes, of Westernization<sup>64</sup> directed against Western Orientalism.

Dress and taste in dress also became a field of study for the Japanese Meiji authorities. One can talk about a “look of enlightenment” in those years. With the right Western dress, accessories and hairstyle, the Japanese thought they could face Westerners literally in their own fashion.

The need to dress properly for different occasions challenged the Japanese elite, who in turn encouraged workers to learn how to cut, sew and design clothes that would fit their bodies while allowing them to move freely, and urged them to master the rules and etiquette of Western dress. The educator and writer Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901) was famous for his detailed and precisely illustrated wood-block printed guide to Western customs and manners.<sup>65</sup> His book provided young samurai of low rank with the information needed to learn “how to eat, dress and even urinate in proper Western style.”<sup>66</sup> The concept of tailoring clothes to a person in the English manner brought a few foreign tailors to Japan, who mostly settled in Yokohama and Kobe around the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>67</sup> Dressed like Westerners, Japanese government officials could then negotiate with Western diplomatic representatives in the same manner as them, at a time when the revisions of treaties, “depended not only on the development of national power but on legal and administrative reforms that would make Japan a ‘civilized’ country capable of proper treatment of foreign nationals.”<sup>68</sup>

As Pyle argues, the Japanese would have “wanted to have their Westernization be honest.”<sup>69</sup> Some government officials, like Itou Hirobumi for example, “rebuffed the suggestion of the German expert on court protocol that the imperial family remain in Japanese dress.” “Government committees turned down more Western plans for building than they approved, on grounds that they were too ‘Oriental.’”<sup>70</sup>

What kinds of stereotype images of Japan were known by the Japanese government committees? Pyle cites Thomas Smith, who wrote in Japan that “the aristocracy itself was revolutionary.”<sup>71</sup> In consequence, and not surprisingly, the first ones to try out Western dress and to learn foreign languages were the higher classes of the population. The government, endeavouring in negotiations “to stand on equal footing with Western countries, . . . sought to modify traditional morality to avoid the criticism and disapproval of foreigners.”<sup>72</sup> Policies for reform of some Japanese customs were also discussed.<sup>73</sup>

In terms of dress, as noted by Milhaupt,<sup>74</sup> prominent individuals such as Okakura Kakuzō (also known as Tenshin, 1862–1913), famous as a teacher and culture critic, were aware of this process of negotiation and shaping of Japan’s cultural identity. He argues, giving advice to his son: “On my first trip to Europe, I wore kimonos most of the time. I suggest you travel abroad in kimono if you think that your English is good enough. But never wear Japanese



costume if you talk in broken English.”<sup>75</sup> Later, in the 1930s, other scholars who had criticized Okakura for wearing native dress when abroad would appear in Western-style garments at important universities in order to distinguish themselves from the colleagues who continued to wear Japanese-style dress.

In the first years of the Meiji period, *kosode*-kimono was still the dress worn by the average population in Japan in the urban centres, and *noragi* or “regional work clothing”<sup>76</sup> continued to be used in the country-side until about the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>77</sup> During the first years of the Meiji Restoration, *kosode*-kimono was not the most favoured dress of the aristocracy, who preferred Western dress instead. An example of the change in taste of dress within the elite was Empress Haruko, who thought of *kosode*-kimono as “a deformity and aberration arising out of Japan’s Sinitified imperial past.”<sup>78</sup> At this point in early modern Japan, a form of “Oriental-Orientalism”<sup>79</sup> was already being consciously constructed and things Chinese or Asian in general were considered inferior and backward by the elite in Japan.<sup>80</sup> In this way, in the eyes of the Japanese, Asian countries were weak, in contrast to the powerful “civilized” Western countries famous for their political, economic and cultural success and ongoing industrialization.

During the Meiji period, social classes were abolished, and in its evolution from *kosode* the Meiji kimono came to represent the new changing character of the era under Western influence, a product of modern Japan, “an embodiment of national style and an allegorical representation of cultural purity.”<sup>81</sup> The expert in Japanese fashion Toby Slade argues that “The large part of that reordering, did not, however, conform to modern reasoning, but was based in the redefinition of ‘Japan-ness’ that accompanied the arrival of the new twin others, modernity and ‘The West.’”<sup>82</sup> The fact that there were changes in aesthetic values in terms of dress, as for example Western-style army uniforms for Japanese aristocrats, soldiers and sailors, represented the efforts of the Japanese government to catch up with the modernity of the Western powers,<sup>83</sup> including clothing habits. To cite Slade:

One of the processes of modernity is a universalization of national identity, facilitated mainly through the institution of universal education and the burgeoning mass media. Through deliberate propaganda, such as dissemination through newspapers and the distribution of imperial portraits showing the Emperor wearing modern uniforms, Japan was transformed from a loose abstraction to a far more established and significant idea—from a collection of feudal domains to a unified nation-state—in the minds of the people who inhabited it.<sup>84</sup>

The power of material culture and especially dress, accessories, hairstyles and aesthetic canons in the cosmetics and apparel of the West played an enormous role in the process of the Japanese unification as a modern nation-state. In visual gendering for example, an important result connected with modernity was the reinvention after the Western model of Japanese masculinity. The aim was to get rid of the feminine and to forsake the male vanity, flamboyance and insouciance<sup>85</sup> of the samurai style, which meant giving up the Japanese-style hair topknot and garments, and even changing the diet to include meat. This new

Westernized man was best incarnated by the image of the Emperor. Also, the traditional samurai warrior attire, perceived as too Oriental and feminine, was replaced by a European-style army uniform. The Japanese were striving to copy the most successful army uniforms of the West, and as “In 1868, the French army was still the most powerful in Europe,”<sup>86</sup> at this stage the French-style uniform was the one chosen as the model.

In the early twentieth century, for the Japanese the image of the “developed” West was represented by this new Japanese masculinity in civilian suit or army uniform. Japan was now able to construct an Oriental Orientalism against “inferior Asia.” In terms of clothing habits, Japanese men wearing Western-style suits and uniforms embodied the desired image of the power of the West. However, and as argued by Iwabuchi,<sup>87</sup> Japan’s “discursive construction of ‘Asia’ is marked by the impossibility of clear separation between Asia and Japan.” In this case the “traditional” and Asian within Japan in terms of clothing habits was represented by the evolution of the *kosode* into the modern kimono, and by its continuous everyday use as the common dress of the regular population and especially of women, as well as the continued use of *noragi*, or regional work clothing, by women in the countryside.

## ***Rokumeikan***

The speed and impetus given by the Japanese government to the process of “Westernization” of the people’s customs and lifestyle reached its peak in the period around 1883 known as “Rokumeikan.”<sup>88</sup> This period also affected the tradition of wearing *kosode*-kimono within the elite. Things Western, including clothing, referred to as “*yō no fuku*” (Western clothes), were seen as symbols of “civilized and enlightened” cultures, and therefore in tune with the challenges of modernization. To win the approval of the foreigners resident in Japan, creative methods of persuasion were used. One famous example was the gaudy Victorian music hall called Rokumeikan, a building that was constructed for the entertainment of foreigners by the Japanese elite.<sup>89</sup>

“The Rokumeikan”<sup>90</sup> became a place for the negotiation of identity, a place for “the new Japanese urban elite”<sup>91</sup> to display their efforts in learning the costumes of Western success. Regarding his visit to the Rokumeikan, Pierre Loti writes:

I did not expect much from this European-style ball, with the high society of Edo in black tie and Parisian dress. From the first, this “countess” (as well as a “marchioness” that I had seen mentioned the day before in a high-class local newspaper) made me smile. But why, after all? These women were descended from noble families; all they had done was change their Japanese titles into equivalent French ones. Their education and aristocratic refinement were no less real or hereditary. It was even possible that it would be necessary to go back farther than our crusades to find the origins of these nobles, lost in the annals of a people so ancient.<sup>92</sup>

In this letter from Pierre Loti to Madame Alphonse Daudet we can interpret some of his impressions while he was taking part in a ball at the Rokumeikan building in Tokyo. As he

reports, the “high society of Edo in black tie” (Japanese men) and “Parisian dress” (Japanese women) were at first objects to make him “smile,” but shortly afterwards he reflects on “a people so ancient,” and women descended from generations that “go back farther than our crusades.” The view that locals look funny wearing Western dress was shared by other foreigners, mostly travellers who visited Japan in those years of change, many of whom were not positively impressed by Japanese people dressing and behaving “a la West.”<sup>93</sup> The use of all forms of Western clothing, including ball dresses, and uniforms, together with objects of interior design made of Western material such as Western-style chairs and tables, and also the Western-looking buildings and architectural style of salons and windows, were all viewed as imitating those of Western countries. Sometimes these strategies of Westernization had a different effect to what was intended. They showed the weakness of the Japanese, who wanted to behave and dress like Westerners but ended up appearing to the West even more exotic, Orientalized, and not quite white.

In terms of dress it was not until 1871 that ordinary people received permission to wear Western clothes. The cloths were expensive to purchase, and people could mostly afford only accessories, which were often worn in combination with Japanese garments. This type of hybrid outfit best reflects the confusion of a society in the process of change. These “tempestuous years” of high Westernization between the early 1870s and 1883, known as *bunmei kaikan* (civilization and enlightenment),<sup>94</sup> may have fermented, as a consequence of “a series of small ripples”<sup>95</sup> of nationalism, the beginning of a revival of kimono at the end of the nineteenth century.

## ***Meiji Kimono***

The opening of commerce with the West greatly influenced design and textile manufacture in Japan. In consequence, the hybridization of the market for cloth and accessories for both Western and Japanese-style clothing influenced the taste of the consumer.<sup>96</sup> At the same time, the introduction of new fibres like wool,<sup>97</sup> which was an expensive material, and chemical dyes of Western origin, made textile artists and artisans face new challenges in terms of the design, colours and texture of the cloths and accessories for their diverse clientele.<sup>98</sup> “Targeting the ever-more discerning consumer, shops developed advertising and marketing strategies aimed at increasing their public profile and fostering customer loyalty.”<sup>99</sup>

During this period, a middle class was beginning to emerge, as well as ideas of democratization. The future middle class of the Taishō period (1912–1926) was able to buy used-silk kimonos in pawn shops and at flea markets,<sup>100</sup> but most people continued to wear kimono made of cotton or bast fibres.<sup>101</sup> Meiji was an unstable period, whose instability was reflected in the colours and patterns used in kimono. “Kimono styles also changed and clothing previously worn as underwear began to be worn alone as casual clothing.”<sup>102</sup>

There was a tendency towards the use of muted colours originally associated with the “*iki*”<sup>103</sup> aesthetic of samurai times; this changed as the turn of the century approached, and by the

1890s kimono patterns became gorgeous in proportions and palette. In the Meiji period, one could interpret the evolution of the *kosode* into modern kimono as an outgrowth; it is as if the change of style in which layers of kimono worn traditionally as underwear began to be worn as outerwear symbolizes the welcoming of a new era in Japanese textile history.

As explained in the previous chapter on the history of *kosode*, before it rose to become the robe used by both the elite and the commoners in feudal Japan it had been the underwear garment of the aristocracy and the main robe of commoners. A recurrent shift from inside to outside that enables new taste in textile design is also a phenomenon that is taking place in the contemporary kimono revival, especially in the context of tourism, in the design of the kimono used as an item for rental at the kimono stations.

At the end of the Meiji period in 1890, on the 29th of November, “the Constitution of the Empire of Japan goes into effect and the emperor officially opens the First Diet.”<sup>104</sup> A wave of nationalism seems to have started within the Japanese government: “A feeling grew that Japan had gone too far in aping everything Western,”<sup>105</sup> and the interest in traditional things returned within the elite of bureaucrats and intellectuals. Again, it is possible to use here the thesis of Maruyama Masao on the process of “Japanization,” that Japan has a strong tendency to look back to its roots and to the concept of the “real” Japan. A need to search for a definition of identity was most likely felt:

For the quarter of a century preceding 1890 Japan had passed through a time of unprecedented ferment, a time of experimentation and groping, as it sought to reorient its institutions to the realities of the international order into which it was suddenly thrust. Building an industrial society had required supplanting much of the old order with techniques and institutions borrowed from the West. As the bureaucracy and the military, as commerce, industry, and education fell under the sway of Western example, there developed among the educated segment of society an intense ambivalence about traditional Japanese and the new Western cultures.<sup>106</sup>

Not surprisingly, national pride rose in Japan after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 and after winning the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5. As Milhaupt cleverly argues, in the search for a Japanese identity: “Nativist attitudes were visually manifest by clothing one’s body in Japanese dress—an expression of pride in Japanese culture. Donning Western-style garments symbolized Japan’s aspirations to be recognized as an equal.”<sup>107</sup>

As an example of the struggle for identity, the Empress Haruko had in the first years of the restoration proclaimed kimono to be an obsolete form of dress. At the end of Meiji, the Empress Teimei may well have influenced the prolongation of the first kimono revival by using the traditional *jūni-hitoe* (formal kimono robe)<sup>108</sup> for her coronation on the 3rd of July 1912.<sup>109</sup> Why did the new Empress choose to wear the traditional *jūni-hitoe*? Toby Slade gives a possible answer, pointing out that:

The perceived unstoppable trajectory of modern progress that was embraced by Japan also resulted in nostalgia and, if not an overt longing for the past, then at least a formless melancholy and regret that some essence or intangible element had been lost.<sup>110</sup>

I interpret this reaction of the women of the Japanese elite (itself turning back to its roots), manifested in the form of dress chosen to differentiate them from the West, as an initial sign of self-Orientalization. As mentioned before, even scholars such as Okakura Kakuzō “engaged in a form of self-Orientalizing,” since he was aware of the impact his donning of Japanese-style garments could have in a Western setting.<sup>111</sup> It seems that at this point of Japanese modern history, not only the elite was looking to the roots of the real Japan represented in the form of dress chosen to be worn: artists, artisans and kimono experts were also working hard to revive traditional textile techniques indigenous to Japan and in danger of being lost. It is at the turn of the century when a group of textile experts and kimono specialists under the leadership of Nomura Shōjiro (1879–1943)<sup>112</sup> made significant efforts to preserve the antique textiles of *kosode*. This took part mostly in Kyoto, where Nomura Shōjiro worked. As technology had influenced the speed of kimono production and kimono were being churned out in masses for the common population, there was also among textile experts a sentiment of nostalgia and a desire to prevent the loss of traditional techniques. The kimono needed to survive against the speed of the time, mobility in the city centres, new ways of transportation, new jobs; all of these were affecting the future of the garment as a choice for everyday life, at least in urban areas such as Tokyo. Nevertheless, the Japanese government followed the style of colonial states in terms of clothing, and kimono remained the clothing reserved for women from the years of the Meiji Restoration until 1945. Even nowadays we still make the association of kimono with Japanese women:

Colonial discourse found in native women a particularly attractive symbol for justifying rule, thereby making gender a salient factor in debating cultural differences. Colonialism in its Orientalist form inscribed privilege as masculine and masculinity as European. The European male was young, virile, clean and fully clothed, often in a suit (cf. Smith 1995; Tarlo 1996; Wilson 1985). In turn, the colonized male was dehumanized, represented as either brutishly male or effeminate. In this struggle over political power, native women served as particularly fertile symbolic terrain.<sup>113</sup>

Hence the masculinity of the Western suit and military uniform suited the policy of the Meiji government; men were allowed and encouraged to make the transition in their clothing habits, and consequently they began to use kimono only at home. The home was their way back to “traditional” Japan. Outside the home, women in kimono represented the “real” and ancient Japan: a further step in the process of self-Orientalization identified above. For the government, kimono worn by women was a comforting sight that suited the external image Japan was constructing of itself in order to demarcate its identity towards the West as an ancient but civilized country.

### ***Japan and the World Exhibitions as Terrain for Japanese First Strategies of Self-Orientalization?***

In 1867 the Japanese government participated in the World International Exposition in Paris,<sup>114</sup> an experience which offered an opportunity to promote Japanese commodities and

to acquire Western technologies.<sup>115</sup> In 1873, weavers travelled to Vienna, among them Date Yanosuke (1813–1876); he managed to take samples of woven Japanese silks with him and brought back sample books with European woven silks.<sup>116</sup> After its participation in the 1890 World International Exposition in Paris, European art movements such as Art Nouveau reached Japan. Thus in the late Meiji and Taishō eras textiles for kimono were made under the influence of and blending with the Art-Nouveau style and its Japanese interpretations.<sup>117</sup> Japanese tapestries were also exhibited at the 1893 Chicago World Fair, while *yūzen*-dyed velvet was shown at the same exhibition and in Paris 1900.<sup>118</sup> Japanese textile art was promoted in the global contest for the quality of its dye techniques, the beauty of its pictorial artworks and embroidered textiles in folding screens,<sup>119</sup> and indeed for all its arts and crafts and the uniqueness of its “ancient” textile traditions:

The World Fair anticipated and helped shape both the form and the content of public life in respect to global issues. At international exhibitions, most of the processes unleashed by the...technological, commercial, and cultural advances were in evidence. Fairs, for example enthroned merchandise in an “aura of amusement,” thus making them special “sites of the commodity fetish” emerging at that time. (Breckenridge 1989: 201).<sup>120</sup>

In a similar way, the image of Japan in the West was crafted in part through its participation in the World Exhibitions, as a nation with rich and ancient craft traditions. The constructed image was imbued with the notion of an “exotic, but highly civilized”<sup>121</sup> country of timeless beauty, represented in the delicacy of its arts and crafts and by its long history; it was the image of a remote, ancient land, one that had kept itself secluded for more than two hundred years; a country rich in commodities representing stereotypes and secrets as Oriental and exotic as Western scholars had helped paint them in the minds of thirsty Western travellers.

The commodities exhibited at the World Fairs introduced Japan to the world, and it soon became a new tourist destination for Western travellers. Due to its geographic position as a far-off country, hard to reach, and the rarity of its objects exhibited in the international fairs, Japan was also referred to as a “geographical exoticism.”<sup>122</sup> The distance between Japan and Europe or America and the visits of Japanese missions to study the West allowed the Japanese to visualize through the eyes of the foreigner just what was to them (Westerners) exotic. Part of these images of the ancient and beautiful land were images of Japanese young women clad in kimono.

Nevertheless, there was also a strong desire inside Japan to absorb and master the new source of power<sup>123</sup> represented by the progress in industrialization and the conquests of imperialism achieved by the West, and the sooner that was achieved the better.

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- 1 Rand Castil, Foreword to *Kosode: 16th–19th Century Textiles from the Nomura Collection*, 9.
- 2 Noma Seiroku, “The *Kosode* Revolution.”
- 3 Ibid., 14.
- 4 Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, “Second-Hand Silk Kimono Migrating Across Borders,” 70.
- 5 *Jūni-hitoe* 十二単: A sixteenth-century term for the most formal version of the Kasane Shouzoku. The dress style of the women of the Heian-period aristocracy. The essential element of this style was the layering of garments to display set combinations of colours.
- 6 Amanda M. Stinchecum, “*Kosode*: Techniques and Designs,” 23.
- 7 Aikawa Kayoko, “The Story of Kimono.”
- 8 *Hakama* 袴: Long, pleated Japanese trousers.
- 9 “It is difficult to say whether the *kosode*, which took centre stage at this point in history, developed directly from the aristocratic undergarment of that name or whether it was more closely related to the single garment worn by commoner women, which it also resembled. Probably its connection to both made *kosode* the natural basis for Muromachi women’s dress.” Liza Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*, 37–39.
- 10 Gluckman and Takeda, eds., *When Art Became Fashion*, Glossary, s.v. “obi.”
- 11 Noma, “The *Kosode* Revolution,” 35.
- 12 Ibid., 36.
- 13 Amanda M. Stinchecum, ed., *Kosode: 16th–19th–Century Textiles from the Nomura Collection*, 26.
- 14 Louise Allison Cort, “Whose Sleeves...? Gender, Class, and Meaning in Japanese Dress of the Seventeenth Century,” 183.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 For more details see: William B. Hauser, “Textiles and Trade in Tokugawa Japan.”
- 17 *Asobime* 遊び: “Playgirls (*asobime*)—multitalented, trendy ladies who led rather public lives (sometimes glossed as “courtesans”)—wore their *kosode* belted with long tasselled silk cords. The cords, called Nagoya *obi*, were woven according to a style then popular in China, roped about the hips six or seven times, and tied in a looping bow. Playgirls also did their hair into Chinese chignons, imitating a fashion for women to put up their hair.” Dalby, *Kimono*, 39–40.
- 18 Stinchecum, ed., *Kosode*, 26; Cort, “Whose Sleeves...?,” 186.
- 19 *Tan* 簞: A piece of cloth.
- 20 Japan Craft Forum, *Japanese Crafts: A Complete Guide to Today’s Traditional Handmade Objects*.
- 21 Alan Kennedy, *Japanese Costume: History and Tradition*, 67.
- 22 Japan Craft Forum, *Japanese Crafts*, 42.
- 23 Dalby, *Kimono*, 40.
- 24 Margot Paul, Preface to *Kosode: 16th–19th Century Textiles from the Nomura*, 10.
- 25 Kennedy, *Japanese Costume*, 6–7.
- 26 Paul, Preface to *Kosode*, 10.

- 27 Dalby, *Kimono*, 48.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid., 52.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 “The genre was known as the *tagasode* or “whose sleeves...?” screen from the use of that term in classical poetry to evoke an absent woman. The screen only suggests the lovers, who are not seen—male garments are often included on the racks. But the meanings of the screens do not seem to be solely or even chiefly erotic.” Cort, “Whose Sleeves...?” 184–94.
- 34 “Clothing racks had first been introduced from China during the Nara period [710–794] and were often used in the drafty castles and mansions of Momoyama as a form of improvised screen.” Jill Liddell, *The Story of the Kimono*, 105.
- 35 “The indigenous kimono, being a loose garment, presented no particular problems of cutting and fitting, and until recently, most Japanese women were capable of putting these garments together entirely by hand.” Toby Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History*, 53.
- 36 Liddell, *The Story of the Kimono*, 106.
- 37 Reiko Brandon, “Kimono Memories: Personal Notes.”
- 38 *Tansu* 箆笥: Japanese-style wardrobe, a chest of drawers.
- 39 *Kinchaku* 巾着: Drawstring bag.
- 40 *Juban* 襦袢: Undershirt, kimono lingerie.
- 41 Milhaupt, “Second-Hand Silk Kimono,” 69, citing Takeda, *Miracles & Mischief: Noh and Kyogen Theater in Japan*, 71–72.
- 42 Milhaupt, “Second-Hand Silk Kimono,” 69.
- 43 *Katami-gawari* 片身替わり.
- 44 Milhaupt, “Second-Hand Silk Kimono,” 69.
- 45 *Kesa* ケサ: Buddhist priest’s stole or robe.
- 46 See Kennedy, *Japanese Costume: History and Tradition*, for a chapter on *kesa*.
- 47 Milhaupt, “Second-Hand Silk Kimono,” 75.
- 48 Kennedy, *Japanese Costume*, 6–7.
- 49 Ibid.
- 50 James L. McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, 116.
- 51 Because “the cultural life carried within the social milieu of the aristocracy” moved together with the Emperor to Tokyo. Fujii Kenzō, *Japanese Modern Textiles*, 92.
- 52 Milhaupt, “Second-Hand Silk Kimono,” 34.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 “A movement was started to revive the local textile industry, and for Kyotoites, the revitalization of the weaving and dyeing industries meant the revitalization of the city itself.



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- Encouraged by the government policy to absorb everything from the West, various innovative measures were taken.” Fujii Kenzō, *Japanese Modern Textiles*, 92.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Makimura Masanao 榎村 正直.
- 57 Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Technological Transformation of Japan from the Seventeenth to the Twenty-First Century*, 92.
- 58 Fujii Kenzō, *Japanese Modern Textiles*, 92.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Kenneth B. Pyle, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 85.
- 61 Haga Tōru, “*Kindai Nihon no sekkei*” [Modern Japanese Design],” quoted in Jansen, “Modernization and Foreign Policy in Meiji Japan,” 17.
- 62 Pyle, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 447.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 “The Meiji Restoration of 1868 established in Japan a strong central government, committed to abolishing feudalism and eager to use Westernization as a model for political, economic and cultural development—the idea of development itself being the operative aspiration of modernity.” Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 54.
- 65 Ibid., 92.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Ibid., 54.
- 68 Pyle, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 477.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Ibid., 87.
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, *Kimono: A Modern History*, 98.
- 75 Ibid. Quotation taken from Christine M. E. Guth, “Charles Longfellow and Okakura Kakuzō: Cultural Cross-Dressing in the Colonial Context.”
- 76 Dalby, *Kimono*, 162.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Ibid., 71.
- 79 Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan*, 97–101.
- 80 As Robertson explains: “Japan has constructed an Oriental Orientalism against ‘inferior Asia.’” Ibid.
- 81 Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 15.
- 82 Ibid.

- 83 “Modernity can be a very flexible designation. Commonly intermingled and confused with modernization,...modernity generally refers to the way in which modernization infiltrated everyday life.... Modernity as a cultural phenomenon is confined in the Japanese experience to the period after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, and while modernity in Western Europe is often used as a term that is extended backwards from industrialist-capitalist society to the ruptures from preceding social systems leading into the social and cultural changes which took place from the mid-sixteenth century, the particular history of Japanese isolation means that the periodizations that can be made are neater. While the levels of urbanization, literacy and trade in consumer goods were all uniquely high in late Edo Japan, the enforced intellectual isolation makes premature any characterization of that period as one of modernity, despite some modern elements which could be recognized as a part of a modern fashion system: mass-produced woodblock prints used to advertise clothing, product placement of kimono textiles in kabuki theatre and rapidly changing seasonal styles in urban Edo culture were some of these.” Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 3.
- 84 Ibid., 8–9.
- 85 Ibid., 66.
- 86 Ibid., 67.
- 87 Iwabuchi Koichi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*, 8.
- 88 Rokumeikan 鹿鳴館.
- 89 Pyle, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 87.
- 90 “The *Rokumeikan* was conceived of by Inōe Kaoru, a ranking government official.” McClain, *Japan*, 181.
- 91 Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 95.
- 92 Pierre Loti, “Un bal à Yeddo [A ball in Edo],” 77–106.
- 93 “Hybridity in early Japanese clothing and some original combinations of East and West (the newest style of felt hat from Paris combined with kimono) and of imports worn improperly according to European criteria (ankles protruding from trousers, collar unfastened and cravat askew) were a source of both amusement and irritation for Westerners.” Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 93.
- 94 *Bunmei kaika*: 文明開化.
- 95 “The political scientist Maruyama Masao, noted for his incisive analyses of Japan’s modern age, writes that ever since the mid-nineteenth century, when the government adopted a modernization policy under heavy Western influence, even while Japans modernization process unfolded steadily, there has been an eruption every twenty years or so of some ideology extolling and calling for a return to the ‘real’ Japan. According to Maruyama, there are deep, indelible forces that keep pulling the Japanese back to their own roots, something he compares to a repeated base-line music. Seen in this context, while the earlier periods of Japanization can be seen as waves, the process since the Meiji Restoration might be thought of as a series of small ripples.” Isozaki Arata, “Acceptance and Creation: The Aesthetic of an Island Nation.”
- 96 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 34.
- 97 “Some woollen and worsted fabrics (such as Raxa and Grofgren) had been introduced at the end of the sixteenth century by Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch merchants, but the closing of the country by Tokugawa Iemitsu, in 1639, to anything but very limited Dutch and Chinese commerce, prevented this importation from developing.” Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 53.

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- 98 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 36.
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 “Since the mid-Tokugawa period, there had been many used-clothing shops in Edo, and business was so brisk that people began stealing clothing to sell it, precipitating an unsuccessful attempt to close down the market in 1724. By the eighteenth century, wholesalers of used clothing emerged; and the volume of trade was huge.” Itō Yoshiichi, *Edo no Yumenoshima* [Edo Dream Island], 26–28.
- 101 “Except for government-sanctioned Western-style dress at official functions, textile production in Japan in the Meiji era departed little from that of the Edo period. Commoners wore fine-striped kimono as everyday clothing. Ceremonial kimono, such as *furisode* (long-sleeved kimono for maidens) and *tomesode* (short-sleeved kimono for married women), were still decorated with auspicious motifs and landscape designs typical of the Edo period.” Fujii Kenzō, *Japanese Modern Textiles*, 92.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 *Iki* いき: roughly, “chic, stylish.”
- 104 McClain, *Japan*, 279.
- 105 Dalby, *Kimono*, 98.
- 106 Pyle, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 125.
- 107 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 97.
- 108 *Jūni-hitoe*: Literally “twelve single layers” of unlined robes, worn as formal attire by women of the imperial court.
- 109 Paul, Preface to *Kosode*, 16.
- 110 Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 5.
- 111 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 98.
- 112 “During the late Meiji (1868–1912) and the Taishō (1912–26) periods, when Western tastes and techniques were dominant and the native arts seemed threatened, Nomura Shōjiro devoted himself to the study, collection and preservation of the most beautiful robes from the age that had so recently ended.” Paul, Preface to *Kosode*, 13.
- 113 Ann Marie Leshkowich and Carla Jones, Introduction to *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress*, 10.
- 114 “Tokugawa Akitake, the younger brother of the last Tokugawa shogun, travelled to Paris and represented the Japanese government for this occasion. During his mission, he presented rolls of kimono fabric (or kimono robes themselves) to Napoleon III of the Second Empire.” Fukai Akiko, “The Kimono and Parisian Mode, 51.
- 115 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 34.
- 116 Ibid.
- 117 Fujii Kenzō, *Japanese Modern Textiles*, 95.
- 118 Yamanobe Tomoyuki and Fujii Kenzō, *Kyoto Modern Textiles, 1868–1940*, 6–7.
- 119 Ibid.
- 120 Stefanie Wolter, *Die Vermarktung des Fremden: Exotismus und die Anfänge des Massenkonsums* [The marketing of the foreign: Exoticism and the beginnings of mass consumption], 34.

- 121 Claudia Delank, *Das Imaginäre Japan in der Kunst: “Japanbilder” vom Jugendstil bis zum Bauhaus* [Imaginary Japan in art: “Japan pictures” from Art Nouveau to Bauhaus], 19.
- 122 In the original German: as a “*geographischen Exotismus.*” Wolter, *Die Vermarktung des Fremden*, 34.
- 123 Dalby, *Kimono*, 73.

# *Part Two:*

## *The Historicity of the Kimono Revival*

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## *The First Kimono Revival (1890–1920)*

After the period of high modernization, *bunmei kaika*,<sup>1</sup> “civilization and enlightenment,”<sup>2</sup> in which, for the Japanese, apparel of European origin became synonyms for progress, civilization and cultural power, “kimono staged a triumphant comeback as expression of Japaneseness,” writes kimono expert Liza Dalby.<sup>3</sup>

A revival is only possible when designers, dealers, textile manufacturers, department stores, magazines, consumers, and collectors can all influence the form it takes, as can also the needs of the times and the political, economic and cultural changes of the era.

In the years around 1890, Japan became obsessed with her search for “national essence.”<sup>4</sup> The first general elections were held (1 July 1890) and the Constitution of the Empire of Japan took effect (29 November 1890).<sup>5</sup> Language and education were becoming standardized, and so was clothing.<sup>6</sup>

According to Dalby, the renaissance of kimono in modern times started around the 1890s and lasted until the start of World War I in 1914. During this period, she argues, the kimono made its last stand as the primary clothing for women.<sup>7</sup> She explains that the revival was above all for women and an expression of tradition.<sup>8</sup> Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, on the other hand, associates the revival both with the modernization of Japan, including kimono and the kimono industry—with the aim of establishing a recognizable national costume that incorporated at the same time selected foreign materials and techniques for its production, and in relation to the birth of the first Japanese department stores.<sup>9</sup> The scholar Margot Paul in turn emphasizes the role of the Empress Teimei, who insisted on donning traditional dress for her coronation in 1912, but also points out that at about this time a group of scholars and textile collectors began to provide artists with the opportunity to reinterpret classic kimono modelled by geishas.<sup>10</sup>

Dalby, Milhaupt and Kojima Kaoru see the revival of the kimono in modern Japan in connection with the marketing campaign of the Mitsukoshi department store to revive the Genroku-style kimono around 1905.<sup>11</sup> The expert on Japan’s souvenir photography Wakita Mio agrees that the campaign’s “sensational success, sparking the Genroku-boom among Meiji Japanese after the post-Russo-Japanese War era,”<sup>12</sup> contributed to the increase in the sales of kimono,<sup>13</sup> but argues that the Mitsukoshi department store had already launched a series of campaigns before 1902, with “massive geisha presence from the mid-1890s,”<sup>14</sup> adding that between 1890 and 1910 many beauty contests with women in kimono took place in Japan.<sup>15</sup> As Milhaupt points out, the Mitsukoshi department store tried out many ways of establishing itself as the arbiter in kimono taste for women’s kimono at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> She writes that from 1905 to 1924 Mitsukoshi sponsored encounters amongst a selected group of intellectuals, “people of culture” (*bunkajin*)<sup>17</sup> and writers.<sup>18</sup> The gatherings were known as “Trend Gathering” (*Ryūkōkai*),<sup>19</sup> and had the aim, as the meaning

of the Japanese term “*ryūkō*” (fashion; way; style; manner) suggests, of understanding “prevailing trends [in kimono] in order to predict and shape new ones.”<sup>20</sup> The gatherings of the *Ryūkōkai* sponsored by Mitsukoshi were used to plan new ways to reach the general public, with the exhibition of objects that allowed people to visually assess the new trends.<sup>21</sup>

### *The Renaissance of Women’s Kimono in Late Meiji*

What kind of internal and external influences—political and aesthetic—affected the proliferation of different types of kimono for women at the turn of the twentieth century?

The political situation of the years following the 1880s encouraged the Japanese government to rethink its strategies of reinforcement, protection and reinvention of “traditional” Japanese culture, including dress policies inside Japan. On the international scene, Japan needed to present itself among other nations, and, in order to confirm the supposedly “homogeneous society” characteristic of a Japan unified as a nation, to demarcate its national identity.<sup>22</sup> With the end of the first Sino-Japanese War in 1885, Taiwan, the Pescadores and Liaotung Peninsula were ceded to Japan, and the Western expansion in Asia “persuaded many Japanese that their nation had to rethink its relationship with its neighbours in Asia and the belligerent powers of the West.”<sup>23</sup> In Dalby’s account, it was during the 1880s that Western-style clothing at least theoretically became available to most Japanese (although for most of the population it was not affordable);<sup>24</sup> in fact, a large portion of the Japanese population had to clothe itself with very limited resources, and not, as we may think, with beautiful kimono.<sup>25</sup> During these years native dress was objectified in the term “*wafuku*” (*wa*, Japanese; *fuku*, clothing). Despite the availability of Western dress, urban women continued to wear kimono in their daily lives, while men used Western-style clothing both for work and as ceremonial wear.

Winning the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905)<sup>26</sup> gave Japan a feeling of equality with the West in military terms, and a role that marked Japan as a military power within Asia and as the only non-Western imperialist country in the world at the time. Nevertheless, and as Atkins maintains,<sup>27</sup> citing Louise Young,<sup>28</sup> “racial issues [were] raised by the refusal of Western nations to accept the racial equality clause proposed by Japan in the League of Nations Charter and the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924 (3).”<sup>29</sup>

This refusal by Western nations fuelled Japan’s fear of remaining “subordinated to the advanced nations,” according to Prince Fumimaro Konoe, as cited by Atkins from Ōka Yoshitake.<sup>30</sup>

### *‘Samuraisation’ and Gender Divides*

Meiji political figures attest to the linkage of style with masculinity as political leadership. But the full (hetero)sexualization of the Japanese man can be fully realized only through the re-inscription of the gender binary.<sup>31</sup>



During Meiji (1868–1912), the dissemination of Confucian values encouraged Japanese women to remain the preservers of traditions and local culture by wearing “traditional” dress.<sup>32</sup> As Hobsbawn and Ranger point out in their work on “invented traditions,” in order to construct a unified nation, various myths and ideologies need to be represented and disseminated.<sup>33</sup> Iwabuchi Koichi argues that the Confucian values of the samurai warriors (representing only six percent of the citizens) were massively disseminated through education and the workplace.<sup>34</sup> In this process, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and termed by the scholar Befu Harumi “samuraisation,” the dominant ideologies and myths, along with the indoctrination of *bushidō*<sup>35</sup> values, were used to construct “Japaneseness.”<sup>36</sup>

In terms of dress, writes Toby Slade, the samuraisation of taste was the result of the freedom given to the population when Edo sumptuary regulations on clothing habits were abolished, with a general embourgeoisement that accompanied the industrialization of the textile industry and the opening of Japan to trade.<sup>37</sup> In his view, the desire for and attraction of samurai clothing may have occurred for “reasons of alienation from the processes of modernization and the resultant desire to reconstruct an idealized past through clothing choices.”<sup>38</sup> The Confucian values of the samurai adopted by the Meiji state included loyalty from below, benevolence from above, respect for hierarchical order, diligence, and the low status of women.<sup>39</sup> Slade argues that these values helped to construct the separation of clothing in gender divides into the categories “modern and traditional” encouraged by the Japanese elite.<sup>40</sup> He points out that “the reconstruction of gender demarcation in the aesthetics of personal adornment was as important a dichotomy in modernity as others such as *civilized* and *uncivilized*.”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, modernity was “first applied by the sex that considered itself, rightly or wrongly, to be serious and non-ornamental,”<sup>42</sup> with femininity and tradition reconstructed to be its more “frivolous and ornamental”<sup>43</sup> opposite. This categorization of the role of men and women in Japan was abstract and arbitrary. Nevertheless, “in the universal conditions of modernity, coupled with the particular gendering norms that prepared it, both Europe and in Japan, masculinity was the aesthetic that modernized first.”<sup>44</sup>

As a result of the politics of the new Japanese state, two of the characteristics of the first kimono renaissance were:

- The divergence of the clothing of the workplace from that of the home for urban men.
- A concomitant division of *yōfuku* (Western clothing) for men and kimono for women.

As argued by Slade, the role of clothing in visual gendering was transformed in Japan’s process of modernization just as it was “throughout modernizing Europe. Masculinity is signalled through form as well as colour, and increasingly through metaphor: dark colours to indicate the seriousness of men in society and brighter colours to indicate the ornamental role of women.”<sup>45</sup> One could argue in the case of Japan that the stereotype of the Japanese kimono-clad maiden as the preserver of the Japanese pre-modern era together with its customs and traditions, and as the feudal wife in Confucian terms, was used by the government as a conscious strategy to establish the desirable role of women internationally—the exotic-erotic-

feminine-gracious image of the Japanese female represented in the image of the geisha, and of women within Japanese society—the humble “good wife, wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*).

This must have also involved an aesthetic response to the desires of Westerners, especially travellers and collectors of Japanese craft and art objects mesmerized by the image of Japan and longing for an imaginary ancient world inhabited by geishas, courtesans and samurai.<sup>46</sup> It was a response which the Westernized look of Japanese men in suits and uniforms could not match. The image contrasted strongly with the ideal Meiji woman at the turn of the century, who was expected to attend girls’ higher school and serve her family and society, all the time being modest, courageous, and frugal.<sup>47</sup> Previously, these virtues fundamental to the doctrine of the “good wife, wise mother” were only expected of the women of the samurai.<sup>48</sup> As Slade argues: “In a favourite Meiji formulation, the nation’s goal was the adaptation of Western technology to preserve the Japanese spirit and the manifestation of this as clearly gendered. For the average urban male, modernization was mandatory. But for females—emblems of that native essence—Westernization was inherently problematic. In the dispute over the fate of Japanese culture in the modern age, women’s bodies and lives thus constituted ‘contested spaces.’”<sup>49</sup> That is why it was part of the policies of the Japanese state to exhort women to contribute to the nation, through their efficient management in the home, their care for family members, their time spent in the organization of patriotic activities, and their responsible instruction of the children.<sup>50</sup> The bureaucrats who shaped these gender policies towards women acted in the interest of the “cult of productivity” in industrializing Japan.<sup>51</sup> In contrast to the models of Western industrial power, the Meiji leaders, recognizing the economic and educational contributions of women, claimed the home as a public place.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Clothing Issues and Gender Divides in Modernity Elsewhere***

The conservatism with regard to the status of women that accompanied the early modernization of Japan, and was articulated in the *ryōsai kenbo* (good wife, wise mother) doctrine of 1898, already had an indigenous sartorial archetype and there was no need to appropriate the bustle styles, which were themselves a reactionary formation against the currents of modernity.<sup>53</sup>

There is an observable connection between gender and national politics in the matter of clothing and culture in the modern world.<sup>54</sup> Regarding Japan’s modernity, the gender divide during the Meiji period was marked from above by the Emperor himself. By cutting off his topknot in 1878—it was a concern of modernity in Japan that masculinity had to rid itself of the feminine—and wearing Western clothing for official appearances he was portrayed for his fellow Japanese as the leading figure on the path towards civilization.<sup>55</sup> A man wearing Western-style garments symbolized Japan’s aspiration to be accepted and recognized as an equal.<sup>56</sup> A woman clothing her body in Japanese dress, on the other hand, expressed pride in Japanese culture and so visually manifested nativist attitudes.<sup>57</sup>

In other non-Western cultures, such as China, by contrast, argues Chinese-dress expert Antonia Finnane in her essay “What Should Chinese Women Wear? A National Problem,” “women, in whatever clothes, have been a relatively subdued presence among symbols of the nation,”<sup>58</sup> comparing the “rather nebulous image of Chinese woman with that of the Japanese counterpart, always and everywhere imagined as clad in a kimono.”<sup>59</sup>

Hence both cultures, Japanese and Chinese, reacted to the challenges of modernity in their clothing habits (in Japan at the end of the nineteenth century and later in China at the beginning of the twentieth century), with these habits clearly differentiated by gender, but in different ways.

As seen by Western cultures, the Oriental others acted differently. In considering the question of Chinese women’s dress in twentieth-century China, Finnane argues that in politics more emphasis was put on the military uniforms and suits adopted by men because they were regarded as more suitable signs of the nation for patriotic purposes.<sup>60</sup> The form of dress that in China around the 1920s and with the fall of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) developed to become the equivalent of a “national” dress<sup>61</sup> for women was the *qipao* or *cheongsam* (gowns worn by banner people).<sup>62</sup> In some respects this is the opposite to the modern kimono, which in its form was a direct descendent of the robe known as the *kosode* in the sixteenth century, in that Chinese women intellectuals succeeded in creating the *qipao* by first creating a basic style from the gown worn by Manchu women and then making it attractive and fashionable.<sup>63</sup> The term was applied to the garment because in its earliest form it resembled a single-piece robe similar to the female version of the robe of the Manchu (semi-nomadic herdsman from the northeast of China, organized in “banners,” who ruled the country for almost three centuries in the Qing Dynasty), rather than the two- or three-piece costume formerly worn by Chinese women.<sup>64</sup>

The modern *qipao* has a hybrid design that combines Chinese, Manchu and Western elements of clothing in one garment, with the Western fashion influences introduced subsequent to the opening of China to the West.<sup>65</sup> Its popularization in China and overseas started later than the kimono, but also via images of women. In the case of China, these were used in advertisements for different types of commodities on calendar posters that were produced in Shanghai and Hong Kong to celebrate the Lunar New Year.<sup>66</sup> The meaning of the rise of the *qipao*, as Finnane puts it, is provided by the women who wore it: they were “the female face of a progressive China.”<sup>67</sup> Women of the emerging middle class were “susceptible to the effects of modern life”<sup>68</sup> and international fashion trends to be found in the modernizing Chinese cities. As Hazel Clark argues, “in the 1920s and 1930s the *qipao* began to gain popularity and came to signify modernity.” Nevertheless, and contradicting this modernity, as a product of colonization it projected the image of Chinese women as “exotic” and desirable consumables.<sup>69</sup>

In the case of Japan, by the turn of the twentieth century there was a great proliferation of different types of kimono and kimono fabrics, each having an appropriate social and seasonal

level. Especially stimulating was, as previously mentioned, the renaissance of the kimono design and aesthetic of the earlier Genroku era, that entered fashion around the time of Japan's victory over Russia, when the firm Mitsukoshi opened the first modern Japanese department store. During these years patterns and colours for kimono multiplied under its influence.<sup>70</sup>

Later, as in most parts of the world in the 1920s, “the changing context of urban women's roles”<sup>71</sup> with the modernization of the cities and the industrialization of society resulted in social experimentation, and in Japan gave birth to new types of urban women. As kimono consumers they were targets of the Japanese department stores and of the advances in the new media, especially via mass women's magazines.<sup>72</sup> From working women (*shokugyō fujin*) employed as waitresses in the cities at cafes and bars, to workers in the textile mills, clerical workers or urban middle-class wives, the self-motivated housewife (*shufu*) or the model “good wife, wise mother” and the “ordinary woman” (*tada no onna*), even the modern girl, all donned kimono on occasion, writes Milhaupt.<sup>73</sup>

### ***Proliferation, Standardization, Western Influence***

For women:

[There was] a great proliferation of types of kimono, each with its appropriate social and seasonal level. Pattern and colour exploded and multiplied, stimulating a renaissance of exuberant design recalling the Genroku era in the early seventeenth century.<sup>74</sup>

Another characteristic of the kimono revival of this period was the standardization of the use of the garment. This must have been a natural consequence of the abolition of the hierarchically defined social classes of the feudal times, which created a more homogeneous consumer circle, so democratizing kimono.<sup>75</sup>

According to Dalby, Western fashion influenced kimono during Meiji in two ways:

- the adoption of physical items of dress (coats, shawls, veils, and jewellery)
- the cultivation of clothing sensibilities (notions of feminine beauty and ideological aspirations regarding women in society)

For example, Western coats influenced the use of the *haori* jacket as a formalizing accessory to kimono, while Japanese brides started to dress in outfits of solid white,<sup>76</sup> the colour of the bride in Western costumes. Another example of the influence of Western dress on kimono argued for by Dalby is the outfit known as “Reform Dress.” Used for school uniforms, this two-piece dress emulated the Western-style blouse and skirt, with a long-sleeved blouse under the kimono and a skirt-like hakama over it.<sup>77</sup>

In pre-modern times and in early Meiji the kimono a woman could wear was determined by her rank in society and the occasion on which it was worn. Different kimonos were worn depending on whether they were for daily wear or for special occasions.<sup>78</sup> At the end of the Meiji period another category of kimono emerged and became known as “visiting wear,” *homongi*.<sup>79</sup> This kimono best represents the new style of kimono for urban Japan, with its

public areas, parks, avenues and department stores, where women needed to dress well while going about the city in public, in a more elegant kimono than *ryakugi*<sup>80</sup> or everyday clothing. Japan had assimilated textile design, dyeing and weaving techniques from other countries in Asia and from the West throughout its history; the treasures of the years of exchange are part of the oldest collection of textiles in the world at the *Shōsō-in* repository in Nara. With time, the culture of mixing foreign with native resulted in a kind of Japanization<sup>81</sup> of the former, and it is not surprising that with the Meiji Restoration and the exchange of ideas, materials, techniques and technology with the now industrialized West there was an impact on the textile production of the modern kimono, with new kimono textile fashions generated, including Western motifs with a Japanese twist.

### ***Materials and Techniques***

Toby Slade upholds the interesting thesis that the way modernism was experienced in kimono design was not through changes in the form of the robe but in the textural experience of the wearer, with new fibres such as wool used in the confection of kimono.<sup>82</sup> Japanese textiles have always been characterized by the use of different methods of weaving and dyeing with native techniques, fibres and natural dyes, always in a great artisanal way and employing wonderful skills. Nevertheless, two major new developments, the use of chemical dyes and the introduction of the modern Jacquard loom for weaving, came with the West and modernization.<sup>83</sup> These developments were studied and mastered by Japanese weavers and dyers, first under foreign tuition, in Japan and overseas, then applied to the pre-existing methods and native materials and techniques.

With the demand for cloth for the making of uniforms for the navy and the army, the Japanese textile industry, with the support of the government, sponsored the building of wool mills. The small-scale workshops of the pre-modern time were transformed into large factories with Jacquard looms that became the motor of Japan's process of industrialization.<sup>84</sup> As noted by the kimono historian Yamanobe Tomoyuki, between 1880 and 1890 “looms with the Jacquard mechanism permitted greater diffusion of patterning, and motifs became larger.” Dalby shows that wool was not only required for making uniforms: the demand for wool kimono was even higher.<sup>85</sup> She argues that “the use of chemical dyes and improved looms turned ‘traditional’ rural stripe-and-splash patterns into mass fashion items—‘serviceable, comfortable, and fashionable, for town or country.’”<sup>86</sup> Penelope Francs adds: “In response, silk producers shifted towards cheaper materials, including lower-grade-silk, mixtures of silk and cotton, and eventually artificial fibres, and developed techniques that enabled them to produce fabrics with the look and feel of silk in more exciting designs for consumers beyond the elite.”<sup>87</sup> Materials like wool now became new resources for kimono design, and by the turn of the century, as Slade argues, “woollens and worsteds showed their real gains, not in the narrow demand for Western suits but in the adoption of these materials for the kimono,”<sup>88</sup> through the kimono cloth made with them.

## ***Kimono Design: Nationalism and Strategies of Self-Orientalization***

The longing for imperialism of Japan as a nation influenced nearly every aspect of the new industrial society rising in this period, and clothes were no exception.<sup>89</sup>

In the post-war prosperity after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 there was an increase in production of *hiro-obi* the “wide sash.”... After 1897, competitions were held for obi designs and there were exhibitions in the major kimono shops, which became popular at that time.... After that war, the people, full with the power of their nation, favoured large, gorgeous kimono woven with only one or two pattern repeats in the form of *hiro-obi*. This magnificent decorative style continued into the Taishō period, 1912–1926.<sup>90</sup>

Kimono design around 1887 was characterized by lighter ground colours for kimono and obi (the sash), a style known as “*Akebono* dyeing.”<sup>91</sup> “This particular style of colour gradation symbolized daybreak as the colour on the kimono lightened upward from the hem.”<sup>92</sup> In Kyoto, elaborate kimono worn by geisha and apprentice geisha became a trend popular with ordinary women.<sup>93</sup> The designs of men’s *haori* coat linings and long *juban* (an undergarment) became larger in scale and the motifs more distinctive.<sup>94</sup> These trends, which reflected the pride of the population after victory in the second Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895, reappeared later in the enlargement of women’s kimono designs after Japan won the Russo-Japanese War at the beginning of the twentieth century, and in particular in the Japanese *ikat* patterns,<sup>95</sup> which, “emerged, stimulated by *yūzen*-dyed patterns,<sup>96</sup> pictorial and photographic designs, as did spirals and curves influenced by the Art Nouveau movement in Europe.”<sup>97</sup>

With Japan’s victory over Russia, a dark shade of blue called *kachi-iro* or “victory colour”<sup>98</sup> for kimono became popular: “On the domestic front, nativism re-emerged in a euphoric public sense of pride.”<sup>99</sup> At the same time, *Japonisme* was blooming in the West. Although Meiji-Japan’s laws prohibited women from political participation:

The Japanese state called on all subjects of the empire, women as well as men, to support the war effort.... A few women worked in hospital as nurses; many raised funds or contributed their own savings or valuable possessions. Finally, within carefully delimited parameters, women joined men in the celebration of victory.<sup>100</sup>

The so-called “mood to revive classic designs”<sup>101</sup> with ultra-nationalistic patterns re-invigorated the use of classic motifs. The revival of kimono reflected national pride in the design of kimono patterns, linings, and collars. Jennifer Robertson argues that strategies of Oriental-Orientalism<sup>102</sup> were used to help construct Japan’s image as an “ancient but civilized” country different from other Asian countries, which were considered both by the West and by the Japanese as backward and inferior.<sup>103</sup> The laws of 1890 prohibiting women from participation in politics “reinforced and legitimized the family duties, social values, and poverty.... Most importantly, the laws were part of a systematic state interest in how women and the family system could serve the developing nation.”<sup>104</sup>

With the entrance of Japan (as the only non-Western country) in the league of imperialist powers of the world, the contrast within Japan between “the traditional” and therefore Asian

and “Oriental,” as opposed to the “Other,” the “Western,” was then exacerbated. Maintaining the idea of homogeneity of what it means to be Japanese or of Japanese origin in the sense of the so-called *nihonjinron* promoted the uniqueness of Japan.<sup>105</sup> The image of cultural and political power during these glorious years was expressed through women’s kimono, *haori* and obi design. Some fashionable motifs used during this first revival were cherry blossoms (the samurai spirit) or chrysanthemum (the imperial flower) and rising-sun flags,<sup>106</sup> the *Kōrin* style, and *Genji*-style motifs, the last also characteristic of *kosode* of the *Genroku* era (1688–1704) of the Edo period.<sup>107</sup> The *Genroku* was a time when Japanese culture flourished.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, despite the claimed homogeneity, these styles were used mostly by women of the upper and middle class: “At the turn of the century, however, women below the ranks of the middle class could scarcely afford the luxury of focusing only on the care of their husband and children, and official rhetoric did not ask them to do so.”<sup>109</sup>

One of the most interesting aspects of this first kimono revival is the influence of the department stores, especially Mitsukoshi. Department stores started to be the new arbiters of taste in modern Japan:

Mitsukoshi developed new designs for kimono modelled on Japanese art works. The retailer held exhibitions devoted to the artist Ogata Kōrin (1658–1715) in 1904 and sold a new style of kimono dubbed the “Genroku Style” in reference to the Genroku Era (1688–1703), which was when Kōrin was active.<sup>110</sup>

While some kimono patterns were inspired by Japanese traditional motifs, new interpretations of pictorial dyed techniques from the feudal period such as *yūzen*-dye were also adapted to modern materials (via a mixture of chemical dyes and rice-paste). A major fusion of the exchanges in knowledge took place with the invention of the stencil paste-resist dyeing technique called *kata-yūzen*.<sup>111</sup> This technique revolutionized kimono design. It allowed the late eighteenth-century paste-resist dyeing pictorial designs (*yūzen-zome*) to be produced in multiples.<sup>112</sup>

Classic patriotic patterns and motives could thus be reproduced *en masse*, allowing a larger proportion of the population to wear new printed kimono. Christopher Breward writes that the twentieth century has been considered by most art historians as the age of “mass,” “mass-production,” and “mass consumption,” as was characteristic of Western society since the beginning of the twentieth century. In Japan, the experience of the same period was not that different, and the influence of the West in kimono developments in terms of textile design, production and advertisement is a proof of that.<sup>113</sup>

This tendency of looking back to traditional patterns/motifs and design for the production and commercialization of kimono as a result of pride in winning a war against a Western power can also be interpreted as one of the early Japanese acts of self-Orientalization.

## *Designers and Marketing Strategies Powering the Revival*

Most of the kimono designers hired by kimono dealers were painters of Japanese-style *Nihonga* and powered the revitalization of stereotypical designs used in *yūzen* dyeing.<sup>114</sup> It is important to mention that during the first fifty years of the twentieth century, Japanese painters designed kimonos and kimono designers painted.<sup>115</sup> During the feudal period, costumers had selected designs from a kimono pattern book (*hinagatabon*)<sup>116</sup> and in consultation with a kimono purveyor, or at a kimono merchant shop or *gofukuya*.<sup>117</sup> As explained by Milhaupt, during the feudal era the boundaries between kimono designers, printmakers, and craftsmen were permeable, with all participating in a fluid interaction during the kimono production process. Famous painters such as Ogata Kōrin (1658–1716), already mentioned above, were sometimes assigned to execute designs directly onto kimono surfaces. “The tradition of personal consultations between producer and client continued for one-of-a-kind designs,”<sup>118</sup> but increasingly designers dominated the mediation between the consumer and the producer, establishing their own designs and setting trends.

In fact, through Milhaupt’s research we know that after 1897 leading kimono dealers started setting the trends in kimono fashion, proposing various interesting designs which gradually increased in size.<sup>119</sup> Later, textile collectors such as Nomura Shojiro and other established *yūzen* dealers in Kyoto persuaded famous painters to produce new designs and drawings for this dyeing process.<sup>120</sup> It has been argued that Nomura, together with Professor Ema Tsutomu, devoted time to organizing kimono exhibitions and book publications, and invited artists to sketch classes with historically accurate costumes modelled by geishas.<sup>121</sup> The purpose of these classes was to rescue and reinterpret classical kimono designs. The visit of motif designers to international exhibitions shows the spirit of the time:

A Kyoto-based motif designer, Kamisaka Sekka, visited the Philadelphia International Exposition in 1903 to study design, and after returning to Japan he emphasized the importance of replacing Art Nouveau design with that of Rimpa-school design.<sup>122</sup>

As the study by Fujii on *Meiji* kimono reveals, nationalist tendencies present in design favoured native over foreign styles of kimono design. At the same time, *kosode* (small-sleeve kimono) designs of the Edo period were receiving renewed attention, and the clear-cut Rimpa designs were just as widely adopted by the public.<sup>123</sup> However, most of the strategies aiming to revive kimono were created by department stores:<sup>124</sup>

The department store was the first modern retailer, not only for Western countries, but also for Japan. The department store broke out of the mould of the traditional retailer with the introduction of two key innovative developments in Japan. One was the modernization of the retailer alongside the physical transformation of the retail outlet from a dry goods-store format to a department-store format. The other was the Westernisation of retailers and their customer’s lifestyles, heavily influenced by the pro-Western political standpoint of the Japanese government at the time. These two factors combined, through an assimilation of



the Western retail model, to trigger the birth of a new entity: the Japanese department store.<sup>125</sup>

Previously these stores only sold dry goods, but now best represented the place where modern urban Japanese were consuming contemporary culture:<sup>126</sup> “Department stores and textile manufactures also promoted their products through seasonal trade shows that for the first time featured ready-to-wear kimonos displayed on mannequins, each labelled as an ‘ideal type’ of woman.”<sup>127</sup> Consumers could then identify with a specific look, and cultivate this image or taste for kimono fashion. While in this era kimono became one of the consumer items which one could purchase at department stores, it is said that already during the *Genroku* era (1688–1704) of the Edo period a similar idea to the Western concept of fashion (as opposed to style) had started to come into play for the first time in Japan. It was then that it became possible to express the thematic content of textile design and pictorial representation by means of a dyeing method, namely the technique known as *yūzen* dye. *Genroku* was also a time when the merchant class was fuelling a passion for “the newest and best of everything,” including series of printed fashion books of *kosode* designs (the famous *Hiinagata bon*).<sup>128</sup> The recent study by Penelope Francs (2015) already referred to above cites the work of the scholar Tamura Hitoshi, who demonstrates that mass-market fashion in the kimono at the turn of the nineteenth century was indeed possible, and that its foundations had already been laid during the Edo period:

It is the interaction between the growth in demand for fashionable kimono goods, stimulated by imported wool, and the responses of domestic producers in their regional production centres that explain the subsequent survival and development of the distinctive industry producing the highly differentiated, Japanese-style textiles that made mass-market fashion in the kimono possible.<sup>129</sup>

But it was the opening of Japan to the West that brought regular imports of new European and American technologies, such as the railroad, the rotary press, photography, and the technology for making movies, and these influenced what scholars have called a modern “culture industry,” consisting of mass publishing, mass media, and mass entertainment based on the new technologies.<sup>130</sup> This “culture industry” affected the lifestyle of the Japanese, especially in Tokyo and other urban centres.

The first kimono revival occurs when the sites for consumption in the city centres also changed, with the building of department stores, dance halls, cafes and other public places:

The dissemination of information on fashion trends, aided by publication of pattern books and fashion guides, promotions and exhibitions sponsored by department stores, and improved transportation between the major cities, created ideal conditions for the textile industry to cater to its expanding consumer base.<sup>131</sup>

During these years at the turn of the century, posters, which had become an efficient medium of commercial art, were used to propagate trends set by “popular actresses and singers modelling the latest kimono fashions.”<sup>132</sup> Posters of beautiful women, “*bijinga*,” a traditional genre of painting going back many years, were still being used for promotional purposes.<sup>133</sup>

Artists and designers like Hisui Sugiura (1876–1965)<sup>134</sup> who became chief designers, in his case at the prominent Mitsukoshi department store,<sup>135</sup> stood at the forefront of a new age in the graphic arts and “forged new directions in consumer trends,”<sup>136</sup> targeting mostly women as the prime focus of Japan’s consumer public. According to Dalby, the use of Western-style accessories like brooches at the closure of white collars and shawls are some characteristics of the hybridism of kimono fashion and the Western influence of this period. White collars are themselves a characteristic of modern kimono and there are many discussions on the thesis that kimono white collars may have been the result of the influence of white-collar shirts used as underwear in Western dress.<sup>137</sup>

### *The New Japanese Women*

Women of this period became an important part in the process of modernization of the country. The heavy work of the spinning mills that made possible the high speed of textile production of textiles during this time was mostly carried out by women clad in kimono. In



Figure 4: The women poses at a mirror in the interior of a Japanese-style room. As an unmarried girl, she wears a formal silk kimono with long sleeves (*furisode*) and sash folded in the *bara-musubi* style, or rose bow. Her hair permed and covering the ears, her fine eye-brown and painted lips are typical of the way “modern girls” arranged their hair and did their makeup in the Western style. Trendy as they were, they often changed their look, most of the time donning Western-style clothing, at other times kimono. Kawakatsu Kenichi “Kimono.” Photographs from the 1936 edition.

this period the production of kimono was controlled by the same large trading companies and department stores which had started it in the late Meiji. Under the concept of commercialism and in order to produce kimono for the masses, kimono designs from earlier periods were

reused, and designs from foreign countries selected and fused into kimono textile designs. Yamanobe Tomoyuki criticizes the kimono of this period because it was perhaps superficial in the complexity of its design and the aims of its production when compared with previous eras (standardization of pattern and mass production against artistry and uniqueness in design). But he also recognizes that with the introduction of new technological inventions from foreign countries, textile techniques such as “*kasuri*,” Japanese *ikat*, enabled high levels of production.<sup>138</sup>

One of the types of kimono that best represents the Taishō era is known as *meisen*.<sup>139</sup> *Meisen* casual silk kimono are multi-coloured *kasuri* woven on mechanized looms using, as Yamanobe explains,<sup>140</sup> a newly invented *kasuri* technique which adds stencil printing to the weaving process. This technique of mass production created casual kimonos with bold design that were easy to combine and less expensive to purchase. They were the kimono that most girls and middle-class working women used as daily clothing. As the kimono expert Reiko Mochinaga Brandon argues, *meisen* kimono express in their design “the richness of the encounter, assimilation and fusion of Western art, design and technology with its Japanese counterpart.”<sup>141</sup> During Taishō, women entered professional careers as teachers, telephone operators, typists, office workers, department-store clerks, bus conductors, midwives, nurses, and even doctors. Education was universal, suffrage was broadened and democracy was growing, and “The implementation of a nationwide education system in 1872 had significantly increased literacy.”<sup>142</sup> The kimono of this era express in their motifs of enlarged patterns the technological advances that were changing the cities of Japan into cosmopolitan centres. The advance of technology enabled electricity and appliances such as the sewing machine or the radio to reach many city households.

In the visual arts, the trend towards Westernization was accelerated by the earthquake that destroyed most of Yokohama and practically all of downtown Tokyo.<sup>143</sup> The new city rose from the ruins of the old feudal Edo with many Western-style buildings of brick and concrete. The concept of the middle class emerged during this period. Paradoxically, given this trend, a new wave of nationalist sentiment was also on the rise. The World Depression affected the Japanese economy too. Modern kimono design reflected the multifaceted role of women during the late nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries. In this transitional era, these somehow more emancipated women, known as the “New Women,” contrasted with those in the traditional role of the feudal-era wife. Urban middle-class wives constituted another, even higher consumer category. The orthodox model of the “good wife, wise mother” (*ryōsai kenbo*) could be seen wearing kimono, but the emerging “modern girl” (*modan gaaru*) might also wear a trendy kimono, with her hair stylishly perm-waved into a Western-style coiffure<sup>144</sup> (Figure 4). As women sought higher education in record numbers, the demand for student uniforms created a market for kimono with subdued, modest designs.<sup>145</sup> In 1900, women comprised seventy-seven per cent of the labour force in the cotton industry.<sup>146</sup> By 1911, more than 190,000 women found employment working the silk-reeling machines in major

production centres. Powered by women, the textile industry provided much-needed capital to fund the government's efforts to industrialize and modernize.<sup>147</sup>

As the development of an urban culture—reflected in the way of life of the expanding middle class, growing mass-production industries, and especially the media—gained momentum following World War I (1914–18), the elements of a mass society emerged and changed the shape of Japanese society.... On the one hand, culture (*bunka*), a term popularized in the 1920s, was linked to the intellectuals' concern with spirituality and considered the fruit of a select group of sophisticated scholars. On the other hand, "mass" culture (*taishuu bunka*), under the sway of Western symbols, emerged against the backdrop of Japanese social *modanizumu* (modernism), a predominantly urban lifestyle in which women figured as prominent icons and stood out in contradiction.<sup>148</sup>

During Taishō, although the disparity of wealth was a common phenomenon among the population, there was an increase in the prosperity of the economy provided by many Japanese of the middle class. They engaged in urban leisure activities which had been developing since feudal times.<sup>149</sup> In this period, Japan's economy expanded rapidly, with a wave of consumerism for goods and leisure activities, especially among women.<sup>150</sup> Between the 1920s and 1930s the "Modern Girl" appears as a phenomenon in Japanese history. Professor of Asian Art History Kendall H. Brown writes:

The late 20s and early 30s marked the rise of the ultra-fashionable and ever-controversial young women known as *moga*, short for *modaan gaaru* (modern girl). Defined physically by their cropped hair, heavy makeup, and Western style of clothes, *moga* often worked and thus had some degree of socio-economic independence. Culturally and politically, in the minds of conservatives at least, *moga* threatened the established norms of feminine deportment and undermined the social order, if not the whole of Japanese culture.<sup>151</sup>

The "*modan gaaru*" (modern girl) and "*modan boi*" (modern boy) were the revolutionary stars in Ginza, a high-class shopping area with Western-style architecture in central Tokyo that remains a centre of high and street fashion in contemporary Japan. This group of Japanese young people, dressed in the most stylish Western fashions, were the pioneers in introducing Western clothes and haircuts to the average population in Japan. Often, modern girls were the target of censure, but the way they had their hair done with a permanent wave, short and curled, began to be one of the basic symbols of modern femininity. As reported by Brown, this hairstyle was introduced through a photo in the magazine *Fujin gurafu* in 1921.<sup>152</sup> In 1923 the first machine for styling the permanent wave was brought to Japan.<sup>153</sup> A "*modern gaaru*" was also tempted to dress in kimono, with her curled short hair and Western-style accessories adding a cosmopolitan touch to the kimono outfits. Brown argues that:

For women, and the artist representing them, the most common method of conjoining tradition and modernity was pairing Western-style hairdo with kimono. Relative to the elaborate Japanese hairdos, cropped and permed Western styles were relatively easy to maintain and comfortable.... A Western hairdo conveys a woman's familiarity with both cultural traditions. The conjunction of Western and Japanese styles may also suggest ambiguity or friction, implicitly questioning the compatibility of cultural modes. Typically,

however, the answer seems to be affirmative, as Western hairstyle and kimono are smoothly synthesized into a hybrid fashion statement of dual cultural affiliation.”<sup>154</sup>

Even though Tokyo rose after the earthquake of 1923 as a modern city with many buildings in Western-style architecture, this was not enough to challenge the majority of the population to give up completely the robes they wore for Western dress, especially not women. From a study on clothing habits made by the Japanese ethnographers Kon Wajirou and Yoshida Kenkichi in 1925, we know that after the earthquake of 1923, most of the men, sixty-seven percent of the 1,180 persons observed in the upscale shopping area of Ginza, wore Western-style fashion, while ninety-nine percent of the women were in Japanese dress.<sup>155</sup> During the 20s and 30s, efforts were made to integrate Western clothing for women, so schoolgirl uniforms and clothes for working women were designed in Western fashion.<sup>156</sup> However, writes Shimada, “All women of those times, even though they had spent their student days in Western-style school uniforms, would revert to Japanese clothes after graduation and marriage.”<sup>157</sup> Throughout the 1930s, reports Milhaupt, luxurious textiles were produced. Often decorated with war motifs such as airplanes or bombs, these were often used as decoration for the obi.<sup>158</sup>

In 1937, with the Second Sino-Japanese War, a time of military conflict began that lasted until the end of World War II in 1945. Between the end of the Taishō period (1912–1926) and the end of the Second World War (1945), the pattern of clothing habits continued to be kimono for both daily life and the home for most women, but Western clothes for work and kimono for the home for men. During this period, kimono culture and design continuously experienced the influence of national and international events of cultural and political origin, such as the influence on design by avant-garde movements such as Art Deco<sup>159</sup> and by mass-media strategies for kimono promotion and sales.<sup>160</sup>

### ***The Kimono Dies***

On the seventh of July in 1940 a law called “The Prohibition Law of Seven/Seven” was passed in order to prevent the production of expensive products, including silk kimono. While at the time Japan’s ultra-nationalist tendencies saw in Western clothing an imitation of the cloth of the enemy’s attire, kimono, “was effectively banned during these years, ironically enough, as an expression of unpatriotic indulgence in luxury. For kimonoed women who had never made the transition to *yōfuku*, government policy urged short, non-draping sleeves.”<sup>161</sup> Frugality as a way of regulating the use of material heavily influenced the textile industry and kimono. Shimada Tomiko observes that in the same year a uniform combining Western and native elements was created for the use of all people in the country:

In 1942, a standard national uniform was established for the use of both officials and the general public. The national dress for women was a combination of Western and Japanese elements. Its basic pattern was a jacket with a narrow kimono-style collar combined with a skirt with a somewhat broad hem.<sup>162</sup>

According to Shimada, even though this style of uniform was not appealing in terms of attractiveness, many women's organizations supported its adoption and its production was carried out by women themselves. The materials for the making of this uniform were recycled old silk kimonos. As the war situation became even more critical, the use of elaborate clothes awoke high criticism among women, and the role of clothing in the war effort was a serious matter of consideration. Shimada records:

In 1943, the Greater Japan Women's Association created a sensation by taking the lead in a movement for cutting off long kimono sleeves. Members of the women's association would appeal to any female passers-by on the Ginza who were wearing long-sleeved kimonos, and would pass out to them little cards reading 'Let's cut off our long sleeves.'"<sup>163</sup>

The long sleeves of kimono were considered a waste of material at a time when there were shortages of all consumer goods. With the war, the use of kimono as a robe almost died out. Even geishas were prohibited from using the robe and performing, and were instead made part of the working women who, like the schoolgirls, were taught in schools how to produce uniforms. Trousers known as "monpe/mompe" made of old silk kimono were produced as street wear for women, and men used threadbare suits from pre-war times.

Reiko Mochinaga Brandon writes of her own war experience:

The government required women to dress in monpe, the half-length work jacket with tight sleeves and divided trousers gathered at the ankles worn by workers. My mother cut up her kimono, inexpensive *meisen* prints first, then precious silk *ōshima-kasuri* (*ikat*), batik-dyed *sarasa*, and hand-dyed *yūzen*, to make these monpe uniforms. During the last years of the war, the remaining silk kimono in our house disappeared, one by one, in exchange for rice and vegetables: farmers preferred to own silk fabric rather than unstable currency. One day I saw my mother standing alone in a dark room in front of the mirror with a white silk kimono draped over her shoulders like a bride. I think she was saying farewell to her kimono. The red wedding kimono was kept intact, but eventually it vanished in a devastating air raid in April 1945.<sup>164</sup>

Air raids intensified in 1945 and most Japanese cities were burned down. Firewood became unaffordable, making bathing almost impossible. There was not enough food, and people desperately tried to obtain fish, vegetables or rice on the black market. The war left many families broken or dispersed in different parts of the countryside. The black market also dealt in cloth: "The pieces of clothing which had been hoarded in chests of drawers had been reduced to ashes during the bombings, or even if they had been evacuated to a safe place, they had to be bartered away piece by piece for food."<sup>165</sup> There were no more clothes for sale in the burnt-out cities and people were left with just what they had on, migrating after the end of the war to farm villages in search of food.<sup>166</sup>

## ***The Second Kimono Revival (1950–1970)***

### ***A Reactionary Revival***

After Japan's surrender in August 1945, women were given political rights and a draft of the new constitution was made.<sup>167</sup> Shimada argues that during these years a wave of democratization swept over Japanese society.<sup>168</sup> In 1947 the new Japanese Constitution “incorporated the principle of equality of both sexes, and women began to leave their homes and to take jobs.”<sup>169</sup> From this time on, Western clothing began to be used widely in Japan, from the urban centres to the country-side. This phenomenon of the popularization of Western attire became a “symbol of Japan's postwar democratization” process.<sup>170</sup>

As Shimada writes, the postwar period with the occupation of Japan by the American Army saw the use of American-style clothing and plain colours, mostly blue and red, among the Japanese population. He considers that by this time women had started to take an interest in dressing well again, and it was common that Japanese with close contact to Americans would manage to exchange Japanese clothing for used American clothes or would try to obtain used American clothes illegally.<sup>171</sup>

### ***Why and How was Kimono Revived?***

In 1949 the laws against the production of textiles were abolished, and materials and ready-made clothing started to circulate. In 1950 the first fashion shows were held, and so the profession of fashion design started to re-establish itself.<sup>172</sup> In 1952 modelling fashions became a profession. In 1953 the confusion regarding what line or fashion design style was appropriate, or desirable, for the taste of Japanese women was resolved by the success of the “Tulip Line” of Christian Dior. In this way, Parisian fashion established itself as the most influential fashion that appealed to and was assimilated by Japanese women. But by 1957 Japanese fashion designers had started to create their own fashion designs. Fashion designers came to be recognized in their profession, and modelling and fashion shows captured the minds of Japanese women, who were seduced by the rapid changes in style presented on stage: “Professional models began to go on tours of the provinces, and the fashion-show idea caught on until it began to take on the appearance of a boom.”<sup>173</sup>

Young girls as well as middle-aged women in their thirties and forties went to fashion shows as a sort of recreation comparable with a visit to the theatre or to the movies in the 1920s.<sup>174</sup> In this way, the demand for dressmaking schools<sup>175</sup> also awoke the desire of Japanese women to make their own Western-style clothing. Some kimono were reused and remade into Western-style clothing. Soon, Western-style clothes were finally assimilated as everyday wear, and learning how to make them became part of the education of most women preparing for marriage. If during the years before the end of War World II most Japanese women learned how to hand-sew Japanese clothes as a regular part of life, after the war there was a clear shift

and they began to study how to sew Western clothes instead. Meanwhile, around 1955 the clothing of Japanese men started to be influenced by fashion.<sup>176</sup> Men's clothing post-war was characterized by the sporty line as a general favourite for informal wear. At the same time, men's clothing became less subdued and bright colours came to be used freely.<sup>177</sup>

Between the years 1950 and 1951, argues Shimada, kimono began to gain new popularity. She terms the new shift of interest to Japanese garments within Japanese designer circles as a "kimono revival." Liza Dalby also writes on this revival of kimono:

By 1943 there was no longer enough fabric in the country to fulfil rations. Baggy trousers called mompe became women's daily dress. Worn over a shirt or an old kimono, mompe was the civilian uniform of a generation of working women.... By war's end, kimono's claim to wearability was gone.

Yet, after all, kimono was resurrected in the 1950s, and continued to grow in popularity during the 1960s in what Japanese called a "kimono boom." Kimono's revival was noticeable after about 1955, not as everyday wear but as ceremonial wear for the New Year's holidays. Department store sales in 1955 showed that four kimono outfits were sold to every six of *yōfuku*....

As prosperity returned, kimono came back like robins in spring. Too extravagant to be worn during the ultra-nationalistic era, kimono had to wait for the economic miracle of the 1960s to find its new—small, and very formal—social niche.<sup>178</sup>

Nevertheless, according to the online *Encyclopedia Japan* on kimono:

During the period between 1965 and 1975, there were a lot of women who wore kimono every day. That was due to the appearance of kimono made from wool called Wool Kimono, which raised the popularity of kimono and created a boom. As Wool Kimono had beautiful colour, it became popular among women throughout Japan as casual kimono."<sup>179</sup>

Milhaupt cites Andrew Gordon<sup>180</sup> and argues that this second kimono revival might have actually started as a "reactionary one" around 1948 to 1950 with a yukata boom.<sup>181</sup> Most likely this boom was then followed by the boom for formal ceremonial kimono powered by the department stores, together with the rise of "author kimono" and parallel to the establishment of the law for Intangible Cultural Property of the 1950s and the creation of the kimono academies in the 1960s.

As Shimada points out,<sup>182</sup> the wave of revivals continued, with the introduction of the so-called "New Kimono" by the kimono designers Tanaka Chiyo and Otsuka Sueko: a kimono influenced by the developments in the confection, and convenience, of Western-style clothing.

Characteristic of this type of kimono, reports Shimada, are its novelty and practicality:

- Easy-to-wear two-piece design and shorter sleeves
- Reduction of the width of the obi
- Production of pre-tied obi for young women who do not know how to tie an obi for themselves
- Machine-sewn kimono made of chemical fibres or woollen material in double-width size



- Washable chemical fibres or wool as popular materials

She also establishes, just as the *Encyclopedia Japan* argues above, that the type of kimono popular within this revival was

- The ready-made wool kimono:

Not only have ready-made wool kimonos begun to come on the market, but also large-scale production of wool and chemical fibre material for kimono has started.<sup>183</sup>

The popularity of casual kimono can be interpreted as just described, or more simply as the result of the response by Japanese designers to the reform of traditional Japanese dress following Western modes. For modern Japanese women, the benefits of fabric technology were highly desirable: For daily life, kimono that could be washed without being dismembered and were made of woollen material were popular in comparison to casual silk kimono.

### ***Kimono from a ‘Thing to Wear’ to Precious Commodity***

Searching for ways to revive kimono for use in everyday life and adjusting its design to the new fabrics and care-technologies, the so-called “New Kimono” was created. “It represented an effort to give native garments a fighting chance in the wearability competition”<sup>184</sup> with Western clothes.

Nevertheless, silk kimono was still used for more special occasions, such as parties, New Year celebrations, or as an evening or cocktail dress. As noted by Milhaupt:

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, the kimono’s rising status as a luxury garment reflected Japan’s rising economic status, domestically and internationally. Discouraged from wearing or unable to afford silk kimonos during the war years, many Japanese families spared no expense to acquire kimonos and revelled in this newly regained luxury.<sup>185</sup>

Also in the same period, so-called “kimono academies” started to open all over Japan. At these places girls could learn how to wear kimonos, and in this way take part in the New Year’s festivities<sup>186</sup> and in all sorts of other special occasions, leaving Western clothes for everyday life and work. Most young girls born after the war had not grown up dressing in kimono, and therefore needed to be assisted either by their mothers or by a beauty expert when it came to putting one on.<sup>187</sup> Important during this revival is perhaps the fact that a new interest in the form and aesthetics of Japanese native costume was formed among the younger generation. Shimada evaluates this phenomenon as a re-discovering of the “well-rounded, harmonious beauty of the native Japanese costume” among young Japanese women. This re-discovery of the Japanese figure in native dress has a lot to do with the way Ito Kinoko wore her kimono while competing as Miss Japan in the Miss Universe contest in 1953.<sup>188</sup> Milhaupt informs us that the kimono style worn by Miss Ito “accentuated a curvaceous, long-legged silhouette, known as *hatto shin bijin*,”<sup>189</sup> that became a style worn by women of a similar age, so mostly young females, as attested by Shimada.

According to the study of Milhaupt, while by the early 1940s kimono had come to symbolize an item of luxurious lifestyle,<sup>190</sup> during the war the kimono began to be an item inappropriate for use. Later, during the U.S. occupation of Japan in the aftermath of the Second World War, kimono was bartered for food in the countryside or sold on the black market. Milhaupt's thesis sees "this revolutionary change in the symbolic and material value of the kimono" as a moment that marks a new meaning for kimono, from an everyday garment into a dress used for ceremonial occasions. This shift resulted in the kimono gaining a more formal status as an object of trade, as a precious commodity.<sup>191</sup> This transformation occurred parallel to the emerging role of kimono makers, which evolved from their being nameless artisans to designated Living National Treasures. The kimono produced by Living National Treasures are considered items of high value and are most of the time collected by museums and private collectors for display, thereby losing with time their meaning as clothing to wear.<sup>192</sup>

With time, the kimono was used less-and-less as an item of everyday clothing, to become the National Costume we now know. As Milhaupt explains, between the end of the 1950s and into the 1960s, kimono rose as an icon of Japan in the world:

From the late 1950s through the '60s, the kimono was used as an icon of Japan in several major orchestrated appearances. The excitement and publicity generated by the 1959 imperial wedding of then Crown Prince Akihito to the commoner Shoda Michiko included photographs of the bride-to-be dressed in kimonos.... Advertisements for the government-sponsored Japan Airlines, which launched international flights in 1954, featured female flight attendants wearing kimonos in their first-class cabins.... In 1959, Kojima Akiko won international acclaim when she was crowned Miss Universe.... Several pictures from her reign show Kojima dressed in formal kimonos, sometimes while wearing her crown.<sup>193</sup>

### ***Kimono and the Adoption of Western Fashion***

With the end of the Second World War, clothing habits changed dramatically in Japan. Western fashion became a field of study at specialized schools, and the home-sewing of Western-style clothes a hobby of housewives and the younger generation of Japanese girls. The six decades after the war were a diary of learning fashion for the Japanese fashion industry. It mastered both the creative way of designing clothes from Europe and the way of doing business from the United States. As Ohara Yoko points out:

Historically, the Japanese textile industry received support from the state in the 1950s, being designated as a key industry to earn foreign exchange for postwar restoration. As typified by Bunka Fashion College, the proliferation of dressmaking schools contributed to home sewing of Western-style clothes and established the foundation for a shift to ready-to-wear apparel.... At the same time, department stores sought partnerships with *haute couture* in Paris and synthetic fibre manufacturers developed new materials (such as nylon), and together they left a big mark on the Japanese fashion industry.<sup>194</sup>

As Ohara describes here, in the 1950s the proliferation of dressmaking schools for sewing Western-style clothes established the framework for a transformation to ready-to-wear

apparel. Strategies were then designed to teach people how to appropriate the Western style of clothing. To this end, it was important to relate points of similarity in how clothes could be worn between the two forms of dress, which existed alongside each other in Japanese society in the 50s. For instance, in an article by Nakahara Jun'ichi<sup>195</sup> in the magazine SOLEIL,<sup>196</sup> one way that seems to have been used to teach the new generation how to wear Western dress was to show that the kimono and Western clothes could be used in similar ways (Figure 5):



Figure 5: During the 1950s, kimonos and kimono lingerie (*nagajuban*) could be used tied high at the neckline, or loose, imitating the 1950s fancy collars of male-shirt design.  
 “Wafuku mo yōfuku mo tekunikku kara umareru seikaku wa mina onaji,”  
 SOLEIL magazine, no. 33 (Spring 1955).

In each illustration, the hairstyle, make-up and pose of the woman in each pair of examples is the same, so as to make clearer the similarities between the ways in which the kimono and Western dress can be worn. As announced by the title of the article, there was a clear intention to make the wearer familiar with the changes in clothing habits of the time by highlighting analogies:

和服も洋服もテクニックから生まれる性格は皆おなじ中原淳一

*Wafuku mo yōfuku mo tekunikku kara umareru seikaku wa mina onaji*

Japanese dress and Western dress are both born from technique; they have the same character.

There was a clear impact during the 1950s on the way casual kimono were worn, accentuating and marking the waist. The Dior “Tulip Line” influenced the way to fold the lower part of the kimono so that it became tubular, the waist was tiny due to the tied sash, and the shoulders were narrow and soft (see Appendix A: Visual Schema below for the illustrations on the Second Kimono Revival). The hairstyles of famous actresses like Audrey Hepburn also made

an impact on the way Japanese women wore their hair while wearing kimono. The efforts put into the assimilation of the Western style of fashion made its study a high priority.

### *The Academization of Kimono*

Gradually, the tradition of wearing kimono was reduced to the ceremonies that officially required them. The knowledge of wearing the robe was also about to be lost. Shimada argues that with kimono worn only on special occasions, young Japanese lost the everyday-life connection to the garment and it was harder to teach future generations how to sew kimono and dress in kimono within the home. As for Japanese men, they were in fact the ones who continued to wear kimono at home, using Western clothes at work and on public occasions. However, an interest in the teaching of the kimono dressing culture revived as the Japanese economy began to recover, which seems to have helped to revive interest in the kimono: academies started to flourish all over Japan around 1960. It would seem that “clever entrepreneurs” thought they could make a good profit introducing kimono “to young women lacking childhood familiarity with wearing it.”<sup>197</sup>

In recent years, a growing sense of nationalism and greater pride in Japanese cultural heritage have revived interest in the kimono. Schools teaching how to sew it by hand and how to wear it have sprung up all over Japan. Norio Yamanaka, chairman of the All Japan Kimono Consultant Association, eloquently described the experience of putting on a kimono and tying the obi properly as a physical and spiritual transformation (Yamanaka, 1982).<sup>198</sup>

The kimono academies had a strong influence on the use of kimono, transforming the garment from its basic meaning “of a thing to wear” into an “object of study,” the practicality of which had been lost. As Stephanie Assmann notes, citing Liza Dalby:

Non-functionality as a way of displaying luxury and refinement becomes a function in itself. Closely related to the importance of appropriate kimono attire is yet another form of consumption: kimono schools that have increasingly emerged since the 1960s (Dalby, *Kimono*, 119–21).<sup>199</sup>

The kimonos from the 1960s on became stiff, the colours subdued, the patterning restricted to a few classical motives, and the way a kimono was used was ruled by certain conventions, also elaborated by the academies. Just like the learning of kimono in the academies, the learning of other traditional arts, such as the tea ceremony and flower arrangement, were considered excellent ways to polish female character.<sup>200</sup> The crafting power of “traditions” as a mean of emphasizing the gender-specific role of women is also reflected in the learning that took place in the kimono academies. The kimono in the modern academy “strives to be chaste, dignified, and proper, like the ideal samurai wife of the past,”<sup>201</sup> and the students of the kimono academies are advised how to wear the national dress of Japan, without frivolity.<sup>202</sup>

After the Second World War, most forms of informal kimono such as street wear, town wear and home wear gradually lost their use, and were kept, put away in wardrobes, in just a few

families. Silk kimono and brocade obi were the outfits to be used on the official or otherwise special occasions derived from this second kimono revival. Since then, this outfit has remained a symbol of Japan as a nation displayed by women.

As Dalby maintains:

The roots of official kimono go back to the Meiji high-city mode of bourgeois propriety, but its full manifestation is largely a post-World War II phenomenon. One result of Japan's postwar economic prosperity was to make traditional high culture available to all. The trite but exclusive upper-class image of a polished young lady became a goal within reach of almost everyone.<sup>203</sup>

Assmann also cites John Clammer, who argues that for the Japanese the possession of cultural capital generates means of differentiation which emanate among people of the same economic background.<sup>204</sup> The mastering of wearing kimono in the academy distinguished the background and cultural capital of the educated middle-class Japanese woman. Barbara Lynne Rowland Mori writes regarding the rise in popularity of the *chadou* Japanese tea ceremony and the increased leisure time of women in the 1960s:

In Japan since the 1960s women, and especially urban homemakers, have increasingly been interested in a variety of leisure activities, particularly the traditional arts of flower arrangement (*ikebana*) and *chadou*. The reasons for this development include growing affluence, nostalgia for things Japanese, and an increase in free time for such pursuits.<sup>205</sup>

It is within this group of women with the budget and time for attending leisure activities that the kimono schools with their traditionalistic discourse found a source of students, with many of them eventually becoming kimono consultants after they graduated from the academies. In Japan, leisure time constitutes both an important element in the study of traditional arts and an opportunity for women to pursue their personal desire for identification as talented individuals.<sup>206</sup> By the mid-1950s, Japan's economic recovery and the creation of sponsored programs such as the Living National Treasures system had established an ideal environment for emerging individual kimono designers, "kimono authors." By the time Japan hosted the summer Olympic Games in Tokyo in 1964 the kimono had become one of the country's national symbols.<sup>207</sup>

## *The Kimono in the Age of Globalization (since 1970)*

### *The Kimono Indirect Revival*

During the 1970s, Japan became the first Asian country to host a World Exhibition, thus being recognized as one of the world's most advanced industrial nations.<sup>208</sup> It was around the same time that Japanese fashion designers began and developed their careers in the West. In the 1980s, Japanese fashion “exploded onto the international scene.”<sup>209</sup> As Fukai Akiko convincingly argues, “The transformation of form in fashion requires a shift in material, structure, and cutting methods.”<sup>210</sup> Such a change was achieved in Western fashion by the work of Madeleine Vionnet around 1918,<sup>211</sup> thanks to her intense focus on the study of kimono.<sup>212</sup> A similar fresh, new aesthetic re-emerged in the 1980s in Europe, this time in the other direction, from Japanese designers working in Paris, who gained their inspiration from the silhouette, shape, structure, textile design and textures of kimono. These new limits revolutionized Western fashion design.<sup>213</sup> I call this phenomenon of Japanese designers working in the West viewing Western fashion through the grammar of the kimono an “Indirect Kimono Revival.” Going beyond cultural frontiers, designers like Miyake Issey, Yamamoto Yohji, and Kawakubo Rei, all trained in Paris and in Japan, brought about a revolution in aesthetics in world fashion. They introduced relaxed, architectural shapes, uneven hemlines, astonishing textures, sober colours, “lace” made of rips or cuts in the fabric. These dress forms enunciated different ideas about fashion and the way clothing relates to human bodies.<sup>214</sup> The new perspective on clothing broke with many conventions of taste, since the Japanese approach puts a lot more emphasis on the quality and expression of the fabric in the design process.<sup>215</sup> There is a moving away from the Western system of construction of clothing in small pieces fixated on the form of the human figure.

But how were the Japanese able to gain a foothold in Paris so quickly? After the Second World War, Japan famously became an economic world power, and the World Exhibition in 1970 in Osaka is a proof of that. As Dorinne Kondo wrote in 1992:

Economic competition is paralleled by competition for cultural recognition, and here Japan is assuming a place at the forefront of design, the meeting point of high tech and aesthetic.<sup>216</sup>

### *The Contemporary Revival*

After Japan's impressive recovery and reconstruction of the country following her defeat in World War II, the remaining years until the turn of the century were ones of intense change and exchange in the world. Globalization and the use of new technologies such as the Internet and the mobile phone introduced new forms of shopping, advertisement and consumption.<sup>217</sup> At the same time, anxiety as a consequence of the rapid spread of Western consumer culture stimulated an opposing reaction. Japan started to fear for her place as an economic power in

the world and nationalism started to rise. It is in these years of tension during the economic crash in the 1990s, when the bubble burst, that the kimono started to experience a comeback. For the generation of Japanese whose parents were born during or after World War II, the Western style of clothing was the normal and daily way to dress. Fashion and dressing in Western style was a synonym for the success of the Japanese state economy of the afterwar period. Nevertheless, as explained by textile expert Nagasawa Yoichi, nowadays the connection of Japanese people towards fashion is changing:

Ordinary people's sensitivity, their sense for clothes, has evolved significantly and is on a higher level. In that sense, fashion itself is now coming to a turning point. Price, design—these things are all starting to change. Now it is very important that the item is cheap and good, whereas thirty years ago expensive things were good and cheap things were rubbish. I am trying to teach this point of view to my students—that such a way of thinking is going to change significantly.<sup>218</sup>

Professor Nagasawa attributes this evolving sensitivity of ordinary people in Japan towards fashion, and the sense they have for clothing, to the fact that today's younger generation in Japan sees design in general as part of their life. Regarding contemporary kimono, he maintains:

Nowadays young people are discovering kimono. The yukata worn in the summer is a proof of that... The generation of youngsters, who are not from our generation, see kimono as a progression of yukata and embrace it with a fresh feeling... I think that recently there has been a kimono boom. But youngsters don't wear kimonos in the normal way. Instead they wear them as mini-skirts, or change the obi, and they do similar things with their hair—they are inventing a new kimono style. One can see quite a lot of that recently.

I think they view it in the same way as Western clothing—they simply take on a new item of clothing.<sup>219</sup>

This change in attitude towards clothing and design, the confidence that people have in their sensitivity to fashion, their ability to use something well-designed but cheap, could also be a good reason why kimono re-entered the Japanese fashion scene as a second-hand item, as part of a revival in the Age of Globalization.

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- 1 *Bunmei kaika*: 文明開化. “The use of the term *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment) by the Japanese state as an expression of public policy implies, of course, that the period before it was uncivilized and unenlightened, when this in many regards was not the case.” Toby Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 6.
  - 2 Liza Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*, 71.
  - 3 Ibid.
  - 4 Dalby, *Kimono*, 71.
  - 5 James L. McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, 279.
  - 6 Dalby, *Kimono*, 71.
  - 7 Ibid., 100.
  - 8 Ibid., 71.
  - 9 Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, *Kimono: A Modern History*, 25.
  - 10 Margot Paul, “A Creative Connoisseur: Nomura Shōjirō,” 16.
  - 11 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 100–101.
  - 12 Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905).
  - 13 Wakita Mio, *Staging Desires: Japanese Femininity in Kusakabe Kimbei’s Nineteenth-Century Souvenir Photography*.
  - 14 Ibid.
  - 15 Ibid.
  - 16 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 117.
  - 17 *Bunkajin* 文化人.
  - 18 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 117.
  - 19 *Ryūkōkai* 流行会.
  - 20 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 117.
  - 21 For instance, in 1916 Mitsukoshi honoured the two-hundredth anniversary of the death of the celebrated designer *Ogata Kōrin* (1658–1716) with an exhibition and an associated design contest which had Ogata’s style as theme and inspiration for the designs. Mitsukoshi continued using campaigns and initiatives to maintain his leading position in kimono design trends. See Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 117.
  - 22 Iwabuchi Koichi, *Recentring Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*, 6–7.
  - 23 McClain, *Japan*, 291.
  - 24 Dalby, *Kimono*, 9.
  - 25 Horikiri Tatsuichi, *The Stories Clothes Tell: Voices of Working-Class Japan*, 1.
  - 26 “The Russo-Japanese War in particular had demonstrated Japan’s power, prowess, and equality with the West through her modern military’s use of modern technology. It had also helped to set Japan on a path of aggressive expansion and imperialism that carried through for the next four decades.” Sandra Wilson, “The Past in the Present: War in Narratives of Modernity in the 1920s and 1930s,” 170.



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- 27 Jacqueline M. Atkins, "Setting the Context," 40.
- 28 Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism*, 313.
- 29 Atkins, "Setting the Context," 40.
- 30 Ibid; Ōka Yoshitake, "Konoe Fumimaro: A Political Biography," 12.
- 31 Dorinne Kondo, *About Face*, 172.
- 32 The fact that kimono stayed the desirable clothing for women and Western-style clothing for men may not only have been due to the political response inside Japan at the time. As Dalby argues, it is worth considering that throughout the Japanese history of *kosode*-kimono, major stylistic hallmarks were received from women's dress rather than from men's. She observes that "the emergence of *kosode* as kimono's immediate predecessor in the clothing family tree...[is] also traceable to its matrilineal inheritance." Dalby, *Kimono*, 14.
- 33 Eric Hobsbawm, and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*.
- 34 Iwabuchi Koichi, "Complicit Exoticism: Japan and its Other."
- 35 *Bushidō* 武士道: the code of honour and morals developed by the Japanese samurai.
- 36 Befu Harumi, *Japan: An Anthropological Introduction*, 50.
- 37 Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 155.
- 38 Ibid., 156.
- 39 Iwabuchi, "Complicit Exoticism."
- 40 Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 156.
- 41 Ibid., 97.
- 42 Ibid. 66.
- 43 Ibid., 66.
- 44 Ibid., 97.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Claudia Delank, *Das Imaginäre Japan in der Kunst: "Japanbilder" vom Jugendstil bis zum Bauhaus* [Imaginary Japan in Art: "Japan pictures" from Art Nouveau to Bauhaus], 35–36.
- 47 Sharon H. Nolte and Sally Ann Hastings, "The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women, 1890–1945."
- 48 Nolte and Hastings, "The Meiji State's Policy Toward Women."
- 49 Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 51.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Ibid., 102.
- 54 Antonia Finnane, "What Should Chinese Women Wear? A National Problem," 5.
- 55 Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 65–69.
- 56 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 97.
- 57 Ibid.

- 58 Finnane, “What Should Chinese Women Wear?,” 5.
- 59 Ibid.5.
- 60 Ibid.5.
- 61 Hazel Clark, “The *Cheung Sam*: Issues of Fashion and Cultural Identity,” 155.
- 62 *Cheongsam/Cheungsam/Cheung Sam* 長衫 is a typical traditional and feminine body-hugging dress with distinctive Chinese features of Manchu origin. It is also known as *qipao* 旗袍.
- 63 Adolphe Clarence Scott, *Chinese Costume in Transition*, 4.
- 64 Ibid., 9.
- 65 Clark, “The *Cheung Sam*,” 155.
- 66 Ibid., 157.
- 67 Finnane, “What Should Chinese Women Wear?,” 13.
- 68 Ibid., 13.
- 69 Clark, “The *Cheung Sam*,” 157.
- 70 Dalby, *Kimono*, 113.
- 71 Barbara Sato, prologue to *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan*, 7.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 104.
- 74 Dalby, *Kimono*, 113.
- 75 “Meiji *wafuku* convention standardized a few styles and dictated that the folds invariably be placed in back.” Dalby, *Kimono*, 104.
- 76 Ibid., 115.
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Ibid., 109.
- 79 *Hōmongi* 訪問: Visiting wear.
- 80 *Ryakugi* 略儀: Everyday clothing.
- 81 “A key feature distinguishing Japanese arts from those of the West is the fact that the vast majority of forms and techniques are not native to Japan but were imported forms and techniques which have invariably been transformed into something uniquely Japanese through a process of refinement, adaptation, and modification. Moreover, the progress of this phenomenon, which I call ‘Japanization,’ seems to follow certain strangely immutable laws.” Isozaki Arata, “Acceptance and Creation: The Aesthetic of an Island Nation.”
- 82 Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 56.
- 83 Understood here as “the processes of political, industrial, scientific, economic and technological reform and innovation.” Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 2.
- 84 Dalby, *Kimono*, 75.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 Ibid., 179.

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- 87 Penelope Francs, “Was Fashion a European Invention? The Kimono and Economic Development in Japan,” 348.
- 88 Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 57.
- 89 Kenneth B. Pyle, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 133.
- 90 Yamanobe Tomoyuki, “Modern Textiles,” 6.
- 91 Fujii Kenzō, *Japanese Modern Textiles*, 93.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 *Kasuri* 緋: *Ikat*: cloth in which patterns are made by reserving sections of warp or weft threads from the dye.
- 96 *Yūzen* 友禅: Popular stencils and paste-resist dyeing technique developed in Kyoto in the late seventeenth century.
- 97 Fujii Kenzō, *Japanese Modern Textiles*, 94.
- 98 Dalby, *Kimono*, 114.
- 99 Ibid.
- 100 Gail Lee Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945*, 159.
- 101 Yamanobe Tomoyuki, “Modern Textiles,” 6.
- 102 Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan*, 97–101.
- 103 “Drawing on Said’s *Orientalism*, Minear argues that Western observers of Japan (such as Chamberlain, Samson and Reischauer) shared ontological assumptions about the West and the exotic, but inferior, Other, Japan. They were fascinated with some exotic parts of Japan, lamenting the loss of ‘authentic’ Japanese tradition in the process of modernization. But, they were all quite sure that Japan’s future was to be modelled on Western civilization: All the causes which produced the Old Japan of our dreams have vanished. . . . Old Japan is dead, and the only decent thing to do with the corpse is to bury it.” (Chamberlain, quoted in Minear 509).  
‘Their’ present laziness is ‘our’ past, and ‘their’ future is ‘our’ present diligence.” Iwabuchi, “Complicit Exoticism,” 1; Richard H. Minear, “Orientalism and the Study of Japan,” 509.
- 104 Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women*, 156.
- 105 Iwabuchi, “Complicit Exoticism.”
- 106 Dalby, *Kimono*, 99.
- 107 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 37.
- 108 Ibid., citing Claire Cuccio, “Inside Myōjō (Morning Star, 1900–1908): Art for the Nation’s Sake.”
- 109 Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women*, 158.
- 110 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 37.
- 111 *Kata-yūzen* 型友禅: *Yūzen* done with a stencil-dyed method.
- 112 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 36.

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- 113 Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion: Studies in Design and Material Culture*, 182.
- 114 Fujii Kenzō, *Japanese Modern Textiles*, 93.
- 115 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 38.
- 116 *Hinagatabon* 雛型本: Model or pattern book.
- 117 *Gofukuya* 呉服屋: Cloth for kimono mercer. Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 38.
- 118 Ibid.
- 119 Ibid.
- 120 Fujii Kenzō, *Japanese Modern Textiles*, 93.
- 121 Ema Tsutomu, *A Historical Sketch of Japanese Customs and Costumes*, 23–41.
- 122 Fujii Kenzō, *Japanese Modern Textiles*, 95.
- 123 Ibid.
- 124 “Department stores as a means of *embourgeoisement* were essential; they democratized consumption.... It is no longer a place where women simply buy things, but a place to which they simply and necessarily go, just as people wander into and out of a shrine or temple. Shopping becomes an act not solely for procurement but also for entertainment.” Slade, *Japanese Fashion*, 62.
- 125 Fujioka Rika, “Japanese Department Stores: A Failure in Globalisation.”
- 126 Ibid.
- 127 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 37, citing Wada, “Starlets and Masters: *Meisen* Posters Published by the Textile Makers,” 8.
- 128 Amanda M. Stinchecum, ed., *Kosode: 16th–19th Century Textiles from the Nomura Collection*, 51.
- 129 Francs, “Was Fashion a European Invention?”
- 130 Gennifer Weisenfeld, “Japanese Consumerism: Forging the New Artistic Field of ‘*Shogyo Bijutsu*’ [Commercial art],” 79.
- 131 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 37.
- 132 Ibid., citing Ōmori Tetsuya, “*Gakatachi no egaita meisen bijin: Ashikaga mesisen no senden posutaakara*” [Beauty in *meisen* garments in painting: Poster for Ashikawa-*meisen*].
- 133 Weisenfeld, “Japanese Consumerism,” 80.
- 134 “Hisui was one of the editorial committee members of the Art Design series. From 1910 until 1934, Hisui was the chief designer at Mitsukoshi department store. The popularity of his art nouveau and art deco-inspired design catapulted him into national recognition in the Japanese art world.” Weisenfeld, “Japanese Consumerism,” 80–81.
- 135 “The Mitsui Kimono shop established the Mitsukoshi Company and opened the first Japanese department store in 1904. Mitsukoshi aimed to produce newly designed kimono as formal dress for Japanese women.” Kojima Kaoru, “The Woman in Kimono,” 5.
- 136 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 37, paraphrasing Jinno Yuki, *Shumi no tanjō: Hyakkaten ga tsukutta teisuto* [The birth of leisure activities: The education of “taste” through department stores], 76–86.

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- 137 “An elderly geisha I know suggested that the appearance and popularity of white undercollars in the Meiji era was directly due to the influence of the look of a white blouse worn under a dark suit jacket.” Dalby, *Kimono*, 106.
- 138 Yamanobe Tomoyuki, “Modern Textiles,” 1–12.
- 139 *Meisen* 銘仙: A warp-printed textile intended to resemble *kasuri*.
- 140 Yamanobe Tomoyuki, “Modern Textiles,” 1–12.
- 141 Reiko Mochinaga Brandon, *Bright and Daring: Japanese Kimonos in the Taishō Mode (from the Oka Nobutaka Collection of the Suzuka Classic Museum)*.
- 142 Weisenfeld, “Japanese Consumerism,” 78.
- 143 Hugo Munsterberg, *The Japanese Print: A Historical Guide*.
- 144 Kendall H. Brown, “Flowers of Taishō: Images of Women in Japanese Society and Art, 1915–1935,” 20.
- 145 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono, 37, citing Arai Masano, “*Ito kara hajimaru monogatari: Kantō meisen sanchi no rekishi, fudō o tazunete* [A story that starts with a thread: History and landscape of the home of *meisen* from the Kantō region],” 126.
- 146 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono, 37, citing E. Patricia Tsurumi, *Factory Girls: Women in the Thread Mills of Meiji Japan*, 150.
- 147 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 37.
- 148 Barbara Sato, *The New Japanese Woman: Modernity, Media, and Women in Interwar Japan*, 137.
- 149 Ikegami Eiko, *Bonds of Civility: Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Culture*.
- 150 Weisenfeld, “Japanese Consumerism,” 78.
- 151 Kendall H. Brown, “Commerce, Creativity and Postcards in Japan, 1904–1940.”
- 152 Brown, “Flowers of Taishō,” 20.
- 153 Ibid.
- 154 Ibid.
- 155 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono, 110, citing Miriam Silverberg, “Constructing the Japanese Ethnography of Modernity,” 38.
- 156 Shimada Tomiko, “Changing Japan XX: Clothing Habits,” 354.
- 157 Ibid.
- 158 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 190.
- 159 In 1926, the Art Deco exposition was held in Paris, “giving birth to a new movement in the arts and crafts. Art Deco was accepted readily by the Japanese, who were familiar with the rendition of two-dimensional motifs—a common element of both Art Deco and the Rimpa School.” Fujii Kenzō, *Japanese Modern Textiles*, 95.
- 160 “Western designs taken from European fashion magazines were also used in Japanese textiles. After 1923, these Western designs were modified to reflect Japanese tastes, and Japanese indigenous *sarasa*-chintz designs as well as the *sarasa*-chintz designs of India and Java were also adapted for use in kimono design.” (*Sarasa*: Calico, chintz). Ibid.
- 161 Dalby, *Kimono*, 147.

- 162 Shimada, "Changing Japan XX."
- 163 Ibid.
- 164 Brandon, *Bright and Daring*, 45.
- 165 Shimada, "Changing Japan XX," 355.
- 166 Ibid.
- 167 Ibid., 356.
- 168 Ibid., 355.
- 169 Ibid., 352.
- 170 Ibid.
- 171 Ibid.
- 172 Ibid.
- 173 Ibid., 357.
- 174 Ibid.
- 175 "The dressmaking school must not be overlooked as a contributor factor to the mass adoption of Western clothing by Japanese women. Dressmaking schools had been in existence even before the war, but it was only in the postwar period that they grew to such vast proportions. Several hundreds of them were founded all over the country." Ibid.
- 176 Ibid., 358.
- 177 Ibid.
- 178 Dalby, *Kimono*, 146–47.
- 179 *Encyclopedia Japan* (website), s.v. "kimono."
- 180 Andrew Gordon, *Fabricating Consumers: The Sewing Machine in Modern Japan*, 85.
- 181 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 240.
- 182 Shimada, "Changing Japan XX."
- 183 Ibid., 360.
- 184 Dalby, *Kimono*, 149.
- 185 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 237.
- 186 Dalby, *Kimono*, 148.
- 187 Shimada, "Changing Japan XX," 360.
- 188 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 237–38.
- 189 Ibid.
- 190 Ibid., 190.

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- 191 “The shift in the kimono’s function from its original use as an everyday garment to its new status as an object of veneration—not only revered as a national costume but also elevated as a ‘traditional’ Japanese art—is closely tied to the activities of artists, collectors and dealers active in Japan and abroad throughout the twentieth century.... Today, institutional and private collectors of Japanese textiles active both within and outside Japan contribute to a heightened appreciation of Japanese garments. Thus the kimono enjoys an elevated status, not simply as a garment, or even a national costume, but also as an object of Japanese artistry and craftsmanship worthy of museum display.” *Ibid.*, 237.
- 192 *Ibid.*, 227.
- 193 *Ibid.*, 238–39.
- 194 Ohara Yoko, “Japanese Fashion Business: Tradition & Innovation.”
- 195 Nakahara Jun'ichi (1913.02.16–1983.04.19).
- 196 Nakahara Jun'ichi, “Wakafu “*Wafuku mo yōfuku mo tekunikku kara umareru seikaku wa mina onaji* 和服も洋服もテクニクから生まれる性格は皆おなじ中原淳一,” *SOLEIL*, no. 33 (Spring 1955), Japan.
- 197 Dalby, *Kimono*, 133–34.
- 198 Hugo Munsterberg, *The Japanese Kimono*. Here Munsterberg refers to Yamanaka Norio, *The Book of Kimono*.
- 199 Stephanie Assmann, “Between Tradition and Innovation: The Reinvention of the Kimono in Japanese Consumer Culture,” 362.
- 200 Dalby, *Kimono*, 135.
- 201 *Ibid.*
- 202 *Ibid.*
- 203 *Ibid.*, 128.
- 204 John Clammer, *Contemporary Urban Japan: A Sociology of Consumption*, 103.
- 205 Anne E. Imamura, *Re-imaging Japanese Women*.
- 206 Barbara Lynne Rowland Mori, “The Traditional Arts as Leisure Activities for Contemporary Japanese Women.”
- 207 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 190.
- 208 Christine Kalb, *Weltausstellungen im Wandel der Zeit und ihre infrastrukturellen Auswirkungen auf Stadt und Region* [World exhibitions over time and their consequences for cities and regions].
- 209 Kondo, *About Face*, 475.
- 210 Fukai, “The Kimono and Parisian Mode,” 54.
- 211 *Ibid.*
- 212 *Ibid.*
- 213 Jan Brand, and José Teunissen, eds., *Global Fashion, Local Tradition: On the Globalisation of Fashion*, 15.
- 214 Kondo, *About Face*, 475.

- 215 For example, in some cases such as in the work of Miyake where “designs are then complemented by letting air into the chinks between the body and the garment,” this air or “*ma*” being a term “widely used in Japanese traditional arts to designate an artistically placed interval in time or space.” Hiramitsu Chikako, “Japanese Tradition in *Issey Miyake*.”
- 216 Dorinne Kondo, “Aesthetics and Politics of Japanese Identity in the Fashion Industry,” 176–77.
- 217 Ibid.
- 218 Nagasawa Yoichi, Expert Interview, October 2008.
- 219 Ibid.



# *Part Three:*

## *The Third Kimono Revival (1990–2010)*

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Reviewing newspaper articles, I could see that the yukata trend was powered by fresh designs, and, just as Professor Nagasawa argues, by the freedom to use and appropriate kimono as just another piece of clothing, in the same way that Western-style clothing is worn.

As mentioned already, after the rise of the economy in the 1960s, in the 1990s Japan's economy crashed and went into long-term recession. Since around the end of the 1980s, the yukata summer kimono has made a comeback, with an international brand like United Colors of Benetton and internationally recognized designers like Anna Sui designing yukata.<sup>1</sup> From the 1990s until the turn of the century the yukata continued to gain attention as summer kimono. As I will explain later in this thesis, parallel to this comeback of the yukata, old kimonos that were handed down within families were refashioned into Western-style clothing, "kimono re-make/remake." This activity of re-making kimono was done mostly by housewives and amateur designers. As mentioned in the *Introduction*,<sup>2</sup> in 2008 Stephanie Assmann reported how around the turn of the twenty-first century a group of men had decided to found a group of kimono wearers, the "Kimono de Ginza" in Tokyo. The group wanted to create events for kimono fans where they could meet and wear kimono in Tokyo. Furthermore, by then more reports were to be found on the Internet announcing that second-hand and antique kimonos were also welcome as an alternative form of dress, worn as casual wear. In 2003 the publication of *Kimono Hime* began,<sup>3</sup> a magazine created to promote trendy and eccentric kimono outfits, especially targeting women and introducing kimono to the young generation, offering antique kimono as another, "light" way to start wearing the robe. While doing field research, around 2003, I discovered many shops and boutiques opened to sell second-hand kimono, especially in tourist and urban areas in Tokyo and Kyoto, and in cities like Kobe or Kanazawa.

Many accessories were created, such as shoes, belts, T-shirts, jeans, shopping bags, and bags in Western-style modern design with textile designs imitating kimono design, especially printed on *chirimen*-like fabric. Sometimes recycled kimono cloth was reused to create the accessories. These function as souvenirs as well and are sold at kimono boutiques and shops, especially in tourist areas in Kyoto and Tokyo. After scanning numerous articles on the Internet, I realized that by 2005 Japanese kimono designers of new casual kimono were attracting attention and also exhibiting their collections abroad, especially in the USA.<sup>4</sup> Famous traditional tourist flea markets were also welcoming amateur designers engaged in the re-make of accessories and clothing made with kimono textiles. Recycled kimono and obi could also be purchased as fragmented textiles at the flea markets.

What was it that started as a yukata boom and by the turn of the century was taking the form of a kimono revival? Reported as a highlight of the contemporary revival was the fact that the kimono was reviving its function as casual wear. Some of the characteristics of the kimono within this contemporary revival were:

- Second-hand antique kimono with patterns of the early 1920s were considered fancy and desirable.
- The style of kimono and the way it was worn that was most promoted is reminiscent of the era called Taishō Romanticism.
- New casual kimono and accessories were also printed with patterns that were once trendy as underwear (*nagajuban*) during the Meiji (1868–1912), Taishō (1912–1926) and early Shōwa (1926–1940) periods. The casual kimono, new or second-hand, and re-make accessories could be purchased online; almost all kimono shops and boutiques, kimono designers or coordinators used the Internet as a platform to sell kimono.
- New events related to tourism in urban areas were created to rent casual kimonos for a day.
- Discounts at restaurants and bars and for taxis, as well as tourist packages, were created and linked the use of kimono with a new way to enjoy visits to tourist areas in Kyoto, Uji City or the Tango Peninsula and Tokyo; all services could be accessed online.
- To the same end, Kimono rental stations were opened at Kyoto Central Railway Station and at Karasuma Railway Station, for costumers arriving in Kyoto from the north or the south of the country.
- Books on the history of modern kimono were published by museums and by kimono collectors.
- I have often asked myself “Why was kimono revived at the turn of the twenty-first century? How did it happen? How could kimono become another piece of clothing in the contemporary wardrobe of the younger generation?”

To answer these questions and thanks to a grant from the Rudolf Chaudoire Stiftung, I was able to visit Japan and conduct field research in the fall/autumn of 2008.

What follows in the next pages is an introduction to my field research. First, I explain in greater depth some aspects of the methodology used in my work. Then I make an overview of what I call “The Waves of the Revival.” These “waves” refer to the categories of kimono created in the re-invention of the kimono within this contemporary revival. In this part of the text I also introduce the styles of kimono that featured in the revival, and the trendsetters and magazines involved in the coordination of the updated and new kimono fashion styles. After that, I make a more thorough description of the “Sites and Events” where this fieldwork was nurtured.

# *Methodology*

## *Serendipitous Beginnings*

After a short period of two months (October to December 2008) in the field I came back to Germany with a suitcase full of books, *mooks*,<sup>5</sup> booklets, magazines and collected textile objects found in Japan. My laptop, digital camera, sound recorder and an external hard drive had been my most faithful tools of research. They helped me document, record and preserve observations, as well as the conversations that I had along the paths I took in order to accomplish my fieldwork. It was not an easy task to decide where to start collecting data in the field, but every day the field experience itself opened a new door for encounters. In fact, and as the anthropologist Joy Hendry writes:

The serendipitous events that occur during the endeavour are often where the best lines of inquiry emerge.<sup>6</sup>

As explained in the section *Methodology* in the *Introduction*, I began the online research for this project at the end of 2006, continually collecting articles in magazines and newspapers on the theme of kimono recycling and revival. Even though most articles I had found by 2008 mentioned Tokyo as the epicentre of the revival,<sup>7</sup> others gave the addresses of shops and boutiques located in the ancient capital, Kyoto.<sup>8</sup> A city famous as the textile centre and heart of “Japanese traditions,” Kyoto had been my home town as an exchange student between 1993 and 1994. In fact, from what I knew about Japan during my previous visit in 1993–1994, kimono was an heirloom preserved within families. In 2001–2005 in Kanazawa in Ishikawa Prefecture, only students majoring in art and design were perhaps aware of the ongoing kimono trend mostly occurring in urban areas like Tokyo or Kyoto.

## *Kyoto-Kanazawa-Tokyo*

Even before going to Japan I knew that I was going to do most of my research in Kyoto, as Kyoto offered the best conditions for it: a city centre and extensive surrounding areas to explore on foot and by bicycle, a city with handcraft traditions in kimono and Japanese textiles, a modern mix of Japanese and Western lifestyles, shopping and tourist areas, a city where my old contacts still lived and worked, and one that I knew quite well. During my stay, I planned a week-long visit to Kanazawa as well (also a cultural and tourist site, but in Japan’s provinces and a city where I had lived and studied from 2001 to 2005), and another week in Tokyo at the time of the traditional *Setagaya Boroichi*<sup>9</sup> flea market, as well as at the time of the monthly gathering of the group known as “Kimono de Ginza.” In this way, I hoped to experience in my short stay of two months in Japan a contrasting panorama of the “phenomenon of revival and recycling of kimono.”

## *Rethinking My Previous Visits to Japan*

From my time in Kanazawa, I knew of the existence of a “second-hand kimono shop” near Kanazawa Station. Some of the students of the Kanazawa College of Art then were buying second-hand silk kimonos and vintage kimono accessories, including second-hand tabi (Japanese split-toed socks), obi and bags (in fact I used to go there with some foreign classmates without even thinking about the possibility of a kimono revival).



Figure 6: A selection of formal kimono and a model wearing the *jūni-hitoe* or twelve-layered kimono at the end of the “Kimono Anthology” show in Nishijin, Autumn 2008.

© Oly Firsching-Tovar

At that time, I noticed a strong feeling of identification with the culture of the Okinawa region in southern Japan and a kind of “nostalgia” among my classmates to get to know more about it. Some of my classmates were learning how to play indigenous musical instruments of Okinawa and were in an Okinawan music band; and one was eager to learn the kimono textile-dyeing techniques of Okinawa known as *Bingata*. Generally, in those years between 2001 and 2005, there was a vogue among my Japanese classmates for going on trips to Asian countries or to “exotic,” far-flung regions in Japan; not only because it was cheaper to spend a week in Thailand, China or Taiwan: for them it was interesting and cool. Nor was it only Japanese youth who wanted to get to know more exotic, traditional and rural parts of Asia. In contrast to my previous visit to Japan 1993–1994, during my stay in Kyoto in 2008 I was impressed to see many Chinese and South-East Asian tourists instead of the usual Europeans or Americans, in for example the audience of a kimono fashion show I visited at the Nishijin Textile Centre in Kyoto (Figure 6). This common interest of Asians, Japanese, Chinese, or people from Thailand in visiting countries on their own continent could be interpreted as a response to media globalization. As the expert in that area, Iwabuchi Koichi, explains:

In the 1990s, in spite of the pessimism of Japanese media industries, the spread of Japanese popular culture among Asia audiences became ever more conspicuous and arresting....

The Asian Business Review reported on the increasing Japanese export programs to Asian markets, stating that “Japan’s entertainment exports to Asia are on a roll” (*Satellite TV sees Gold in Local Content*, 1996). This phenomenon has been described dramatically by a Taiwanese-American scholar, Leo Ching (1994, 199), who notes that “throughout Asia, Japan is in vogue.”<sup>10</sup>

In some contemporary Japanese dramas, kimono appear, and recently a new Japanese drama called *Kol Kimono* was set in Japan but broadcast only in Thailand.<sup>11</sup> In this drama, elegant kimono is worn and displayed in the beautiful scenery of Kyushu in southern Japan. One of the main strategies of the drama was to show the locations where it was made, and thereby to get new tourists to visit Japan. However, it demonstrates also that kimono was fashionable for an Asian audience.

## *Examining the “Intervisuality” of the Field Site in Kyoto*

With the help of the names of the second-hand kimono shops and kimono coordinators found in articles in the online edition of *Japan Times*, or in Japanese magazines for the international public like *Kateigaho International* and *Nipponia*, as well as with the help of the Internet, I started to surf for addresses of shops dedicated to the sale of second-hand kimono in Kyoto and Tokyo. I arrived in the field with the addresses of some shops to visit that I thought might become important for my investigation. Nevertheless, these plans and my schedule did not mean I knew exactly which sites I was going to visit in each city. As Patricia G. Steinhoff explains so well, one must first “find the trails that lead” to the invisible subjects “and then work out ways to talk to them and observe their activities intermittently, in scattered locations.”<sup>12</sup> And to my surprise, the first two days after my arrival in Kyoto gave my research a new dimension.



Figure 7: One side of the three-dimensional poster of the Kimono Rental Station at Kyoto Station, advertising the styles of kimono coordination for women and men. Kyoto, October 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

On the way to buy my train ticket to the Kanazawa College of Art and Design (where the expert interview with Professor Nagasawa had been arranged) I found a rather large three-dimensional poster advertising the “Kyoto Kimono Rental Station” (Figure 7). This prominent poster, showing twenty different kimono outfits for rent, some for men but mostly for women, was located at the north entrance of Kyoto Central Railway Station. I decided to visit it the next day.

During the visit, I became familiar with another category of kimono, “casual kimono for rental,” and with the fact that since 2007 the season of autumn had been a time when people could “enjoy”<sup>13</sup> getting dressed in a rented casual kimono outfit and walking around in it, doing tourism and shopping in the city of Kyoto. The poster featured photos of various



kimono outfits for men and for women, texts explaining the offers promoted at the station, and diagrams of the “Kimono Rental Station.” A close-up of the picture of one of the kimono-clad women could also be found in other parts of the station enlarged as a poster (Figure 8).<sup>14</sup> A second poster found on the same day in Kyoto advertised the booklet-coupon *Kyoto Kimono Passport*,<sup>15</sup> showing another woman dressed in kimono in what seems to be a tea ceremony (Figure 9).



Figure 8: Poster for the “Kyoto Kimono Rental Station.”

The upper title of the page is written in English, to catch the curiosity of foreign tourists.

As can be seen on the website of the Kyoto City Tourism Association,<sup>16</sup> the railway station, railway companies, textile centres, museums and the city newspaper all participate and collaborate in the promotion of the *Kyoto Kimono Passport*, creating a network of institutions and shop owners that help the kimono culture to keep on moving with the times.

There were various forms of advertisement, including posters illustrated with the repetition of the same photographs used in various formats (Figure 10), texts citing key words like “enjoy,” slogans like “*kimono de aruko*” (“let’s walk around in kimono”). These I found in tourist brochures and advertisements, collected at train stations or on buses, in booklets sold at shops, and also on the Internet. This kind of visuality in the use of simultaneous forms of display and repetition of the same images and slogans written in the text of the advertisements is what Nicholas Mirzoeff has called “Intervisuality”: “the simultaneous display and interaction of a variety of modes of visuality.”<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, as Sarah Pink explains, citing Arjun Appadurai:

Like other items of material culture, visual images have their own biographies (see Appadurai 1986).<sup>18</sup> When they move from one context to another they are, in a sense, “transformed”; although their content remains unaltered, in the context “the conditions in which they are viewed are different.” (Morphy and Banks 1997:16) This also applies to the biographies of images that travel through the research process.... Images first produced, discussed and made meaningful during fieldwork will be given new significance in academic culture, where they are “separated from the world of action in which they were meaningful and placed in a world in which they will be interrogated and interpreted from a multiplicity of different perspectives.” (Morphy and Banks 1997:16).<sup>19</sup>



Figure 9: A women dressed in kimono is taking part in a tea ceremony; her attitude and gestures suggest that she is grateful and inspired by this traditional ritual. With her attitude she invites other people to have this experience at Kyoto, in kimono.

Poster for *Kyoto Kimono Passport*. Kyoto, 2008.

Taking on Pink’s explanation of the way visual images as objects need to be analysed, considering their biographies (as argued by Igor Kopytoff)<sup>20</sup> and at the same time their changing contexts, and using a mix of data as sources—which was the case for my the research material, I had to think of a creative and reliable concept—such as “Intervisuality”—which could help me examine the samples collected in my field experience and to put them into words:

Aspects an ethnographer may sample include settings, people, time and contexts (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995).<sup>21</sup>

Karen O’ Reilly talks of two stages in ethnographic research: the stage of “writing down,” when the information is gathered and stored, and “writing up,” the stage in which we have come to the point of presenting to others the information collected and selected from the field experience:

During fieldwork things are collected: we take notes of what people have said to us; we note down conversations we have overheard; we record (in writing on tape, or even in photograph and video) certain events, stories, formulae; we collect news items or advertisements or anything of interest that tells us more about our topic; and we do interviews which we transcribe or write from notes.<sup>22</sup>



Figure 10: Photo-documentation collage showing the repetition in the use of the same advertisements for the promotion of the Kyoto Kimono Rental Station and of the Kyoto Kimono Passport, located at different places within and outside Kyoto Central Railway Station.

Photo taken in Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

The field research for this thesis was based on a similar combination of collected material. The photos, as well as the material collected in the form of documents, books, magazines, flyers, postcards and advertisements, all contained visual information, images and text important for the evaluation and understanding of the kimono phenomenon.

## *Voices of My Informal Interviewees*

While in the field I sometimes chose the role of the tourist, and sometimes that of the researcher. When I was roaming the streets of Kyoto looking to settle down in my small apartment in *Higashiyama* (on the east side of the city), I was there as just another tourist taking pictures of the surroundings. But I was received by my landlady as a researcher: one of my best friends in town had kindly arranged for me to stay at her place, and since it was a dormitory for students, it was important for me to be introduced as a PhD candidate. Before going to Japan, given that my field of research was a new phenomenon, and as O'Reilly explains:

The way in which phenomena which were believed to exist in the world were available to anthropologists to learn about and explain was through observation rather than trusting the description of others, even participants.<sup>23</sup>

I did stay with my plan of putting most emphasis on observation. However, in some cases the role as participant “researcher” enabled the gathering of data through short videos, photographs and informal interviews with different groups of people in the field. O'Reilly suggests that in some cases:

It may be easier to take the role of researcher and to be seen to be collecting information in an acceptable way....

In your own milieu (i.e. not in some exotic outpost) it is sometimes possible to adopt the role of researcher since this is a recognised role, and it is sometimes quite difficult to go further (although some participation is still inevitable).<sup>24</sup>

That was the case in my experience in Japan, as I assumed the double-role of participant-observer. It was the combination of the two roles of an observer—a “tourist”—and of a participant—a “researcher”—that enabled me to collect different types of data and access various groups of actors, ask questions spontaneously, or observe things as they occurred in the field. The data obtained in my informal interviews were collected after I had presented myself to my key informants as a PhD candidate interested in the culture of kimono doing research for a university in Germany, and previously graduated from a Japanese Art College with a major in textiles. This information was summarized on my presentation card, which then became my passport to connecting with and receiving the attention of my informants. I could talk to my informants in Japanese, and since the first place in which I had lived in Japan was Kyoto, I knew some of the manners of the place and how to approach people in the city. As the tourist, on the other hand, I was the typical foreigner who was curious and wanted to take pictures of everything found on her way, including, of course, Japanese people. Then again, as a researcher, I could ask more questions related to the theme of my studies, pay visits to local workshops, and do informal interviews with photographs of the informants.

## ***Before and After: Theoretical Approaches***

Before entering the field, while doing the analysis of a textile object and the first searching online and in scholarly books, and with an approach based on the methodology of grounded theory,<sup>25</sup> I had asked myself if kimono could have already experienced a revival at other times in Japanese modern history. I also wondered about the possibility that the concept of recycling in Japan may have a different meaning from the Western approach.

These first research questions led me to the historical research of kimono revivals in modern Japanese history. This investigation helped me to find a chronological structure (historicity) for the theme of revival that you have read about in the first sections of this thesis, and a thematic spectrum of the ecological, religious, economic and artistic meanings of recycling within Japanese textile history. Once back from the field, sorting the data collected, reading the experiences in my field diary, re-hearing and translating interviews, and organizing pictures, new questions for research arose. As O'Reilly describes so well, “The process is not circular,” nor completely linear. She cites Berg (2004):

There is a tension between the theory-before-research model and the research-before-theory model, but this tension can be resolved if we think of research progressing not in a linear way but in a spiral, where you are moving forward from idea to theory to design to data collection to findings, analysis and back to theory, but where each two steps forward may involve one or two steps back.<sup>26</sup>

New research questions also arose while using the theses of self-Orientalization, proposed by Koichi Iwabuchi (1994), and those of Re-Orienting Fashion, proposed in the study of the revival of Asian women's traditional dress in the book of the same title by Niessen, Jones and Leshkovich (2003).<sup>27</sup> I have used them myself as instruments for field research: I went to the field asking myself if strategies of self-Orientalization were being used in the promotion of the new kimono revival inside Japan.

## ***Multi-Sited Ethnography***

As result of my online research (2006–2008) and my previous visits to Japan (2001–2005), as well as from the literature on kimono revivals that I had reviewed (Assmann 2008),<sup>28</sup> I knew that I could not stay just in Kyoto as the single site for my two months of fieldwork. Events were happening in parallel in Tokyo, Kyoto and Kanazawa connected with the phenomenon of kimono revival and recycling in contemporary Japan, and there were boutiques, shop owners and personalities involved in this revival that I needed to “follow” in order to observe the contemporary kimono phenomenon. I therefore decided to use the Multi-Sited Ethnography conception of methodology proposed by the anthropologist George E. Marcus,<sup>29</sup> together with the “Ethnografischer Temporalisierung der Feldforschung” (Ethnographic Temporalization of Field Research) of Gisela Welz,<sup>30</sup> in particular the techniques “Follow the People” and “Follow the Thing,”<sup>31</sup> to realize my ethnographic research:

Multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography.<sup>32</sup>

From the multi-sited fieldwork, I then selected “Sites and Key Events,” places and important events during the field experience, to help me represent, “write up” the “Intervisuality” of the data found in the field and the experiences accumulated there.

Most of these key events took place while visiting important tourist and shopping areas in the cities of Kyoto, Kanazawa and Tokyo. The style of writing chosen for the “write-up” of my fieldwork was inspired by the work of John Van Maanen on “Tales of the Field,”<sup>33</sup> especially by his “Impressionist Tales,”<sup>34</sup> and by the “thick description” of Clifford Geertz.<sup>35</sup>

# *The Waves of the Revival: Kimono Categories*

## *Five Categories*

### *Kimono Re-Make*

While in the press the “yukata boom” was announced as mostly enjoyed by the younger Japanese generation,<sup>36</sup> I knew from my Japanese host mother with whom I stayed during 1993–1994 that it was popular to reuse old silk kimono—“antique kimono”—inherited within the family, and then for mature women to “re-make” them into Western style clothing (as in the case of my host mother). This act of re-using silk kimono cloth to make Western clothes such as two-piece dresses or overcoats seems to have become popular from the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s among housewives who enjoyed the hobby of sewing their own clothes and who had the time to join leisure activities such as a sewing-class group. Some of my host mother’s own “re-make” clothes (Figure 11), and the re-make jacket or coat made of kimono cloth worn by a woman at the Toji-Temple flea market (Figure 12) are two different examples of the kimono re-make designs that can be produced.



Figure 11: Re-make clothes made by my host mother. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

As I have explained in the chapter on the Second Kimono Revival in Part Two, the activity of sewing cloth in Western style using kimono or other kinds of fabric took hold in Japan among women in the 1950s and 1960s, with the government sponsoring the home-made confection of Western-style clothing. At the time, Japanese fashion looked strongly to the design line and style of Paris. In fact, as I could observe doing my field research in 2008, there were many kimono shops and boutiques selling kimono re-make (*rimeiku*) articles<sup>37</sup>—jackets, T-shirts, bags, and accessories, while re-make articles made from kimono fabric were sold at

pawn shops, art fairs, and open-air bazaars on shopping streets, not to mention the various online shops for these kinds of products available in the Japanese market.



Figure 12: A flea-market visitor wearing a jacket re-make from kimono cloth; the colours and patterns stand out in the middle of the crowd. Toji Temple. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 13: Re-make/“ReMAKE” shirts at the pawn shop/recycled kimono shop *Kyoto Bamboo Club* on the Philosophers’ Walk in Kyoto’s East District, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



In the entrance of a pawn and second-hand kimono shop called the “Kyoto Bamboo Club” (Figure 13) on the famous Philosophers’ Path *Tetsugaku-no-michi*,<sup>38</sup> in the area adjacent to the Ginkakuji Temple, signs announced the sale of “Re-MAKE” shirts. Apart from re-make articles, this pawn shop sells yukata and used kimono.



Figure 14: “Kimono Re-Make” (*kimono rimeiku*) designs by amateur designers sold at the Toji flea market. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 15: Japanese artist showing her male jacket at her exhibition in the art gallery and shop *TERRA*. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

“Kimono Re-Make” clothing made by independent fashion designers (Figure 14) can be found in the famous tourist flea market at Toji Temple in southern Kyoto city: a coat and a two-piece dress made of kimono fragments in cotton dyed with indigo (*aizome*<sup>39</sup>) in techniques like tie-dyeing (*shibori-zome*)<sup>40</sup> in combination with other materials such as jeans or fragments of *aizome*-dyed cotton; a *happi* coat quilting on cotton; Japanese *sachiko*; and a two-piece dress made of fragments of striped silk crepe called *tsumugi*<sup>41</sup> and other fragments of *kasuri-ikat*.<sup>42</sup>

To what extent is this trend of selling re-make products and recycled kimono cloth and fragments the result of the shrinking household budget of the Japanese family, and especially of less money being available for a Japanese housewife to use for her wardrobe? Kojima Akira addresses this aspect in an essay titled “Emerging from a Long Tunnel” published by *JAPAN ECHO* in February 2007:

To some extent, the revival of the business world was achieved at the cost of the household sector. Plainly stated, families were forced to accept a loss of income. In fact, a trend of decline in the total income of the household sector persisted throughout the deflationary years after the 1997 crisis.<sup>43</sup>

For most of these women, including my host mother, they and their husbands had to live on just the pension of the latter, at a time when Japan’s economy saw its hardest post-war times.

### ***Antique Kimono***

At the same time, and in fact since the beginning of the year 2000 according to articles found in the press, “antique kimono,” kimonos that were manufactured at the beginning of the twentieth century, prior to the early Shōwa period, had started to become popular among young Japanese women.<sup>44</sup> This would seem to have been a consequence of the “yukata boom” and the help of the Internet.

As observed in other online articles, the trend to buying “antique kimono” or antique accessories with bold-patterned design characteristic of the 1920s, 30s and 40s followed the yukata boom from the end of the 1990s up to the turn of the twenty-first century, paired with Western-style fashion accessories sometimes made of “Recycled-Kimono” cloth, and combined with contemporary hairstyles.

Recently, though, the kimono has been making its way into the fashions of women in their twenties and thirties. But the way these women wear kimonos can be a major departure from the past. Kimonos are now sometimes worn over Western clothes like a coat, and some women pin a favourite brooch on the obi. Another popular twist is to wear tabi (Japanese socks with a split big toe) that are colour-patterned instead of the traditional white. Each woman is coordinating her own kimono style.<sup>45</sup>

Visiting an exhibition at a gallery and shop named *TERRA* in the Teramachi Street in Kyoto city centre, I could observe how this trend of antique kimono was really happening. The artist was very kind to show me her male *haura* jacket and to pose together with her younger friend (Figure 15). The artist was wearing a colourful one-piece dress and using a “men’s *haura*”<sup>46</sup>

as a jacket, decorated with a small brooch made of recycled kimono cloth to give it a more feminine touch. What actually seemed to be the most fun was the way she was playing with the coordination of her clothing, using leggings and winter boots and allowing the clothes worn under the jacket to flow openly like a dress.

The boom in buying, collecting and experiencing the act of orchestrating one's outfit with an "antique kimono" or a piece like an "antique *juban*, *haura* or *haori* coat" and mixing them with Western clothing instead of only with "yukata" summer kimono is likely to be powered by the creation of the *mook* magazine targeting Japanese women entitled *Kimono Hime* (Kimono Princess), published by Shondesha. Also calling itself "Antique and Cheap" *Kimono Hime*, it had, as proclaimed on the front cover of the magazine, been on the market since May 2003.<sup>47</sup> With it, young Japanese or innovative "eccentric" mature women could create their own "looks" adjusted to their bodies and needs through the way they don and use kimono and Western-style accessories. Heike Jenß claims in relation to clothes as a medium for Self-Orchestration that:

The body is the instrument and the central venue through which the appropriation of fashion via practices of consumption and self-staging occurs. The clothes need the body, it needs its shape, its movement, its gestures and facial expressions to unfold. At the same time, the clothes modelled in their construction by the cut and colour of the material and their form shape even the appearance of the body, its posture and movement. [The appearance] encodes its gender and sets it in relation to space and time.<sup>48</sup>

Most likely, and again thanks to the comeback of the yukata as a "re-invented" alternative to everyday clothing for the summer, this well-established business—also supported by the yukata presented by Western designers' collections<sup>49</sup> like those of Jean Paul Gaultier, Anna Sui or Benetton<sup>50</sup>—could have encouraged Japanese designers, kimono coordinators and handcraft artisans to make new proposals in the way "antique kimono" could be worn in a stylish manner. The kimono as formal wear is difficult to appropriate, due to the rules involved in the orchestration of the kimono outfits regarding formality, gestures, and movements within the etiquette of the wrapped body. Therefore, with the introduction of the use of antique kimono and its coordination with Western clothing, Japanese designers and kimono coordinators are encouraging the consumers, whose curiosity and enjoyment seem to have been stimulated.

While "antique kimonos" are kimonos made a century ago, recycled kimono of less value can also be purchased on the second-hand kimono market. Obviously, the economic aspect plays a role in the strategies of marketing, and finally, "affordable kimonos" can be bought at shops and boutiques or ordered on the Internet with the use of the mobile phone. The importance of the Internet and the mobile phone in the present kimono trend is indisputable.

### *Recycled Kimono*

On the one hand, new young costumers were targeted, because it had become clear that without freshness in design and new proposals on how and when to wear kimono the kimono industry was on its way to become, as the article mentions, “a thing of the past.” On the other hand, the new trend to “antique kimono” motivated the opening of shops and boutiques<sup>51</sup> engaged in the sale of “recycled kimono” or kimonos produced since the mid-Shōwa period,<sup>52</sup> thus creating a new form of business. This new second-hand circuit for vintage kimono has opened new job opportunities at a time when the number of people searching for part-time jobs—called “freeter” or “freta” (*furitā*)<sup>53</sup>—is increasing among young Japanese.



Figure 16: Two different ways to find recycled kimonos on the market. Hanging or as piles of clothes at a stand at the Toji-Temple flea market in Kyoto (l.). Or carefully ordered at a *Tansu-ya* recycling kimono shop and boutique named *Ichi.man.ben* in Kyoto (r.). Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

*Tansu-ya*<sup>54</sup> is the best-known company in the second-hand kimono business in Japan. Also exporting second-hand kimono to its customers in the USA,<sup>55</sup> it promotes the opening of second-hand kimono boutiques that are run by private managers. Each manager gives each boutique or shop a different note in the way recycled kimonos are displayed for the public. In this way, the palette of shops and boutiques varies depending on the owner. Antique kimono and recycled kimono sold at *Tansu-ya* kimono shops have normally undergone a process of special washing, cleaning, and refurbishing and are ready to be used. This act of “purification” of what has been used by somebody else, a kimono that does not come from the family line, may be important for the new Japanese wearer. On the one hand, in the tradition of *Shinto* “the native religion stresses the sacredness of nature and its products,”<sup>56</sup> and second-hand silk kimonos are made from silk, a natural material. On the other hand, consumers do not need to do this process of kimono-care themselves and can purchase their kimonos as if they were buying second-hand Western clothes, as seen in a photo taken at the boutique *Ichi.man.ben*. (Figure 16). This also increases the price of these kimono compared to the prices of those sold in temple flea markets without pre-care or refurbishing and hanging on a rack, as in the photo

on the left in the above figure. It is important to note that the act of refurbishing a kimono has a long tradition in Japan, as well as the sale of second-hand clothing:

Dry-goods shops sold bolts of cloth, but only a limited class could afford to have kimono made from new cloth. Generally, people bought kimono from second-hand dealers. It was not necessary to have a large number of kimono: a kimono lasted a long time if the neckband was replaced periodically. People also wore kimono layered. And an old kimono, after being sent out to be washed and filled, would be also sold to a second-hand dealer and another used kimono bought.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, until the recent trend in recycled kimono, it was not common practice to buy second-hand kimono. The only places one could acquire or sell used kimonos were flea markets or neighbourhood pawn shops, where people short of money give their own kimonos to be sold.

The unpopularity of second-hand kimono most likely started after the Second World War,<sup>58</sup> when Western clothing began to be used by most of the population as everyday wear. Second-hand European and American branded clothing are still largely favoured despite their high prices, as can be seen at second-hand shops in Tokyo's trendy shopping areas like *Harajuku* or *Omotosando*.<sup>59</sup> The rise of the Japanese economy in the 1960s and 70s stabilized a consumer society in Japan. Some critics of the late-Shōwa Japanese society, writes historian James L. McClain,

drew ahead on the extravagant excesses of the New Consumerism practiced by Japan's nouveau riche and the more affluent members of the middle class.<sup>60</sup>

In Japan, as in other consumer societies, there is a constant demand for new products. In the 1960s, 70s and 80s upper-middle-class Japanese had fixed employment and a good income, and the consumption of Western fashion design and haute couture made by Japanese designers as well as foreigners was a symbol of the prosperity of the economy and the position of Japan as a world economic power.

However, in an article by Nakamura Akemi in *The Japan Times* from April 2004, the analyst Takahashi Shoichi of the Yano Intelligence Ltd. states that the recent kimono boom “may also encourage women to pass their kimono on to their daughters.”<sup>61</sup>

It may be possible that the kimono marketing strategies go further, to a re-educational process that plays with the emotion of the consumers who “nostalgically” realize that they have not learnt how to dress in traditional clothes, and that the act of learning how to wear kimono passed on from mother to daughter has also become rare. Are all these strategies simply related to the economic fact that the kimono industry was about to collapse?:

The kimono market—including yukata, obi, “*geta*” sandals and other accessories—was worth about 2 trillion yen at its peak in the boom of the 1980s. By 1999, it had shrunk by 60 percent to 788 billion yen, according to the Kyoto Foundation for the Promotion of Japanese Dress (Kimono) Industry.<sup>62</sup>

### *Ecologically Friendly Kimono*

These recent changes in mentality, exemplified by the way present-day Japanese approach a piece of their country’s material culture as important as kimono as a second-hand item alternative to Western clothes, must also be interlinked with the ecological trends influenced by the Kyoto Protocol of 1997. With the rediscovery of the concept of “*mottainai*” or “zero waste” by the 2004 Nobel Prize winner and Kenya’s Deputy Environment Minister Wangari Maathai,<sup>63</sup> through the work of famous designers like Issey Miyake with his A-POC design concept of 1998, as well as with the impulse of the investigation of recycling materials by the Japanese textile industry, which also referred to the “*mottainai*” concept in their campaigns,<sup>64</sup> the revived kimono seems to have come to represent or symbolize Edo-period feudal Japan’s history of reducing, reusing and recycling clothes and handmade articles that were made to last,<sup>65</sup> and at the same time to call out to Japanese tourists to “slow down” the pace of the times.



Figure 17: Shopping, eating or walking, let’s be ecological and get to know Kyoto in kimono!  
Photo taken from an advertisement on the bus. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

A photo taken from an advertisement found on a bus in Kyoto features a couple dressed in kimono walking calmly in the streets of Kyoto, and the words “*Eco de ikou*” (“Let’s go ecologically”) (Figure 17). The “slow-down aesthetic”—after Ernst Jünger’s *Ästhetik der Entschleunigung* (The Aesthetics of Slowing Down)—seems to be the idea behind this advertisement. With a *machiya*, merchant-style house, as background to the figures, the composition of the picture places us as observers in an updated view reminiscing on the feudal times of *shitamachi* and the slower way of life of the pre-modern era. There are actually campaigns in Kyoto just to keep these houses alive for future generations.<sup>66</sup> A lot of this has to do with keeping “what is left” architectonically of Kyoto’s city centre.<sup>67</sup> Kimono wearers, designers and producers, boutiques and souvenir shops have spread out along with the revitalization of these merchant house areas—such as Teramachi Street, the slope up to Kiyomizu Temple, or the geisha district at *Gion*. A kind of contemporary *shitamachi* lifestyle seems to be being revitalized in Kyoto city centre. “Often translated as ‘downtown,’

*shitamachi* actually refers to urban neighbourhoods filled cheek-by-jowl with small shopkeepers and artisans.”<sup>68</sup> However, it is important to know that in Japan:

The importance of preserving buildings is recognized as policy in one area only: the area of tourism. A recent White Paper on Tourism is the only one among Japanese government papers which refers to cultural heritage. This underlines the very close connection between tourism and protection of cultural assets in Japan.<sup>69</sup>

Hence a couple walking in kimono as in the poster-advertisement in Figure 17 can be understood as promoting the “enjoyment of life” while strolling along in the typically “calm” environment of a Kyoto tourist spot. As Sylvie Guichard-Anguis convincingly argues:

The destruction of shops selling traditional artefacts or products (combs, Buddhist altars, lacquers, sweets, teas, incense, etc.) which originated in the Edo period and their subsequent reconstruction as tourist attractions, show that in Japan living traditions need contemporary meanings adapted to an ever-changing present.<sup>70</sup>

In this context of spending time in leisure activities while touring in Kyoto, *machiya* and *shitamachi* landscapes of the feudal era become the perfect context to display one’s Japanese-ness.

### ***Digitally Printed Kimono***



Figure 18: Mr. Maeda’s son and wife showing the digitally printed kimono fabric in Taishō-Period design. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

One example of how living traditions need to be re-interpreted in contemporary ways to be adapted to an ever-changing present is the use of digital design to print kimono. I made a photo documentation on this development during a visit to a kimono design company, with which I got in touch thanks to the help of one key informant, Mr. Maeda, who is himself the owner of a traditional kimono shop or *Gofukuten* in Kyoto. I got to know him while I was doing field research in Uji City and it was very kind of him to introduce me to the world of digitally printed kimono.<sup>71</sup> A contemporary printing machine is used for digitally printing the kimono cloth (Figure 18). As reported by Maeda’s son, the pattern selected for the printed kimono dates from the Taishō period (1912–1926) (Figure 19).



Figure 19: Detail of a Taishō-period design for kimono, on what seem to be the illustrations of a Western-style comic in a newspaper. Design used for the kimono fabric printed digitally.

Source shown and shared by Mr Maeda's son. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

### ***Kimono Styles, Magazines, and Trendsetters***

This wave of kimono revival continued beyond the turn of the twenty-first century, powered by new kimono trends such as the “PUFFY” or “cute” style, and contemporary re-interpretations of previous trends, such as “cool-retro-chic Taishō Romanticism,”<sup>72</sup> “Samurai Chic”<sup>73</sup> for men, or “Meiji Hybridism,” propagated by different publications in magazines such as *mooks*<sup>74</sup> on contemporary Japanese lifestyle. The publications targeted international and indigenous consumers of Japanese contemporary culture and lifestyle in Japan—and abroad, especially in cities with large numbers of Japanese citizens.<sup>75</sup> In these publications, not only does the work of kimono fashion designers and kimono coordinators promote re-interpretations of past kimono fashions such as the Meiji hybrid outfits or “Kimono a la Taishō Mode” to be found in the *mook* magazine *Kimono Hime* (Figure 20), but also seems to invigorate with its modern “looks” and “new kimono trends” the interest of young people in the re-discovery of their traditional dress.<sup>76</sup> Other kimono styles in this contemporary revival include *Nagoya-jyo*, *Mori-girl* and *Otoko-poi*.<sup>77</sup> The trendsetters of the present-day revival can be famous Japanese pop artists. For example, the famous model Takahashi Mariko appears on the front page of the magazine *Kimono Hime*, wearing a coordinated look of vintage kimono and accessories (Figure 21), and the actor Asano Tadanobu poses in his “Samurai Chic” look in a photo in the magazine *Kateigaho International* (Figure 20).<sup>78</sup>

Or Japanese pop “Idols” such as the duo PUFFY—see for example the article entitled “Summer Kimono & Yukata, PUFFY-style.” PUFFY

is a duo that has torn up Japan’s pop-music scene and is now finding fame in America as a pair of animation characters.<sup>79</sup>





Figure 20: The actor Asano Tadanobu posed dressed in man’s kimono. His coordination styled and named “Samurai Chic” recalls the hybrid outfits at the end of the 19th century, but updated with contemporary accessories. Taken from the article “Kimono for Men” in *Kateigaho International Edition*, 2004.



Figure 21: The famous model Takahashi Mariko dressed in a kimono coordination in “Taishō-Romanticism” style. The photo was taken from the cover of the first edition of the magazine *Kimono Hime*, 2003.

The duo PUFFY appears in an article on the website of the Japanese National Tourism Organization under the rubric “Japan In-depth: Cultural Quintessence”<sup>80</sup> (Figure 22). It advertises the “PUFFY Style” as an “imperative part of the wardrobe” for summer activities, especially nightlife events. The photo is taken from an online article on the kimono Puffy style in *Kateigaho International*. It is also in an advertisement of the Japan Travel Bureau, in a poster for the “Cool Japan” campaign of 2006.<sup>81</sup>

The fact that *Kateigaho International* launched its international edition in 2003 is relevant: The trends to clothes made with recycled kimono fabric or with recycled patterns of kimono and of kimono for men, have been promoted since the directly and indirectly, announcing that kimono is part of the Japanese contemporary lifestyle: that it is back and it is in!

See the two singers of the band PUFFY wearing kimono<sup>82</sup>

in summer-night styles unique to Tokyo. In vintage kimono and chic accessories they can enjoy both the nightlife and the cool evening breezes. We bring you the looks of PUFFY-style summer and a special interview with Ami Onuki and Yumi Yoshimura.

The PUFFY yukata style:

The best evenings in Tokyo are summer evenings  
— whether you immerse yourself in good music  
or revel in the outdoors firework displays.  
Yukata (summer kimono) are an imperative part of  
the wardrobe for going out on a summer’s night,  
but for some extra chic, throw in the right accessory  
— especially the flamboyant sparkly stuff!<sup>83</sup>



Figure 22: The duo PUFFY advertising the “Puffy Style” as an “imperative part of the wardrobe” for summer activities, especially nightlife events. Photo taken from an online article on the kimono Puffy style in *Kateigaho International*.

## *The Commodification of the Kimono*

In this part of the thesis I want to bring into discussion the way in which kimono have been revived and the strategies at play to make kimono desirable, affordable and enjoyable by almost everyone. As a result of the field research, I concentrated my attention on the context of tourism. I argue that the strategies at play to revive kimono are very much linked to other promotional tourist campaigns that make Japan an ever-exotic spot, for foreigners, but especially for the Japanese themselves.

### *Kimono Commodification in the Context of Tourism*

#### *Key Event: Visit to the “Kimono Rental Station” in Kyoto City*

There has been a “Kimono Rental Station” at Kyoto Central Railway Station since 2007. Kyoto Station is not only one of the most visited train stations in Japan, it is also a popular venue for shopping, business, and gastronomy, and therefore for tourism. Most Japanese and foreign tourists arrive at the ancient capital of Japan through the gates of Kyoto Station. Inside its building there is a designated area for a “Kimono Rental Station.” Before being allowed to enter the room, the customer is first received at a kind of reception where he or she can get informed about the range of events offered at the station. Once the visitors enter the area to



Figure 23: The space in the station and how it is arranged: divided into one large room for the kimonos and two smaller rooms, one for the footwear, and one for bags and accessories.  
Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

be dressed in kimono, they must take their shoes off. The attendants are dressed in a casual standardized kimono, worn with white *juban*, then the kimono, the obi, white tabi and wooden and lacquered *geta*.<sup>84</sup> Bags and shawls can be also rented at the kimono station but are not included in the main package (Figure 23). The hairstyle of the attendants is modern but not too fancy, and the girls use light makeup.

The attendants wear accessories such as a watch or rings. The areas for the selection of the kimono, *geta* and bags are separated from each other; each of them has enough space for a good number of customers to be there at the same time. The coordination of the complete outfit can be done with the help of a kimono coordinator, *Kitsuke*,<sup>85</sup> or chosen by the customers themselves. This kimono offered at the station is categorized for the offer as:

*Kajuaru na kimono rentaru* カジュアルなきものレンタル (Casual kimono rental)

*Kitsuke komi* 着付け 込み *zei komi* 3,000 yen kara 税込 3,000 円から

The bargain starts from “3,000 yen including *Kitsuke*,” where “*Kitsuke*” means to be dressed up with the help of a kimono specialist!

In year 2008, customers could make a booking on the website of the station while looking through the station’s activities calendar. More discounts were offered to costumers travelling around Kyoto, including gifts and coupons to be used at Kyoto hairdressers or cosmetic shops.<sup>86</sup>

### ***Informal Interview at the “Kimono Rental Station” in Kyoto***

At the Kimono Rental Station in Kyoto Station I had the chance to informally interview<sup>87</sup> one of the members of staff: a young man in his thirties, dressed in a black suit, white shirt and black tie. He became my first Key Informant in the field. According to his records, the event “Kimono Station” had been taking place in Kyoto for two years, first in 2007 from the 2nd of October to the 25th of December, then in 2008 from the 20th of October to the 8th of December. He said that the dates of the event were chosen to coincide with the autumn trees changing colour, called “*kōyō*,” which is a marvellous time when nature shows the best of Kyoto. For this occasion, many travellers come to Kyoto to enjoy the beauty of the season and the temples and gardens. The informant explained that the idea of the event is to give people who do not know how to wear a kimono a chance to try it on and go out wearing it. Some of the people who try on a kimono may want to wear it again, and so purchase a new one, thus helping to keep the tradition and the local industry going. He said that for most people kimono is an uncomfortable attire (a recurrent statement regarding the inconvenience of wearing kimono in contemporary Japan; see the introduction to *The Book of Kimono* by Yamanaka Norio,<sup>88</sup> where he adds eight more reasons women give for not actually wearing kimono). A similar argument to that of my informant was made by an analyst of Yano Intelligence Ltd., who in an interview with the *Japan Times* explained that the kimono boom could encourage women to pass their kimonos on to future generations.<sup>89</sup> My informant kindly explained that the Kimono Rental Station event is part of a number of other strategies

related to the support of the Kyoto kimono industry. He stated that seven years earlier (in 2001) the booklet coupon *Kimono Passport* had started to offer bagels to the citizens who wore kimono at other shops and restaurants in the city.<sup>90</sup> Nowadays, in 2013, the Kimono Rental Station is open all year around, and not just during the autumn, as back in 2008. The business seems to have gone well in the few years of its existence. The kinds of kimono that can be rented at the Kyoto Kimono Rental Station are made on sewing machines and are of polyester, with the synthetic material chosen to make the business worthwhile. The kimono are cheap and machine washable, and easier to wear than formal silk ones; the idea is “to make people feel relaxed; they do not need to worry about damaging it.”

**Key Event: Visit to the “Kimono Rental Station” in Uji City**

At Kyoto Station, I also found a poster framed on one of the walls advertising a kimono event to take place in the city of Uji between the 5th of October and the 9th of November 2008. I decided to visit the tourist information centre in Kyoto Station, and there I found the same advertisement, but as a pamphlet (Figure 24). The pamphlet was promoting a day visit to Uji City in kimono, and was clearly inviting males to also take part in the experience: the picture on the pamphlet included an image of two girls and one boy. The event involved renting a kimono at the NPO [non-profit organization] “I Love Kyoto” and getting to see the sites in Uji City in kimono.



Figure 24: Pamphlet for the kimono event promoting a visit to Uji City. It invites young costumers, girls and boys, to get to know this important historical area while dressed in kimono. Uji City, 2008.



Figure 25: Romantic Uji promenade and sightseeing boats on the Uji River. Uji, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 26: Young Japanese women wearing kimono rented at the non-profit organization “I love Kyoto”; view of the folding of the obi or belt from behind. Uji, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

The pamphlet explicitly stated that this rental activity encouraged not only female but also male customers, and stressed the fact that the day visit to Uji City renting a kimono can become even more fun if enjoyed as a form of group activity. As one can see, this pamphlet is almost all written in Japanese, using very few words in the Roman script or the *katakana* alphabet used to translate foreign languages; the image of the boy and the girls is quite small, and they feature contemporary looks with dyed hair, especially the boy. The centre of the pamphlet is filled with information for visitors—the days the event will take place, opening hours, the price, address and name of the organization promoting the event, a telephone number and a small map.

The title at the top of the pamphlet says: “*Kimono de tanoshimu Genji Monogatari no machi Uji*” (Let’s enjoy Uji—the town of the *Tale of Genji* in kimono). *The Tale of Genji*, written by Lady Murasaki Shikibu<sup>91</sup> in the early eleventh century, is one of the first novels of world literature and is a classic of Japanese literature. As explained on the website of the *Tale of Genji* Museum, Uji was a “‘getaway’ locale for the Heian nobility.”<sup>92</sup> The place was famous for viewing the autumn leaves and as a spot for “boating pleasure” (Figure 25), and was regarded as a religious destination. It is one of the most promoted day trips to make if you are

visiting Kyoto and the surrounding areas. Uji City and its cultural sites with historic monuments such as the Byoudoin Temple have been on the World Heritage List since 1978.<sup>93</sup> Uji was the location of the final scene of *The Tale of Genji*. The last ten Uji-chapters of the book begin with the metaphor of the world bridge, the chapters beginning with the words “*Hashi-Hime*” (The Princess at the Bridge), alluding to the “spatio-temporal transfer from Kyoto to Uji” in the tale and to “contrastive elements between Kyoto and Uji, such as ‘vibrancy and tranquillity.’”<sup>94</sup> The contrasting elements can be translated as the “vibrancy” of urban Kyoto as opposed to the “tranquillity” of the countryside town of Uji.

My day visit to Uji started with finding the pamphlet, so on the same day, the 9th of November, I took a local Japan National Railways train (hereafter JNR) from Kyoto Station to Uji Station. At the entrance of the building where the NPO office was, there was a mannequin dressed in kimono, and inside there was a shop for souvenirs with many designs of Japanese “*furoshiki*” (cloth wrappers). The NPO office was located in the upper part of the building. Afterwards, as I was crossing the Uji River, on one of the bridges I saw the first group of young Japanese women wearing kimono. There were four of them (Figure 26), walking together in the direction of the riverbank. I informally video-interviewed them. They were customers of the small Kimono Station at Uji organized by the NPO I Love Kyoto. Curiously, all of them were Uji citizens and had already graduated from its university. All around twenty-five years old, they implied that they could not put on a kimono by themselves without help, not even a summer kimono or “*yukata*.” Apparently, it had taken them more than an hour to get ready because their hair had been styled to match the kimono outfits at the NPO office. They were friendly, and one of them was leading the conversation while the



Figure 27: A gentle pose of a young Japanese woman being photographed at a garden and teahouse in Uji, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

others added simple statements to confirm the information that was given. Around us, the rest of the tourists were walking up and down, not paying much attention to our conversation, and against the mass of greys, browns and purple-blues of their Western outfits, the kimono wearers stood out from the crowd.

I continued my day visit by crossing to the other side of the river, to a picturesque landscape, an area with restaurants, and a small promenade along the riverbank where the boats that can take you along the river were waiting for new costumers. I continued walking past souvenir shops, restaurants and other shops. In the garden at the entrance to one teahouse there was a



Figure 28: Ladies wearing silk kimono taking part in a tea ceremony. Uji, 2008.  
© Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 29: A family at a Shinto shrine celebrating the Seven-Five-Three years-of-age ritual. Uji, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

girl wearing kimono. She was posing resting a hand on the surface of a stone lantern (Figure 27) while being photographed by a friend. Her kimono and obi, especially the way the obi was tied, were like the ones of the group of the four girls I had met previously, so I assumed she must have been another customer of the Kimono Rental Station in Uji.

Continuing the visit, I crossed the river again, and this time I went in the direction of the *Tale of Genji* Museum. On my way, I came across a group of mature and elderly women who were attending a tea ceremony. Some of them were wearing silk kimono (Figure 28). Further on, I encountered a family that was celebrating “*shichi-go-san*,” the “Seven-Five-Three” years-of-age ritual festival where Japanese families bring their children to a Shinto shrine to give thanks for the health and good spirit of the young and to pray for a healthy and blessed life. For this occasion, the mother and grandmother usually dress formally in kimono, and the little children wear children’s kimono of bold colours and designs (Figure 29). The father in this family is in a Western-style suit.

After visiting the shrine, I went again to look for the museum, and chanced upon two girls walking about Uji wearing kimono (Figure 30). In this case the girls had been helped to dress, but had not had their hair done by a stylist. Their obi were twisted in the front and folded in an unusual but trendy way, showing the contrast of textures and colours of the two sides of the belt (Figure 31). The colours of their kimono are auspicious for the autumn season and feature a flower design and a repeated pattern in *Asanoha*, flax leaf, in purple. Similar colours



and patterns were used in the kimono of the group of four girls. Figure 26 shows the four girls at Uji seen from behind; the way the obi is tied is called everyday-obi.<sup>95</sup> In their hands the two girls are holding a city map of Uji with a walking-tours guide.

In contrast to the people wearing kimono in groups, such as the ladies going to attend the tea-ceremony reunion in Uji City in formal silk kimonos, the rented-kimono group of wearers could be recognized especially by the opacity of the colour of polyester from the Kimono Station against the brightness of the silk kimono (Figure 32).



Figure 30: Young Japanese women participants at the kimono event in Uji City. They tour the city and its surrounding tourist attractions using a map and guide. Uji City, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 31: Silk kimono.  
© Oly Firsching-Tovar

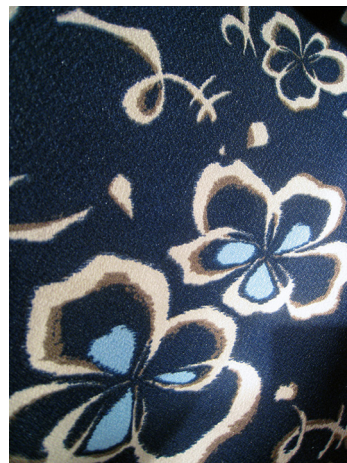


Figure 32: Polyester kimono.  
© Oly Firsching-Tovar

The people I found wearing rented kimonos in Uji were mostly young. My informant at the Kyoto Kimono Rental Station had said that there was a stronger tendency to wear silk kimono in everyday life among the older generations of over forty.

***The Important Questions Are:***

Why has the time come now in which renting a kimono to get to know Kyoto and other historical tourist areas in its proximity appeals to Japanese youth? What space does the kimono as a rented commodity open to the young Japanese wearer to make them feel “more Japanese”?

***Tourism, Nationalism and Popular Nostalgia***

In the chapter “Whose history, Whose tradition?” of her 2013 book *Performing the Buraku: Narratives on Cultures and Everyday Life in Contemporary Japan*, Flavia Cangia reveals how the ACA (Agency of Cultural Affairs) cultivates the necessity of “cultural power” in the context of Japanese nationalism. She writes:

The spread of folkloric studies in the 1970s provided Japanese nationalism with persuasive arguments that mark the boundaries between Japan and non-Japan. Tradition and culture were employed in public narratives to replace the emperor symbol and to define Japanese uniqueness. The national culture (*minzoku no bunka*), in particular, started to represent an evocative notion in the context of Japanese nationalism, a conceptual framework in which different meanings and images converge: these are supposed to make the Japanese, by virtue of its Japaneseness, own certain cultural peculiarities, ranging from proprietorship of material culture, to linguistic, artistic, religious, and social characteristics. Other registers aside from “culture” have also helped build a national identity, some of these being ethnic and economic key-terms, linking arts, citizenship, economic success and ethnicity to the idea of cultural uniqueness.<sup>96</sup>

She also argues in her work on the Japanese minority group known as *Burakumin*:<sup>97</sup>

In addition to “material culture,” entire historical eras have played a strong role in the construction of the Japanese identity undertaken by national education and tourism programs.<sup>98</sup>

***The Japanese National Railway Company***

As the point of departure to get to know Kyoto,<sup>99</sup> and therefore what is known as the heart of Japanese traditional culture, it is no surprise that the Kimono Rental Station is located at Kyoto Station. Most of the Japanese tourists coming to Kyoto arrive there with the Japanese National Railway Company. Later, walking the field, I found another Kimono Station at the Karasuma Station in downtown Kyoto.<sup>100</sup> Most of the customers there had come by train from Osaka and the southern regions of Japan.

JNR and the tourist and the kimono industries worked together in the networking, promotion and advertising of the events involving rented-kimono activities at the Kyoto Kimono Rental Station. The cooperation between the promotion of kimono as “Japanese dress” and tourist strategies of JNR are not new.<sup>101</sup> As an example of how the image of kimono as “Japanese Dress” was constructed in modern Japanese history, Milhaupt cites a book published in 1936 by the Board of Tourist Industry and the then Japanese Government Railways.<sup>102</sup> The

publication that targeted “the foreigners interested in Japan,” was entitled “Kimono: Japanese Dress.”<sup>103</sup> Its author, Kawakatsu Ken’ichi, was a managing director of the famous Takashimaya department store.<sup>104</sup> Apparently, the goal of the book, edited with the collaboration of the Japanese government, was to promote the idea of kimono as a synonym for “Japanese Dress” in the West:<sup>105</sup>

A WOMAN WITH stylishly bobbed hair and kimono-clad figure admires her reflection in a full-length mirror. Her photograph serves as the frontispiece to *Kimono: Japanese Dress*.<sup>106</sup>

### **Campaigns**

The event at the Kyoto Kimono Rental Station is most likely a consequence of the waves of campaigns that started with the Japanese National Railways campaign “Discover Japan.” According to the expert on Japanese mass culture Marilyn Ivy, “‘Discover Japan’ signified the desire to return to authentic yet unknown origins.” As mentioned by James L. McClain, “popular nostalgia”<sup>107</sup> was a sentiment that “began to sweep across Japan during the 1970s and then intensified in the 1980s.” McClain argues that the “Discover Japan” campaign “cast up romantic visions of things past and now nearly lost,” including “reviving old festivals (and inventing new ones).”<sup>108</sup>

Moreover, argues Flavia Cangia:

According to the ACA, modernization and industrialization have resulted in the Japanese losing most of their opportunities to be in contact with and directly touch the culture of everyday life. The re-appropriation of these traditional habits might help the Japanese re-establish contact with their “past,” construct a common identity as Japanese, and strengthen interest in cultural activities at the regional level.<sup>109</sup>

Such as Japanese youth getting to know the historic sites at Uji wearing kimono?

McClain explains that some of the marketing strategies of the “Discover Japan” campaign included large full-colour posters placed prominently in the windows of travel agencies and at JNR stations.<sup>110</sup> According to McClain, the posters “featured young people—often one or two city women still in their early twenties, obviously single, and dressed in blue jeans—encountering some aspects of a more authentic, almost forgotten Japaneseness: village girls raking autumn leaves at a local Shinto shrine.” Moreover, McClain argues that on each poster a scene of home villages emerges, “a single scene, glimpsed in a fleeting moment, into a timeless, universal depiction of what should mean to be and feel Japanese,” and that these were “launched to promote ridership to scenic spots by vacationing families and small groups of friends.” As he astutely observes, “Popular Nostalgia is a way to use the verities of yesteryear to prepare for the uncertainties of tomorrow.”<sup>111</sup> “Yesteryear” is cast well in the environments of urban jet-cities with a traditional “village-like” landscape such as Uji, reminiscent of premodern or feudal Edo Japan, at the Tango peninsula in northern Kyoto, or in suburbs of Kyoto city where Japanese-style merchant houses, temples and gardens have to some extent been preserved. In a chapter in their book *Practices of Looking: An Introduction*

to *Visual Culture*,<sup>112</sup> Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright have written on the way nostalgia as a strategy of marketing is used in advertising:

It is an essential element of advertising that it promises to us an abstract world which we will never experience.... It is our drive to fill our sense of lack that allows advertising to speak to our desires so compellingly.... Yet, it is an essential aspect of lack that it is necessarily always unfulfilled.... Nostalgia is a longing for a prior state, often perceived to be innocent, which will always remain unfulfilled because this state is irretrievable—indeed, it never existed. Advertising is adept at speaking to consumers in nostalgic terms.<sup>113</sup>

Apparently, Japanese youth is driven to feel nostalgia for a time when everything in everyday Japan was supposed to have been better.

The casual kimono of the Kimono Stations seems to be a “commodity by destination” in Appadurai’s sense: “that is, objects intended by their producers principally for exchange,”<sup>114</sup> getting it for a day as an affordable rented kimono. The casual kimono for rental serves the consumer as a day-long “path to the past” so that he or she can get to know the heart of Japanese tradition in Kyoto and its surroundings—Uji or the Tango peninsula—while taking a journey in time in a kimono.

In the 1980s the successor campaign, “Exotic Japan,” depicted global cultures as a series of internally foreign travel destinations.”<sup>115</sup> Marilyn Ivy argues that “the ‘Exotic Japan’ campaign, which started in 1984, encouraged Japanese to look at Japan with eyes of the foreign other,” implying “not only the foreign within the native but also the native as foreign: Japan itself as exotic,” which is a deliberate act of self-Orientalization. I remember my classmates and their trips in 2001–2005 to the countryside in Okinawa to search for knowledge in textile techniques original to the island, and their devotion to Okinawan music. I have asked myself whether the “Discover Japan” and “Exotic Japan” campaigns perhaps follow one another in reaching towards time-sensitive youth who are starting to discover traces of their own culture through studying specific subjects at Japanese universities, especially in the areas of arts, crafts, design and architecture. Some of my informants, including those informally interviewed in Kyoto, were university students or college graduates coming from different regions of Japan. Some visitors to the Kimono Rental event at Uji City near Kyoto had travelled from Okinawa, as I was informed while visiting the NPO “I Love Kyoto” in Uji. A campaign that certainly must have influenced the introduction of the events and services of the “Kimono Rental Station” is the “Visit Japan” campaign “*Yokoso Japan*” of the year 2003.<sup>116</sup>

As seen on the same website, the history of this campaign shows that the offices opened overseas were located in other Asian countries.<sup>117</sup>

The Visit Japan campaign of 2003 was followed in 2006 by the Japanese Prime Minister Abe’s vision of “a beautiful country, Japan”:

When I assumed the office of the Prime Minister in September last year, I laid out to the people of Japan the vision that the Abe administration will pursue: “a beautiful country, Japan.” A country which is full of vitality, opportunity and compassion; a country which



Figure 33: Young ladies sightseeing in 1936; the flowers in the hand of one of the women were most likely then used for a flower arrangement (*ikebana*). Kawakatsu Kenichi, “Kimono.” Photographs from the 1936 edition.



Figure 34: Young Japanese tourists walking around in rented kimono. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

cherishes the spirit of self-discipline; a country which is open to the world; so that it is admired and respected by people all over the world, and our children’s generation can possess self-confidence and pride. In order to realize this new vision of Japan, I believe it will be essential to work with the Japanese people and to produce results one by one with a sense of speed. I pledge to continue my utmost efforts towards Japan’s bright future.<sup>118</sup>

As we have seen from McClain’s work and from my experience in the field, posters and their distribution among travel bureaus or at tourist centres at stations, in buses, and trains are a constant mode of propaganda in contemporary Japan. But in the case of the kimono revival within the context of tourism, instead of the Japanese being invited to get to know small home villages wearing blue jeans, now historic and traditional-looking scenes or areas of pre-modern and early modern architecture such as Kyoto, Uji or Tokyo are the places to enjoy the atmosphere of yesteryear while dressed in kimono. At the same time, the cityscape of a place like Kyoto can become even more exotic if Japanese and foreign travellers encounter numerous pedestrians in the streets wearing rented kimono outfits and enjoying autumn in Kyoto, or apprentice geisha, “maikos,” wearing rented outfits not just for going to work but

for fun! A photograph found in Kawakatsu Kenichi's book *Kimono: Japanese Dress*, published by the Japan Tourist Bureau in 1936, shows young Japanese walking out in kimono<sup>119</sup> (Figure 33). Certainly, this kind of image of young women clad in kimono is one of the most stereotyped images of traditional Japan (see Figure 34).

### *Advertising and Self-Orientalizing Strategies*

As mentioned before, the kimono of the Kimono Rental Station fall in the category known as *fudangi*, “everyday-wear.” The casual kimono of the station has one standard sleeve size which ignores the marital status of the wearer and therefore the dress coding. Normally, the size of the sleeves varies in the construction of kimono according to age and gender, with long sleeves for single females, and short sleeves for adults.<sup>120</sup>

The kimonos for women and men displayed in the pamphlet of the Kimono Rental Station were very similar in their colour to some of the styles of kimono worn during the Meiji era (1868–1912),<sup>121</sup> although with fewer and more subdued combinations for men's kimono, based on a grey, brown and indigo-blue palette. During Meiji: “The most fashionable shade at the turn of the century was *azuki-iro*, a purple red, the colour of the auspicious *azuki* bean,” explains Dalby.<sup>122</sup> An advertisement with a woman wearing a kimono looking in a mirror (Figure 35), found in Uji City in 2008, stresses the power of the delicious *azuki* bean in the attainment of beauty, Japanese beauty.



Figure 35: Advertisement for the delicious *azuki* bean, which can make the eater even more “beautiful.” Poster found in Uji City, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

As Liza Dalby observes, at the turn of the twentieth century, during Meiji, the *azuki* bean colour was then followed “by a plethora of bright greys: colours ranging from purple, red and orange to pink but filtered through *nezumi*, ‘mouse’ grey. Mouse colours were ‘*iki* and sophisticated.”<sup>123</sup> This palette of mouse colours was the one favoured for the kimonos offered at the “Kyoto Kimono Rental Station” in 2008. In contrast to the mouse colours used for the rental kimonos, the yellow kimono of the woman shown on a pamphlet at the Kyoto

Central Railway Station Tourist Information Centre combined with a more formal obi, perhaps of brocade, with an *obi-jime* or decorative belt, catches our attention (Figure 36).<sup>124</sup> The sleeves of her kimono are printed in their lower part with a design of foreign white lace. The very fine lines of her face and the light makeup accentuate her almost white skin; her closed lips, soft smile and gaze are directed to the beholder. The colour of her dyed-brown bob hairstyle reflects a contemporary touch and, together with the patterns of the sleeves, reveal a certain hybridism in her appearance. Does she represent the beauty ideal of a so-called *Hafu*, a half-Japanese and half-European or American foreigner? Another source of ambiguity is that the woman's look of beauty and physical charm emphasizes "femininity," which is an attribute linked to "Japaneseness," but her hairstyle reminds us of the rebellious Japanese "Modern Girls" or *moga* of the 1920s, famous for their progressive and independent attitudes and for their introducing the performance of foreign fashions to the society of their times.



Figure 36: Front page of pamphlet for the Kyoto Kimono Rental Station, 2008. The ends of the sleeves of the kimono in the photo are printed in a lace in Western-style design. Lace as material or as printed pattern for kimono together with obi or *zōri* sandals was popular in 2008. Kyoto, 2008.

The subtitle of the pamphlet, written in pink in large characters across the width of the front page and before the kimono of the woman, asks:

きもので京都、しませんか？  
*Kimono de Kyoto, shimasenka?*  
 Would you do Kyoto in kimono?

It is an invitation for visitors to get to know the city while wearing kimono. And on the left side of the page we read:

お友達と、カップルで、母娘で  
*Otomodachi to, kappuru de, hahamusume de*  
 With a friend, in a couple, mother and daughter

京都散策を彩るきものを、  
*Kyoto sansaku wo irodoru kimono wo,*  
 Walking for pleasure in Kyoto in colour-arranged kimono

色々ご用意しています。  
*iroiro go youi shiteimasu.*  
 All well-prepared for you

On the reverse of the pamphlet (Figure 37), a few examples of kimono coordination for women and men are shown, and more detailed explanations on time, services and prices provided. A miniature picture of the *Kyoto Kimono Passport* (Figure 38) is also to be seen, along with a map with the location of the Rental Station and the sponsors, the web address, etc.



Figure 37: Reverse of the pamphlet of the Kimono Rental Station. The pamphlet becomes a link between the “Kyoto Kimono Rental Station” and the *Kimono Passport*. Kyoto, 2008.

At the Kimono Rental Station the customers get ready to get to know Kyoto in kimono, which is then used as a rented commodity that enables simultaneous consumption of traditional and modern Japanese “life-style” while doing sightseeing and shopping in Kyoto. Suga Masami analyses the degrees of Japaneseness within Japanese contemporary consumer culture in the following way<sup>125</sup>:

Many consumer goods, foods, and services could be labelled Japanese simply because they may give an impression that they are not Western. When it comes to people, however, there is a set of criteria that make up Japaneseness and also determine the degrees of a person’s



Japaneseness. Despite the rapid wave of Westernization that swept over Japan, especially in the material aspects of everyday life, three things have remained relatively unchanged: Japanese language, physical appearance, and location.

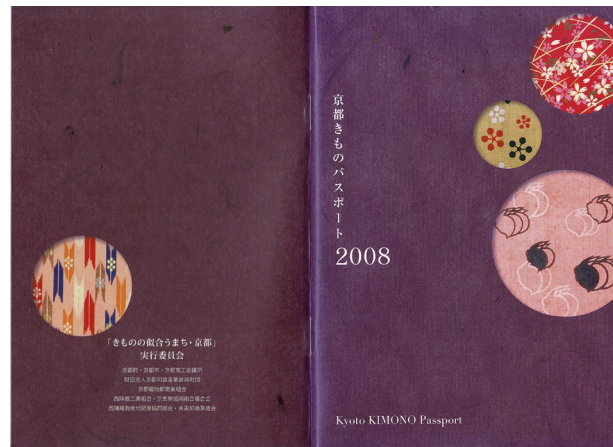


Figure 38: *Kyoto Kimono Passport*, 2008, found doing fieldwork. Kyoto, 2008.

### *Japanese Language*

The text of the pamphlet and posters of the Kyoto Kimono Rental Station are mostly written in Japanese, just using Roman letters to highlight “Kimono Station.”

### *Physical Appearance*

The Japanese still look Japanese, as a result of their genetic background. Because the Japanese have long favoured endogamy, marrying within their own race, most Japanese exhibit similar physical characteristics, with only minor individual variations. In general, they have dark, straight hair, yellowish tinted skin, medium height (not many are under 5 feet, and not many are over 6 feet), and Japanese facial features. The physical characteristics can be modified to look more “Western” through applying permanent waves and dye to the hair, using whiter shades of cosmetic foundation, or wearing high heels to extend height. When they discontinue those practices, however, people return to the original Japanese appearance with which they are born.<sup>126</sup>

The physical characteristics of the woman of the pamphlet of the Kimono Station: the hybridized look of brown-shade hair, the paleness of her skin, the narrower facial form, and the bob hairstyle denote a Japanese woman modified to look more “Western.” With her modified look—through the slightly Westernized aspect of her face, hair colour, and her looking directly at the beholder—does this model clad in kimono become exotic and attractive for the Japanese consumer? Or is she meant to become attractive to travellers both native and foreign? Is her Westernized look and the whiteness of her skin representative of the beauty ideal of contemporary Asian women?

Iwabuchi explains:

Japan is represented and represents itself as culturally exclusive, homogeneous, and uniquely particularistic through the operation of a strategic binary opposition between two imaginary cultural entities, “Japan” and “the West.”<sup>127</sup>

The kind of self-Orientalizing strategy at play in the design of the advertisement suppresses the minority groups within Japan: the model resembles a Japanese woman (not an Ainu, nor a tanned southern Okinawan). While her look stresses the favoured endogamy that produces or keeps a desired type of Japanese people as pure Japanese, the Westernness of the model is included in the hybridism represented in the colour of her hair, her haircut, her make-up and her direct look at the public.

Iwabuchi notes:

Self-Orientalism is a strategy of inclusion through exclusion, and of exclusion through inclusion. Both strategies cannot be separated from each other and work efficiently only when combined.<sup>128</sup>

### ***Location***

The Japanese consider only those who still live in Japan to be Japanese citizens. Because the Japanese government is known to seldom grant Japanese citizenship to immigrants, the possession of Japanese citizenship is highly valued as a solid testimonial of one’s Japanese-ness based on Japanese ancestry.

Is the *Kyoto Kimono Passport* a symbolic strategy, a “passport” to “the real Japan,” to the *furusato*?<sup>129</sup> And is kimono the one place to which to return in times of anxiety, a place providing repose and protection for the Japanese in times of Globalization?

The notion of *furusato*—usually translated as the English “hometown”—has played a strong role in national politics, in particular in local political agencies and touristic advertising, where nostalgia-based rhetoric has long influenced the style in which nation as home—and on a micro scale the region and the town as miniature of the nation—are imagined.<sup>130</sup>

On the other hand:

The wedding industry has begun offering a rental imitation twelve-layer kimono to couples for their wedding, along with other standard costumes commonly rented out by the industry....

I use the word “costume” to emphasize the rarity of kimono being worn as everyday apparel in modern Japan. Just as “Halloween costumes” worn only once a year are called costumes, kimono worn only for special occasions also qualify for this category of apparel.<sup>131</sup>

Or does casually renting kimono for a day in the context of tourism also fall into the category known as “cosplay” (*kosupure*) or “costume play” (*kosuchuumu purei*)?<sup>132</sup>

In an informal interview with Mitsuoka Miyoko, manager of the Antique Kimonos at KIKUYA shop in Shimogyo-ku in Kyoto, about the renting-kimono events at the station and the trend to wearing kimono among some young people in Kyoto, she affirmed that she considers these youngsters to be donning kimono just as costumes for “cosplay.” Like Mrs.

Mitsuoka, other owners and attendants at antique kimono shops criticize the unconventional way some young Japanese wear kimono these days, for example, using coloured tabi instead of the white ones they consider “proper.” On the other hand, young kimono shop attendants working at different boutiques in the city, who have become influential kimono trendsetters for the youth in Kyoto, also suffer from the criticism of the older generation, as I was told by two young attendants at the *Tententen* kimono boutique in Kyoto.

### ***Commodification by “Casualization”***

Usually this concept of “renting kimono” is related to the notion that the kimonos to be enjoyed are not formal but “casual ones” used for the activities of everyday life such as going shopping or visiting a friend, and leisure activities like eating at a restaurant or doing sightseeing. They are made of washable materials requiring less care, usually inexpensive textiles such as polyester, which imitate the patterning and texture of silk kimono materials and weaving techniques. These kimonos are printed and sewn together using a sewing machine.

Can we talk here of a marketing strategy that uses the “casualization” of kimono as a tool to attract people to try traditional dress in a more comfortable way while doing leisure activities?

For example, the article by Susan B. Kaiser, “Identity, Postmodernity, and the Global Apparel Marketplace”<sup>133</sup> employs the concept of “casualization” of men’s business-wear dress code, best represented by the term “casual Fridays,” when employees change their suits for a more relaxing outfit to wear on at least one day of the week.

This re-discovery of the casual kimono seems to be a strategy which plays with the goal of making kimono a dress easy to appropriate, especially by younger consumers, while at the same time still connecting the wearer with aspects of the country’s traditions.

### ***Men as Kimono Wearers***

As we have seen in the advertisements at the Kimono Rental Station in Kyoto and Uji, men are also being asked to take part in the experience of wearing rental kimono. Furthermore, it was men who created the group of kimono wearers named “Kimono de Ginza.” When I did the interview at the Kimono Rental Station in Kyoto, it was a man who was available to talk to me and was in charge of presenting the station’s concept. It is important to note that men are taking part in this contemporary revival, as designers or coordinators, and some of them as owners of the kimono shops and boutiques. Men are also participants who take part in the experience of wearing kimono, as a rented item from, for example, the kimono stations, or as their normal way to dress as manager of a kimono shop (Figure 39). Most of the time, their looks remind us of the image of a *samurai*. Other men and boys were also walking around in Kyoto with rented outfits. For instance, in Kyoto at *Kiyomizu-michi* I found a group of just boys; most likely they were looking at the young girls who were there enjoying the “hunting of autumn leaves”—or were these maybe hunting for a boyfriend or husband? (Figure 40).

Differently from other Asian dress revivals,<sup>134</sup> the contemporary revival of kimono has given men’s casual kimono a new space to be produced, bought or rented, worn, enjoyed and displayed.

Nevertheless, the image of men wearing kimono in contemporary Japan also reinforces the stereotype of the samurai and its Orientalizing image. At first this trend may seem to demonstrate merely that the colonialist process by which men gave up their traditional clothes to function as the makers of progress and modernity in the process of Modernization and Enlightenment during the Meiji period (1868–1912) and until the Second World War has been reversed. But it can be argued that within the contemporary revival the image of the samurai has actually been reworked as a combination of the powerful Japanese warrior and the Meiji gentlemen clad in kimono. In her essay “Empowering the Would-be Warrior, *Bushidō* and the Gendered Bodies of the Japanese Nation” the scholar Michele Mason makes us aware of the “powerful hold on the social imagination” that “persists despite the vast and growing temporal, political, and cultural distance between the eras of samurai rule and today.”<sup>135</sup> Mason highlights in particular the gendered way by which shaped images and ideals of physical bodies (modern Japanese “samurai/citizens”) and the body-politic (the Japanese nation-state) are recreated as they respond to the changes in politics and society in Japanese history:<sup>136</sup> “At the turn of the twenty-first century, for instance, with the millennial crossroads inspiring reflection on past and future, Japan witnessed something of a “*bushidō* boom.”<sup>137</sup> Mason argues that the centrepiece of the current boom is the new Japanese translation of Inazo Nitobe’s (1862–1933) masterpiece “*Bushidō: The Soul of Japan*,” originally written in



Figure 39: Trendy kimono look for men worn by the owner of a men’s kimono shop in Kanazawa City, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 40: Boys dressed in rented kimono, met walking around the area near Kiyomizu Temple. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

English and published in 1900.<sup>138</sup> For Mason, studies on the notions of *bushidō* have always been “complex, changing, and contradictory idealizations” of the ethical code of the samurai, and writers on the topic “commonly point out an exemplary model of a remote historical moment while lamenting the failings of moral, society, and governance in their own age.”<sup>139</sup>

In the present revival, “the samurai spirit” is also used as a metaphor to encourage consumers and producers to try kimono, “Even though ‘the samurai’ is an overworked cliché, its enduring popularity as a symbol of Japanese masculinity and national identity compels us to reconsider this powerful, if wholly overdetermined, icon.”<sup>140</sup> For instance, the “way of the warrior” and its look in contemporary fashion for men’s kimono as well as the influence of the “*bushidō* boom” draw on notions of the “samurai spirit” and the “indomitable inner strength of the gentlemen.”<sup>141</sup>

These and similar expressions are encountered in the 2004 summer edition of the *Kateigaho International Edition*, where in a short text introducing the article “Kimono for Men, Samurai Traditions for Today”—advertisements for casual kimono for men—are announced. On the first page of the article, the text introduces the casual style of kimono for men in the following way:

Kimono are capturing our imagination anew. Looking chic and sharp, the kimono-clad gent exudes confidence and personal style. What draws men to this attire? Does it speak the samurai spirit? Do kimono quietly call up indomitable inner strengths? Men’s kimono may have remained unchanged for centuries, but the current revival has a fresh approach. On these pages, five gentlemen, each a leader in his field, try on kimono for our cameras.<sup>142</sup>

The first successful “gentleman” shown is the famous actor Asano Tadanobu. He poses dressed in a black linen crepe kimono with a linen *haori* short kimono jacket worn casually over it (Figure 20). The reader is advised, still on the first page of the article, as follows: “*Sport the combination with a cool attitude, just as you would wear a linen suit at a summer resort.*” The name of the style given to the combination is “Samurai Chic.” It recalls the hybrid outfits at the end of the nineteenth century, when kimono was paired with Western-style accessories to create hybrid looks. Asano’s hair is worn long and tied at the top of his head like a samurai would do.

The other gentlemen are the ballet dancer Shuto Yasuyuki, the photographer Kirishima Roland, the president of Beam and businessman Shitara Yo, and the president of Ginza Motoji Co. Ltd., Motoji Komei. The pages on which they appear advertise the styles, characteristics and prices of men’s footwear for kimono: *geta* (wooden clogs), *setta* (flat, leather-soled sandals), *tabi* (split-toed socks) and *hanao* (informal *zōri*: flat and thonged sandals). Interpolated between the advertisements are the pictures of the personalities themselves dressed in kimono, each accompanied by a short text with a mini biography on their successes. As it is a summer issue, all are wearing a summer kimono, yukata.

On the last page of the article is a dialogue between Shitara Yo and Motoji Komei. Shitara sells Western clothing while Motoji is a specialist in Japanese wear. In the interview Motoji advises Shitara on wearing kimono: Shitara considers himself to be a beginner in that area.

Motoji argues that via Internet and books the kimono industry offers “a wealth of information for men setting out to buy their first kimono.”<sup>143</sup> Moreover, the kimono industry is beginning to change, and now provides an atmosphere attractive to customers in their shops, which are places to drop in and leave as if they were in a Western-style fashion boutique. Motoji goes on to say that what his colleague in selling clothes needs is more opportunities to wear kimono; he suggests one day of wearing kimono at work each month, or going out with his wife with both wearing kimono. He recommends thinking of the ambience of the place you intend to visit in kimono, so that you choose the right outfit. For special occasions Motoji himself puts on his *haori* jacket and hakama trousers, because with this outfit his “*sense of being a man is heightened. I feel braced up like I’m wearing armour,*” to which Shitara answers: “*I know what you mean. It fills you with the spirit of bushido (the way of the samurai). It invigorates you.*”<sup>144</sup> So two successful mature Japanese agree in feeling their manliness heightened by wearing traditional clothing. One encourages the other to go back to its very roots, displaying not the image of just any man, but of a “truly Japanese citizen,...the samurai.”

### ***Kimono Commodification by Means of “Complicit Exoticism”***

#### ***Key Event: A Day Visit to the Way to Kiyomizu Temple***

The area of the surroundings of the Kiyomizu Temple<sup>145</sup> is famous for the many sights located within easy reach of an enjoyable walk. On my way to the temple, I first visited the Yasaka Shrine, in the eastern part of Kyoto. Approaching the gate of the shrine, I came across two girls wearing kimono, and just a few seconds later a second couple, this time a man and a woman also wearing kimono having a look around. They were taking pictures, and also posed for me. In the shrine grounds, looking for the way to Maruyama Park, I went up to the pond and garden. In the park, I could take pictures of the scenery, and as the day was sunny, many tourists, Japanese and East Asians, were enjoying the display of colours of the tree leaves. One of the couples I had just met came to the place too; they began to take pictures of each other on the bridge, as did other tourists who were drawn to this marvellous spot.

In the city, many shops and kimono boutiques as well as tourist hotels offer the kimono rental service. This service is not only available in the Kimono Rental Stations at Kyoto Station or in Karasuma Street, although the rental station at Kyoto Station may be better-known because of its convenient location and significant size. Again, it is easy to distinguish from where the kimonos are rented, because each shop that rents them out has its own style

As we can see, the two girls in the picture are wearing kimono in similar colours (Figure 41). We can observe that the colours of the fabric of the kimono and the patterns are a dark shade of *murasaki* (dark violet) to match the season of autumn, with red used as an accent and so a good colour for the accessories, such as the obi, or for the shawl. The ways the girls use the short-length shawl and dress up their hair, with the detail of a flower motif on the side, are similar. The bags also share the same modern style, their pattern resembling that of a kimono, most likely a reproduction of a former kimono pattern in *yūzen* technique. The combination of kimono patterns with the more modern forms of handbags can also be seen in different second-hand kimono boutiques and souvenir shops in the city, as well as in the kimono sections of most shopping centres.



Figure 41: Young Japanese women wearing rented outfits at the Yasaka Shrine. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

Apart from the many different visitors in rented kimono, women could also be seen wearing kimono to attend a tea ceremony or ikebana lessons; their kimono were all made of silk. Other women use the robe as a uniform in their places of work at traditional restaurants, hostels and cafés (normally in this case the kimono is worn with an apron and the sleeves of the kimono are tied out of the way).

### *Visiting the Wakon Kimono-Rental Shop*

It is interesting to see Japanese girls working in second-hand kimono boutiques or recycled kimono shops like *Wakon*: young shop assistants who are also trendsetters of contemporary kimono fashion (Figure 42). In the shop they were wearing casual kimono with patterns that resemble those used a century ago, such as the small sewn pattern of a cat and a rose (Figure 44). The rose pattern was very popular during the 1920s and 30s (Figure 43). The coloured collars, *han-eri*, and coloured tabi-socks contrast with the well-known “traditional” white socks and white *han-eri* that became the colour worn with the development of the modern kimono a century ago.



Figure 42: The interior of the *Wakon* shop with numerous kimono-related products. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 43: Black-rose design emphasizing the romantic mood of the time. Taishō-period kimono from my host mother in Kyoto. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 44: Contemporary kimono textile design with small details of a cat and a rose from past kimono fashions. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



## *Imbued in My Own Image of the Exotic*

Walking the narrow streets, with Japanese-style houses along each side, crowds of tourists were going by, this time Westerners as well. Every now and then, people wearing kimono appeared, but the more I looked the more people I saw. They were of all ages, old ladies to the very young. Surprisingly to me, some looked like maiko, while others were wearing proper silk kimono. Most of the people in kimonos were not alone: on that day I met groups of up to five or seven girls were walking together. As already mentioned, there were also teenage boys and young men strolling in their kimonos (Figure 40), and they were happy at being photographed in their outfits.

On the way to Kiyomizu Temple, a maiko posed for a photographer (Figure 45), and we also took the chance to photograph her. She smiled graciously, and it was very special seeing the ambiance she created with her presence, clad in her colourful kimono, in the scenery of old-style wooden houses: all of that matched perfectly with the sunny day and the feeling of autumn. I must admit—and this is a very important fact for this research—that I almost confused her with a real maiko, and for some minutes I found myself immersed like perhaps most foreigners in a kind of “dream of the exotic” which we have learned to see in many movies about Japan: the image of a precious doll in human size amongst perfect scenery.



Figure 45: Rented maiko outfit worn by a tourist being photographed. Kyoto East District, 2008.  
© Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 46: Western tourists in rented maiko outfits taking pictures at the entrance of a temple. Kyoto East District, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

Some minutes later I noticed two other maikos near me (Figure 46), this time taking photos of one another. It was then that I realized that all the “maikos” I had encountered were either a few foreigners or ordinary Japanese tourists who had rented the outfits. Walking further,

two ladies posed for me dressed in their own kimono and *haori* jackets. They told me that they had actually got dressed in Kobe and came to Kyoto specifically to enjoy wearing kimono in the city.

***Maiko Outfits for Rental on the Way to Kiyomizu Temple***

Walking on, I came across a group of five girls dressed up as maiko. They were certainly having fun, as people were constantly stopping them to take their picture, thinking they had come across real maiko. The girls were taking pictures of each other with their digital cameras and their mobile phones (Figures 47, 48). They had found the place renting out maiko outfits on the Internet, and had come all the way from Nagoya to experience this part of their own culture. They said, “*It was a once-in-a-life chance to feel like one of those girls who wear kimonos.*”



Figure 47: Young Nagoya women taking pictures on a scenic path near the way to Kiyomizu Temple. Kyoto, 2008.  
© Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 48: Three of the young Nagoya women.  
Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 49: Japanese school children and tourists with the girls from Nagoya in rented maiko outfits. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

In 1993–1994 I had the chance to live for one year in the city of Kyoto. At that time, as a foreigner, one was tempted to hunt for geisha or maiko near the area called Gion, famous for its many teahouses and restaurants, where geisha performances can be experienced by normal Japanese citizens or foreign tourists. I write “hunt” because it was not usual, and is still not usual, to come across a real geisha or a maiko so easily. Normally they could be seen walking from teahouse to teahouse in the area of Gion or Pontocho, or at temples if they had been taking part in a formal photo session.

Doing fieldwork in Japan in 2008, my experience was totally different. As remarked above, there were girls dressed as maiko all along the Kiyomizu-michi<sup>146</sup> and near Gion. I could observe their interaction in the field and talk to a group of them. As Stephanie Assmann observes, “Japanese do group activities concerning the performance of traditional dress out of the context of formal occasions,” and these girls were really enjoying having the experience while sharing it with friends. The group from Nagoya was the only one I got the chance to talk to, and when I asked them if I could also get dressed as maiko they told me about the shop they had found on the Internet. “*In a webpage is all the information you need!*” they said.

The girls, who are themselves Japanese tourists and university graduates, posed together with Japanese school students, who were fascinated by the rareness and exoticness of the “rented costume-clad maiko” (Figure 49). A real sensation and amusement for both parties: they surely didn’t know that the girls weren’t real maikos (maybe it would have disappointed them). In any case, the students were enjoying the encounter with this group of girls donning maiko outfits, the act of being photographed, and being asked by others to be photographed

with them, and the excitement of the other tourists at catching a glance of a rented outfit of “meta-Japaneseness” being worn. Here the gaze of the Japanese school children is perhaps very similar to that of a foreign tourist: after all, they have all seen maiko in books, TV dramas and shows, and had to travel all the way to Kyoto to have this new experience. We could talk of an “auto-exotic gaze”<sup>147</sup> in Japanese girls dressing up like maiko, and enjoying the traditional Kyoto environment of the setting at Kiyomizu-michi as an act of Auto-Exotization, or perhaps, as argued by Dorinne Kondo:

The journey to Kyoto becomes more than mere tourism; it is a Proustian quest to recapture lost time and a lost identity, a time/space of essentialized Japanese-ness.<sup>148</sup>

The emancipated way the girls dressed up like maiko, acting, walking around, playing with their cameras and cell phones, talking to each other just like any other young girls do, contrasts with the “traditional” and Orientalized image of the oppressed but elegant and delicate geisha girl that we as foreigners may have.

The groups of girls were immortalizing the unique experience by taking photos of themselves in their maiko outfits, or having their photos taken, documenting the experience with their digital cameras and perhaps sending the images instantly to other friends with their cellular phones, or posting them on an Internet social network such as Facebook.

As John Urry argues in the second edition of his book *The Tourist Gaze* (2002):

Photography gives shape to travel.... Indeed, much tourism becomes in effect a search for the photogenic; travel is a strategy for the accumulation of photographs.... Japanese, Americans and Germans all seem to “have” to take photographs and then to remember through these photographs.<sup>149</sup>

In his chapter entitled “Seeing and Theming,” Urry also writes about the social composition of fellow-tourists and the local people living in the places visited, which he argues is important because tourism involves the visiting of various public spaces, and in such places people not only gaze but are also being gazed upon by others. With their cameras, tourists photograph and are photographed by others.<sup>150</sup>

Like other souvenirs, photographs can be considered “Objects of Memory,” which means that through the materiality of the photographs memory can be refracted and evoked.<sup>151</sup> The experience of wearing the maiko costume and wig, and being made-up as a maiko, the act of going in groups to share that experience, the act of photographing and being photographed are all very much linked to the subjects of “Seeing and Theming,” but it is especially the physical surroundings, with their architecture and the kimono, that play an enormous role in constructing an image which re-invents the “past.”

For example, in the case of Japan, Meiji-era photographs used to be souvenirs of “Old Japan.” The “Theming” of most of the photographs created at that time for Western tourists was through “views of famous scenic places,” which were used to provide for the visitors an experience

with an aura of unmediated authenticity compared to the staged and stereotyped scenes of the Japanese pictorial tradition of famous places, called *meisho*.<sup>152</sup>

A famous site in Kyoto, one of the traditional *meisho* images of the “Kiyomizu-Temple” view, is close to the temple: the Kiyomizu-michi, “the way to Kiyomizu Temple.” It is a tourist area with a scenery of small streets with Japanese traditional wooden houses (*machiya*), shops and restaurants with gardens, paths to walk, and the temple pagoda. It all evokes a time in the past, mostly that associated with the pre-modern era of the Edo period. In my previous visit in 1993, it was not necessary to be dressed up like a maiko for my Japanese classmates to enjoy the way to Kiyomizu Temple, and they did not feel any less Japanese in their Western clothing. Could we attribute the effectiveness of the “Exotic Japan” campaign of 1984 as due to having “encouraged Japanese to look at Japan with the eyes of the foreign other,” especially those younger Japanese, and therefore to have made what they see as exotic and interesting enough to want to try the outfit and become a maiko?

As Marilyn Ivy in her essay on “Formation of Mass Culture”<sup>153</sup> notes, the nostalgia products of the Exotic Japan Campaign encourage Japanese consumers to look at Japan with the gaze of the Westerner—the Japanese become tourists, visitors exploring their own country. The program targeted young Japanese who had not grown up wearing Japanese traditional clothing and whose lifestyle had been strongly influenced by that of America. She argues, citing Fredric Jameson,<sup>154</sup> that Japanese youth “know nothing of prewar Japan, which thus became another frontier of the ‘exotic.’” In this way, we can understand how, as “Objects of Memory,” photographs could become for the Japanese tourist a contemporary way to fantasize and to preserve a piece of traditional Japanese visual culture for future generations.

### ***The Evocative Geisha and the Concrete Geisha***

In Japan, to reflect a culture that is “as ancient” as Egypt,<sup>155</sup> means that it must be unchanging—and associated with geisha, samurai and famous landscape environments like Mount Fuji. The image of a woman clad in kimono, most of the time the image of a “geisha girl,” decorates the front cover of most well-known travel books, Japanese dictionaries and books on Japan in the rest of the world. Yet the Japanese themselves, attests Dalby, consider geishas to be “more Japanese” than almost any other definable group in their society.<sup>156</sup>

The reason for this is probably that a geisha’s purpose is to maintain Japanese tradition.<sup>157</sup> Geisha are the masters of wearing kimono, and they have been important trendsetters of *kosode* and then of kimono since at least the Edo period.<sup>158</sup> They are experts in Japanese dance; they can play traditional musical instruments and sophisticated traditional games. What is important in the case of the kimono revival is to have the image of a maiko or “geisha girl” working as a mirror for the fixed stereotyped image we have of Japan—as Iwabuchi explains when he uses his term “cultural odour”:

I use the term cultural odour to focus on the way in which cultural features of a country of origin and images or ideas of its national, in most cases stereotyped, way of life are associated positively with a particular product in the consumption process. Any product

may have various kinds of cultural association with the country of its invention. Such images are often related to exoticism, such as the image of the Japanese samurai or geisha girl.<sup>159</sup>

One can look in the geisha mirror as foreigner and see the evocative image of a geisha that has been in our mind due to our interaction with photography, prints, film, Internet pages, TV programs, artworks, or what Iwabuchi calls “fragrance”:

Here, however, I am interested in the movement when the image of the contemporary lifestyle of the country of origin is strongly and affirmatively called to mind as the very appeal of the product, when the “cultural odour” of cultural commodities is evolved. The way in which the cultural odour of a particular product becomes a “fragrance”—a socially and culturally acceptable smell—is not determined simply by the consumer’s perception that something is “made in Japan.” Neither is it necessarily related to the material influence or quality of the product. It has more to do with widely disseminated symbolic images of the country origin.<sup>160</sup>

It would seem that instead of the foreigner it is the Japanese themselves who recognize the meta-Japanese image of Japaneseness in the geisha mirror. The geisha image is related to the Japanese identity and, with the help since modern times of the Western tourist gaze (following Urry), the geisha image is stereotyped as to represent the ideal of the unique, erotic and feminine Japanese beauty.

Much of the fascination with geisha has to do with their remoteness. Like royalty, they inhabit a special world, hidden from view. They not only dress differently, they live differently from ordinary people. Their whole culture can be seen as a series of distancing devices that include the special style of talking, the refusal to accept first-time customers, and objectification through the beautiful accessories.<sup>161</sup>

Nevertheless, at present and parallel to the kimono revival, Japanese tourists are becoming maiko (apprentice geisha) themselves while renting the outfit:

Not only has the dress itself has become an object of consumption, but a whole industry has emerged around preserving the art of kimono wearing. Moreover, the kimono as the garment worn by geisha has been reinvented as a symbol that is being used to uphold the enigma of Japanese culture.<sup>162</sup>

Curiously, the idea of transforming oneself into an apprentice geisha is an in trend among contemporary Japanese girls. Both options of renting a casual kimono for a day in Kyoto or a maiko outfit are part of leisure activities for Japanese women. But becoming a “maiko”<sup>163</sup> seems not just to be a pastime or hobby for Japanese youth; it is more an act of consuming ethnicity and enjoying national identity, and perhaps also a nostalgic way to recognize how foreign the world of the geisha as upholder of Japanese traditions—as we’ve seen, the Japanese regard the geisha as “more Japanese”<sup>164</sup> than almost any other group in society—has become. As quoted by Dalby, “the maiko of Kyoto were a tourist attraction” in 1995. Back then it was popular among Japanese girls to be maiko for some years without needing to commit to becoming a geisha in the end. But in Kyoto in 2008 the maiko like those in 1995

were competing as tourist attractions with rental outfit-clad maiko for-a-day who could be foreign tourists or visitors from all over Japan.

## ***Kimono Commodification Using Memory Culture***

### ***Key Event: Day Trips to the Sanjo–Karasuma and Shijo-Kawaramachi Shopping Streets in Kyoto City Centre***

On the 26th of October, I went to the Shijo-Kawaramachi intersection and started walking along Shijo Street in the direction of Karasuma Street. My plan was to look at the shops and get an impression of what these famous streets might offer for my research. It was Sunday, and a lot of shops were still closed at about 10:30 a.m. On the way, I turned down one passage leading to Teramachi Street and came across some shops where clothes with kimono designs were being sold. Three shops were worth visiting:

#### ***Kimono Shops/Boutiques at the Crossroads***

The first one, “*MoMon*,” had fancy clothes made with printed kimono designs, T-shirts, jeans, and accessories made for both boys and girls. The attendant said that the shop had opened about six years earlier (around 2002). Some jeans had applications of kimono designs on the pockets or on the side of the leg. Most of the fabric designs used at *MoMon* were auspicious and evocative of autumn (see Figure 50), either on parts of T-shirts, as can be seen in the traditional design of the Japanese maple and its autumn tints on the mannequin displayed in the foreground, or printed on textiles and serving as decoration in the shop window.



Figure 50: As in other boutiques that I visited in Kyoto, the boutique *MoMon* sells many different articles: Western-style clothes such as jeans, T-shirts, etc., and accessories adorned or patterned in kimono design, especially with flowers, plants and leaves as autumn motifs. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

The second shop specialized in accessories, including shoes, bags and mobile-phone decorations made of cotton printed with kimono patterns. The fabric and the articles themselves, shoes, bags and belts, were mostly made in China by a company called Corazón. In the shop, they had some items made with real pieces of recycled kimono, but these were rather few. Most souvenirs (Figure 51) were made of cotton or imitations of silk with kimono-like printed designs manufactured in China.



Figure 51: Shoes and sandals made by the Chinese company Corazon. Souvenirs and accessories on Kawaramachi Street. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 52: Packaged casual kimono souvenir “set” ready to take away: with kimono, zōri, obi, obi-jime, tabi, han-eri and juban. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Surprisingly, a third shop at Kawaramachi Street had sets of kimono ready to take away “packaged” as a “kimono set” in a transparent plastic envelope (Figure 52). I had seen something similar done with yukata, summer kimono, back in the year 2005 at stores like “*Uni Qlo*,” but this was the first time I had seen a casual kimono with its accessories already sorted and ready to be purchased. In this packaged take-away casual kimono, the set of six items—kimono, obi (belt), tabi-socks, *zōri*-sandals, *juban* (kimono lingerie), and *han-eri* (collar)—cost 21,000 yen. Just as the kimono in the package, most of the kimonos for sale at this shop were made of polyester.

### ***Kitsuke or Kimono Coordination***

In Japan, people talk about the coordination of the kimono outfit, or *Kitsuke*. For instance, if a person specializes in the coordination of kimono, most of the time this person has a diploma from a kimono academy or school. This means that the person is skilled in arranging with a specific fashionable but mostly traditional note the parts of the kimono and its accessories—kimono, *nagajuban* (full-length garment worn between the kimono and the kimono underwear), obi, *han-eri*, tabi, *geta*-sandals—to create a specific look for a specific occasion (Figure 53).



Figure 53: A model being dressed by a kimono-coordination specialist in *Wafufu*, Sanjo Street, Kyoto, 2008.

© Oly Firsching-Tovar

In the present kimono revival, the kimono coordination offered at shops, boutiques and in *mooks* like *Kimono at Kyoto*, or the more famous *mook*/magazine *Kimono Hime*, seems to be trying to emancipate kimono from the rules established by the academies, and power the use of kimono through fashion. This becomes possible because the outfits offered are those of casual kimono, worn on occasions such as going to town, doing shopping, meeting friends and travelling. In her 1993 book *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*, Liza Dalby offered an almost prophetic thought, that without changing the view of kimono solely as official dress, informal fabrics would not be able to compete in the confection of casual kimono:

Even as kimono academies urge women to find ways to squeeze kimono back into everyday life, the stiffness of the mode they promulgate undermines their efforts, aesthetically and functionally....

Because official Kimono is always concerned to stand on its dignity, efforts to work its way back to informal fabrics for every day are probably doomed to fail.<sup>165</sup>

### ***Pattern and Designs of the Third Kimono Revival***

The kimono found at contemporary kimono boutiques and shops in 2008 were sometimes second-hand vintage pieces or new casual kimono. For instance, I visited the kimono boutique called *Tententen*, which sells new casual kimono with designs printed in the patterns of the Taishō era. The mannequin shown is dressed in a casual kimono made of silk-imitation fabric with a “*nagajuban*” (kimono lingerie) design using just one Camellia pattern for the complete kimono, worn with an obi for kimono with its respective *obi-age*<sup>166</sup> and *obi-jime*<sup>167</sup> (Figure 54). In another shop a similar pattern is used for a yukata (Figure 55) worn with a lighter yukata obi with the detail of a Camellia flower attached to it.



Figure 54: Kimono coordination, *nagajuban* design with Camellia pattern, at the boutique *Tententen*, Sanjo Street, Kyoto, 2008.

© Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 55: View of a display on mannequins of trendy summer kimono, yukata. The Camellia pattern was popular in 2008 not only in summer but also for casual kimono that can be used in the fall. Kyoto, 2008.

© Oly Firsching-Tovar

### ***Kimono Lingerie Design as Design for the Outer Kimono***

It is important to note that some of the casual kimono found in the field, as in Figure 54, have been reprinted with patterns like those of *nagajuban* (kimono lingerie). Most *nagajuban* patterns were traditionally stencil-dyed, which made possible the repetition of the pattern on textile and its re-use in mass production on different surfaces, as in two *nagajuban* designs with flower motifs, Japanese Cherry and Japanese Apricot (Figure 56). As noted earlier, I had



Figure 56: *Nagajuban* kimono lingerie design. Taken from the pocketbook *Nagajuban: Japanese Lingerie Kimono*.

seen an umbrella and a bag printed with the same style of pattern as the kimono and the yukata mentioned above at the Wakon shop. It is significant that the lingerie design, *nagajuban*, could become the inspiration for the design of the outer kimono garment in the current kimono revival, especially for the casual kimonos printed on synthetic fabric, for summer and for rental.

Beginning in the sixteenth century, it became the fashion to wear kimono in several layers—often as many as five or even ten. However, the twentieth century trend towards simplicity and modernism was instrumental in changing the way kimono were worn, and it was at this time that *nagajuban* became a fundamental ingredient of the equation. The *nagajuban* glimpsed at the sleeve openings of a kimono is an essential constituent of elegance, unique to the kimono, that seems to subtly hint at the charms of the wearer.<sup>168</sup>

If we observe the tendencies of the present kimono revival, we notice that the casual kimono rented at the kimono stations and shops or sold at boutiques use simple combinations of pattern and vivid colours, just like in a *nagajuban* design. This kind of casual kimono mode is recurrent sometimes in a more classic way in mute mouse colours and sometimes in a more extravagant and bizarre way in the shops and boutiques found at the crossing of Sanjo-Karasuma and Shijo-Kawaramachi shopping streets in the autumn of 2008 (Figure 57).

Printing on polyester or other synthetic silk-imitating fabrics reduces the numbers of colours needed to print the patterns, hence reduces the cost of manufacturing a kimono, and so makes kimono more affordable for the consumer. However, it also means that many different kimonos can look the same—the exclusivity of the one-piece kimono may become rarer. On the other hand, one can assume that reviving past *nagajuban* designs is a strategy to evoke a world of kimono unknown by young Japanese, a rather “exotic kimono mode” re-discovered and reinvigorated.

Silk kimono is the type of kimono used by women adherents of the arts of tea, flower-arranging, and the *koto* arts<sup>169</sup> (Figure 58). The colours of official kimono such as these are rather subdued. With this revival and the return of the casual kimono for a more pluralistic public, the casual kimono has moved from its state as an “ex-commodity,” regarded (after Appadurai) as an example of “things retrieved, either temporarily or permanently, from the commodity state and placed in some other space,” to be now put out on the market and reinvented as a robe for everyday life.



Figure 57: Kimono at the Kimono Stations in Uji City and on Karasuma Street (small picture upper left and the kimono in the middle). Original *Nagajuban* of the Taishō period (bottom left). Casual kimono offered for sale in a shop at Kawaramachi Street (right). Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 58: Two different styles of kimono worn as the visiting wear *hōmongi*. Image taken from the magazine *Kimono Salon*, 2012.

In the present kimono revival, the tendency is to look back to the way kimono was worn at the beginning of the twentieth century, when it was still the everyday form of clothing used by most Japanese, and when hybrid outfits of kimono mixed with Western-style patterns or

accessories were in vogue, as well as to look at the variety of motifs in the patterns used at that time, more specifically around the turn of the century and some decades afterwards (1890–1930).

The integration of fashion accessories of Western origin like shawls, brooches, umbrellas, boas, rings, bags, fans and flower adornments for the hair, as well as other forms of haircuts and hair styling, e.g. the Gibson-girl look, the Bob look, the Bridal look, perm hair etc., were all used in coordination with kimono outfits during those years. At that time, the mixing and parallel influences of traditional Japanese and Western elements were also creatively used for the pattern designs of Japanese footwear such as sandals, *zōri* and *geta*,<sup>170</sup> or in the design of Japanese-style fans, for example with Art-Deco decoration (Figure 59).



Figure 59: Clothing habits of the 1920s. Illustration taken from the book by Jō and Watanabe, *Japanese Fashion*.

One way to analyse how this rediscovery of past kimono fashions has affected different groups in present-day society such as producers and consumers, followers of kimono, or young and old, is the act of buying and collecting recycled kimono and pieces of kimono and obi. Another aspect of this is seeing how pattern designs of those years (e.g. the rose), hairstyles adorned with flowers (Figure 60), coloured collars, the integration of accessories such as boas, and lace as material for the making of *han-eri* collars or for details in the decoration of the obi, give a nostalgic note to the way the kimono outfit is promoted and worn today.

With these trends evoking past kimono fashions or what one could call “kimono cool outfits” of the past, a new market for young designers of kimono accessories has also been created. See for example the kimono style of the autumn and winter collection coordinated by the *Ichimanben* recycled-kimono boutique in Sanjo Street in Kyoto (Figure 61); in the poster, the model is wearing an irregular striped pattern that was very much used in kimono fashion of the 1920s. Just such a pattern is worn by the woman on the right in the illustration of the clothing fashions of the 1920s already mentioned (Figure 59)<sup>171</sup>—note also the coloured collar and flower motif for her hair.



Figure 60: Taishō-Romanticism style of yukata advertised in the daily fashion newspaper *Senken* 74 (25 June 2007). Found doing field research at the library of the Kanazawa College of Art, 2008.



Figure 61: Kimono style of the autumn and winter collection coordinated by *Ichi.man.ben*. Kyoto, 2008.  
© Oly Firsching-Tovar

The kimono in Figure 62 features a style coordinated by a souvenir and kimono shop in Kawaramachi Street, in the Kyoto city centre. This shop also sells bags, obi, *furoshiki* (Japanese wrapping towels), and kimono accessories with retro-style fabrics of the twentieth century, including spider-web, dots, stripes and tartar patterns. The last illustration of the *mook Japanese Fashion* edited by Seigensha features stylish contemporary kimono outfits (Figure 63). Do these examples demonstrate the circular history of Japanese clothing habits of modern times, starting and ending a century with uncertainties on the future of kimono?

And therefore proclaiming its revival and survival? Some other famous patterns used and revived within this revival are: peacock, rose, card, orchid, bellflower, lily, tulip, dahlia, sunflower, cobweb, arrow, dragonfly, maple, and grape.



Figure 62: Kimono and its accessories at Kawaramachi Street. Kyoto, 2008.  
© Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 63: Contemporary kimono outfit taken from the book by Jō and Watanabe, *Japanese Fashion*.

### ***Kimono “Memory Culture” in the Mooks *Kimono Hime* and *Kimono at Kyoto****

With the following images, I want to show some of the “kimono cool outfits,” or updated fashionable kimono coordinations, just mentioned, as proposed by two *mooks* on kimono styling. Firstly, *Kimono Hime* (published in Japan by Shodensha and sold internationally at Japanese bookstores abroad where large populations of Japanese live such as Düsseldorf in Germany), and secondly *Kimono at Kyoto* (published by Mitsumura Suiko Shoin and specially made for Japanese tourists travelling to Kyoto). My argument here is that there has been a wave of kimono revival that is pretty much similar in the way its image is promoted by shop owners and by kimono coordinators and designers, and this style is mostly reminiscent of the era called “*Taishō Roman*” (Taishō Romanticism).

#### ***Kimono Hime***

The first edition of the *mook* *Kimono Hime* came out in 2003. It is relevant to mention that many of the published *mooks*, books and magazines, as well as the opening of many kimono boutiques, coincided with the time frame of the years 2002–2005.

For the discussion on how kimono has been reinvented or updated as casual wear and using strategies that play with the “past,” fashioning kimono memory in the style of kimono coordination, I have concentrated my attention on the analysis of two pictures from the *mook* *Kimono Hime* in its first issue in April 2003 (Figure 64).

The pictures represent the look that this *mook* promoted in its first issue, a style of kimono coordination with a strong mix of antique kimono, Western fashion accessories and Western hairstyles.

On the front page, the motto of *Kimono Hime* is stated in the *katakana* alphabet (used to translate foreign languages): “*Kimono no hajimete wa antiiku kara,*” which translates as “Start with kimono by wearing an antique one.” The content of the *mook* starts with a photo series in which the model is the famous American-born Japanese actress Mariko Takahashi. The photo series is followed by an interview with the famous Japanese soprano Kiyoko Otani, who sang in the opera *Madame Butterfly* in the 1960s in Poland. In the interview, Otani gives her views on kimono and talks about her experience of wearing it and being advised on how to wear it as an opera singer. The rest of the edition is about the work of designers and producers of kimono coordination: thirteen different kimono activists, some of whom appear as representatives of shops, others in their own right. There is also illustrated advice on how to dress in kimono, while the last pages of the *mook* are on kimono accessories.



Figure 64: Picture of the actress Takahashi Mariko modelling antique-kimono looks for the *Kimono Hime* Spring Collection 2003.

A total of eight different kimono outfits worn by Mariko Takahashi appear in the photo series. In both photos examined here, the model stands in the middle of the picture. In the left-hand photo, she is in a space rose in colour; it surrounds her and contrasts with her figure. In this photo a small text is written in white to the right of the model’s body in Japanese: “*oshare gokoro to midashinami*” (fashionable appearance around the turn of the century).



This text introduces us to two facts: firstly, that kimono was fashionable during the revival at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and secondly, that this was a retro style which reminds us of the way kimono was worn by some women at the turn of the twentieth century and called “Kimono a la Taishō Mode.”

In the photo on the right, the model stands with her hands joined in front of her, her fingernails polished and lacquered red. She stands in the foreground of the picture, her image framed with an illustrative design oval in an Art-Nouveau style with organic outlines of white flowers and green leaves, the latter in turn with a white-line design of green beans in their pods, the green background recalling the season of spring. Her proximity to the front of the picture allows the observer to see in detail the components of her layered kimono outfit, makeup and hairstyling (on page ten in the *mook* there is a detailed explanation in Japanese of the type of kimono and accessories worn in the picture, together with their prices, the names of the shops from which they can be bought, and the name of the stylist).

The model is wearing a *meisen* kimono with a design of polka dots called *mizutama* in red shades of *beniuro*, Japanese safflower. She has an attached collar dyed soft-pink and colour-printed with cherry blossom patterns in red, blue and white and delicate fine dark stripes, a *han-eri* collar in purple with a flower motif embroidered in pink, and a delicate necklace in the design of a small carved flower.

The obi is in Art-Deco design, antique *obi-jime* with a detail of a pin made of blue *nandoiro* in fine stripes. Over her kimono the model wears a coloured *haori* jacket also in the dark shade of *akaneiro* (madder red), with patterns of chrysanthemum, *ume* (Japanese plum), and *jigami* (Japanese fan paper) in shades of salmon pink, red, grey, and soft yellow.

Her hair is bound and worn up, covered at the back with a hat, and with a flower arrangement to the side. In the photo on the left, the model wears black velvet gloves with small appliqués, retro elements also characteristic of the so-called American “flappers.”

The combination of layers of kimono observed in both photos is another characteristic of the way kimono used to be worn at the turn of the twentieth century during the first revival. Looking at the model on the left, at the bottom of the outfit one can see a bit of the design of the *nagajuban* (kimono lingerie), with stripes and flowers in a soft-rose palette, green leaves and red-blue lines. Over this is a black silk kimono with a flower motif in pink, and over that a violet-coloured *han-eri* collar with a fine pattern of flowers, also in pink. The obi also features a similar combination of colour, salmon-pink, green, red and black, and is secured by a metal brooch also acting as an accent with an artistic design of a flower bouquet.

The footwear consists of coloured *zōri* (socks), also with a violet touch, and *geta* (sandals) in black and red. The bag carried in the hand with a metal opening and textile body also complements the look, which “pushes some ‘contemporary’ boundaries”<sup>172</sup> in kimono fashion.

Paradoxically, in this *mook*, kimono seems to be revived through reviving the power of the fashionable *moga*, Japanese Modern Girl; but how does this work? Starting with the short

haircut called “bob,” in Japanese “*bobu*,” associates the image of the model with that of the famous rebellious Japanese Modern Girls. The *moga*, or *modan garu*, were young Japanese girls who introduced the latest Western fashion and trends to Japan and were notorious for their short hair and free way of living. Their image is not normally associated with kimono but with the use of trendy Western fashion. In *Kimono Hime* the *modan-garu* look is extended to the makeup, for which that of the model in both outfits discussed here is typical, with rounded, coloured cheek bones in cherry red, well-defined, red-coloured lips, black delineated eyes, and high, thin and arched eyebrows—a typical Western-style of makeup of the 1920s.

Moreover, page eleven in the *mook*, after the photo series and the description and advertisement of each coordinated outfit of the series, is designed with an illustrated poster of a woman as background, the Japanese opera singer Kiyoko Otani introduced above. Her image is centred and dominates the layout of the page. To her left is the text: “*Kimono no jidai ni kimono kinakatta modan girl*” (The Modern Girl who did not wear kimono in the era of kimono).

Why is it important for a *mook* to recall the Modern Girl as a fashion icon when reviving kimono today? Because they did not wear kimono at that time?

To be fashionable today means to also wear kimono, that’s why!

### ***Kimono at Kyoto***

The cover of the *mook Kimono at Kyoto*<sup>173</sup> features an eclectic design in a mix of Art-Nouveau romantic decoration and bright, flat Art-Deco-like squares of colours in red, purple, yellow and pink. In the yellow and purple squares, the title of the publication “*Kimono at Kyoto*” is written in a combination of *katakana* alphabet (used to translate foreign languages) and roman letters, using the English preposition “at” to give an attractive foreign touch to it. As an incentive to buy the book, the reader gets a short invitation to walk around Kyoto and do some shopping for kimono while getting to know the artists, designers and kimono coordinators who currently live and work in the city. Kyoto seems to act as the epicentre of this tourist attraction in this publication, as well as in Dorinne Kondo’s essay “The Orient Within: Kyoto Etrangere” in her book *About Face*, as “a metonym for authentic tradition and renewal for the postmodern Japanese.”<sup>174</sup> Kyoto becomes an oasis for shopping and consumption for kimono fans.

The *mook* content is divided into four chapters in a way similar to the structure of *Kimono Hime* but in a smaller format. Chapter One is about the people who take part in the coordination and sale of contemporary kimono and in providing advice on all matters concerning it: fifteen Kyoto shop owners who introduce their workplaces and their kimono-coordination styles. Chapter Two introduces the people who wear kimono on a day-to-day basis due to their jobs, such as geisha and maiko, or monks working at temples or shrines. Chapter Three, entitled “*Kimono de Osampo*” (to wander around dressed in kimono) gives advice to Japanese tourists on unusual or impressive visits that can be made in kimono around

Kyoto's city centre. Chapter Four of the *mook* discusses the materials, techniques and processes of making kimono and its accessories.



Figure 65: The contemporary Modern Girl-like look.  
Taken from the *mook Kimono at Kyoto*.

For the argument on how kimono have been updated to become outfits resembling past kimono fashions, it is also important to take into consideration the relation between dress and architecture, and between dress and its context of wearing. In the case of the *mook Kimono at Kyoto*, it is the relation between the models in their kimono outfits and the architectural landscape of Kyoto city as the stage where the pictures were taken which complements the orchestration, “Inszenierung,” of the kimono coordination each of them uses:

When orchestration takes place, something is staged temporarily. It completes and presents itself as a spatially visible or audible event.<sup>175</sup>

Let's go to Chapter Three. The girls leading the tours in kimono specifically visit areas in Kyoto's city centre where there is a strong mixture of Western and traditional Japanese architectural styles. These areas are at the same time an oasis for shopping and tourism.

The first walk accompanies two girls on their journey through Kyoto, which also seems to be a journey in time. The set of kimono and obi of one of the girls is complemented with a flower motif, *hanakazari*, at the side of her hair in combination with a knitted shawl; these accessories again recall the way some women looked in their kimonos during the Taishō era (1912–1926).<sup>176</sup> The next recommendation is to take a walk along the historic street of Sanjo, one of the main streets of Kyoto, with modern architecture and pedestrian walkways. It has been suggested that the spirit of the famous Japanese women of the Taishō era, the Modern Girls, and their energy can be felt while doing the tour out on the streets. In a photo from Chapter Three (Figure 65), the text to the right of the model turning her head to look at the viewer says, read from top to bottom, “*modangaru kibun mankitsu youfuu kenchiku wo tazuneru*” (the Modern Girl is happy visiting Western architectural sites), which refers to the

area between Sanjo Street and Teramachi Street. In this area, there are many important architectural buildings. In Sanjo Street, for example, the Museum of Kyoto, a Japanese interpretation of modern Western architecture from the beginning of the twentieth century, stands alongside many antique merchant houses or renovated Kyoto *machiyas*.<sup>177</sup> This is a shopping area with many bars and cafes, and here is where the new-born Modern Girl clad in kimono should do her shopping and enjoy the eclecticism of the place and its history.



Figure 66: Kimono models in Kyoto. Taken from the *mook Kimono at Kyoto*.

The second walk starts with the scene of a temple where a couple is standing, looking at each other, flirting, stylishly clad in up-to-date kimono outfits (Figure 66). Another Modern Girl with dyed brown hair and the corresponding Modern Boy, also with a contemporary haircut; their chic kimonos are designed in a colour palette of black, white, purple and mouse grey. Contrasting with the orchestration of their outfits, the scenery (the side wall of a temple) invites the young couple to feel the atmosphere of a temple, the essence of Kyoto condensed in just such a historical site, which in this rather untypical scene simply accentuates the mix of traditional and modern elements. The temple and kimonos stand here for tradition, the way the models interact in their kimonos, with their liberated and rebellious “looks” and their poses, stand for modernity and emancipation from the conservative kimono rules and etiquette.

The attitude is indeed revolutionary, even though dressed in kimono.

According to the guide, nightlife and kimono are also connected in Kyoto, so on this walk the reader is accompanying a single girl who appears at a bar and at other places around the city centre: restaurants, pool bars and a club with a DJ and a cafe are advertised.

To sum up, “Taishō Romanticism” as an artistic and literary movement in the Taishō period of Japanese modern history is recalled in this chapter as a “Retro-Modern Style.” The young girls on tour with the reader through the pages are associated in the written text of the book and to some extent through the style of their kimonos and accessories with the Modern Girls, Japanese young women and Western-style fashion trendsetters of the 1920s.

A kind of “Memory Culture” in the sense of Jan Assmann,<sup>178</sup> including both “Taishō Romanticism” (1912–1926) and modern kimono, seems to be consciously reworked as a strategy by which young Japanese, male and female, can enjoy contemporary kimono while making a trip to both pre-modern and modern times. Irwin Scheiner writes regarding “Imagined Communities” in his 1998 essay “The Japanese Village: Imagined, Real, Contested” in Stephen Vlasto’s *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*:

Over the past several decades Japanese have shown a vast capacity to create an idealized past. Even more apparent has been their effort to establish this past as an ideological basis for present conceptions of the Japanese state and people.<sup>179</sup>

An “idealized past” in today’s Japan tries to make the Modern Girls of bygone days, once the pioneers of Western fashion in Japan, into an archetype of fashion for kimono today.

## *Recycling Kimono: Souvenirs and Accessories*

We have seen how kimono as casual wear has been revived to become a commodity which can be bought new or recycled, or rented for a day trip to take part in leisure activities, most of them events connected and invented for its display. The events are related to tourism and consumption, and how the kimono can be a new dress alternative to Western clothing. Their affordable prices, often targeting the younger generation, are achieved through recycling and the possibility to buy kimono at second-hand kimono shops and boutiques or at flea markets, and especially on the Internet.

We have also seen that some of the used kimonos worn today are inherited from within the family as a tradition that has been passed down from generation to generation, but also that the closets of a whole generation of Japanese women of the 1920s and 30s seem to have been reopened for their contents to be sold on the market and re-discovered by a group of very fashion-conscious people—designers, manufacturer’s coordinators and collectors—and welcomed by the young generation of Japanese as an exotic piece of Retro-Look. As Heike Jenß in her essay on “Retro-Looks in Modedesign und Jugendkultur: Tom Ford (Gucci), Anna Sui und die Mods” (Retro-looks in fashion design and youth culture) argues:

But clothing offers a space particularly suitable for the debate with the past: Through it, a complete or a fragmentary image of the past can be re-orchestrated by one’s own body and—in as far as original old clothes or clothes true to the original are concerned—sympathetically re-felt.<sup>180</sup>

The enjoyment that promoters and creators as well as young consumers have found in reviving kimono with the looks of yesteryear looks are perhaps mostly attributable to the variation in design and colour of the re-discovered kimono and kimono patterns, and the colourful arrangements of the robe, made for everyday life. These looks of the beginning of the twentieth century contrast with the sobriety and the palette of colour used for the confection of modern kimono as formal wear:

Thus the accepted definition of a woman’s most formal full-dress kimono is black, patterned only, with five crests. The current coloured version of this kimono (*iro tomesode*) aspires to the highest reaches of formality but still defers to black. At a wedding, for example, the female relatives of the bride (whose participation is socially “heaviest”) are usually dressed in black, whereas her friends (whose position is “lighter”) are usually dressed in coloured versions of crested, hem-patterned kimono.<sup>181</sup>

The rules in the use of modern kimono created by the kimono academies in the 1960s take into consideration all the minute details regarding the “proper” wearing of kimono (age, gender, occasion, the season and its patterns, colour, hierarchy, formality) which give the kimono the right to be recognized as “Japan’s National Costume,” but also turned “the natural dressing process into a system and promoted a formal and inexpressive style of *kimono* dressing.”<sup>182</sup>

The revival that promotes the kimono as casual/street wear nowadays gives producers and consumers a new global space for the buying and selling of kimono and its accessories which is similar to the system used for the buying and selling of Western clothing. For example, the so-called *Gofukuten* or traditional shops for kimono have been “by-passed,” argues Sheila Cliffe, by the significant use of the Internet in the buying and selling process within this revival.<sup>183</sup> As we have seen, boutiques and shops have been opened and operate in urban city centres and traditional tourist places in Kyoto and Tokyo, and most of them even work in the same way as Western-style shops and boutiques. The customers can buy ready-to-wear kimono, old or new, receive help in combining the robe with accessories, and everything is there at one place to take with them. Also, the ambience of the shops is friendly for the public, who can look at the merchandise directly and are not even required to take off their shoes. Visitors do not have to bring a more experienced friend or relative to help them negotiate the price; all that is needed is to match the kimono and its accessories, alone or with the help of shop attendants, since workshops on the Internet and the help of specialized magazines are available to prepare them for the visit and for afterwards.

At present the colour, pattern, design and arrangement of kimono and its accessories are not only combined for wearing them on casual occasions, but also to create a new desirable and sometimes eccentric look (Puffy, Taishō Romanticism, Samurai Chic) to be donned while attending leisure activities such as summer festivals, shopping with friends, eating at restaurants, taking part in organized sightseeing tours of local urban areas, or in kimono fan groups and clubs.

Moreover, because of Japan’s early process of modernization, the freedom of carefully mixing Western and Japanese elements to achieve a certain look of kimono has already existed in the past, and so can be cited today by the coordinators and trendsetters of the contemporary revival. This enables us to think of the culture of the contemporary kimono as one re-established using Memory Culture (after Jan Assmann),<sup>184</sup> and as telling us of the way the clothing habits of the Japanese have evolved during the last century.

Nowadays, in the contemporary revival, both experienced and amateur designers, as well as producers of souvenirs and people who make kimono for a hobby, have all found a source of inspiration in kimono fabric designs and in recycled fragments for remembering or reconstructing, through these, the essence of Japan of the pre-World War II years, mostly with an idealized taste and a nostalgic yearning.

### ***Recycling Nostalgia***

This part of the analysis is concerned with the sale of vintage kimono fabric in the second-hand circuits and how these kimonos find their way onto the market; how the recycling of kimono patterns and their reproduction in kimono fabric is used in the confection of clothing, souvenirs and accessories made in mass production; as well as how original products are being made by young amateur designers with recycled kimono.

I will also consider how pieces of kimono and obi are sold at flea markets and shops and are purchased for the re-make and exchange of gifts among family members or friends. I use for the discussion the term “*nosutaruji kōkoku*” or nostalgia products; these are objects that are transformed in the manufacturing process into repositories of nostalgia.

Nostalgia is from the Greek *nostos*, to return home, and *algia*, a painful condition—thus, a painful yearning to return home.... In the late seventeenth century, the term was meant to designate a familiar, if not especially frequent, condition of extreme homesickness among Swiss mercenaries fighting far from their native land.<sup>185</sup>

The definition of modern nostalgia is different:

Yet in the last third of the twentieth century the meaning of the term “nostalgia” began to shift more and more toward a temporal perception: Today, nostalgia is understood to be a longing for an idealized or even glorified past.<sup>186</sup>

In the case of Japan, we know from the work of Marilyn Ivy that since 1984 the “Exotic Japan” campaign has encouraged Japanese people to see Japan with the gaze of a foreigner, and that this campaign

coincides with a boom in nostalgia products (*nosutarujii shōhin*), and nostalgia advertisements (*nosutaruji kōkoku*). These products and ads also focused particularly on the 1920s and 1930s, but their primary targets were not people who grew up in the 1920s but rather young people who know nothing of prewar Japan.<sup>187</sup>

Objects and products from the 1920s and 1930s include recycled/antique kimono, and reproductions of past kimono designs used for the making of pieces of clothing, souvenirs, and accessories with modern looks.

### ***Promoting Nostalgia***

Marilyn Ivy argues that in Japan, in order to stimulate consumer demands, producers needed to create a “paramount of information” on ways to disseminate and diversify the presentation of their products, “including a greater selection of cultural commodities;”<sup>188</sup> including, I would argue, kimono and souvenirs and accessories made with either second-hand kimono cloth or reproductions of past kimono designs. She explains how new forms of publication known as “catalogue information magazines” have developed with the new computer technologies, stimulating local and small editions of magazines targeting a specific and limited group of consumers. These magazines are characterized by the “serial displays and comparisons of goods and services.” As we have seen, this concept of “*mooks* magazines” directed essentially at young consumers, in our case consumers of kimono fashion and kimono accessories, or at tourists interested in kimono culture going to Kyoto, is applied in *mooks* like “*Kimono at Kyoto*” or “*Kimono Hime*.”

We have also learned how the kimono coordinations of this revival proposed by owners of new and second-hand kimono shops are advertised in the *mooks*; that the use of photos of their products are linked to their webpages on the Internet; and how photos of their products



being worn are mixed with other products of other shops and modelled for the *mook*, sometimes by famous actresses (or actors), accompanied by short text interviews explaining the concepts behind the products. The Internet and the mobile phone are probably the most important tools for the advertising, buying and selling of kimono, as well as for networking and the exchange of ideas concerning the kimono dressing culture between its promoters and consumers.



Figure 67: Department-store Taishō-Romanticism-like style of coordination of a new and elegant casual kimono. Photo taken in Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

A “paramount of information” on the kimono revival and its retro style is also to be found at department stores (*depato*); they too promote the nostalgically updated kimono fashion worn in the 1920s and 30s such as “Kimono a la Taishō Mode” or “*Taishō Romanti*.” Even though the nostalgia products including casual kimono sold at the Japanese “*depato*” are brand new, they reveal or cite with their design and patterns oldie styles, for instance the casual kimono here (Figure 67), with a roses pattern and worn for the winter with a kind of stylish boa. “Japan is in the age of *mono igai no mono*, or things other than things,” writes Millie R. Creighton in her article on “*Depato*.” “Among the most important of the things other than things that department stores sell are nostalgia and self-exoticism.”<sup>189</sup> This kind of self-exoticism involved in the marketing of Japaneseness with nostalgia products, she explains, citing Ivy, can be attributed to the increased affluence of a modern or postmodern Western life-style in Japan: “As increasing affluence has made the West attainable, increasing Westernization has transformed Japaneseness into the exotic.”<sup>190</sup> Moreover, writes Creighton:

As part of a *matsuri buumu* (festival boom), regional events symbolizing pre-Westernized Japan, . . . have been staged recently in metropolitan department stores as “authentic regional traditional events.” Other regional re-creations have including a Miyagi culture fair, a Kyoto craft day.<sup>191</sup>

But then how exactly did kimono of the 1920s and 30s reach the market? How does the business work?

### ***The Life Cycle of Second-Hand Kimono and its Way to the Market***

While in the field, I had the opportunity to visit different kinds of shops and boutiques where second-hand kimonos, recycled kimono and obi were sold, and flea markets. As previously reported, I could observe how my host mother herself was involved in the act of re-making Western-style clothing using old kimonos inherited from her mother, and also how pawn shops in some neighbourhoods have joined the business and sell inherited kimono from people in need of money, or from their family members after they have passed away in order to get some money and free up storage space at home.

There are also private shops offering to receive or buy old kimonos. I got to know about these shops while getting the local newspaper in Kyoto, “*Kyoto Shinbum*,” at my dorm. The shops send postcards with the newspaper, with general information on the types of kimono (material, technique), kimono jackets, or fragments of kimono that they are interested in buying, the address of the shop, opening times and telephone numbers, and even a hotline number.

Another way to sell your kimonos is for example to a kimono chain such as one buying and selling old kimono that is called “*Tansu-ya*” (I cannot say whether this chain and the shops distributing postcard advertisements work together). There is a big market for buying and selling used kimono. One just needs to look on the Internet to realize that, in particular, kimonos and kimono cloth are very sought after abroad. There are many designers of clothing, shoes and accessories and hobby makers of patchwork for example in the United States, England, Germany and France who devote their attention to and like combining their designs with pieces of kimono fabric in order to give an exotic note to their own products.

However, for my discussion I will concentrate on the local Japanese market. As reported in the digital version of an article in the *Japan Times*, the president of Tokyo Yamaki Co., Nakamura Kinichi, noticed the success of other second-hand items on the Japanese market, especially the performance of the used-book retail chain Bookoff Corp., and decided to implement the concept for selling used kimono. The company opened its first second-hand kimono shop in September 1999.

An article by Nakamura Akemi in the *Japan Times* dated 30 April 2004 states that:

The firm began purchasing kimono lying dormant in people’s closets, paying 300 yen to more than 100,000 yen apiece. After being washed and disinfected, the old kimono are

resold, with the core price range at several thousand yen to 20,000 yen—less than 10 percent of the most popular price range for new kimono.

The Funabashi *Tansu-ya* shop attracted an unexpectedly large number of customers, mostly women in their 40s or older, Nakamura [Kenichi] said. But the firm hit a snag: Kimono made before 1970 were too small for some younger women.

To solve the problem, the firm decided to manufacture new, larger kimono featuring early twentieth-century patterns.

These garments are made overseas in order to keep production costs low, and are priced at around 50,000 yen each.

The strategy seems to be working: Tokyo Yamaki now operates about 80 *Tansu-ya* shops nationwide and expects to rake in sales of 3.3 billion yen—90 percent of its total sales—from *Tansu-ya*'s business for the year ending in May.

It expects the figure to rise by some 10 percent in the next business year, Nakamura [Kenichi] said.

Other firms, including major kimono retailers and stand-alone businesses, are also gearing up to cash in on the used-kimono market.

Tokyo-based Kururi Inc., which opened its first used-kimono shop in 2000, launched a new store in March that only sells reproductions of antique kimono.

“We target women in their late teens to early 30s,” Kururi President Izuru Miura said. “More and more women (in that age group) are wearing kimono as they do Western clothes.”

In 2005 I was living in Japan studying at the Kanazawa College of Art in Ishikawa prefecture. It is interesting to mention that in 2003 a quite well-stocked second-hand kimono shop used to exist in the area near Kanazawa Station. When I came back to do fieldwork on this thesis in 2008, I went to Kanazawa to have an expert interview with a Professor of Fashion Design at the College, and with the idea of visiting the second-hand kimono shop. To my surprise the shop was no longer there, and at three other addresses that I had collected of second-hand kimono shops in the area, the shops were no longer used for that purpose. In an essay of 2008, Stephanie Assman<sup>192</sup> reveals the results of a survey conducted in 2006 by the Yano Research Institute, a market research institute based in Tokyo. This was a detailed Internet survey on women (aged between 20 and 60), their attitude and consumer behaviour regarding the kimono. She summarizes:

If second-hand kimonos were bought, they tended to be of low cost, approximately 10,000 yen. There still seemed to be a great reluctance to buy second-hand kimonos: overall 50% of all respondents replied that they felt hesitant about buying a second-hand kimono.

This might be one of the reasons why the business of the second-hand kimono shop did not last in Kanazawa. Kanazawa is a tourist place and a cultural centre, but with a more conservative population; perhaps people there were not ready for this new market of second-hand kimono. One must consider that the sale of antique and recycled kimono within this contemporary revival is very much localized in urban and touristic centres like Tokyo and Kyoto and their vicinities, and belongs to the activities promoted by the tourist industry and the citizens of these centres. As now established by other researchers such as Assmann (in the

same essay) and Cliffe, “Kimono wearers are increasingly getting together in *kimono*-wearing groups.”<sup>193</sup> Groups like the one which calls itself “Kimono de Ginza,” or the “Nihonbashi Kimono Club,” meet in Tokyo, and are described by Assmann as “post-modern groups,” because their meetings and system of organization are relatively non-hierarchical and free from rules such as those decreed by the kimono academies. Cliffe’s research attests to an increase in the number of Japanese kimono fan networks on social media. The phenomenon of second-hand kimono is followed by groups all around Japan which are engaged in the revival of kimono not just in its second-hand variant but also as an article for rental, or casual/street wear, or whose members are collectors of antique kimono or kimono fragments. As the article from the *Japan Times* cited above mentions, at *Tansu-ya* shops and boutiques customers can purchase authentic kimono from the 1920s and 30s or kimono made overseas with reproductions of 1920s designs which younger consumers can wear, but there is a tendency to seek and collect old pieces.

### ***Recycling Shops and Boutiques for Kimono***

It is important to mention that, as observed in the field, the concept of the shop or boutique varies, as do its presentation and marketing strategies, depending on the owner of the particular shop belonging to a recycled-kimono chain.

#### ***Ichi.man.ben***

For example, *Ichi.man.ben*, a rather stylish boutique, is located on Sanjo Street in a building designed by the architect Tatsuno Kingo (1854–1919) which stands out as a historic symbol of Kyoto’s process of modernization. The owner of *Ichi.man.ben*, with whom I could do an informal interview, belongs to the chain *Tansu-ya* but has freedom in the way she arranges and creates the coordination of recycled kimonos and newly created accessories in her shop. She includes as items in her boutique the work of amateur designers, such as a *han-eri* collar designed by the amateur designer Choko (Figure 68), brooches and hair arrangements by the amateur designer Michi (Figure 69), and a coordination typical of the Taishō-Romanticism style, created by the owner of the shop (Figure 70).

The aesthetic of Taishō Romanticism is linked to the heavy use of different Western-style accessories worn with bold kimono, especially those items reminiscent of the accessories worn by women in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>194</sup> In the case of *Ichi.man.ben*, the work of the designers consists mostly of accessories made in an up-dated interpretation of the Taishō-Romanticism style: brooches, necklaces, removable collars, armbands, flower bugles for the hair which go well with kimono but also with Western-style apparel. The accessories complement the style of the kimono, with bold design in the piece itself and a mouse-colour palette with patterns also reminiscent of the fashion of those modern times (rose, lace, geometrical figures) that the proprietress of the boutique has chosen as her way to make kimono desirable (see Figure 71; *Ichi.man.ben* was opened in 2003 and was still operating in

2013). Other shops of the *Tansu-ya* chain of second-hand kimono pay less attention to these strategies and look less elegant in their style.



Figure 68: *Han-eri* collar designed by CHOKO. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 69: Brooch by the designer Michi at *Ichi.man.ben*. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 70: In this photo the manager of the *Ichi.man.ben* boutique is wearing a kimono coordinated by herself which represents the style of her shop. The kimono collar had just been made, hand-painted by the designer Michi, who sells her accessories at this boutique. Sanjo Street, Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 71: Kimono coordination by *Ichi.man.ben*. Trendy and unconventional leather material for the *obi-jime*, two different colours for the *obi-age*, and a *han-eri* with a raised appliqué for this kimono set. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

### ***Jidaigireya Bon-Kyoto***

Another kind of shop for recycled kimono owned by private individuals is for example the *Jidaigireya Bon-Kyoto*. Founded in 1984 and also still operating, they say:

Through the changing world of this generation, we continue to preserve the best of yesterdays. We take old Kimono and obi (belt worn around kimono) from the Taishō and beginning of the Shōwa eras and create more modern-design Kimono and contemporary novelties. In the season-conscious city of Kyoto, we offer a selection of bedroom decorations, small pouches [pouches], hair accessories and lots of great souvenir ideas for your loved ones back home. Drop by BON KYOTO and experience the warmth and importance of preserving our history. Drop by when you're nearby strolling the areas around Ginkaku-ji temple and Manshū-in temple or even on your way to Ohara.<sup>195</sup>

This fine shop mostly sells recycled and antique kimono, and not being part of a chain means that you are more likely to find what you are looking for here, if that is original pieces. The

kimonos sold are authentic, not conveniently reprinted recent editions of past kimono fashions made overseas for younger customers. The accessories sold are made from “*hagire*”<sup>196</sup> or castoffs of kimono fabric, fragments of kimono, and reductions of used pieces that are most likely from a damaged kimono. Fragments of kimono fabric or a used finely hand-painted *han-eri* collar can be bought (Figure 72), as well as fragments of obi, while *juban* (lingerie) can be bought per meter, or framed as the motif of a postcard, as *komono*, or as part of the design of a patchwork, a mobile phone accessory or a beautiful necklace (Figure 73).

This shop is definitely more conservative than others and the items sold here would serve well as souvenirs or collectors’ pieces.

### *Yaya yufu*



Figure 72: Recycled hand-painted collar found at *Jidaigireya Bon-Kyoto*.  
© Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 73: Necklace sold at *Jidaigireya Bon-Kyoto*.  
© Oly Firsching-Tovar

Antique kimono shops are another place to purchase second-hand kimono or recycled fragments of kimono textiles. The kimono there are classified as antique because some of them might be as much as one hundred years old. *Yaya yufu* is an example of a shop which offers antique and recycled kimono, and also well-preserved kimono fragments which are selected to attract kimono collectors. Despite being an antique kimono shop, it has a range of prices such that it is possible to find a good affordable piece. As most other shops, it has a website with a blog written in Japanese. The page is linked or cited in travel guides on Kyoto for foreign as well as Japanese tourists. Here is an abstract of the advertisement for *Yaya yufu* from the Internet (review made by Fodor’s Travel Intelligence):

Just steps from Shijo subway station’s exit 5, this quaint kimono shop offers original attire and antique accessories. Its English-speaking staff member, Megumi, is kind, inviting, and extremely knowledgeable about the traditional art of kimono, as well as its blend with

modern styles. Your time spent trying on different combinations with her is sure to be a fun fashion experience to send you home with a real piece of lovely Kyoto. Many of the goods sold here are painstakingly tracked down at Kyoto estate sales and flea markets. Who knows how many generations back that *tsugekushi* goes? <sup>197</sup>

While shops like *Bon-Kyoto* and *Yaya yufu* are more concerned with the sale of antique kimono, unique antique handmade pieces, or fragments of kimono or kimono accessories, mostly selling an item or piece signifying “Kyoto,” “lovely Kyoto,” or Kyoto handicraft sensibility, the kimono shops of the chain *Tansu-ya* seem to keep as their target Japanese customers willing to try a kimono for the first time. For example, *Ichi.man.ben* offers a “Kimono Debut Set” for women and men, as seen in a very short review online in a travel guide to Kyoto:

In the remnants of a building by Tatsuno Kingo, the architect of Tokyo Station and the Bank of Japan, this kimono store offers all-in-one “debut” sets for ¥18,900, or vintage kimono from as little as ¥5,000.

Although this very short article is written in an Internet travel guide in English, the *Ichi.man.ben* webpage remains completely in Japanese, while, on the other hand, in *Yaya yufu*'s blog only the titles combine English and Japanese words. I mention here Internet sites of the shops visited because they give us an idea of the public that is engaged in the contemporary use and collection of recycled kimono and kimono fabric within this revival. Curiously, the webpage of the more conservative *Jidaigireya Bon-Kyoto* has more information regarding its concept, products and the history of the shop, all translated into English. The reason for this might be that this shop is advertised, together with other shops for Kyoto crafts, in the online version of the “Official Kyoto Travel Guide.”<sup>198</sup> This guide has made a column for “Kyoto’s Greatest Souvenirs and Exquisite Craft Selected by Foreign Residents of Kyoto,” under which category *Jidaigireya Bon-Kyoto* is cited. On the same page, one can read:

Welcome to Kyoto!

There is a vast array of famous tourist spots in Kyoto, but that is not the only attraction of Kyoto. A rich culture that has been nurtured through a long 1200-year history is still an integral element of the lives of people who live in Kyoto

It takes the form of craftworks that relate to you the history of Kyoto.

Craftworks go beyond all bounds of time, as they embody the spirit of the people who have passed down their traditions over the centuries.

The craftworks that we are introducing here have all been chosen with the opinions of foreign residents of Kyoto taken into consideration.

Please be sure to drop by our shop and enjoy these craftworks by actually holding them in your hands. When you actually take a close look at them, your heart will be moved by their value, and they will provide you with further understanding of Kyoto from a different angle. If you do this, there is no doubt that your trip will become an even more magnificent one. And we would be overjoyed if you would convey the deep allure of Kyoto craftworks to your family and friends after you return to your home country.

Please enjoy Kyoto to your heart’s content! <sup>199</sup>



It is interesting but not surprising that the opinion of foreign residents in Kyoto counts so much that it is called on to help decide which shops and commodities should be named “Kyoto’s Greatest Souvenirs and Exquisites Craft.” There is no real explanation as to which countries these foreigners come from, or why they were considered as qualified for their judgement to count, but they are referred to as residents of Kyoto. They are perhaps people living in Kyoto or somewhere else in Japan who play or have played an important role in Kyoto’s society. The main point here is to show that the kimono revival runs parallel to the promotion of souvenirs and accessories made of kimono fabric, that at least in Kyoto the kimono revival is part of a bigger project focused on the continuous promotion of Kyoto and Japan as a tourist attraction, and that not just the visit to the touristy spots of Kyoto “also wearing a rented kimono” is important: to be really sure that you have had “a magnificent trip” to the ancient capital of Japan you have to buy a souvenir made by the hands of craftsman whose work has been passed down from generation to generation.

### ***Souvenirs and/or Accessories Made with Kimono Cloth or Recycled Patterns***

The products made by hand and sold at shops like *Bon-Kyoto* compete with many other souvenirs and accessories ordered and mass produced in China or Vietnam which are readily available at most shopping/-tourist areas in Kyoto. Even though their quality does not compare with that of handmade products, the idea behind the marketing strategy is not so different. Kyoto and kimono or kimono fabric design, especially imitations of the technique known as “Kyoto *chirimen*,”<sup>200</sup> belong together. *Chirimen* is

plain-weave silk crepe. The warp is usually composed of untwisted raw silk; the weft of tightly twisted (1,500-4,000 twists per meter) raw silk. After the weft is twisted (in either a right twist (S-twist) or left twist (Z-twist)), it is starched to maintain the twists during the weaving process. Once removed from the loom, the cloth is boiled with soap and ash to remove the starch and sericin from the raw silk. Shrinkage occurs as the twisted weft reacts against the untwisted warp, resulting in a crinkled surface.... The technique of weaving *chirimen* was introduced into Japan from China during the Momoyama period.... During the Edo period *chirimen* was a highly favoured silk, its surface an ideal ground for *Yūzen-Zome*.<sup>201</sup>

The fact that *chirimen* has been a favoured silk surface for the dye technique of *yūzen-zome* since the Edo period is important to mention. Indeed, most patterns printed on a range of textile surfaces nowadays are *yūzen*-dyed *chirimen* reproductions. The revival of this technique has proved to be well-accepted by local and foreign tourists in Kyoto.<sup>202</sup>

Some souvenirs, including those made of plastic but adorned with the pattern of kimono, “distinguished by the fine white lines left by the paste resist that delineates shapes”<sup>203</sup> of the *yūzen* dye, become repositories of nostalgia: a piece of “lovely Kyoto” items that are now representative of Japanese-ness and ready to take home.

Cultural and social features are key factors that make a tourist destination more attractive to different groups and categories of tourists. Tourists are generally very interested in such elements of the national culture as art, science, religion, and history.<sup>204</sup>

Hairpins sold at a souvenir shop in Uji City are a good example of this phenomenon (Figure 74). The small advertisement mounted in front of the bugles says: “Each item has been made thinking about the attitude of each *chirimen* pattern.” The statement is intended to give buyers the feeling of having obtained a special, even unique object, its uniqueness achieved through a fragment of a *chirimen* silk crepe kimono design in *yūzen* technique having been taken to adorn and give birth to a new entity.

At the entrance of a souvenir shop on the Philosophers’ Path in Kyoto city (Figure 75), one can see a sample of the many different objects which are produced to be sold as accessories and souvenirs, most of them combining Western-style form and kimono design for the fabric. For example, the traditional Japanese wooden *geta* (sandals) are sold parallel with Western-style house shoes “nostalgized” with patterns of kimono-design fabric. The fabric itself is normally made of 100% polyester, while designs of printed *chirimen* can also be bought at shops in the Kyoto city centre (Figures 76, 77).

At another shop, this time in Uji City, we see gloves with details of “*wagara*” or Japanese-pattern designs, this time printed on another kind of synthetic fabric (Figure 78).



Figure 74: Hairpins with kimono-fabric design printed on plastic. Uji City, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 75: Belts, bags, and different kinds of accessories found on the Philosophers' Path. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 76: Slippers in Western style decorated with a kimono-fabric pattern, found on the Philosophers' Path. East District, Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

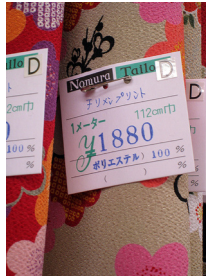


Figure 77: Kimono fabric sold at a cloth shop in Shijo Street, Kyoto city centre, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 78: Hybrid accessories with Western design and details of kimono fabric. Uji City, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 79: Piles of used kimono sold at the Toji Temple, Kyoto city centre, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 80: A young man cutting an obi (kimono belt) to sell a fragment of the fabric. Toji-Temple flea market, Kyoto city centre, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

As also observed in the field, it is mostly women who are involved in the making of craft objects made of *chirimen* fabric or any other fabric for kimono; see the article “The *Chirimen* Craft Museum” written by Imanaka Chiaki and produced by the Kyoto University of Foreign Studies in its online version.<sup>205</sup> A lot of them go to the flea markets, like those at Toji Temple or at Kitano Shrine, or to shops for recycled kimono or antique kimono in order to buy pieces and/or fragments of kimono fabric (Figures 79, 80, 81). Some amateur designers also produce their creations by remaking cloth, arranging and mixing different kinds of kimono and obi; these can be found on stands at Art and Crafts fairs in Kyoto (Figure 82). While in the field, I sometimes had the feeling that every one of these women, whether buying or selling the pieces of craftwork or the fragments of cloth, wanted to get a piece of these fabrics and “take what is left” from the old kimonos and obi that were being sold on the market (Figure 83).

Certainly, on this last trip to Japan in 2008 there was an atmosphere of anxiety about how the future would turn out in Japan.



Figure 81: Polyester fabric imitating *chirimen* texture and *yuuzen* textile design, 1880 yen per meter. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 82: Sora, a young amateur designer selling her re-make kimono creations at the Arts and Crafts Fair of the Kyoto Museum in Sanjo Street. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 83: An Arts and Crafts lady selling her pieces, from vest, bags, to small objects made with recycled fragments of kimono, at the Toji-Temple flea market. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

The economic crisis and the cultural challenges of a globalized world are phenomenon from which the Japanese cannot escape or hide. In this context, the making of small craft objects may serve as a kind of prayer for better times.

## *The Wearers of the Kimono Revival in Kyoto and Tokyo*

This part of the analysis is concerned with the way some women and men photographed in the field donned their own kimono. I would also like to explore how some Japanese women and men aged over thirty (and not just girls or boys in their twenties) are consuming and wearing their kimonos with an original note that reflects the influence of trends in kimono fashion propagated by some of the previously mentioned kimono *mooks*, kimono shops and boutiques, and in general by books edited in the last ten years specializing in the history of modern kimono (covering the late Meiji, Taishō and early Shōwa periods).<sup>206</sup>

### *Kyoto*

Being in the field, it was a must for me to go and visit the flea markets at Toji Temple and Kitano Shrine. The flea market at Toji is on the 21st of each month and at Kitano around the 25th or 26th. Most travel guides to Kyoto say when these flea markets are open. They are famous for the sale of antique handcraft, scrolls, pottery and all kinds of rarity objects, both antique and more modern, and also for the sale of kimono, kimono cloth, obi and other kimono accessories. In a previous visit to these flea markets in 1993–1994 it was possible to find some second-hand kimono, mostly men's yukata at not very affordable prices for a second-hand piece. At that time, most of the stands were selling handicraft, especially pottery, lacquer wear, and scrolls. By contrast, in Toji Temple in 2008 there were many stands selling recycled kimono for prices ranging from 500 yen to 5,000 or 6,000 yen, re-make kimono in Western-style clothes made by amateur designers, second-hand kimono accessories like obi, tabi, *han-eri*, and not to forget, *komono* (small articles or belongings) made of kimono cloth.

As at the Toji flea market, at the flea market in Kitano Shrine there were also many stands for second-hand kimono, for ceramics and pottery, books and other objects (Figure 84).



Figure 84: Kitano Shrine. Northern Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

***Key Event: Girls Wearing their Own Kimono Outfits at Flea Markets and Tourist Spots in Kyoto***

For this part of the analysis of pictures of kimono wearers, I have concentrated my attention mostly on women wearing kimono who had dressed themselves, and whose styles of kimono wearing were trendy and representative of the contemporary revival.

With time I learned to differentiate between kimono. They could be rented; worn by girls or boys; with similar patterns and made from a similar fabric (matte polyester); with similar ways of tying the obi; with similar accessories, like bags and shawls; and with similar hairstyling—they themselves had been styled, not just the kimono. They could be worn as a uniform, for instance, by women working in a Japanese-style guest house or a restaurant where the kimono all have the same colour and pattern design; or the kimono could be worn by a man who owned a kimono shop. I could also tell when women were coming from or perhaps returning to a flower arrangement class or a tea ceremony, from their silk kimonos and high-quality obi, *haori*-jackets and accessories.

As with the other participants on this day, I asked for permission if I wanted to take a photo of someone, and had a short conversation with the person. The participants I decided to analyse said they had put on their kimonos by themselves. For the analysis of this series of pictures I first go into a description of their looks, based on the style of kimono, the elements of the obi, hairstyle, pose, and accessories. Then I continue the analysis with the comparison, correlation and connection of the outfits with the literature, mostly *mooks*, on modern kimono that I have found in the field.

**Key Participant 1** (Figure 85) is wearing a kimono made in *shiro-gasuri* (ikat *kasuri*), *yagasuri* (white *kasuri* with an arrow pattern),<sup>207</sup> and a shawl covering the collar of her kimono; the shawl, obi (belt), *obi-age* (bustle sash) and her tabi (split-toed socks) in dark shades of brown, *kuri-iro* (maroon), match the patterns of her kimono. She also wears an *obi-jime* (decorative belt) with a similar combination of white and brown patterns, and wooden *geta*-sandals, and has complemented her outfit by carrying her bag over her shoulder in a very casual manner, practical for a day of shopping. The bag, with its metal frame and sparkly silver colour, provides a strong accent to her outfit. A small detail, also in silver, hangs from the front of her obi: the cord of her mobile phone; she wears her hair bound and tied at the back. She looks directly at the camera and poses for it; she seems proud of the fact that she is being asked for a photograph.



Figure 85: Key Participant 1 at the Kitano Shrine.  
Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



**Key Participant 2** (Figures 86, 87) is wearing a kimono with a motif of arrow feathers known as *yabane*. Her kimono is a vintage piece in *Meisen* technique, with bright colours of an arrow-feather pattern against a black surface. She has tied the obi high and twisted it in a way that shows fragments of the inside design front and back. This way of tying the obi, known as *bunko-gaeshi musubi* or reverse-bow box, is used for everyday wear, and is said to be worn by teenage girls and young single women.<sup>208</sup> She is wearing a white collar and white socks, but her red-lacquered wooden *geta* match perfectly her red-lacquered Japanese umbrella. In her right hand, she carries a traditional *furoshiki*, or cloth wrapper with “Camelia” pattern, which can also be used as a carry bag. Her long hair is worn unusually for with kimono, loose and with a modern cut. The vintage kimono, *geta*-sandals and umbrella made her look retro in style, but also made her stand out from the crowd, who were mostly wearing Western clothing in autumn colours. She poses with a gesture showing the design of the sleeve of her kimono. Her face looks directly at the camera, giving her a rather shy but proud look.



Figure 86: Key Participant 2 at the Kitano Shrine. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 87: Key Participant 2 at the Kitano Shrine; view of her kimono from the back. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

**Key Participant 3** (Figure 88) is wearing a striped kimono in shades of beige and black; the patterned collar has a motif of checks in black and white. Over the kimono she wears a beautiful *Douchuu-gi* coat with patterns of chrysanthemum, also in a soft palette of earth colours.<sup>209</sup> In combination with her outfit she carries a leather bag in Western style, coloured tabi-socks, and her hair has been done tied at the back and arranged with a prominent flower motif made of similar colours to those of her jacket; her hands are half-covered by fingerless gloves. She poses proudly, looking at the camera holding hands with her partner. He looks even more proud of his wife or girlfriend. That both man and woman stand next to each other holding hands shows us a contemporary Japanese couple.



Figure 88: Key Participant 3 and her companion at the Kitano Shrine. Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

**Key Participant 4** (Figure 89) is wearing perhaps the most extravagant kimono outfit of this series, and her look resembles one proposed by the *mook Kimono Hime*, where the juxtaposition of layers of kimono and the use of the *haori* (a short coat worn over the kimono) is very common. Like **Key Participant 2**, she also wears a *Meisen* kimono, with geometrical patterns in a combination of diamonds in peach-coloured *momo-iro*, and black-and-white geometric flowers with red centres. Her coloured *haori* is medium crimson with patterns of leaves in combinations of shades of blue, white, yellow, grey and purple.

The *han-eri* or collar is interesting, because it seems to have been made by hand from a piece of recycled kimono cloth, most likely from a child's *nagajuban* (under-kimono). The *han-eri* is not sewn to the collar of the *nagajuban*. The pattern is that of *kokeshi* dolls, with the pink background normally used to represent a wish for a healthy child. The participant wears an obi with a pattern of hollyhocks in red and gold on a black background. She has combined the obi with an *obi-age* in shaded tie-dyes; the *obi-jime*, normally tied in the front, is made as a fine stripe in silver and black and has an *obi-dome* (brooch) in the form of a small flower in silver, with at its centre a rounded blue stone. One can also see what looks like the cord of a cell phone or the keys of the participant worn inside the obi. This participant combines her outfit with a black beret hat.



Figure 89: Key Participant 4 at the Kitano Shrine.  
Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

I encountered **Key Participant 5** at Toji Temple (Figure 90). She is wearing a *Meisen* kimono in the pattern of Siberian iris in white against a violet—*ebizome* or “vine grape”—background. Even though at first her look may seem conservative, with the use of a white collar and white tabi-socks, some elements of her outfit remind us of trends in the contemporary kimono revival, like the use of lace at the end of one of her sleeves—most likely a kind of appliqué, because the same lace has been used to decorate her obi. This twist in the use of lace in just one of the sleeves is a playful and trendy way to arrange her outfit. The colour of the obi is gold, and her *obi-jime* consists of two woven cords of different sizes, their blue accent complementing the vine-grape colour of the kimono. A metal golden-coloured brooch (*obi-dome*) in the form of a queen bee adorns the knot. Her white shawl with dotes at the ends hangs from her shoulders. She wears her hair up, with a hair flower motif at the side. She is holding a very informal Western-style bag for carrying her shopping. Her tabi-socks are in a lace pattern, and her *geta*-sandals have also been adorned with a stripe of lace.



Figure 90: Key Participant 5 at the Toji Temple.  
Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

**Key Participant 6** (Figure 91) also looks rather conservative in her outfit. Again, I came across her while shopping at the flea market at Toji Temple. She is wearing a silk kimono in pale green with a pattern of chrysanthemum and cherry blossom, *sakura*, in shades of golden fallen leaves, *kukushiba*. Her *haori* is similar in colour to these, which is auspicious for the season of autumn, with a woven pattern featuring a *Genji-wheel* design. She has a silk obi patterned in the design worn by courtiers of the Heian period, in a soft pastel palette in shades of yellow and chestnut. It is important to note that all these patterns (chrysanthemum, cherry-blossom, *Genji-wheel* and courtiers’) have been used in the past to represent nationalistic ideals.<sup>210</sup> The *obi-jime* in a combination of white and red is tied with a knot at the front of the obi and matches the tabi-socks in *kanoko* dots-on-red design. This participant is wearing *zōri*, which are more formal sandals than *geta*, with her outfit. She has also combined the look of the bag hanging at her right side and that of the shawl, both with patterns of flowers on a black background. The shawl and the *furoshiki*-bag in her hands give this participant a rather informal touch; she has tied her hair at the back and looks straight at the camera. On looking closely at the opening of the collar of her kimono, one can see that she is carrying the *Kyoto Kimono Passport* with her.



Figure 91: Key Participant 6 at the Toji Temple.  
Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

**Key Participant 7** (Figure 92): Although I did not find this participant at the site of the temple flea markets or in their vicinity, I have integrated her into this discussion because she also put on her kimono herself and independently created her outfit. The same is true for **Key Participants 8 and 9**: all these girls I encountered in shopping streets around the fields already mentioned, at Sanjo-Karasuma and Teramachi Street and at the Kiyomizu-michi (the way to Kiyomizu Temple), the famous tourist centres in Kyoto already discussed earlier.

I actually met **Key Participant 7** while visiting Teramachi Street: I grabbed her straight away and took this photo on the street.

This girl, the youngest of all these Key Participants, is wearing a combination of dark blue kimono and *haori* with similar abstract patterns. The pattern of the *haori* seems to be an abstract form of the cherry fruit in red (the circles with sometimes a yellow or white thin line in the middle) and green leaves. She has a striped obi; the stripe in the middle is thicker and has a woven texture that recalls leather. The colour of the stripes changes from ochre, earthen yellow-red-brown *outan* to bright golden-yellow *yamabuki-iro*. The thicker stripe in the middle has a patterned sequence of the ginkgo leaf in gradations of yellow and green, and the two yellow stripes at the top and bottom also have patterns of the ginkgo leaf in black, auspicious for autumn. This participant uses two cords as *obi-jime*: she has tied them parallel to each other, both with knots at the front of the obi; one is woven in *akako-iro* (red incense) and white, while the other one is a cord made of many thin cords of rainbow colours tied together. She wears a woven *obi-age* in celadon-colour, and the way she has tied it shows clearly that she has arranged it by herself, because it is exposed and not hidden at the front, thus competing with the design of the obi. Her coloured red-orange *nagajuban* kimono lingerie can be seen through her sleeves and collar. She has a knitted hat with an appliqué at the side in grey and white, and a flower appliqué in pale blue. She has done her hair with a touch of the braid look, tied to the side with a blue thread. She wears accessories that are normally worn with Western-style clothing, like her bracelet and her rings, and a handbag.



Figure 92: Key Participant 7 in Teramachi Street.  
Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

**Key participants 8 and 9** (Figure 93) I found while visiting the area of Kiyomizu-michi on the way to Kiyomizu Temple. **Key Participant 8** on the left is wearing perhaps the most antique of all the kimonos in the series, an *Edomurazaki Edo* (purple and white check)-patterned *kasuri* Japanese ikat kimono. I asked her why her look in kimono is a bit different from those of most girls wearing kimono. She answered: “*I am wearing a Taishō-Romanticism style of kimono,*” adding: “*I am wearing an old one*”; “*It is mine*”; “*It was my grandmother’s kimono.*”



Figure 93: Key Participants 8 and 9. Kiyomizu-michi, Kyoto, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

Not only has she put on an antique kimono, she is conscious of the style in kimono fashion that it represents, Taishō Romanticism. Therefore, which outfit to wear was her personal decision: for this gorgeous kimono. It has a coloured collar with dots in cyan surrounded by small organic patterns in grey that could have been hand painted. The obi in indigo has a pattern of a red rose with leaf in green at the front of the belt. She wears a classic scarlet-coloured *obi-jime* tied at the front, and an *obi-age* in patterned and coloured silk. On the right side of her obi is a pendant with flowered design, most likely the cord of the mobile phone, and she wears browned velvet gloves with appliqué. She carries a blue handbag and her shopping bag with her. Her hair is tied at the back. Her companion, **Key Participant 9**, looks rather modest in her outfit; she has a velvet coat in Edo-purple on top of her kimono, which also seems to be patterned in a purple palette; her collar is white, and in her left hand she carries a shawl in wisteria. She wears her hair open without any ornament. She is carrying a pair of boxes in her hand, probably some souvenirs to take back home.



### *Analysis*

It is important to mention that the nine Key Participants in this series wear outfits which belong to the category called *fudangi* (everyday clothes). Liza Dalby divides this category into two subcategories known as “street wear” and “casual.”<sup>211</sup> The hierarchy of kimono being “street wear” or “casual” depends on the type of fabric the kimono is made of. The “street wear” includes “Smooth *komon*”<sup>212</sup> and “Crepe *komon*,” while to the “casual wear” belong “*pongee*, cotton, wool, *ramie*.” For this kimono revival, synthetic fabric like polyester, imitations of silk, and digitally printed kimono are classified as “casual/street wear.” The same can be said for *meisen* kimono, which has been making a real comeback, having been rediscovered as a second-hand item, and has become a must-have for any kimono fan in the present revival. It is important to recognize that, as Liza Dalby argues, “the most important, most differentiated, and most problematic dimension of native dress for the modern kimono wearer—formality” is formality! “Japanese propriety produces infinitely graduated levels of formality defining people’s places in particular settings. These are the sorts of distinctions that dress is ideally suited to demonstrate.” Nowadays, in this revival, and especially for the young generation, kimono formality seems to have become reduced to the distinction between *haregi* “special, formal wear” and *fudangi* “everyday wear.” After all, and as Dalby explains, contemporary kimono used to be regarded mostly as a type of dress to be worn on formal occasions. The present kimono revival seems to be trying to push kimono, re-inventing it to regain its position as an alternative dress for the wardrobe of Japanese women, a position which has long been dominated by Western clothing in contemporary Japan.

Within this group of nine Key Participants found in the field wearing their own kimono outfits, at least half of them had on a *meisen* kimono. The patterns used include striped, geometrical, arrow-*yagasuri* and Chrysanthemum for the kimono, and the rose for the obi. The hairstyles, the way the participants do their hair—including the use of flower motifs at the side, tied back or in a kind of braid style, also belong to the hairstyles used during the 1920s and 30s, but are not exact copies. Rather, they are a contemporary version or a re-make of proposals seen in *mooks* like *Kimono Hime*, *Kimono at Kyoto*,<sup>213</sup> or *Shōwa Modern Kimono: Yayoi Museum*.<sup>214</sup>

Another source of inspiration that the girls certainly must have is the reproductions of posters and artworks of the painters and artists of the modern period around the beginning of the twentieth century in Japan, such as Takehisa Yumeji, Takabatake Kasho, Kato Masawo or Fukiya Kouji, that form part of the illustrations used in *mooks* like *Shōwa Modern Kimono* on kimono held in the collection of the Yayoi Museum. In the series of photographs of the Key Participants one can see that the girls are playing very much with the way they use and decorate their obi—arranging it in various creative forms, such as tying the obi, sometimes even using two parallel cords at the same time, or using appliqué of lace to give a unique note to the outfit. The way that some of them design the obi and its accessories breaks all the rules (everything should be done according to the way established by the kimono academies). Not just because they don’t measure how high the knot of the cord or of the band is, or in which

exact position it is fixed, but also because they are mostly interested in the final look and its fashionability. Another ingredient of the equation in terms of obi and its accessories is the cord of the mobile phone that is very often seen used by the Key Participants, with the mobile phones hidden in the obi but the cords adorning the belt.

In general, I see a tendency to freedom and relaxation when the Key Participants put together their kimono outfits, some though with more skill than others. As I did my fieldwork during the autumn, I had the chance to see how the cool kimono outfits are worn on a cold day. The participants had chosen to wear different kinds of coat with their kimonos, as well as shawls or hats. In terms of footwear, tabi-socks and *geta*-sandals were mostly coloured, replacing the traditional white, and coloured *han-eri* were favoured against white collars.

However, as observed and as shown in the photos on how kimono coordination is done at some shops and boutiques for second-hand kimono in Kyoto, like *Tententen*, *Wafufu*, *Ichi.man.ben* or *Wakon*, and in *mooks* on contemporary kimono like *Kimono At Kyoto* or *Kimono Hime*, in this revival these are all trends running parallel. We have seen that they are concerned with a review of kimono fashions of the Modern era: the late Meiji, Taishō and early Shōwa periods. The picture of a page from the *Shōwa Modern Kimono* in the Yayoi Museum show three examples of how kimono can be worn on cold days (Figure 94). Each picture in the photo is a piece of art: the one on the upper-left is by Takabatake Kasho,<sup>215</sup> a famous Japanese painter to whom the Yayoi Museum pays tribute; the one on the right is by the famous and perhaps the most inspiring personality artist of the Taishō-Romanticism period, Takehisa Yumeiji (1884–1934, born in Oku, Okayama, Japan).<sup>216</sup> In these examples we can see how the Western-style of shawl worn with kimono in those modern years is used. In the upper-left picture the material is green crepe, and one side of the shawl is allowed to fall to the front, the other to the back of the body. In Yumeiji's illustration, on the other hand, the shawl works as a veil to cover the hair and the upper body. The bottom-left illustration features a cotton shawl check-patterned in white and yellow with many cotton balls hanging from the shawl. In all three pictures we can observe gloves as part of the kimono accessories, as well as the style of bag carried with each outfit. As we see in these illustrations, the Japanese beauty of modern Japan seems to be subtly Westernized. Waved hair, short bob haircuts, and makeup were ways to express women's awareness of the fashion system of their time, of trends that were promoted by department stores which used to commission artists to design kimono, as well as posters and other advertising materials using the image of Japanese women. As Toby Slade argues:

The rapid change in the availability of materials, especially cotton, allowed the kimono to become a much more common item, and the embourgeoisement of the population allowed more and more people to afford it. Wealth brought traditional tastes, and while new ideas were making the money, it was spent on traditional clothes.... The process of change in the Meiji period involved a great deal of invention of tradition, as part of the larger project of creating a national identity which could be used for the benefit of the State.... But by the Taishō period, the department stores started the marketing of trends in kimono designs, and

what was once a symbol of tradition became part of a system of capitalism and the artificial creation of demand that is the modern fashion system.<sup>217</sup>

Some of the women in the pictures painted by famous Japanese artists may also have been Modern Girls wearing kimono. Therefore, the Key Participants we have seen may have been impressed by the aesthetics and the diversity of ways of arranging a kimono in these illustrations, as well as by the looks of past kimono fashion, which is now trendy, as worn by emancipated women of the time. Their image may be seen as more appealing than that of the models in mainstream kimono magazines like *Kimono Salon*,<sup>218</sup> who most of the time show the way kimono is said to be correctly worn, as originally dictated by the kimono academies of the 1960s (see Figure 58 above).



Figure 94: Taken from the *mook* *Shōwa Modern Kimono: Yayoi Museum*.

## Tokyo

As part of the plan for the fieldwork in Japan in autumn 2008 I decided to stay ten days in Tokyo. The aim of this visit was to obtain a short, more qualitative impression than most sources I had used until then of how the kimono revival was experienced in Japan's capital city. I knew from Stefanie Assmann's paper written in 2008 that there was a group, founded by men, of Japanese who were meeting and getting together in order to wear kimono. She related the presence of this group to the fact that a rediscovery of the kimono in Japanese consumer culture was taking place in contemporary Japan. The group, called "Kimono de Ginza," was my main point of interest during my visit to Tokyo, and I had the opportunity to be with them one evening during their monthly gathering in December 2008.



Figure 95: Costumer dressed in kimono at the *Ōedo Kazuko Kimono Boutique*. The boutique is decorated in an eclectic style, combining Western-style furniture with objects (magazines, dolls, children's toys) representative of the material culture of a century ago. Tokyo, 2008.  
© Oly Firsching-Tovar

I arrived in Tokyo on the 6th of December with enough time to also visit the flea market of Setagaya Boroichi. For the first days of my stay I had booked a hotel, and then I moved to the apartment of my Japanese host-sister, who had come to Venezuela on exchange in 1995. She was instrumental during this part of the trip in helping me get ready for visiting some areas of Tokyo where I wanted to look around and do direct observation, as well as perhaps short informal interviews in some kimono shops and boutiques. My area of research on kimono boutiques was limited to the vicinity of Omotesandou/Harajuku, a lively shopping area in Tokyo and, one of the centres of Tokyo street fashion. In Harajuku, we were able to visit several boutiques, one of them called the *Ōedo Kazuko Harajuku Antique Kimono Shop*, which specializes, as its name suggests, in antique kimono of the Taishō and early Shōwa periods (see Figure 95). In this boutique, I found the *mook Shōwa Modern Kimono* mentioned above, on the collection of the Yayoi Museum, and could observe that kimono and its accessories were sold, as in

most of the shops and boutiques in Kyoto, in a friendly atmosphere—where no one needs to take off their shoes, where the access to the items offered is very easy, and where one can be helped to try on a kimono. It was interesting to observe that as decoration there were many cabinets with or without glass, and various objects, mostly toys, paintings and old magazines of the 1930s, were on display. Doing informal interviewing there was not possible, nor arranging an interview for another day.

My host sister also helped me the afternoon and evening I spent with the group "Kimono de Ginza" on the 13th of December. Together we took a short trip to Kamakura as well, which is a very popular historic and tourist centre near Tokyo. I thought that perhaps some venues similar to the kimono rental stations in Kyoto, on the Tango Peninsula or in Uji City might

work in this area, but could not find any evidence of them. There was a teahouse where one could get dressed in kimono to join a tea ceremony, but it seemed an offer specific to that shop. In contrast, in 2013, five years later, there were websites where one could look at and rent a kimono and then “walk about in Kamakura Traditional District,” as I found out from the website *J. tripper: Guided Private Walking Tours*, “Tokyo’s private tours specialist.”<sup>219</sup> It is possible that the concept of “walking about” in various remaining traditional districts in Japan in kimono is getting more and more popular among Japanese tourists and their foreign followers. For example, a report on the “Development of Japan Brand Initiatives” in the 2008 book by Keith Dinnie, *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice*, reveals that:

The Policy Headquarters has provided the vision of a strong Japan brand to be built strategically by strengthening the content business, nurturing unique and attractive lifestyles as reflected in the food culture, local brands and fashion, and assimilating the brand image in collaboration with the tourism industry, as well as through cultural diplomacy. A key premise here is that Japan aims to become an intellectual property-based nation, attractive and influential in entertainment contents, lifestyles and culture in general.<sup>220</sup>

One of the ways that entertainment may be related to the culture of kimono is the space opened by tourist attractions and events in which one can walk about while dressed in the robe. Japanese food, the tea ceremony, and the gardens and temples can be even more exotic if one is dressed in kimono attire.

### ***Key Event: An Evening with the Group “Kimono de Ginza”***

A recent example of a network of kimono enthusiasts that has gained public attention is the group Kimono de Ginza, which was founded in 1999 and at first intended to be open only to men. However, as women began to show an interest in the activities, they were able to join the group the following year. Depending on weather conditions, between eighty and a hundred participants, men, women, and children of all ages, meet once a month on the Ginza, an exclusive shopping district in Tokyo. Participants are from different professional backgrounds: among them are civil servants, company employees, teachers, and office workers. There is no membership in the true sense—participation is free to anyone who wears a kimono on the day of the occasion. The gatherings are merged with the latest technology: a picture of each meeting is displayed on the website homepage, where future meetings are also announced. After the photo shoot, the group splits up into smaller groups to go for a walk in the vicinity or to take a stroll around department stores to shop for kimonos and kimono-related accessories. The meeting is concluded by a dinner in a Japanese pub (*izakaya*) followed by a “second party” (*nijikai*).<sup>221</sup>

On the 13th of December 2008 at 2 pm, I arrived with my host sister at Ginza, going to the exit that led the way to “Wako,” an old department store at the crossing of Ginza and Mitsukoshi. Wako, we had read on the Internet, was where the group Kimono de Ginza gathers, and the 13th of December was the date for their monthly meeting, set to start at 2:30 pm. We had arrived 30 minutes earlier in order to observe how the group gets together. The

street on the side of Wako was closed off to traffic, so pedestrians could walk and even sit and enjoy the afternoon while perhaps doing some shopping or dining in the area. As we were waiting for the members to show up for the meeting, we had the chance to see people wearing kimono along the streets: some couples, women doing shopping, and a girl wearing a formal kimono who was perhaps on her way to a wedding.



Figure 96: The group “Kimono de Ginza” gathering in the pedestrian zone. On that day, they were waiting to have their group photograph taken and exchanging impressions on their looks—men, women, young, mature, old.  
Tokyo, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 97: The members of the group “Kimono Ginza.”  
A group picture taken in front of Tiffany & Co.  
Tokyo, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

Around 2:30 pm more and more people, men and women all wearing kimono, started to gather in the area near the subway station close to Wako (Figure 96). Some small groups were forming to the sides of the streets, and at one point a man, the chief of the group, *Touban*, showed them the way to the place where group pictures of all the participants were going to be taken. At this point we were just observers and could document the gathering from a distance. It was impressive to see how the rest of the Japanese pedestrians were amazed by the gathering of people wearing kimono and most people were taking pictures.

While the members of Kimono de Ginza were getting together near the place where the group picture was going to be taken, they showed each other what they had on, the style of obi they were wearing, or a detail of the *obi-jime* they had on that day, perhaps a new accessory or removable-crests application for their *haori* jacket. Some of them had had their *haori* jackets painted, especially with auspicious motifs for Christmas, and displayed them, each in its own style. Later, we had more opportunity to do the same, in more convivial surroundings (Figure 99).

As we followed the members of the group, we stopped in front of the Tiffany & Co building, in front of which a lot of pictures were being taken, first of the group of ladies, then of the men, and finally of the whole group (Figure 97). Afterwards, the participants also took pictures of each other. We got to know some members of the group, and they invited us to meet them for dinner, giving us the address of the restaurant, “Tohuro,” in the basement at the exit of Ginza-Ichome on the Yurakucho line. Tohuro is a chain of Japanese-style Izakaya restaurants which try to reproduce the ambience and feel of the streets of the Edo period (Figure 98). It has small private rooms but can also handle the gathering of larger groups for private parties.<sup>222</sup> The time set for dinner was 5:30 pm. The place has a big dinner room in Izakaya style (Japanese-style bar), where people can sit on the floor at a “*Horigotatsu*” table on “*zabuton*,” Japanese-style cushions, all adequate for kimono. We did not have a reservation, but the members of the group were happy to welcome us as guests for the evening and we paid the fee of 3,000 yen each just like the other participants to be able to have dinner together. They offered us a place at a table from which we could observe the whole room.

At each table there were about twenty people, and altogether we were about seventy persons having dinner together that night. My host sister and I were the only ones not dressed in kimono, but we also had to introduce ourselves, as every newcomer must do on their first visit. As we were not sitting in the middle of the room, where the tables are small, but to the side, we enjoyed our dinner with the other guests at our table. There were two married couples, husband and wife, and some other women and men. Both men and women were open and proud to show each other what they were wearing that night, and what they had made themselves. One of the married couples was playfully showing how they had advised each other on the selection of the fabric to combine for having their kimono made. The men were proud of the advice of their wives and they all looked happy to have a chance to wear kimono together.

The members are proud of developing their own way of dressing while re-inventing rules. A lot of them had started learning how to wear kimono at a Kitsuke Kyoushitsu,<sup>223</sup> that is, in a kimono school, others had been taught by their parents, or by other members of the group. Some participants told us that evening that they liked their culture and that’s why they wanted to wear kimono, to feel perhaps more Japanese. Some said that when they got old they would like to use kimono and walk in kimono as their everyday clothing, and another young participant said that she would like to go to work in kimono. Others liked the opportunity that the Kimono de Ginza group offers to wear their old kimonos inherited within the family.



Figure 98: At the Izakaya restaurant *Tohuro*, with design in Edo-period style. Tokyo, 2008.  
© Oly Firsching-Tovar



Figure 99: At the dinner table, a man and two women are modelling their outfits and Christmas designs, hand-painted on the *haori* jacket and the obi (kimono belt). Tokyo, 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

Some had wanted to try on a kimono only once but had discovered that they liked it more and more. Some people said they had started by buying small pieces of work called *komono* made of Japanese textiles, thus collecting objects made of recycled kimono cloth, and at some point realized that they wanted to learn how to wear kimono. Many of the participants we could talk to during that evening in 2008 said that they had learned how to wear kimono in the previous five years. They felt it was difficult to imagine that in the everyday life of Tokyo



there is a group of people who enjoy their national dress so much. The atmosphere was joyful, with everybody thinking about what to wear for the next time. Some boys were there too, wearing kimono made of textiles from women's kimono. Creativity and playfulness have no end within this group of kimono fans!



Figure 100: A group of mature men from the group “Kimono de Ginza.” Tokyo, 2008.

© Oly Firsching-Tovar

### ***The Commodification of Time and Space for Kimono Wearers in Tokyo and Kyoto***

Thanks to the monthly gathering of the group Kimono de Ginza and its announcements in the Internet, it was easy to meet people wearing kimono dress by themselves in Tokyo. In Kyoto finding people, men or women, wearing kimono dress turned out to rely more on luck. In fact, the only men dressed in kimono I found in Kyoto were the ones renting the outfits at the kimono stations. In Tokyo, as already mentioned, the group Kimono de Ginza was founded by men, and the leader of the group on the afternoon of the field research was also a man. In Kyoto, dressing in kimono wearing trendy fashions was more actively pursued by women. In Tokyo, the group of people experimenting with kimono was more pluralistic. In Kyoto, most of the kimono wearers in updated trendy outfits were young women, some of them working as kimono coordinators, shop assistants, or managers of boutiques, others tourists. The participants in the kimono revival that I found in Kyoto certainly must have taken into consideration the trends proposed by kimono magazines, *mooks* and tourist magazines on kimono. These publications are carefully and beautifully illustrated, still reinforcing the image of the ever-sweet, docile kimono-clad maiden, but also showing the more rebellious character of the Modern Girl (*moga*) clad in kimono as a reference for style and fashion.

In Kyoto, tourism and kimono are very much linked. Kyoto, Uji and some tourist areas on the Tango Peninsula in Kyoto Prefecture are tourist destinations with traditional and modern sites,

and these have become the stage for the display of kimono. It is common knowledge shared by social anthropologists that human beings have always decorated their bodies,<sup>224</sup> their motivation not just protection against the weather but for the sake of making themselves beautiful and different from others. Gertrud Lehnert says, taking up ideas of Maurice Leenhardt and John Carl Flügel, that this unity of the bare and the fashioned body opens new possibilities in the way people can explore and conquer a space, a space understood by her (after Henri Lefebvre<sup>225</sup>) as always socially (or culturally) constructed.<sup>226</sup>

The fashion body carries its own space with it, and interreacts with the surrounding spaces. It trains and makes—“dresses”—the body we are born with to a finished body, it makes possible or forbids movements and so our experience of space, indeed our shaping and design of space.<sup>227</sup>

Jennifer Craik, fashion specialist and one of the most critical voices raised against the Eurocentric view of fashion<sup>228</sup> writes: “Fashion constitutes the arrangement of clothes and the adornment of the body to display certain body techniques and highlight relations between the body and its social habitus.” She sees fashion as a “body technique” and points out that the body “is not given, but actively constructed through how it is used and projected,”<sup>229</sup> and argues that “Dress and body technique are ‘tailor-made’ for their environment.”<sup>230</sup> Craik makes us aware that techniques of dress and decoration in non-Western cultures are distinguished from fashion: “They are regarded as traditional and unchanging reflections of social hierarchies, belief and customs.”<sup>231</sup>

From a Eurocentric perspective, non-Western dress embodies meanings of spirituality, and projects the identity of a group, religiosity and membership;<sup>232</sup> because it is said to be unchanging non-Western dress is thought of as costume. However, in the contemporary revival, the kimono normally regarded as non-Western dress has been advertised by its promoters but also embraced by the participants of the revival as a fashionable piece of cloth, one that can be appropriated for its specific use as casual wear. Furthermore, in the context of tourism, it has become detached from the formality and religious and ceremonial meanings that have been given to it as the national costume and as which it is more commonly known.

As mentioned before, the levels of formality—especially for the young generation—seem to have been reduced to the distinction between two categories: *haregi* “special, formal wear” and *fudangi* “everyday wear.” The view of the kimono as a costume has been encouraged to change. Influential voices such as that of the famous fashion designer Yamamoto Yohji have promoted it in its literal meaning of “a thing to wear” and “challenged rigid rules dictating how to ‘properly’ wear kimono,”<sup>233</sup> exhorting the wearers to be “brave” and “cool” in order to reflect “contemporary attitudes towards this once classical garment.”<sup>234</sup> Pop stars like the band PUFFY (Ami Onuki and Yumi Yoshimura) as well as tourism campaigns, promoters of kimono events, designers, magazines, shops owners and attendants in boutiques seemed to have heeded his advice.<sup>235</sup> Consumers are invited to view kimono and experience it, so that they learn how to use it, and so that the techniques developed for its use become

familiar with time. If you embrace such a kimono, it can be as easy as if you are wearing Western clothing.

We know that most people in contemporary Japan do not wear kimono in their daily lives. Therefore, it was also necessary to create new occasions when and where to wear the kimono in order to revive interest from the consumer perspective.<sup>236</sup> The dressed body in kimono and the body technique used vary depending on the places the kimono body will be worn and the spaces produced for its consumption.

Space as a whole is consumed for production just as are industrial buildings and sites....

When we go to the mountains or to the beach, we consume a space. When the inhabitants of industrialized Europe descend to the Mediterranean, which has become their space for leisure, they pass from the space of production to the consumption of space.<sup>237</sup>

“Places,” writes Lehnert, “shift their aspect depending on the user and to what purpose they are used.” They have an aesthetic which has “atmospheric and emotional potential—and because of the users’ perceptions and the use of this potential” the places for the performance of the body in kimono and the times of the year and the activities that are normally enjoyed with the particular season are carefully matched—perfect environments produced and organized as spaces for leisure. Iconic places in Japanese history in cities like Tokyo, Kyoto and Kanazawa together with the material structure provided by specific buildings, gardens, temples, café shops and boutiques, become “perceived spaces” or “experienced spaces” by the wearers of the revival, who seemed to be seduced by the illusion of an aesthetic of the past, projected by an aesthetic of immersion.<sup>238</sup>

New activities are planned either by groups such as Kimono de Ginza or by the Japanese Tourist Industry to complement the structure needed for the kimono display. The images and texts used in advertising the events are targeted to different groups of participants, sometimes directed to youth, boys and girls, or at times to couples, and, in the case of Kimono de Ginza, to everyone who enjoys wearing kimono. With the new activities, trends have been set and an aesthetic revived from the period in history when the first kimono revival took place, the end of the Meiji and the Taishō and early Shōwa periods, that is, the modern era around and after the turn of the twentieth century (the years also when the modernization of Japan took place, and when militaristic international success helped nationalism to rise). The hybridized look of the Meiji period and that of the Taishō Mode prevail within this new, third revival.

The places with an atmospheric potential suitable for these activities are located most of the time in urban areas (shopping centres and shopping streets, pedestrian-friendly precincts of famous temples, shrines and gardens, or sites of modern consumption like Ginza). The stages for the exhibition of the products of the revival are the shops, boutiques, and department stores where the wearers can shop but also observe how the display and coordination of the outfits are done. In this way, a kind of museal re-creation is offered, especially for selling souvenirs at the sites where tourists interact with the kimono environment, to which sites also foreigners are mostly attracted. The places chosen and the spaces produced for the consumption of kimono emanate a “complicit” atmosphere of nostalgia.

For instance, the shops for rented maiko outfits are mostly situated in places easy to reach by a short walk, and where the outfits can be worn in traditional areas, with plenty of temples, shrines and Japanese-style houses, perfect scenery for the photo shooting promoted in some of the packages offered by the shops and tourist centres. By contrast, the tours that the participants are invited to make in the *mook Kimono at Kyoto* are at sites representative of Kyoto's process of modernization, in the Kyoto city centre with its shopping streets and pedestrian-friendly areas, which are rich in both traditional and modern Japanese architecture, with plenty of boutiques, pubs and bars. These more eclectic environments function as a great stage on which to freely dress for the "orchestration"<sup>239</sup> of the kimono coordination, and to be seen in updated contemporary kimono fashions, like those advertised in the *mook*. As noted by Craik, "dress and body technique are 'tailor made' for their environment."<sup>240</sup> In the present revival, the environments are constructed places, recreated for the body in kimono.

The places to show the "orchestration"<sup>241</sup> of the kimono coordination are temples, gardens, galleries, and famous shopping streets past and present; they are the stage for the commodification of time and space within this contemporary revival.

The body of the kimono wearer undertakes a kind of trip: getting ready in kimono, dressing oneself, adorning the hair, walking along the streets dressed in kimono, the gestures and movements, changing to a slower speed. The wearer inside the kimono space undergoes an individual experience; although in the context of tourism the activities are often enjoyed in groups, the contact and the experience with kimono is intimate.

In Tokyo, the kimono wearers gather to enjoy a one-day-in-a-month activity created for wearing kimono. They meet in a famous fashion area, Ginza, a symbol of Japan's process of modernization, where the first famous department stores were built. In the past, this area of Tokyo became the first place where Western fashion and contemporary kimono fashion at the beginning of the twentieth century were displayed.

Kimono wearers of the group Kimono de Ginza are free to show how they see kimono; there are no limits to their imagination. How a person appropriates kimono shows his/her creativity and taste; in a sense, the encounter of the kimono wearers is a chance to express the desire to be seen in kimono and to learn from other participants. But the journey that the Kimono de Ginza experiment with every meeting is also a trip into the past. They start at the streets of Ginza, a centre for the display of street fashion, and meet later in a restaurant underground which sets a scene recalling feudal, pre-modern times when kimono was worn as the everyday clothing of the population. The space of the restaurant bar in traditional style which kimono wearers can appropriate is desired for the freedom of movement it allows them in their kimono.

In Kyoto, for this contemporary revival the tourist industry and the textile industry "re-invent" new routes and update environments recalling past scenes where Japanese used to go sightseeing in kimono, and now, with their fashioned body, can display their identification

with their own cultural heritage, traditional and modern, through practices of dress and tourism, making them aware and proud of their cultural identity through consumption.

In her 1998 essay “It Takes a Village: Internationalization and Nostalgia in Postwar Japan,” published in Stephen Vlasto’s *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*, Jennifer Robertson explains:

The creation of *furusato-mura*, or “old-village, villages,” as tourist destinations for urbanites in search of an agricultural (read, traditional) experience, has been a primary feature of state-sanctioned native place-making programs.<sup>242</sup>

As we have also learnt, although Uji is the second-largest city in Kyoto prefecture and therefore does not match the concept of a village, its scenery, with the Uji River promenade, the traditional style of the merchant houses, the Uji Bridge and the temples and shrines in the surroundings, make part of the city a perfect landscape in which to exhibit the beauty of kimono. It is true that if one visits it in a kimono one may experience a change in the speed of the visit, in the performance of one’s dress as a kimono wearer, and in the view of its sites, especially from the perspective of a Japanese tourist. In 2008, the rental station had chosen autumn as the time to enjoy this kimono oasis; viewing the changing colours then is certainly conducive to observation and recreation in a low-speed mode.

In Tokyo, the meetings of groups of people wearing kimono is not connected, at least directly, with the context of tourism or with a special season of the year. There are also kimono rental places in the city, but mostly it is foreign tourists who may try on a kimono there, not Japanese.

## *Kimono and Gender*

In this section, we stay with the wearers of Kimono in Kyoto and Tokyo, but focus more on the implications for gender.

Within the contemporary revival, Kyoto stands out for its marketing of kimono culture, its networking, and the creation of spaces for wearing kimono (the streets of the city of Kyoto; or Uji, with its architecture, restaurants, temples and gardens; and for its consumption the railway station). It also has the Kimono Rental Station, which by offering different types of kimono for men and for women—and therefore kimono for a new group of consumers, mostly younger—has re-created gender.

As we have seen, the casual kimono of the Kyoto Kimono Rental Station for men and women—at least those in use in 2008—are reminiscent of the kimono colours of the late Meiji period, 1900–1910. Are the roles played by the women and men during the process of Japan’s modernization at the end of Meiji and in the Taishō and early Shōwa periods and their clothing habits important to know for the young generation of tourist in Kyoto? Here I am using the concept of gender after Bernstein: “As a socio-historical convention of deportment arbitrarily attributed to either females or males.”<sup>243</sup>

By contrast to the arbitrary recreation and design of the kimono for men and women of the Kyoto Kimono Station there is freedom among the participants of Tokyo’s Kimono de Ginza: As shown earlier, it is fashion-orientated in the orchestration of kimono, open to many different types of participants, and there the gender aspect remains an individual matter and irrelevant within the group; more important is how each person dresses themselves in kimono.

Taking a step back from the gender aspect for a moment, have contemporary Japanese been seduced by an “exotic” and “updated” image of their traditional dress in a time of Globalization, or does this revival show that they are just tired of Western modes, and that Japanese indigenous clothes have therefore become appealing, at least for a small group of the society?

This last question arose in my mind after re-reading one of my collected informal interviews. I had asked two girls visiting a garden in the Kiyomizu-michi area near Kiyomizu Temple about their opinion regarding the fact that “Lately a lot of people go out for a walk dressed in kimono,” then asked why they thought this was happening.

One of the interviewees answered with a kind of nationalistic argumentation:

*Maybe there was too much of foreign cultures coming to Japan, and now the young generation wants to revive Japanese beauty in this way to be more faithful to the aesthetic of one’s own country.*

The other girl had a humbler attitude when answering the same question. For her:

*I do it more because it is nice to walk in Kyoto wearing kimono and it is fun.*

To wear kimono in Kyoto is said to be fun! Most of my interviewees, when expressing the pleasure they feel wearing kimono in Kyoto, used the Japanese expression *tanoshimi!* This means: pleasure, enjoyment, amusement, fun, diversion, delight!

A lot of them, mostly girls clad in rented kimonos or ones who had been helped to dress by a specialist, argued:

*We get a lot of attention. — People look more at you. — We received a lot of attention from everywhere. — Something changes in you, it changes completely, it is fun.*

While in Tokyo the attitude among the kimono wearers at Kimono de Ginza is deeply interlinked to the way each person reaches new fashions and styles with their kimono, they also have fun being seen by other Japanese at their gathering in the streets of Ginza.

In Kyoto, the advertisements at the Kimono Station are part of nationally created tourist campaigns, with the women in the advertisements acting as “activists” for the revival of kimono. Their image is shaped assuming an updated contemporary version of women as the holders of tradition or as managers of the Japanese home, sometimes with a slightly Westernized look, that of “complicit exoticism.”<sup>244</sup>

In Kyoto, women oversee bringing men and other members of the family to try and learn how to wear traditional clothes themselves, as a form of education. In advertisements they appear as the archetype of the “mother,” linked, as Robertson has argued, to the image of the homeland, *furusato*:

Native place-making projects are premised on a nostalgia for an authentic community symbolized, especially for men, by *ofukuro*, one of the most effective expressions for “mother,” used almost exclusively by males. *Ofukuro* literally means “bag lady” and, consequently, refers connotatively to the notion of females as repositories, in this case of, traditional values deposited for safekeeping by the (male) engineers of *furusato*-making programs.<sup>245</sup>

While in Tokyo Kimono de Ginza has existed since the turn of the twenty-first century, the Kimono Rental Station only opened in 2007. We know from Flavia Cangia’s work<sup>246</sup> on the “Program for the Diffusion of Culture of Everyday Life” (part of the Program for Parent’s and Children’s Traditional Culture Classes) which began to be implemented around 2009–2010 in order to support the diffusion of *seikatsu bunka* (culture of life) within the target group of parents and children that:

Six fields of intervention were identified: *go* board (*igo*), Japanese chess (*shogi*), flower arrangement (*kado*), tea ceremony (*sado*), Japanese clothing—kimono (*waso*), traditional incense-smelling ceremony (*kodo*).<sup>247</sup>

Even though some of the Japanese females enjoying the kimono revival and the offers at the Kimono Station in Kyoto may be thinking that they can revive “the Japanese beauty” and be “more faithful to the aesthetic of Japan,” the truth is that the revival involves an irreversible degree of Westernization in the way kimono is advertised, consumed, promoted and worn under the influence of Western fashion and the Western lifestyle, as had already happened

during the Taishō period (1912–1926), this process in turn having already started with the creation of the department stores at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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In her afterword to *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress* Sandra Niessen restates an important thesis argued in that book:

On the two sides of fashion’s conventional divide, those who protect the exclusiveness of (Western) fashions, and those who defend the purity of traditional attire, are speaking high and low dialects of the same global fashion language.<sup>248</sup>

Fashion as memory may help to revive the past, or to connect contemporary Japanese with the past as they try nostalgically to attain a “recovery of lost Japanese-ness.”<sup>249</sup> However, while wanting the special degree of uniqueness of the Japanese beauty, the fact is that kimono is a commodity that in most parts of the world has been officially declared to be an item of “traditional culture” whose use is, through its being displayed, to do far more: to demarcate Japan’s supposedly homogeneous national identity.

Now, in the contemporary kimono revival, this use is flatly contradicted by another: as an item for rental in our globalized world, kimono has become a dress for tourist “entertainment exotic” to both Japanese and non-Japanese visitors.



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- 1 “Yukata Back in Fashion: New Looks for Traditional Summer Garment,” *Trends in Japan*, 11.
- 2 In the section *State of the Art* of the *Introduction*.
- 3 *Kimono Hime* [Kimono Princess]: *Antique & Chic*. 10 issues between April 2003 and October 2010 (Tokyo: Shodensha *mook*, 2003–2010).
- 4 Martin Webb, “In Sceptical Quest of a Boom,” *Japan Times*, 18 September 2005.
- 5 A magazine-style book that is popular in Japan, especially among the younger generation. See the *Introduction*, endnote 224.
- 6 See Joy Hendry’s essay: “From Scrambled Messages to an Impromptu Dip: Serendipity in Finding a Field Location.”
- 7 Annie Van Assche, ed., *Fashioning Kimono: Dress and Modernity in Early Twentieth-century Japan*, photog. Stefano Ember, 29.
- 8 “Twenty per cent of Japan’s traditional craftsmen live in Kyoto” and “it is tourism and the service industries that continue to make up the bulk (65 per cent of the workforce).” John Dougill, *Kyoto: A Cultural and Literary History*, 259–64.
- 9 Jessica Korteman, “*Setagaya Boro-Ichi*: Winter Flea Market Shopping in Tokyo,” *Notes of Nomads*, 18 December 2014 (website).
- 10 Iwabuchi Koichi, *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*, 122–23.
- 11 Fran Wrigley, “New J-Drama ‘*Kol Kimono*’ Brought to You from... Thailand!”
- 12 See Patricia G. Steinhoff, “New Notes from the Underground: Doing Fieldwork Without a Site.”
- 13 “Enjoy” is a recurring word used in different advertisements concerning the use of kimono, including in a local newspaper. It is a key word for encouraging people to try on kimono and to promote its use. See the online articles in the *Kyoto Shimbun* [Kyoto newspaper] of 25 October and 22 November 2008 (website).
- 14 It is also used as the front page of a pamphlet (see the identical Figure 36 below).
- 15 See *Kyoto Kimono Passport* (website).
- 16 Kyoto Tourist Information Centre [2F of Kyoto Station Building], Kimono Station Kyoto [1F of Kyoto Industry Centre, on the south side of Shijo, south of Karasuma, Shimogyo-ku] Nishijin Textile Centre [on Horikawa, south of Imadegawa, Kamigyo-ku] The Museum of Kyoto [Sanjo Takakura, Nakagyo-ku] Keihan Railways Sanjo Station Information Station, Hankyu Railways Kawaramachi Service Centre, Kyoto Prefecture Fabric-dyeing & Craft Section [3F of #2 Bldg., Kyoto Prefecture Office, on Shimodachiuri, west of Shinmachi, Kamigyo-ku] Kyoto Shimbun Culture Centre [on Karasuma, north of Ebisugawa, Nakagyo-ku]. From “Kyoto Magonote: Kimono Rental Service,” *Kyoto City Tourism Association* (website).
- 17 Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Visual Culture Reader*, 3.
- 18 Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*.
- 19 Sarah Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research*, 95.
- 20 Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process.”

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- 21 Karen O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods*, 39.
- 22 Ibid., 175.
- 23 Ibid., 102.
- 24 Ibid., 109.
- 25 "For Strauss and Corbin, grounded theory is based on a methodology: 'a way of thinking about and studying social reality' that does see theory as being grounded in data without a simplistic adoption of inductive reasoning." O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods*, 128. Karen O'Reilly's book is useful on Grounded Theory and Ethnographic Analysis.
- 26 O'Reilly, *Ethnographic Methods*, 117.
- 27 Sandra A. Niessen, Ann Marie Leshkovich, and Carla Jones, eds., *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress*.
- 28 Stephanie Assmann, "Between Tradition and Innovation: The Reinvention of the Kimono in Japanese Consumer Culture."
- 29 George E. Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography."
- 30 Gisela Welz: "Temporalisierung der Feldforschung meint also die serielle Abfolge von mehreren Feldaufenthalten, während die Forscher dazwischen zeitweise nach Hause in ihre Herkunftsgesellschaften und zumeist auch ihre Heimatuniversität oder die Forschungseinrichtung, an der sie arbeiten, zurückkehren." Welz cites anthropologist Thomas Scheffer (Scheffer 2007): "Das Feld findet nicht nur (an) verschiedenen Orten statt, sondern auch verschiedenen Zeiten. Es wird in verschiedenen Rhythmen und in verschiedenen sequenziellen Bezügen entfaltet." Gisela Welz, "Die Pragmatik ethnografischer Temporalisierung: Neue Formen der Zeitorganisation in der Feldforschung [The pragmatics of ethnographic temporalisation: New forms of time organisation in field research]."
- 31 Follow the People: "The circulation of objects or the extension in space of particular cultural complexes such as ritual cycles and pilgrims may be rationales for such ethnography, but the procedure is to follow and stay with the movements of a particular group of initial subjects."  
Follow the Thing: "This mode of constructing the multi-sited space of research involves tracing the circulation through different contexts of the manifestly material object of study (at least as initially conceived), such as commodities, gifts, money, work of arts, and intellectual property.... However, the most important and influential statement for this technique for multi-site research on the circulation of things is Appadurai's introduction to his collection *The Social Life of Things*." Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System," 106–7.
- 32 Ibid., 105.
- 33 John Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*.

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- 34 A description of Van Maanen’s impressionist tales: “The attempt is to evoke an open, participatory sense in the viewer and as with all revisionist forms of art, to startle complacent viewers accustomed to and comfortable with older forms. For my purposes, it is the impressionist’ self-conscious and, for their time, innovative use of their materials—colours, form, light, stroke, hatching, overlay, frame—that provides the associative link to fieldwork writing.
- The impressionists of ethnography are also out to startle their audience.... Their materials are words, metaphors, phrasings, imagery, and most critically, the expansive recall of fieldwork experience....
- Such tales comprise a series of remembered events in the field in which the author was usually a participant.” Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field*, 101–2.
- 35 Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.”
- 36 Daimon Sayuri, “Kimono Makers Target the Young: As Purists Age, Industry Forced to Change with the Times.”
- 37 *Kimono rimeiku* 着物リメイク: “Kimono re-make”. See the websites for the kimono re-make shops “*Asobi ya machida nokia jōhō: Kimono rimeiku* 遊びやまちだ展示会情報: 着物リメイク [Play information and exhibition information: Kimono remake]”; *Morie-Tokyo/Bridal*; *Engeru-kurōzu* [Angel clothes].
- 38 “Approximately two kilometres long, the path begins around Ginkakuji (Silver Pavilion) and ends in the neighbourhood of Nanzenji. The path gets its name due to Nishida Kitaro, one of Japan’s most famous philosophers, who was said to practice meditation while walking this route on his daily commute to Kyoto University. Restaurants, cafes, and boutiques can be found along the path, as well as a number of smaller temples and shrines which are a short walk from the canal.” “Philosophers’ Path,” *Japan-Guide.com* (website).
- 39 *Aizome* 藍染め: Indigo dye.
- 40 *Shibori-zome* 絞り染め: Tie-dye.
- 41 *Tsumugi* 紬: Striped silk crepe.
- 42 *Kasuri* 緋: A Japanese word for fabric that has been woven with fibres dyed specifically to create patterns and images in the fabric. It is an *ikat* (resist-dyeing) technique.
- 43 Kojima Akira, chairman of the Japan Centre for Economic Research, is writing in a section of his article on the role of what he calls “the neglected Household Sector” in the year 1997, after the financial crisis that Japan had gone through. Kojima Akira, “Emerging from a Long Tunnel.”
- 44 “Kimonos are Hot: Young Women Create New Tradition.”
- 45 Nakamura Akemi, “Kimono Makes Comeback—in Used Form: Female Shoppers Search for a Cheap, Elegant Reminder of Yesteryears.”
- 46 “In the Meiji period, fashion focused on innerwear, and attention shifted to the luxurious *haura* (jacket lining) for men and *nagajuban* (long undergarment for women).” Fujii Kenzō. *Japanese Modern Textiles*, 60.

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- 47 *Kimono Hime* [Kimono Princess]: Antique & Chic,” first issue April 2003 (Tokyo: Shodensha *mook*). See also the website “Kimono Hime: Retro trends with antique kimono magazine,” which shows the front covers over the ten issues produced between 2003 and 2010.
- 48 Heike Jenß, *Sixties Dress Only*, 37.
- 49 To read more on the possibility that this kimono revival could be “Western-inspired” see “Kimonos make a comeback” (online), and also Natalie Obiko-Pearson’s article “Platform Sandals, Pants Blend with Tradition: Kimono stages Western-inspired revival” in the *Japan Times*, 5 August 2003 (online).
- 50 Obiko-Pearson, “Platform Sandals, Pants Blend with Tradition” (online).
- 51 Nakamura Akemi, “Kimono Makes Comeback—in Used Form.”
- 52 *Encyclopedia Japan* (website).
- 53 Freeter/freeta: *furitā* (フリーター) is a Japanese expression for people who lack full-time employment, excluding housewives and students. It is probably a combination of the English word “free(time)” and “アルバイト *arubaito*,” from the German word “Arbeiter” (worker). The term originally included young people who deliberately chose not to work for a salary, even though jobs were available at the time. *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* (website).
- 54 “One firm that quickly spotted the business potential in used kimono was the kimono wholesaler Tokyo Yamaki Co., which opened its first *Tansu-ya* second-hand kimono shop in the city of Funabashi, Chiba Prefecture, in September 1999.” Nakamura Akemi, “Kimono Makes Comeback—in Used Form” (online).
- 55 Obiko-Pearson, “Platform Sandals, Pants Blend with Tradition” (online). The global movement in second-hand kimono can be followed over the Internet. Here in Germany there are some collectors and fashion designers who acquire their kimono online and use them as work material. One of them is Mo Damböck: Damböck, “Nokimo-Kimonos u. Kelims: Webart aus aller Welt.”
- 56 Alan Kennedy, *Japanese Costume: History and Tradition*.
- 57 Tanaka Yūko, “The Cyclical Sensibility of Edo-period Japan.”
- 58 Yamanaka Norio, Introduction to *The Book of Kimono*.
- 59 “Active Corporation.” *Sunnypages.jp: Tokyo Reviews Tokyo In-Depth*.
- 60 James L. McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, 582–97.
- 61 Nakamura Akemi, “Kimono Makes Comeback—in Used Form” (online).
- 62 Obiko-Pearson, “Platform Sandals, Pants Blend with Tradition” (online).
- 63 Wangari Maathai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 in recognition of her leadership in the Green Belt Movement, a long-term project in which many people, mainly women, worked together to plant tens of millions of trees to slow deforestation in Africa. “*Mottainai!* Or recycling in Japan” (online).
- 64 See the article by Ohara Yoko, “Japanese Fashion Business: Tradition & Innovation.”

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- 65 “Generally, people bought kimono from second-hand dealers. It was not necessary to have a large number of kimono; a kimono lasted a long time if the neckband was replaced periodically. People also wore kimono layered. And old kimono, after being sent out to be washed and filled, would be also sold to a second-hand dealer and another used kimono bought. Fine-quality kimono were passed down in families for generations.” Ohara Yoko, “Japanese Fashion Business.”
- 66 For more information on *Machitsukuri* (town making) and maintenance see “*Kuryeetaazujapantowa*” [Creators Japan is] in the online magazine *Creators Japan*.
- 67 See the online article by Anthony M. Tung, “Reversing the Culture for Destruction.”
- 68 McClain, *Japan*, 596.
- 69 Sylvie Guichard-Anguis, “Cultural Heritage and Consumption,” 105.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 107.
- 71 See the blog from textile artist Takahashi Hiroko, who is herself also engaged in the design of digital kimono: Takahashi, “Yukata for Light Up Nippon 2012.”  
Another link to a report in the *Japan Times* from 2005, in which a French designer decides to print a kimono with her own motifs: Karen A. Foster, “Opening the Kimono to Everyone.” (online).
- 72 “It seems that today’s young Japanese women have changed their way of thinking about kimono, as evident in Tokyo’s kimono revival trend.” Van Assche, ed., *Fashioning Kimono*, 29.  
“The nostalgia for ‘Taishō Romanticism’ appears today in the form of vintage kimonos of the 1920s and 1930s paired with jeans, or cut and resewn into chic, Western-style garments.” Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono: Reflection of Japanese Modernity,” 41.
- 73 “Kimono Chic for Men: Wear it Your Way,” *Kateigaho International Edition*, Summer 2014.
- 74 Such as *Kimono Hime* [Kimono Princess]: *Antique & Chic* and *Kimono at Kyoto (mooks)*. See “Kimono Hime: Retro trends with antique kimono magazine (Japanese language only).” See also Oly Firsching-Tovar, “Reviving Kimono: Fashion as Memory at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century,” 117–18.
- 75 As in Düsseldorf, London or New York, for example.
- 76 See *Kimono at Kyoto (mook)*.
- 77 This information on other kimono styles has been acquired from the blog *Immortal Geisha*. See “Kimono,” *Immortal Geisha*.
- 78 “Kimono Chic for Men.”
- 79 “Summer Kimono & Yukata, PUFFY-style,” *JAPAN: The Official Guide* (website).
- 80 “Cultural Quintessence,” *JAPAN: The Official Guide*.
- 81 See poster in Terry Satsuki Milhaupt. *Kimono: A Modern History*, 240.
- 82 “Summer Kimono & Yukata, PUFFY-style.”
- 83 *Ibid.*
- 84 *Geta* 下駄: Japanese-style sandal.

- 85 *Kitsuke* 着付け: To be dressed up in kimono with the help of a specialist.
- 86 “AsoPlaza’s Coupons,” *Nippon Travel Agency* (website: “Search for valuable discount coupons for popular destinations and sightseeing spots in Japan at Nippon Travel Agency's AsoPlaza!”).
- 87 The interview was recorded as field notes in my research diary.
- 88 Yamanaka Norio, *The Book of Kimono*.
- 89 Nakamura Akemi, “Kimono Makes Comeback—in Used Form” (online).
- 90 *Kyoto Kimono Passport* (website).
- 91 “Murasaki Shikibu was born around the first year of Tenen (973) as a daughter of Tametoki Fujiwara, a renowned scholar of Chinese poetry and court official. Her great-grandfather was Tsutsumi Chunagon Kanesuke, a famous *waka* poet during the mid-Heian period. She lost her mother early in life and was brought up under the full influence of her father. After being married for three years, her husband died of an illness and she reportedly began writing *The Tale of Genji* as a way of overcoming her sense of grief and loss.” See “The Tale of Genji and Uji City,” *The Tale of Genji Museum* (website).
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Guichard-Anguis, “Cultural Heritage and Consumption,” 100.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 According to Yamanaka Norio in his *The Book of Kimono*, an everyday obi is: “An obi made of easy-to-wear elastic material [that] is available for everyday wear.”
- 96 Cangia, *Performing the Buraku*, 118.
- 97 People labelled *Burakumin* (hamlet people) are usually described as Japan’s outcasts of the Edo period (1603–1868). They were engaged in special occupations (e.g. in the leather industry, meat-packing, street entertainment, shoes and drum making) and compelled to live in separate areas, known as *buraku* (monkey-training is one of the street entertainments historically associated with the Burakumin).
- 98 Cangia, *Performing the Buraku*, 120.
- 99 “It has been claimed that after Mecca in Saudi Arabia, Kyoto is the second most-visited place on earth. Some forty million people descend on the city each year, of whom only 800,000 are foreigners.” The unpopularity of second-hand kimono most likely started after the Second World War, when Western clothing began to be used by most of the population as everyday wear. Dougill, *Kyoto*.
- 100 “Kyoto Magonote: Kimono Rental Service,” *Kyoto City Tourism Association* (website).
- 101 Milhaupt, “Facets of the Kimono,” 34.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Ibid.
- 105 Ibid.
- 106 Ibid.

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- 107 McClain, *Japan*, 597.
- 108 Ibid., 596–97.
- 109 Cangia, *Performing the Buraku*, 123–30.
- 110 McClain, *Japan*, 596–97.
- 111 Ibid.
- 112 Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, “Consumer Culture and the Manufacturing of Desire.”
- 113 Ibid., 217.
- 114 Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things*.
- 115 Marilyn Ivy, “Formation of Mass Culture.”
- 116 “The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism announced at a round-table conference of cabinet ministers on December 24, 2002 that the ‘Inbound Tourism Initiative of Japan’ had been formulated in cooperation with other related ministries and agencies to promote foreign tourist traffic to Japan. The Initiative is based on the ‘Basic Policies for Economic and Fiscal Policy Management and Structural Reform 2002’ (approved at a cabinet meeting on June 25, 2002).
- In comparison to the 16 million Japanese traveling overseas annually, only 5 million foreign tourists, less than a third of the former figure, visit our country. The Initiative aims to lessen the gap at the earliest possible stage.
- For the above purpose, a decision was made to launch the Visit Japan Campaign as a part of the ‘Strategy to Promote Inbound Tourism,’ which is one of the key strategies enumerated in the Initiative.
- The ‘Strategic Meeting of the Inbound Tourism Initiative of Japan’ was held under the auspices of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism on March 26, 2003 with the objective to unite the forces of the public and private sectors and initiate the Visit Japan Campaign, for which the Visit Japan Campaign Headquarters was established.
- The Secretariat office of the Headquarters was then opened on April 1, 2003 and has started to take action in realizing the target of attracting 10 million foreign tourists to visit Japan by the year 2010.
- See “Japan: Endless Discovery,” *Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)*. (“The official tourism website of Japan”).
- 117 Ibid.
- 118 Brief History:
- April 1964: JNTO established as a government-affiliated corporation.
- April 2003: Visit Japan Campaign launched.
- December 2005: International visitors to Japan during 2005 post a record high of 6.73 million.
- May 2006: Singapore Office opened.
- See “Japan: Endless Discovery.”
- 119 Kawakatsu Kenichi. *Kimono: Japanese Dress*.
- 120 Liza Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*, 188.
- 121 Jō Kazuo, and Watanabe Naoki, *Japanese Fashion: Meiji. Taishō. Shōwa. Heisei (1868–2007)*.

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- 122 Dalby, *Kimono*, 111.
- 123 Ibid., 110–15.
- 124 This image, in the form of a poster, has been briefly introduced above. See the identical Figure 8.
- 125 Suga Masami. “Exotic West to Exotic Japan: Revival of Japanese Traditions in Modern Japan,” 99–100.
- 126 Ibid.
- 127 Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 7.
- 128 Ibid., 1–7.
- 129 A *furusato* is one’s hometown or ancestral village, the place, in the words of one Japanese, “where one can return whenever the urge strikes; a place where one’s heart finds repose and where the routines of daily life are grounded in compassion; a place where customs are highly valued.” Jennifer Robertson, “A Dialectic of Native and Newcomer: The Kodaira Citizens Festival in Suburban Tokyo,” 23.
- 130 Cangia, *Performing the Buraku*, 143–69.
- 131 Suga, “Exotic West to Exotic Japan,” 113.
- 132 *kosupure* コスプレ; *kosuchuumu purei* コスチュームプレイ.
- 133 Susan B. Kaiser, “Identity, Postmodernity, and the Global Apparel Marketplace.”
- 134 Sandra Niessen, Afterword to *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress*, 259.
- 135 Michele M. Mason, “Empowering the Would-Be Warrior: Bushido and the Gendered Bodies of the Japanese Nation.”
- 136 Ibid.
- 137 Ibid.
- 138 Inazo Nitobe, *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan*.
- 139 Mason, “Empowering the Would-Be Warrior.”
- 140 Ibid.
- 141 Ibid.
- 142 *Kateigaho International Edition*, Summer edition, 2004.
- 143 Ibid.
- 144 Ibid.
- 145 “For tourists, the number one destination is Kiyomizu Temple on the eastern hills. Founded in 798, it is famed for its views and surrounded by green woods. Among the attractions is a three-layered pagoda, a shrine noted for bringing luck in love, and a spring with healing properties.” Dougill, *Kyoto*, 221.
- 146 *Kiyomizu-michi* 清水道: the way to Kiyomizu Temple.
- 147 See José Teunissen, “Global Fashion/ Local Tradition: On the Globalisation of Fashion,” 11.
- 148 Dorinne Kondo, *About Face*, 79.



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- 149 John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, 128.
- 150 *Ibid.*, 137.
- 151 Elizabeth Edwards, “Photographs as Objects of Memory.”
- 152 Anne J. Nishimura Morse, “Souvenirs of ‘Old Japan,’” 41–43.
- 153 Ivy, “Formation of Mass Culture.”
- 154 Fredric Jameson, “Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.”
- 155 “For many people, to reflect on a culture such as ancient Egypt is to invariably conjure up three of the most distinct arenas of Egyptian materiality: pyramids, statues, and mummies. Their evocative and concrete images have a great deal to do with their ‘affecting presence’ (Armstrong 1981) for contemporary culture.” See Lynn Meskell, “Objects in the Mirror Appear Closer Than They Are.”
- 156 Liza Dalby, *Geisha*, xiii.
- 157 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 158 “By the nineteenth century, geisha had become modish figures who were celebrated by admirers of *iki*, a sort of ‘daring chic’ that combined casual elegance with worldly nonchalance.” Dougill, *Kyoto*, 181.
- 159 Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization*, 27–28.
- 160 *Ibid.*
- 161 Dougill, *Kyoto*.
- 162 Stephanie Assmann, “Between Tradition and Innovation: The Reinvention of the Kimono in Japanese Consumer Culture.”
- 163 “The maiko typifies the popular image of geisha as a doll-like figure decorated from head to foot. Her face is a painted white mask with eyebrows underscored in red and small scarlet mouth. Her kimono is bright and eye-catching, with long dangling high wooden clogs, some four inches high. The white face is arresting; much of the fascination lies in its ambiguity, for like skin-tight clothing it reveals as much as it conceals. The thick paste stops short of the hairline to leave a strip of naked skin, as if in a facial striptease.” Dougill, *Kyoto*, 173.
- 164 Dalby, *Geisha*, xiii.
- 165 Dalby, *Kimono*, 136.
- 166 *Obi-age* 帯揚げ: Bustle sash.
- 167 *Obi-jime* 帯締め: *Obi* cords.
- 168 See *Nagajuban: Japanese Lingerie Kimono*.
- 169 “The roots of official kimono go back to the Meiji high-city mode of bourgeois propriety, but its full manifestation is largely a post-World War II phenomenon. One result of Japan’s postwar economic prosperity was to make traditional high culture available to all. The trite but exclusive upper-class image of a polished young lady became a goal within reach of almost everyone. Proficiency in flower arrangement, the tea ceremony, and wearing kimono demonstrated a girl’s—and by extension her family’s—cultural aspiration. Even today, after completing formal education, a Japanese girl will often mark time before marriage with lessons in various

traditional arts, thereby polishing her desirability as a marriage partner. At this point she may even take a few lessons in how to wear a kimono.” Dalby, *Kimono*, 128–29.

170 Nakamura Keiko, ed., *Shōwa Modern Kimono: Yayoi Museum*.

171 Jō and Watanabe, *Japanese Fashion*, 230.

172 “*Kimono Hime*: Retro trends with antique kimono magazine” (website).

173 *Kimono at Kyoto (mook)*.

174 Kondo, *About Face*, 80.

175 Martin Seel, “Inszenieren als Erscheinenlassen: Thesen über die Reichweite eines Begriffes [Orchestration as allowing to appear: Theses on the range of a concept].” In the original German: “Wo Inszenierung stattfindet, wird etwas vorübergehend in Szene gesetzt. Es vollzieht und präsentiert sich als ein räumlich sichtbares oder hörbares Geschehen.”

176 According to Dalby, knitting enjoyed a tremendous vogue around 1918, soon manifesting itself in the sudden popularity of sweaters and shawls for women. Dalby, *Kimono*, 140.

177 As one end of the old Tokaido Road between Edo and Kyoto, Sanjo Street was originally lined with shops and small Japanese inns. In the late nineteenth century, it became the “main street” of Kyoto, with various Western-style buildings of brick, stone or concrete. This reflected the Meiji-era impulse to adapt Western technology, as well as Kyoto’s vigorous leadership in doing so. Along Sanjo were located the major banks, schools, post office and newspapers of the city. By now they have mainly moved to more prestigious plots on nearby streets, but some of the buildings remain, interspersed with a number of traditional wooden buildings with *machiya*-type facades.

One of the Western buildings, the Kyoto Branch of the Bank of Japan, built in 1907, has been designated a nationally “Important” Cultural Property, and two others, the Mainichi Shimbun office (1929) and the remaining portion of the Nihon Seimei Life Insurance Co. (1915), are listed as Cultural Assets by the city. In the name of preserving the area as a showcase of Meiji- and Taishō-era urban design, the city created the Scenic District of Western Historic Atmosphere in 1985. It covers 30 meters on either side of the street for nine blocks from Teramachi to Muromachi Streets, although the surviving Western-style buildings are found only in one two-block zone and on two other intersections. See more in the *Kyoto Journal* online edition: Guenter Nitschke, “A Sense of Place: Urban Preservation and Renewal in Kyoto.

178 After Jan Assmann: Memory Culture is the way a society ensures cultural continuity by preserving, with the help of cultural mnemonics, its collective knowledge from one generation to the next, rendering it possible for later generations to construct their cultural identity. See Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* [Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination], 30–34.

179 Irwin Scheiner, “The Japanese Village,” 67.

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- 180 Heike Jenß, “Retro Looks in Modedesign und Jugendkultur: Tom Ford (Gucci), Anna Sui und die Mods.” In the German original: “Die Bekleidung bietet allerdings einen besonderen Raum für die Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit: über sie kann ein vollständiges oder fragmentarisches Bild der Vergangenheit mit dem eigenen Körper reinszeniert und,—sofern es sich um originale oder originalgetreue alte Kleider handelt—, nachgefühlt werden.”
- 181 Dalby, *Kimono*, 199.
- 182 Stephanie Assman, “Between Tradition and Innovation.”
- 183 See Sheila Cliffe, “The Role of the Internet in the Revival of Japanese Kimono,” 92.
- 184 Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*.
- 185 Fred Davis, *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*, 1.
- 186 “Technological Nostalgia,” *Workshop KIT, Karlsruhe, Germany*.
- 187 Ivy, “Formation of Mass Culture.”
- 188 Ibid.
- 189 Millie R. Creighton, “The *Depato*: Merchandising the West While Selling Japaneseness.”
- 190 Marilyn Ivy, “Tradition and Difference in the Japanese Mass Media.”
- 191 Creighton, “The *Depato*.”
- 192 Stefanie Assman, “Between Tradition and Innovation.”
- 193 Cliffe, “The Role of the Internet in the Revival of Japanese Kimono,” 92.
- 194 Nakamura Keiko, ed., *Shōwa Modern Kimono*, 99–125.
- 195 “*Bon-Kyoto*,” (Webpage for antique kimono, incl. re-make, and novelties shop).
- 196 *Hagire* はぎれ.
- 197 “*Yaya yufu*,” Fodor’s Travel: Kyoto Travel Guide: Kyoto Shopping (website).
- 198 *Kyoto City Official Travel Guide* (website).
- 199 Ibid.
- 200 “Learning About Kyoto,” *The Kyoto Project* (website).
- 201 Gluckman and Takeda, eds., *When Art Became Fashion: Kosode in Edo-period Japan*.
- 202 Ibid., 339.
- 203 Ibid.
- 204 Lola Shamukhitdinova, “Ikat in All its Manifestations: A New Wave of Popularity.”
- 205 These days, Japanese women have advanced the art of *chirimen* by taking up the *chirimen* craft. Many of them want to cultivate themselves by learning to value fine things, develop their aesthetic sense, and become skilled with their hands. Now, *chirimen* is also used as material for pouches, wallets, bags, and other fashionable Japanese goods.
- 206 See for example the 2005 *mook Shōwa Modern Kimono: Yayoi Museum*, edited by Nakamura Keiko.
- 207 Tomita Jun and Tomita Noriko, *Japanese Ikat*.
- 208 Yamanaka Norio, *The Book of Kimono*, 30.

- 209 *Dōchū-gi* 道中着: An overcoat designed to protect the kimono from dust and to keep warm when outside during the winter. The collar resembles the kimono collar, while the length can be adjusted to make either a half-length or a three-quarter length coat. Spun silk, wool and small patterns make nice coats which can be worn for traveling, or as visiting kimono, such as *tsumugi* or *komon*. Ibid., 59.
- 210 See Dalby, *Kimono*.
- 211 Ibid., 195.
- 212 “A type of paste-resist-dyed patterning in which grouped repeats of minute patterns are often composed in geometric arrangements, although the individual motifs themselves may not be geometric.... Until the introduction of synthetic dyes in the Meiji period, *komon* patterns were white (undyed) on a brushed-on dark ground of a sombre colour.” Gluckman and Takeda, eds., *When Art Became Fashion: Kosode in Edo-period Japan*, 335.
- 213 Discussed above in the sub-section *Kimono “Memory Culture” in the mooks Kimono Hime and Kimono at Kyoto*.
- 214 Nakamura Keiko, ed., *Shōwa Modern Kimono*.
- 215 Takabatake Kasho 高畠 華宵.
- 216 Takehisa Yumeji 竹久 夢二, Oku (now Setouchi), Okayama, Japan. Yayoi Museum and Takehisa Yumeji Museum are built connected as a tribute to Takabatake Kasho. See “Yayoi Museum & Takehisa Yumeji Museum,” *Tenkai-Japan* (website).
- 217 Toby Slade, *Japanese Fashion: A Cultural History*, 132.
- 218 *Kimono Salon* (website).
- 219 *J. tripper: Guided Private Walking Tours* (website). “J.tripper” is a wordplay on the expression: “day tripper”.
- 220 Keith Dinnie, *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice*, 212.
- 221 Stefanie Assman, “Between Tradition and Innovation.”
- 222 “*Tofuro: Roppongi*,” *Sunnypages.jp: Tokyo Review; Tokyo In-Depth* (website).
- 223 *Kitsuke* 着付け: To be dressed up in kimono with the help of a specialist.
- 224 See for example Anthony Synnott and David Howes, “From Measurement to Meaning. Anthropologies of the Body.”
- 225 Lefebvre, *La production de l’espace* [The production of space].
- 226 Gertrud Lehnert, “Solitudes of Transition: Hotels (Marcel Proust and Vicky Baum),” 53.
- 227 In the original German: “Der Mode-Körper trägt seinen eigenen Raum mit sich, und er tritt in Interaktion mit den umgebenden Räumen. Er richtet den Leib zum Körper zu, er ermöglicht oder verbietet Bewegungen—und damit Raumerfahrungen, ja Raumgestaltungen.” Lehnert, “Mode als Raum, Mode im Raum,” 1.

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- 228 “*The Face of Fashion* rejects the argument that the term ‘fashion’ refers exclusively to clothing behaviour in capitalist economies, that is, where certain economic exchanges are invoked in the production, circulation and distribution of clothes.... Accounts of western fashion typically treat it as unique, by virtue of its economically driven consumption. In such accounts, fashion behaviour itself is of marginal importance, having no meaning beyond the reaffirmation of economic exchanges and their ideological reflections.” Craik, *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion*, 5-6.
- 229 Craik, *The Face of Fashion*, 10.
- 230 Ibid., 17.
- 231 Ibid., 18.
- 232 Ibid., 18.
- 233 Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, *Kimono: A Modern History*, 242.
- 234 Milhaupt, *Kimono*, 242.
- 235 Ibid., 242.
- 236 Ibid., 246.
- 237 Lefebvre, *La production de l’espace*.
- 238 See Bieger, *Ästhetik der Immersion: Raumerleben zwischen Welt und Bild; Las Vegas, Washington und die White City* [The aesthetics of immersion: Experiencing space between world and image; Las Vegas, Washington and the White City], 75.
- 239 In the original German “Inszenierung.”
- 240 Craik, *The Face of Fashion*, 17.
- 241 In the original German “Inszenierung.”
- 242 Robertson, “It Takes a Village,” 119.
- 243 Gail Lee Bernstein, ed., *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600–1945*, 2.
- 244 Iwabuchi Koichi, “Complicit Exoticism: Japan and its Other.”
- 245 Jennifer Robertson, *Takarazuka: Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan*, 124.
- 246 Cangia, *Performing the Buraku*, 126.
- 247 Ibid.
- 248 Niessen, Afterword to *Re-Orienting Fashion*, 258.
- 249 Kondo, *About Face*, 79.



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## CONCLUSION



This thesis establishes that the kimono has been both revived as casual wear and updated as a fashionable and chic garment. Reported in the Japanese and international press and argued for in the work of Annie Van Assche (2005), Stephanie Assmann (2008), Sheila Cliffe (2013), and Terry Satsuki Milhaupt (2006/2014),<sup>1</sup> this has now been confirmed by my field research. The casual kimono can be used in its complete form as a rented, new, or vintage item. As Sandra A. Niessen, Ann Marie Leshkovich, and Carla Jones in *Re-Orienting Fashion: The Globalization of Asian Dress* (2003)<sup>2</sup> report, the revival of the kimono in contemporary Japan occurred parallel to other Asian dress revivals in the Age of Globalization. I have concentrated my attention on the phenomenon of the third kimono revival, in the years between 1990 and 2010. With the material gathered in the field in 2008, including textile objects, photo documentation, pamphlets, postcard, books, and *mooks*, it proved possible to follow how the “casual kimono” has been revived as another item of consumption in contemporary Japan. One of the most striking results is that the style of kimono being revived recalls the modern era of a century ago, especially the kimono that women wore during the end of the Meiji and in the Taishō and early Shōwa periods (1900 to 1930). The consumers targeted with the revived kimono styles are, as suggested in the media, mostly young.

As revealed through the field work, in Kyoto the kimono revival is pretty much linked directly or indirectly with the enterprise of tourism. Kimonos are enjoyed by Japanese and foreign tourists alike, as a commodity to be used and rented while shopping and visiting the city and its environs: a kimono suitable for leisure activities. In Tokyo, most of the followers of the kimono revival are people interested in the kimono-wearing culture, a general public with participants of different ages, sexes and gender orientations, who can be adults, older men and women, or youth. Foreigners interested in kimono are also welcome to participate. Many of them gather in group events like Kimono de Ginza where they can exchange their knowledge and put their curiosity to the creation of new ways of wearing kimono and new styles of kimono. Many of the shops and boutiques where one can find vintage kimono or kimono rental places are located in famous fashion areas such as Ginza, Omotesando or Harayuku.

## *The Kimono Revival as a Strategy of Self-Orientalization?*

A further result of the thesis is, as I have argued, that the discourse of self-Orientalization in Japan exists as a strategy of reification and marking and constructing the Japanese identity. It has been used at particular moments in Japanese modern history—as established in the work of Iwabuchi Koichi (1994/2002), Marilyn Ivy (1995), and Dorinne Kondo (1997),<sup>3</sup> and, in terms of dress, in correspondingly different ways.

Above all, it has been used by the Japanese state and by the tourist industry as a strategy to promote and advertise Japan as an “ancient but civilized” country: a state that resisted being colonized, a country whose citizens share one racial origin represented by the emperor, a country of ancient and rich traditions. The negotiation of Japan’s identity and positioning in the modern world is linked to the fact that Japan was forced to open itself to the West in the mid-nineteenth century at a time when the West ruled the world. This conflict at the root of the creation of a nation-state generated a kind of trauma: the Japanese did not want to be colonized by the West, as had been as other Asian countries.

In Japan, as in other Asian societies, men were the first to abandon traditional dress. This occurred as a process of appropriation, and as such, many experiments were made, often hesitant, but in general, and as Niessen points out in the afterword to *Re-Orienting Fashion*, studies on Asian traditional dress reveal “the course of fashion colonialism, whereupon men are the first to put on suits to function in the colonial establishment and women stay behind in traditional dress to guard the home.”<sup>4</sup>

Japan was consciously imbued in a process of high modernization and enlightenment, meaning also Westernization in many aspects of their culture and lifestyle. Nevertheless, there is a parallelism with the countries which were colonized, and from the time of the Meiji Restoration men trained themselves and worked hard to learn the manners and the way to dress in Western uniforms, clothes, and coiffures. During Meiji (1868–1912), women of the elite also tried Western styles of clothing and etiquette for the first time. The efforts made by the elite sometimes failed, and in the eyes of many foreigners the Japanese continued to be perceived as inferior, the women backward and docile, the men effeminate.

On the international stage, Japan sent missions abroad, with scholars and specialists in different areas of study travelling to the United States and Europe to learn how the West had managed to dominate the world economically, politically and militarily. The frequent participation of Japan in World Exhibitions from the time when Japan opened its ports to the West also re-established contact, and opened a new stage for the exchange of ideas in technology, art and commerce between Japan and the West. In those years, Japan attracted many tourists, art dealers and collectors, indeed the interest of foreigners in general, as the country of the Far East.

At the same time, *Japonisme* began to influence Western art, and around the 1860s kimonos began to appear in European paintings.<sup>5</sup> With this exchange, Japan also offered an image of herself to the curious travellers who came to work and visit the country, or to those who visited the Japanese pavilion at World Exhibitions. Kimono-clad women, for example, served tea in a Japanese teahouse at the Paris Exhibition in 1867, and women in their kimonos had a great impact on Western fashion: the kimono became popular around 1880 as a luxurious gown for the home, and kimono design influenced the structural transformation of Western-style clothing in the 1920s.<sup>6</sup> Kimono may also have stimulated the fantasy of Western travellers as the erotic garment worn by geishas. In these years, and especially around the end of the nineteenth century, the term kimono became part of the Western lexicon.<sup>7</sup> In the West at the time, the difference between the garments of Japan and China was still not clear.<sup>8</sup> The Orient was a vast region, exotic and foreign, and the Japanese identity needed to be re-shaped:

The Japanese government strategically viewed expositions as a venue to display the nation's cultural capital and assess the reception of its wares in a global context. The production of Japanese textiles in the last quarter of the nineteenth century became part of this cultural negotiation, reflecting Japan's attempt to absorb Western materials and technology while maintaining its own cultural integrity and identity.<sup>9</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century, inside Japan, the so-called "Kimono Beauty" pictures of attractive Japanese women clad in kimono, "*bijinga*," as well as postcards and posters with images of Japanese women, were used as a form of propaganda by the owners of Japanese department stores. These images were a reference to and a mirror of the exchange in aesthetics in women's kimono fashion, which ran parallel to the exchange in cultural and commercial activities between Japan and the West.

Kimono patterns, colours, and obi reflected in their design Japan's celebration after the triumph of the wars against Russia and China: with nationalism rising, kimono patterns became bolder and obis broader. Later, in the 1930s, as we learn from the work of Milhaupt,<sup>10</sup> came the promotion of the kimono as the "Japanese Dress," its author a managing director of Takashimaya, one of the most famous Japanese department stores.<sup>11</sup> The aim of this joint strategy of the Board of Tourist Industry and the Japanese Government Railways was the marketing and creation of Japan as a tourist destination for Westerners. Milhaupt is right to cite Brian Moeran,<sup>12</sup> who argues that "stores were clearly designed to be tourist, as well as shopping attractions; and thus to be palaces of culture as well as consumption."<sup>13</sup> From the late 1950s and through the 1960s, during Japan's post-war economic recovery, kimono became the precious commodity which represented this success. After the Second World War, the kimono that survived was primarily the more formal silk kimono. The economic growth of Japan and its position as a world economic power opened a space for continuing the construction of the kimono as the Japan National Costume.

As already mentioned in the section in Part 2 on the second kimono revival, Milhaupt exemplifies how the kimono was used to represent the nation as an icon of Japan cultural identity: For the imperial wedding in 1959, many photographs of the bride-to-be dressed in

kimono were made and disseminated. In 1954, advertisements for Japan Airlines sponsored by the government featured Japanese flight attendants in kimono catering for businessmen in the first-class cabins on international flights. An advertisement of the time stressed the fact that kimono was the “oldest” “flight uniform,” worn everywhere in the world. In 1959, the first Asian woman to win the Miss Universe contest, Kojima Akiko, was Japanese, and several pictures were made of her in a kimono during her reign, including while wearing her crown.<sup>14</sup> Japan’s nationalism and politics of inter/nationalization have made kimono worn by women an icon, an embodiment of tradition, while the birth of the kimono academies also helped to internationalize kimono as a symbol of Japan. After the Second World War, through the kimono becoming a garment mostly used in ceremonial and official events, it started to be appropriated as the dress a Japanese woman could use when abroad to demarcate Japan’s cultural identity.

In contemporary Japan, strategies of self-Orientalization are manifested through the promotion of an updated and desirable contemporary kimono as an item of consumption that has been reinvented to attract groups within society, mostly youth, interested in the kimono, in learning about culture, and in the rediscovery of Japan’s “traditional culture.” In my work, I set out to observe this phenomenon linked to the context of tourism.

In the contemporary revival, the images of beautiful women, “*bijinga*,” clad in kimono again play an enormous role in advertising. In relation to strategies of self-Orientalization, images of Japanese women are sometimes used with a more Westernized look, resembling that of the Japanese Modern Girl of the 1920s (see the pamphlet for the *Kyoto Kimono Rental Station*, Figures 8 and 36). Alternatively, advertising materials can appear more conservative and traditional in order to attract more mature native tourists to visit more traditional-like shops, including Japanese restaurants, bars, and famous sightseeing spots (see the poster for the *Kyoto Kimono Passport*, Figure 9). Such strategies use the image of an attractive Japanese woman, sometimes modern, sometimes more traditional, but always within the canon of beauty, a homogeneous beauty who stands for the endogamy of the Japanese, highlighting the image of uniqueness of which the Japanese are very proud and continuing the nationalist discourse of the texts of *Nihonjinron* (theories and discussion about the Japanese). The minority groups within Japanese society, such as the Ainu, darker-skin Okinawans, or Koreans, are not represented in the advertisements.

In the contemporary revival, magazine editors, kimono boutique owners and managers blend in the contemporary looks they are coordinating with those of earlier times. Magazine producers, kimono designers and coordinators work together with the city tourist industry to invent new routes of consumption of kimono and of Japanese contemporary lifestyle. Publications such as the *mook Kimono at Kyoto* teach us exactly how to travel to Kyoto and what activities we can enjoy while paying a visit, dressing in kimono in pubs, bars, or public buildings, in museums, galleries, temples, and shrines. All of these can be found at historical locations, where shops and boutiques run by the kimono designers, coordinators, or hairdressers are also present. The activities enable the kimono wearer to jump in time while

remaining in the present and enjoy the different stories behind the walls of shops and facades of the city, with all the comfort that a twenty-first century consumer could desire. As Marilyn Ivy (1993) has argued,<sup>15</sup> for the Japanese youth of the 1980s the West was attainable, and for them things Japanese started to be exotic, influenced by local tourist government-sponsored campaigns.

Other strategies of self-Orientalization are used in the performance of dress, for instance, the design of the stage for the orchestration (“Inszenierung”) of the fashioned-body (“Mode-Körper”);<sup>16</sup> the stage can be Kyoto city itself, or *Izakaya*, a Japanese style of bar, teahouses, restaurants, or other tourist attractions, as well as famous locations in temple surrounds, or pedestrian-friendly shopping streets. These strategies are part of a larger project related to the continuous promotion of Kyoto as an exotic and traditional, but at the same time modern, cosmopolitan, unique, “cool,” and magnetic tourist place, as reported already by Dorinne Kondo (1997),<sup>17</sup> thereby Orientalizing Kyoto and other tourist spots in the country as a way of “Branding the Nation.”<sup>18</sup>

Another example of the quickness of kimono’s meanings and the strategies of self-Orientalization is the tendency to promote kimono in this contemporary revival as an item representative of Japan’s recycling and ecological culture of the Edo period, reinvented as a kind of “healing/peaceful dress.” For instance, with the production of re-make products using old kimono textiles, the fact that kimono can be recycled gives the dress a contemporary character; at a time when ecological products, recyclables and all things organic are thoroughly in, this approach influences how people perceive kimono. At the same time, kimono-wearing tourists are invited to slow down their speed of life and enjoy a day walking, visiting shops, restaurants, temples or shrines. This is another level in self-Orientalization, with kimono used as an item that nowadays can be promoted as “ecologically friendly,” as a contemporary way of consuming “wellness” that still represents the values and the benefits of previous non-Westernized times (the feudal era). Here, kimono functions as a dress that reveals to the present-day wearer the forgotten “beauty and calmness” of the “ancient and civilized” Japanese character, complicitly and nostalgically persuading the Japanese consumer to look to their roots.

In the context of nationalism and inter/nationalization, since 1980 the Japanese government, through its Board of Tourism, has been producing waves of ongoing promotional campaigns: “Exotic Japan,” “Discovering Japan,” “Cool Japan” (2002), “Welcome Japan” (*Yokoso* Japan, 2003), and now, under the administration of Prime Minister Abe, his vision of “Beautiful Japan.” These campaigns have involved working to make regions, city areas and architectonic spaces into wonderful and peaceful oases for tourists to enjoy an imagined and romanticized past, a past of villages and towns associated with Japan’s canon and stereotypes of exoticism and beauty (from Mount Fuji to geishas and samurai); indeed, the commodification of Japan’s “cultural odour.”<sup>19</sup> Women and men dressed in kimono in tourist areas in contemporary Japan adorn the view, their presence creating a “cool experience”—in the gaze of the tourist John Urry (1990, 2002) for example<sup>20</sup>—only comparable to watching a movie or reading a book.

Both foreign and native tourists can themselves experience the exotic sensation of dressing in and performing kimono, through making a visit in kimono, and also view other kimono wearers interact. Nevertheless, this experience is only possible due to the rarity of the use of kimono in the daily life of most contemporary Japanese.

Women within this revival are again used in their active role of preservers of tradition. As established in *Re-Orienting Fashion*, in Japan as in other Asian nations the post-colonial rhetoric continues. Within this revival, Japanese women clad in kimono are the ones most marketed as icons of tourism.<sup>21</sup> Today, they are asked as tourists to bring along their husbands or partners, friends, and other women in their families, so that they too can experience Japan in kimono.

For more than forty years, foreigners, mostly Europeans and American, have been welcome to observe kimono trends in kimono fashion shows in important textile centres such as Nihijin in Kyoto. In contemporary Japan, tourists from other Asian countries are also increasingly coming to admire kimono, not only from far-away Europe and America. The campaign for a “cool Japan,”<sup>22</sup> the creation of magazines targeting tourists interested in Japanese contemporary life-style, arts and crafts, such as the English edition of *Kateigaho International* (first published in 2003), the “conjuncture of media globalization and Japan’s ‘return to Asia’ project,”<sup>23</sup> and the welcoming of Japanese TV dramas by other Asians, all show to some extent the cultural power of Japan within Asia. The effect of Japan’s cultural influence represented by Japanese pop culture, *manga*, *anime*, drama, cute style, fashion, film and electronics is indisputable, despite the decline of the Japanese economy.

In the context of gender and in contrast to other Asian dress revivals explored and investigated in *Re-Orienting Fashion*, in the contemporary kimono revival men are an important part of its creation. They are active in the promotion of the meetings of kimono fans and as kimono-shop owners, kimono manufacturers and coordinators. The advertisements for the Kimono-Station event at Uji in 2008, inviting young boys to rent a kimono for a day, and the boys found strolling along the path through the fields to Kiyomizu Temple, are some examples of how males are targeted as consumers within the contemporary revival and how they take part in it. The group Kimono de Ginza, created by male participants, is another example of how men have become active in the revival of kimono, with the group meeting for the sake of enjoying kimono without the formalities and rules constructed by the rigid kimono schools and academies.

But in the 1960s the kimono schools and academies were also created by men. In the present men are positioned at the top of management at the manufacturing and distribution levels, while women participate as designers and coordinators, are most targeted as consumers, and their images are used in advertising. As Jones and Leshkovich report in their introduction to *Re-Orienting Fashion*,<sup>24</sup> there is a tendency to continue to use the stereotype image of the Asian women as being docile and oppressed most of the time by their male counterparts within their countries. Although I was able to interview several girls wearing kimono during my field

research, with some of them managers of kimono shops, most of the managers at the rental stations and shops to whom I could talk and interview were males. By contrast, in the advertisements at the kimono stations, recycling shops and events, there is a stronger use of the images of women than of men.

## *Reviving Kimono, Recycling Nostalgia?*

Studying this contemporary revival revealed that second-hand “vintage” kimonos became clothing that automatically advocated a longing or nostalgia for a specific kimono fashion in the past, that of the Taishō-Romanticism style popular a century ago. Attractive by virtue of the rareness of their patterns and colours and the fancy orchestration of the kimono coordination, the style had caught the attention of the younger generation, who then started hunting for this unknown and exotic world. Heike Jenß argues that vintage clothes are “clothes that are precisely valued for their materialization of time and ‘datedness’ and their capacity as memory modes through which new wearers can feel in touch with a former fashion time.”<sup>25</sup>

The Taishō-Romanticism style of the kimono ensemble had a characteristic juxtaposition of many elements: mostly accessories in Western style used in coordination with the kimono—bags, shawls, gloves, umbrellas, broches, shoes etc.; adornment for the hair, hats, and hairstyles; heavy use of make-up—and the use of layered kimono in a variety of designs. The style of kimono created during the Taishō period was the expression of a society in change. For the young Japanese of today’s revival, this previously unknown world of kimono is certainly appealing. Also appealing to young kimono wearers is the fact that most of the trendsetters are famous Japanese pop singers, actors, actresses, and writers—Japanese icons of beauty and people considered stimulating to imitate, male and female. It’s they who make the contemporary kimono fashionable and desirable. I found out that earlier in history, during the Genroku era (1688–1704) of the Edo period, geishas and *kabuki* actors portrayed the trends in kimono for the merchant class. During the Meiji period at the turn of the century, the strategies were not so different, with department stores also introducing the use of Japanese “celebrities” of the time, “film stars and singers rather than Geisha,”<sup>26</sup> as trendsetters.

Furthermore, areas for the performance of fashion at urban places that were famous a century ago have been revitalized as tourist areas. These places are the stage for displaying the beauty or charm of the contemporary kimono. “Strolling the Ginza”—at the beginning of the twentieth century Ginza was the place for Japanese to show how they had appropriated the Western fashion—has become a strategy to be used, this time not to stroll just at Ginza but at any other place specifically created for the consumption of an eclectic, post-modern and contemporary life-style, where kimono and Western-style clothing are used mixed or parallel to one another.

In the text of the *mooks* *Kimono at Kyoto* and *Kimono Hime*, the *moga*, the Japanese “modern girl” who used to be the archetype of fashion modelling Western-style clothing in Ginza during the 1920s, has been re-discovered within the contemporary revival as an archetype of fashion for chic, casual kimono. Her image as emancipated young woman is used to inspire young consumers for this revival, this time to get to know their own ethnic style of dress.



As Milhaupt suggests,<sup>27</sup> many of those involved in the wearing of kimono for leisure activities in contemporary Japan belong to small groups in society known as “tribes,” especially among the younger generation. Some of them travel and enjoy offers like those at the Kimono Rental Station in Kyoto Prefecture; others decide to rent a kimono in their own town, like the girls I met from Uji. Some others want to dress up and are transformed for a day into maikos, like the girls from Nagoya. Others prefer to visit the flea markets to buy used kimono cloth for making their own pieces; some of these sell their kimonos at dealers, others participate in kimono competitions and kimono fashion shows. Some create re-make looks of kimono clothing in Western-fashion design as amateur designers. Other young Japanese take a part-time job as a *furitā*,<sup>28</sup> thanks to the opening of kimono boutiques, second-hand shops and stands at flea markets. My study reveals that what all these groups have in common is their engagement in the consumption of kimono and kimono accessories, kimono history and looks, as well as the collection of antiques and/or vintage pieces, and the making of new ones. Thanks to the re-discovered vintage kimono cloth and the revival of its use, and the advertising found in specialized books, *mooks* and magazines, they can immerse themselves in a re-discovered world. These publications function as their major source of information, teaching how to dress in kimono, what kind of coordinations are in, where to find shops and boutiques, how to travel, or how to do online-shopping for kimono.

The consumption of looks and trends proposed by the various printed media, such as magazines, postcards, pamphlets, and books, has recreated the “cute” kimono look of the “PUFFY style,” Taishō Romanticism, Samurai Chic and Meiji hybridism. Shop owners, hairdressers, celebrities, writers, actors, kimono experts, collectors and coordinators have all made it possible to capture the attention of new consumers intent on rediscovering the beauty of the kimono past and present, as an item suitable for the enjoyment of life. The proliferation of channels of consumption within this “revivalism or nostalgia is the way in which the digital age has spawned new methods of producing, marketing, and consuming kimono,”<sup>29</sup> using contemporary “technology to design and print kimonos, circumvent traditional distribution channels via Internet marketing, and access ideas from an international vocabulary.”<sup>30</sup>

As mentioned before in Part Three on the contemporary kimono revival, one of the contexts in which new styles of kimono have been created is that of tourism. The main stations of a visit to a major city like Kyoto have opened to the Japanese tourist the opportunity of getting dressed in a comfortable casual kimono for a day of sightseeing and shopping. There is a strong and recurrent tendency to use nostalgia as a crucial element accompanying the participants in their celebration of special moments, moments which connect the wearer with reconstructed areas architectonically inspired from the past, like the *Izakaya* (Japanese style-bar) in the design of a feudal town, where the group Kimono de Ginza first met in December 2008. Or in activities such as *Gimbura*, “Strolling the Ginza” in the past, or wandering about a specific area in Tokyo, Uji or Kyoto—such as on the route to Kiyomizu-michi, strolling in Uji, or visiting the shops, bars and galleries along Sanjo Street in Kyoto with its mixture of merchant houses and modern architecture. The visit to these places becomes a “cool thing to

do in “cool Japan”—if one wears kimono. To have fun in kimono means to break the golden rules created by the kimono academies of the 1960s and to appropriate kimono as one appropriates any other trend in Western style-clothing.

In the case of styles revived for kimono, these famous fashion designers want to give impulses to other designers and kimono wearers, for them also to contribute to a fresh approach to kimono. Nowadays, young designers learn what the natural way of dressing in kimono was a century ago. Fashion designer Yamamoto Yohji, also cited by Milhaupt,<sup>31</sup> recommends that wearing kimono should be fun “Let’s forget about attending kimono lessons....” He says: “Let’s just wear [kimono] the way we want to,...” because kimono is indeed just a thing to wear and not an item of study: “Do it your way... make it your own style.”<sup>32</sup>

As a response to the collapse of the no longer sustainable Japanese economy in the 1990s, some women, mostly housewives, started to transform their inherited kimonos into Western-style dresses. The nostalgic boom of the 1980s had inspired designers and collectors of kimono, as well as scattered small groups who made souvenirs and accessories with patterns of recycled kimono cloth. At the end of the 1980s, the nostalgic boom rescued the use of the kimono as a casual item, starting with the re-invention of the yukata as a casual kimono used for summer activities. The waves of the revival, together with a second-hand circuit for “vintage” kimono, made that a fashionable commodity, while digitally printed kimono became an object of research for the development of new techniques reviving patterns used during the first revival (1890–1920). Furthermore, from at least 2003, patterns of kimono were used to produce souvenirs and accessories with a Western look but printed in kimono patterns. Such items, made in “*wagara*” (Japanese-pattern design), marked a trend: they could be used either combined with Western-style clothing or mixed with a casual kimono. *Komono*, small belongings, souvenirs and accessories made with kimono patterns, became objects which as carriers of memory also function as reference points in time and space.<sup>33</sup>

The Japanese engaged in the production of these objects hope through the use of the fragments of kimono textiles that have survived to preserve patterns of the past for the present and the future.

The “casualization” of kimono, that is, its promotion as casual wear, is a strategy which manages to “demystify kimono as just being Japan’s National Costume.” Yamamoto Yohji’s proposal<sup>34</sup> was to shift the connotations encapsulated in the word kimono from being strictly confined to those of Japan’s National Costume, as represented by the most formal outfit of silk kimono and brocade obi, towards a more pluralistic meaning of the term originally known as a “thing to wear.” Providing in this way a new niche for kimono as a daily dress and chic garment used for leisure activities was decisive to making this contemporary revival possible.

The revival of the casual kimono has taken place within the context of new forms of media communication. The meetings of such groups as Kimono de Ginza, and the promotions of events and gatherings, as well as the fashion shows they organize, have all only been possible thanks to the networking facilities made available by the use of the Internet. Whether remake-

kimono or kimono coordination, all kinds of online workshops are open to the public, thus making the kimono-wearing culture available to almost everyone. Workshops for practicing online how to put on a kimono make the learning process much more accessible and dynamic. The kimono also travels, “Migrating Across Borders”<sup>35</sup> thanks to websites, online shopping and shipping facilities. Designers around the globe add a special note to their creations using fragments of kimono, or re-making them into new designs. Since the 1980s with the phenomenon of the “Indirect Kimono Revival,” new impulses have been given to high fashion and street fashion thanks to the successful careers of designers like Miyake, Yamamoto, Kenzo, Kansai and Kawakubo, whose proposals gave birth to new interpretations of Western fashion inspired by kimono and other key elements of Japanese aesthetic such as irregularity, imperfection and asymmetry.<sup>36</sup>

## *Kimono (2010+)*

This study has concentrated its attention on the third kimono revival to have taken place in Japanese contemporary history, between the years 1990 to 2010. Some years have passed since then, and while the revival of kimono has ceased, its use has not. Despite the Fukushima nuclear disaster in March 2011, and in September 2013 Tokyo winning the bid to host the Olympic Games in 2020 in Buenos Aires, which might have been thought to result in tourist trips being postponed, tourism to and within Japan has continued to increase. Parallel to this tourism wave, under the administration of Prime Minister Abe nationalism is on the rise and politics of nation branding have been implemented. The kimono continues to work as a key element in the visualization of Japan's cultural heritage, as an enduring symbol of Japaneseness.

As established in this thesis, the use of kimono as a “commodity by destination”—“that is, [an example of] objects intended by their producers principally for exchange”<sup>37</sup>—in its casual form, a form of dress that has become detached from its ceremonial use as costume, has made it possible, through the exchange process, for the price of kimono to fall. As a result, kimono has become a commodity that can be acquired purely for enjoyment, whether made for the market in a variety of fabrics of both low and high quality, or as a vintage piece, desired and enjoyed by natives and foreigners alike. It can be bought in a shop or online, or, more often, as a garment perfect for leisure activities, just rented. The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), founded in October 2003, says: “A key premise here is that Japan aims to become an intellectual-property-based nation, attractive and influential in entertainment contents, lifestyles and culture in general.”<sup>38</sup> The kimono is just what Japan needs.

A further result of this study is to show that the commoditization of the kimono was not itself enough to bring about the third kimono revival: this also required the commoditization of history by turning it into nostalgia. To turn kimono into an attractive product ready to be enjoyed, experienced and consumed, historic sites, current trends and past kimono fashions, places and environments were re-created in innovative ways and disseminated within Japan and abroad, easily accessible thanks to the use of new technologies, the Internet, the media and advertising.

The consumption of kimono in the context of tourism may start with the need to take part in a group activity, whether as a couple or in groups of friends, as advertised for in magazines, on the Internet, or by travel agencies in Japan or abroad. Experiences wearing kimono, of the present but for the future, can be captured in the activity of photographing, or being photographed. This is Urry's “tourist gaze”,<sup>39</sup> with the experiences shared in groups disseminated via Internet social media.

In the last ten years, attractive tourist packages for the wearing of kimono and other “traditional”-like garments and costumes have expanded, reaching both long-famous tourist areas and those newly constructed in the countryside. The strategy of marketing continues to

target native tourist and foreigners alike:<sup>40</sup> In the vicinity of Narita Airport you can find packages to transform yourself into a *ninja* or a *samurai*,<sup>41</sup> or in Kanazawa you can visit the 21st Century Contemporary Art Museum in a kimono rented from one of the more than ten shops available these days.<sup>42</sup>

The study of kimono continues as a form of group activity even abroad. An interest in kimono is possible because nowadays “*one can afford kimono as one affords a piece of Western clothing*” said my Japanese friend and informant, who started learning how to wear kimono not in Japan but in Frankfurt, and bought her first casual kimono outfit on her last trip to Japan in 2017. The interest may start abroad via Twitter, imitating events in Japan such as “Kimono de Jack.” As reported by Milhaupt in 2014, “Eleven kimono enthusiasts in Kyoto organized an event, via Twitter, known as ‘Kimono de Jack’... More recently, ‘Kimono de Jack’ events have been held in England, the United States and other countries.”<sup>43</sup>

Japan’s place in the globalized world has forced the country to re-think its strategies in order to maintain its power as an economic and cultural magnet. Japan keeps being attractive and exotic both for the Japanese themselves and for tourists abroad. “Japan zum Anfassen” (Japan to Get Your Hands On) is the motto of the *Japantag* (Japan Day) event planned for September 2019 in Frankfurt, Germany. Japan has become attainable and consumable for anyone who can pay and is fascinated by the markers of Japaneseness that already attracted foreigners a century ago, but now can be consumed with the standards and comfort that only a land with high economic capital can provide. As recently as the 25th of March 2019, at the Traveller Made Award Ceremony in Marbella, Spain, “Japan was chosen as the ‘Most Desired Travel Destination’ by the European Luxury Travel community.”<sup>44</sup>

Events like “Kimono de Jack” also suggest, as Milhaupt rightly observes, that making the future of kimono secure is not only for the benefit of Japanese wearers but extends the kimono-wearing culture to citizens of the world.<sup>45</sup> The internationalization of the casual kimono as a vintage, new or rented article can continue to stimulate the desire of foreigners in their search for the “beautiful” and luxurious travel destination Japan, where kimono endures its place as a symbol of the country, and as a commodity with multiple lives and facets.

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# Appendix A: Visual Schema

## Visual Overview of Kimono Revivals in Modern and Contemporary Japan



Figure A: (*Furisode*) long “waving” sleeves, formal kimono for single women in *yūzen* dyeing technique, Western-style parasol and Gibson-girl hairstyle. Source: Jō and Watanabe, *Japanese Fashion*



Figure B: Meiji “Reformed Dress” for girls (students). A combination of kimono-style blouse, long, pleated Japanese skirt-like trousers (*hakama*), and Japanese-style sandals or Western-style leather shoes. Source: Jō and Watanabe, *Japanese Fashion*

### First Revival, 1890–1920

1877 Introduction of the Jacquard loom mechanism.  
Introduction of chemical dyes.  
1894–1895 First Sino-Japanese War.  
1904–1905 Russo-Japanese War.  
In 1904, Mitsukoshi Dry-Goods Store Company Ltd. is established as Japan’s first modern department store.  
Around 1901, Art Nouveau influences in kimono textile design.

### Meiji Kimono

Kimono design moved from the hem onto the shoulder and bosom.  
Kimono sleeves a bit longer than in modern kimono.  
The folds of the sash (*obi*) used placed on the back.  
The most common style is the *boxy pouf* belt *taiko obi* (*boxy pouf* belt).  
Kimono underwear (*juban*) worn as colourful patterned under-garments.  
The collar (*han-eri*) worn in many colours and usually embroidered; prominently displayed.

### Formality

Formal and informal kimonos used in layered sets (*o-tsui*) of two or three garments, the outermost called *uwagi*, and under this *shitagi*.  
The under layers of the kimono show slightly at the bosom; sleeve openings and hem.  
Multidimensional ensembles.  
At the end of the Meiji period an intermediate category of kimono emerges, *homongi*, a class of patterned silk kimono to be used as “visiting wear.”

### Pattern Design

Chrysanthemum, Wisteria, Pomegranate, Sparrows, Phoenix, Landscapes, Pine Trees and Cranes, Bamboo, Plums, Tortoise, Arrow.  
About 1895, women’s coat worn over the kimono (*haori*) in contrasting linings, collars sporting patterns of cherry blossom (*samurai spirit*) and chrysanthemum crossed with Rising-Sun flags (*patriotism*).

### Colours

Exuberant design, prominence of detail, brighter pastel colours (*azuki-iro*) or purple red.  
Bright grays filtered through “mouse-gray” (*nezumi*).



Figure C: Genroku-Era-Style Revival (1904–1905). Kimono in bold colours and pattern design in *yuzen* technique, contrasting collars and traditional Japanese *Shimada-Mage* hairstyle. Hand-coloured postcard circa 1905. Source: “BlueRuin1,” *Tumblr.com*

### Textile Techniques

Stencil resist dyeing (*kata-zome*).  
 Small-scale pattern (*komon*) covering the entire kimono.  
 Multicoloured rice-paste-resist dyeing (*yuzen-zome*).  
 Tie dyeing (*shibori*).  
 Indigo dyeing (*aizome*).

### Materials

Cotton, wool, linen, silks (crepe, *chirimen*, *rinzu*).

### Hair Styles and Accessories

Women starting to adopt Westernized sweptback hair (*sokuhatsu*) and soirée chignon (*yakaimaki*).  
 Low pompadour (*higashi-gami*) or eaves-hair.  
 Forehead-hiding (*odeko-kakushi*).  
 Other common traditional hairstyles: *shimada-mage*, *icho-gaeshi*, *marumage*, and a new *sokuhatsu* in the Gibson-girl style.



Figure D: By the 1910s, Taishō-Romanticism fashion had stepped in with the concept of “stylish wear” (*sharegi*). Adoption of Western-style items in dress and accessories, such as coats, shawls, veils, and jewelry, or use of Japanese items with Western motifs. Source: Jō and Watanabe, *Japanese Fashion*

### Taishō Kimono

Mass appeal and flamboyant styles.  
 Ready-made kimono sold at department stores in major cities; intended for casual everyday wear.  
 Department stores use marketing tactic of “specific looks.”  
 Producers set trends in paste-resist and stencil dyeing techniques (*yuzen*) for kimonos emanating from a Kyoto-school or Tokyo-school painting style.

### Formality

*Yuzen* dyeing techniques that include hand painting, rice-paste resist, stencil dyeing, embroidery, and gold and silver leafing continue to be used to decorate formal kimono. Striped patterns used for work and activities outside the home, such as cafes, department stores, factories, businesses; also worn as casual everyday wear.  
 The tie-dyeing (*shibori*) technique starts to be used by all classes thanks to the abolition of sumptuary laws and the introduction of aniline dyes imported from Europe.  
 The growing hybridity of foreign and Japanese adornment and taste becomes increasingly popular.



Figure E: “New Fashion” kimono style, with the kimono worn folded up like a skirt and tied with a cord belt draped at the waist (*himo-obi*), as accessories a necklace, an umbrella, high heels, and a flower motif for the hair. Source: Nakamura Keiko, ed., *Shōwa Modern Kimono: Yayoi Museum*



Figure F: Two different kimono coordinations in the Taishō-Romantic style around 1910. Source: Jō and Watanabe, *Japanese Fashion*

### Pattern Design

Traditional Japanese patterns remade to appear new and modern; popular are:  
 Arrow feather (*yabane*), Maple leaves (*momiji*), Fans, Crest, Plum blossom, Chrysanthemum, Water stream (*ryusui*), Chinese arabesque, Morning glory, Rimpa School, Bush clover, Key-fret (*sagayata*), Wisteria, Mandarin orange, Camellia, Whirlpool (*uzumaki*), Cross, Stripes.  
 Kimono Decorated with Western Motifs: Cobweb, Peacock, Thistle, Dalia, Rose, Polka dots, Geometric designs, Grapevine, Card-game, Dragonfly, Iris.

### Colours

Bright colours, introduction of new synthetic aniline dyes imported from Europe.

### Textile Techniques

*Yūzen-zome* (see above).  
*Kata-zome*: *Yūzen* done with a stencil-dyeing method.  
*Itajime-gasuri*: block-clamp resist dyeing, warp and weft threads.  
*Meisen*, a new warp-printed technique intended to resemble *kasuri*, in which the threads (weft and/or warp) are direct-dyed with a series of stencils (one for each colour) prior to weaving.  
 This silk was spun on high speed machines in large textiles factories, making kimono more affordable than ever.

### Materials

Gauze, serge, silks, linen, cotton, wool.  
*Omeshi* (heavy silk crepe), a new inexpensive silk fabric.  
*Murayama Oshima Tsumugi*, an imitation of *Oshima* silk.  
*Katabira* (Japanese linen-like fabric).  
 Handspun (*tsumugi*) pongee silk.  
*Rinzu Chirimen* (satin crepe).

### Hair Styles and Accessories

European hair styles, such as braid style, bob style, or cropped and curled; with flower motifs to decorate the hair.  
 Around the 1920s a vogue starts for *mimi-kakushi* (ear-hiding), for example in the *rajo-maki* (radio-roll) style, where the coils of hair over the ears resemble the headphones of radio announcers, one of the new jobs for women during this period.  
 Japanese hair accessories such as *kushi* and *kōgai* designed and decorated in Art Nouveau and Art Deco motifs.



Figure G: Men's yukata and informal kimono styles around 1900. Source: Jō and Watanabe, *Japanese Fashion*

### Men's Kimono

Western-style clothes and uniforms for the workplace.  
 Kimono for casual occasions and relaxing at home.  
 Oiled topknot, cropped head and chestnut burr (*zangiri atama*).  
 Hybrid outfits: a mixture of native and Western styles.

## Second Revival 1950–1970

Around 1950 yukata boom.  
 In 1950, the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties or so-called "National Treasures" is enacted.  
 Around 1955, popularity of kimono for ceremonial wear at department stores increases total kimono sales.  
 In 1955, the Cultural Properties Committee establishes the first annual Japanese Traditional Crafts Exhibition to protect traditional weaving and dyeing techniques.  
 Manufacture of author kimono in one-of-a-kind design.

### Formality

Experimentation in the creation of new casual kimono:  
 Easy-to-wear two-piece design and shorter sleeves,  
 Reduction of the width of the *obi*,  
 Production of already-tied *obi* for young women,  
 Machine-sewn kimono.  
 Emergence of the Kimono Academies/Schools.  
 Silk kimono reserved for ceremonial and formal occasions.  
 Prevalence of Western dress in everyday life for most Japanese, women and men.

### Textile Techniques

Chemical fibers such as nylon and taffeta.  
 Woolen material in double-width size.  
 Ready-made wool kimono.  
 Hairstyles and accessories  
 Hairstyles imitating those of famous Hollywood stars, such as the Audrey Hepburn look. Accessories are reduced, with no coloured collars, split-toed socks (*tabi*) or special underwear.



Figure H: Taffeta fancy casual kimono. Source: *SOLEIL* magazine, no.33 (Spring 1955)



Figure I: Wool kimono. Taken from a "Kimono and Obi" supplement to the *Shufunotomo* (Housewife's Friend) magazine from November 1960. Source: *Wafu Works: Vintage Japanese Textiles for Quilters, Textile Artists and Collectors* (website)

### Men's Kimono

Some men continue to relax at home in kimono.



Figure J: Wool kimono. Taken from a “*Kimono and Obi*” supplement to *Shufunotomo* (“Housewife’s Friend”) magazine from November 1960. Source: *Wafu Works: Vintage Japanese Textiles for Quilters, Textile Artists and Collectors* (website)



Figure K: Men’s and women’s contemporary-brands: *yukata* designs by Kansai. Kyoto 2008. © Oly Firsching-Tovar

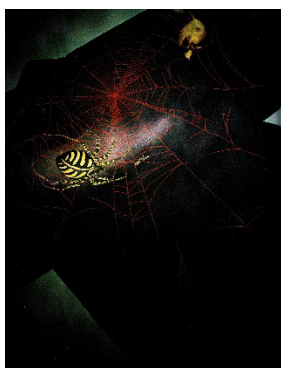


Figure L: *Haura* (decorative lining for *haori*) with spider-web design. The Spider/spider-web design is one of the updated patterns of contemporary kimono. It was a fashionable pattern during the Meiji period. Source: Fujii Kenzou, *Japanese Modern Textiles*. © Kyoto Shoin, 1993.

## Third Revival 1990–2010

### Heisei Kimono

Patterns worn during the Taishō and early-Shōwa periods inspire contemporary newly made casual kimono.  
 Pattern design of kimono lingerie (*juban*) used for casual kimono design.  
 Vintage kimono in (*meisen*) silk with textiles of the Taishō and early Shōwa period are popular.

### Formality

New casual kimono including brand kimono, Summer *yukata*, Antique kimono, Recycled kimono, Remake kimono, Ecologically friendly kimono.  
 Digitally printed kimono and kimono for rental are created.  
 Silk kimono and brocade sash continue to be used as formal ceremonial wear.

### Pattern Design

Polka dots, Rose, Card-games, Cab web, Camellia, Geometrical figures, Maple leaves (*momiji*), Taishō-period (*nagajuban*) design.  
 Mouse colours in *yukata* (around 2008) at the kimono stations.

### Textile Techniques

For new casual kimono: Imitation of silk (*chirimen*), Polyester kimono.  
 Second-hand silk kimono: *Meisen*, *kasuri*, wool.

### Hairstyles and Accessories

Eclecticism and freedom in the way to match the kimono outfit with Japanese or Western-style accessories.  
 Use of sparkling accessories, bags, shoes, hairpins, necklaces and armbands.  
 Use of lace for the *obi* and for the sleeve ends, or for the (*zōri*) sandals.  
 Use of prominent hair styles tied up with flower hairpins on the side.  
 Creation of new events for kimono wearers.  
 Rules for the wearing process relaxed;  
 more innovation and experimentation.  
 Hairstyles recalling the modern era.



Figure M: Cross-gender kimono. Participants at the “Kimono de Ginza” gathering in Tokyo, December 2008.  
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### Styles of the Contemporary Revival

- Taishō Romantic
- Meiji Hybridism
- Puffy or cute
- Samurai Chic
- Nagoya-jyo
- Mori-girl or wood girl
- Otoko-poi
- Cross gender

### Men’s Kimono

At kimono fanclubs men wear different kimono outfits recalling the Meiji period.  
 Yukata for men for the summer festivities designed in updated patterns of the Meiji period.  
 Kimono for rental for sightseeing, in a palette of grey, brown and indigo blue.  
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## Appendix C: Glossary

<i>aizome</i> indigo dyeing	藍染め
<i>asobime</i> playgirls	遊びめ
<i>bijin</i> “beautiful woman”	美人
<i>boro</i> a class of Japanese textiles that have been mended or patched together	ぼろ
<i>bunkajin</i> “people of culture”	文化人
<i>bunmei/bummei kaika</i> civilization and enlightenment	文明開化
<i>Bushidō</i> the code of honor and morals developed by the Japanese samurai	武士道
<i>byōbu</i> folding screen	屏風
<i>cheongsam</i> typical traditional and feminine body-hugging dress with distinctive Chinese features of Manchu origin; also known as <i>cheungsam/cheung sam</i> and <i>qipao</i> (see below)	長衫
<i>chirimen</i> crinkly silk crepe	縮緬
<i>dōchū-gi</i> an overcoat designed to protect the kimono	道中着
<i>fasshon</i> fashion	ファッション
<i>freeter/freeta</i>	<i>furītā</i>
<i>furītā</i> part-time workers or the underemployed	フリーター
<i>furoshiki</i> Square wrapping-cloth	風呂敷
<i>furisode</i> Single woman’s kimono with long flowing sleeves	振り袖
<i>furugi</i> old clothes, secondhand clothing	古着
<i>futon</i> the traditional Japanese style of bedding	布団
<i>geta</i> pair of Japanese wooden clogs	下駄
<i>geisha</i> a Japanese girl or woman who is trained to provide entertaining and lighthearted company especially for a man or a group of men	芸者
<i>gofukuya</i> cloth for kimono mercer	呉服屋
<i>hagire</i> cast-offs of kimono fabric	はぎれ
<i>hakama</i> long, pleated <i>culotte</i> -like Japanese trousers	袴

<i>han-eri</i>	半襟
decorative neckcloths worn with kimono	
<i>haori</i>	羽織
long, medium length or short coat worn over kimono	
<i>haura</i>	羽裏
decorative lining for <i>haori</i>	
<i>hinagatabon</i>	雛型本
model or pattern book	
<i>hōmongi</i>	訪問着
visiting kimono	
<i>iki</i>	いき
chic	
<i>imamekashii</i>	今めかしい
fashionable, up-to-date	
<i>juban</i>	襦袢
undershirt, kimono lingerie	
<i>jūni-hitoe</i>	十二単
“Twelve unlined robes”: layering of garments to display set combinations of colors	
<i>kasuri</i>	絰
<i>Ikata</i> : cloth in which patterns are made by reserving sections of warp or weft threads from the dye	
<i>katami-gawari</i>	片身替わり
<i>Noh</i> -theater robes	
<i>kata-yūzen</i>	型友禅
<i>yūzen</i> done with a stencil-dyed method	
<i>kesa</i>	ケサ
Buddhist priest’s stole or robe	
<i>kimono</i>	着物
“a thing to wear”: term that can be used for clothing generally or for a traditional long outerwear	
<i>Kimono-RiMeiku</i>	着物リメイク
“Kimono Re-Make”	
<i>kinchaku</i>	巾着
money pouch/drawstring bag	
<i>kitsuke</i>	着付け
to be dressed up in kimono with the help of a specialist	
<i>kodomo-gara</i>	子供柄
pattern for textiles used for children’s clothing	
<i>kokoro</i>	心
heart; mind; mentality; emotions; feelings	
<i>kokusaika</i>	国際化
internationalisation	
<i>komon</i>	小紋
small repetitive patterns done by stenciling	
<i>komono</i>	小物
small article, bits, and pieces, belongings	
<i>kosode</i>	小袖
short-sleeved kimono	
<i>kōmin-ka</i>	皇民化
the assimilation of ethnic others	
<i>kosuchuumu purei</i>	コスチュームプレイ
“costume play”, or:	

<i>kosupure</i> cosplay	コスプレ
<i>kōyō</i> autumn colors	紅葉
<i>maiko</i> apprentice geisha	舞子
<i>meisen</i> a warp-printed textile intended to resemble <i>kasuri</i>	銘仙
<i>mompe/monpe</i> baggy working trousers worn in Japan, especially by women	もんぺ
<i>mook</i>	“Magazine” + “Book”
<i>nagajuban</i> a full-length garment worn between the kimono and the kimono underwear	長襦袢/長じゅばん
<i>nihonjinron</i> a non-fiction genre of literature consisting of theories of “Japaneseness”	日本人論
<i>noragi</i> “regional work clothing”	野良着
<i>obi</i> outer sash for a kimono	帯
<i>obi-age</i> bustle sashes	帯揚げ
<i>obi-dome</i> obi brooch	帯留め
<i>obi-jime</i> obi cords	帯締め
<i>oiran</i> “flower-leader,” meaning the most beautiful of all flowers	花魁
<i>omeshi</i> heavy silk crepe	おめし
<i>qipao</i> “gowns worn by banner people”; also known as <i>cheongsam/cheungsam/cheung sam</i> (see entry above)	旗袍
<i>ryakugi</i> everyday clothing	略儀
<i>ryūkō</i> fashion, fashion, way, style, manner, trend, vogue	流行
<i>Ryūkōkai</i> “Trend Gathering”	流行会
<i>sensō-gara</i> wartime designs or patterns	戦争柄
<i>shibori-zome</i> Japanese tie-dye technique	絞り染め
<i>shichigosan</i> Seven-Five-Three Festival for children seven, five, and three years of age	七五三
<i>subon</i> the meaning has changed from “underskirt” to “trousers/pants”	ズボン
<i>sukaato</i> borrowed from English “skirt”	スカート
<i>tabi</i> split-toed socks	足袋

<i>tan</i>	反	
standard bolt of kimono fabric, about 12 yards long by 14 inches wide		
<i>tan</i>	簞	
a piece of cloth		
<i>tansu</i>	簞笥	
chest of drawers		
<i>tsumugi</i>	紬	
hand-spun silk		
<i>uchikake</i>	打掛	
ornate wedding coat with a long trail		
<i>wafuku</i>	和服	
traditional Japanese clothing		
<i>wagara</i>	和柄	
traditional Japanese pattern		
<i>yosōi</i>	装い	
clothing		
<i>yōfuku</i>	洋服	
Western-style clothing		
<i>yukata</i>	浴衣	
informal unlined kimono, usually made of cotton		
<i>yūzen</i>	友禅	
popular stencil and paste-resist dyeing technique developed in Kyoto in the late-seventeenth century		
<i>zōri</i>	草履	
flat and thonged sandals		



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