

The Kimono Exposed: Through Modernization and Imperialization

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Introduction

As part of the transnational and transregional circulation of clothing from the second half of the 19th century until the first half of the 20th century, how can we trace the trajectory, distribution, establishment, and transformations of the Japanese kimono? This chapter addresses these topics.

The term *kimono* (着物, キモノ) has come to be associated with an innocuous and vibrant image in contemporary Japan. Until 50 or 60 years ago, this garment was worn by a wide range of women and men in styles varying from simple and casual to luxurious and formal. It is now primarily a ceremonial costume worn on special occasions, such as one's coming-of-age day or weddings. Moreover, this garment is also the representative "Japanese-style" work clothing worn by those in the customer service industry—most notably the proprietresses of traditional Japanese inns—and has since been adopted and modified by "cosplayers" as well.

Following the 2006 revision of the Basic Act on Education, which included elements of "patriotic education," the "Middle School Curriculum Guidance: Technical Skills and Home Economics" was revised in 2008 to include the term *wafuku* (和服, Japanese clothing, which in many cases implies *kimono*). This term was also included in the 2017 revision of the "Elementary School Curriculum Guidance: Commentary on Home Economics." As a result, classes on topics such as how to wear a *yukata* (浴衣, a light, casual version of the *kimono*) were incorporated into the elementary school home economics curriculum. Patriotism and clothing thus became closely linked.

The connection between patriotism and the *kimono* was also observed during the Asia-Pacific War. At the time, there was considerable debate over how aspects of *wafuku* can be incorporated into *fujin-hyojun-fuku* (婦人標準服, a standard dress for women,



announced in 1942), which referred to clothing that was easy to move around in and was suitable for wartime. Therefore, *kimonos* have become associated with political circumstances and ideologies in modern times and have undergone transformations in terms of how they are manufactured and worn, and what they represent. Moreover, these changes were not limited to the Japanese mainland or the domestic context. However, the transformation of the *kimono* with respect to the changing political landscape—within and outside Japan and the former Japanese Empire—has yet to be explored in Japanese, Asian, or even fashion history.

This chapter examines the factors represented by *kimonos* during the period from the second half of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century by adopting a wider perspective that considers the entire Asian continent. Specifically, this chapter traces the relationship of the *kimono* with fashion, nationalism, and imperialism. The first section provides an overview of how the concept of the *kimono* was established. The second section uses contemporary photographs to examine the representation of the *kimono* in Southeast Asia from the end of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century. The third section explores the representation of the *kimono* in the literature of Japan-occupied Taiwan and Korea. The final section investigates the representation of the *kimono* in Japanese propaganda during the Pacific War.

To trace the transformation of the *kimono*, various materials, such as photographs of emigrants, several pieces of colonial literature, and magazines published in Japan-occupied Taiwan and Korea, are examined. These materials were not widely circulated during that time, so their contemporary influence may not be significant. In addition, they are fragmentary and do not cover the wide geographical area and period covered by this research. However, exploring these materials from the present-day perspective can help clarify how the *kimono* evolved with the dynamism of the Asian political landscape in the past.

1. What Is a *Kimono*?

Globally, the *kimono* is generally considered a type of women's clothing that is unique to Japan, with large sleeves that form a T-shape when spread out. How did this image originate?

Since Japan opened up to the outside world in the second half of the 19th century, samples of *ukiyo-e* (浮世絵, Japanese woodblock prints) and articles of

authentic Japanese clothing began to reach Europe, and led to the spread of the concept of “kimono.” In Japanese, the term *kimono* originated from the phrase *kiru mono* (things to wear), and thus referred to clothing in general. During the early modern period, the term also referred to the *naga-gi* (長着, literally means “long wear”)—an ankle-length *kimono* that was a common form of clothing at the time. However, the *naga-gi* came to be regarded as *kimono* because the term was used in languages outside Japan. Eventually, the term *kimono* and its meaning in European languages were re-introduced and became common in Japan during the mid-20th century (Mori 2015: 210–211).

In addition, in the “imaginary Japan” that was part of the Japonisme movement mainly in Europe, *kimonos* were believed to be the clothing worn by women, particularly *geisha*—Japanese women who entertained men, and sometimes women, for a living by singing and dancing. This led to a feminine and erotic connotation to the *kimono*, and causing it to be considered women’s clothing outside of Japan (Corwin 1996: 45–53).

During this period, the *Karayuki-san* (からゆきさん, Japanese female emigrants who earned a living primarily through sex work) and others who wore *kimonos* migrated to other parts of Asia. Around the same time, Europeans who had been exposed to the Japonisme movement through images of *kimonos* and *geishas* started to travel and migrate to Asia. Eventually, due to the development of European imperialism across Asia, Japanese clothing came to be referred to as *kimonos*. The advancement of imperialism resulted in the term being exported to parts of Asia where the *Karayuki-san* operated. Consequently, the *kimono* became associated with sex workers and women who worked in the customer service industry.

2. *Karayuki-san* and the *Kimono*

The *Karayuki-san* played a key role in the proliferation of *kimonos* across Asia. Starting in the latter half of the 19th century, individuals relocated from Japan to Southeast Asia in pursuit of economic opportunities. Individuals involved in the sex industry, particularly prostitute brokers, sex workers, and those who ran brothels, were the first to emigrate. Subsequently, retailers in trades, such as clothing and general merchandise, moved there to fulfill the growing demand for Japanese items. During the early stages, these emigrants typically belonged to the lower classes (Shimizu and

Hirakawa 1998: 21–23).

Although the total number of *Karayuki-san* who emigrated to Southeast Asia is unknown, Shimizu and Hirakawa used diplomatic historical materials and other sources to determine that between 500 and 600 Japanese prostitutes were in Singapore during the early 20th century. In addition, approximately 200 Japanese prostitutes (including “mistresses”) were in Penang and between 10 and 50 of them were in Malacca (including “mistresses”; *ibid.*: 25) during this period as well. Sex workers from various ethnic backgrounds lived in Southeast Asia. For instance, 1,911 Chinese, 148 Japanese, 27 Indian, and 20 Malay women were registered as brothel workers at the Bureau of Straits Settlements in Singapore (*ibid.*: 29). Japanese sex workers catered to customers of all backgrounds, including Malay, Chinese, Indian, and European people, and they wore a combination of *kimonos* and clothing from various other regions (Warren 1993: 268). In Southeast Asia, there were many draper shops and traveling clothing salesmen (Shimizu and Hirakawa 1998: 50–51, 79) who supplied the *Karayuki-san* with outfits.

Photographic portraits in the Mr. and Mrs. Lee Kip Lee Collection have captured the fashion of the *Karayuki-san*. Figure 1 presents a *carte de visite* taken in Singapore during the 1860s and depicts an alleged *Karayuki-san* in a set that presents a mixture of cultures. Gazing at the camera, she is dressed in a *kimono* and *geta* (high wooden clogs), and is holding a *shamisen* (三味線, a Japanese guitar). Figure 2 presents a photograph taken in Saigon during the 1870s, wherein a woman is depicted wearing a *kimono* with *kake-eri* (掛け襟, a protective collar), sitting barefoot on a chair placed on a carpet. The *kimonos* in Figure 1 and 2 were commonly worn in Japan during this period.

However, the *kimono* in Figure 3 is slightly different from the other two. The woman in the photograph, which is believed to have been taken in Singapore during the 1870s, is wearing a large, patterned *kimono* that resembles a *nagajuban* (長襦袢, a long *kimono* undergarment), with a narrow sash tied tightly to accentuate the breasts, which was a popular fashion trend in Europe at the time. She is also holding a European-style fan and wearing beaded slippers. In the background, there are various items from different cultures, such as Chinese-style ceramics and Turkish-style tapestry.

Figure 4 presents an alternate version of a photograph that appeared in James Francis Warren’s *Ah Ku and Karayuki-san* (Warren 1993: pl. 20), and depicts a woman wearing European-style pumps with her long hair hanging down untied. These



Figure 1. Unknown photographer. Japanese lady (*geisha*?). Singapore, 1860s. Albumen print (*carte de visite*). Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee collection, Singapore.



Figure 2. Unknown photographer. Barefoot Japanese lady (*geisha*?). Saigon, 1870s. Hand-colored albumen print (*carte de visite*). Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee collection, Singapore.



Figure 3. Unknown photographer. Lady in a *kimono*. Singapore, 1870s–1880s. Albumen print. Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee collection, Singapore.



Figure 4. Unknown photographer. Lady in a *kimono*. Singapore, 1870s–1880s. Albumen print. Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee collection, Singapore.

photographs were likely used for commercial purposes. These images included a Turkish or Persian-style carpet or curtain, and the building featured seemed to be in ruins. These elements created an “oriental” and “exotic” atmosphere in the photographs.

Peter Lee suggested that clothing worn by the individual in Figure 3 represents the “experimental hybrid fashion” that was prevalent in Singapore at the time (Lee 2016: 73). According to Lee, starting from the second half of the 19th century until the early 20th century, various “experimental” combinations of Malay, Chinese, Indian, Turkish, Egyptian, and European fashions coexisted in Singapore. The board on which the photograph in Figure 4 is mounted includes the following text: *Japonaise en villégiature à Singapore* (“Japanese woman at a health resort in Singapore”).

However, it remains unknown whether the individual depicted in this photograph had traveled to Singapore from Japan. The individual may have been from another country and simply wore the clothing for the purpose of taking this photograph. The key factor here is that a Japanese *kimono* was included in this example of experimental hybrid fashion (Mori 2018: 394). These photographs present a view of the migration, transformation, appropriation, and syncretism in multicultural contexts that the *kimono* underwent in Southeast Asia during the late 19th century.

However, different types of photographs appeared in the 20th century. These photographs depicted *kimonos* according to the norms in Japan at the time (Figure 5). For example, commemorative photographs of weddings or birthday celebrations from the period show people wearing decent ritualistic *kimonos* bearing their family crests, with the right and left sides wrapped neatly in front without a crease. Their hair is also arranged in a perfectly decent manner. This style of dressing was not seen in their previous photos. The appearance of such photographs can be explained by the fact that a significant number of Japanese merchants and farmland owners had become successful and consolidated their social standing during that period (Shimizu and Hirakawa 1998: 78–81).

In addition, the *Karayuki-san*, who were unable to read or write, are believed to have sent photographic portraits of themselves, instead of letters, to relatives in their Japanese hometowns (Yamazaki 1972: 71). The *Karayuki-san* presented themselves in these photographs in ways that conformed to Japanese norms related to *kimonos*. The images portray their longing for a connection to their home country, which is known as “long-distance nationalism” (Mori 2018: 394). In other words, *kimono* fashion, which



Figure 5. Unknown photographer. Japanese couple. Singapore, 1900–1910. Gelatin silver print. Mr and Mrs Lee Kip Lee collection, Singapore.

is characterized by a hybrid mixture of different cultures and a nationalistic *kimono* fashion, coexisted in Southeast Asia during the early 20th century.

3. Representation of the *Kimono* in Colonial Literature

3.1. The *Kimono* in Colonial Taiwan

She had been instructed at school to “be a fine example of a Japanese,” but she failed no matter how hard she tried. Although at school she learned everything from how to wash her face to how to wear a **kimono**, she felt odd whenever she wore *wafuku*. What was worse, the other female students at school would talk scandalously about her, saying things like, “Look at that one who changed her name. The way she is wearing [her kimono] is so strange!” (Wu 2007: 424; emphasis added)

Nearly all open space—even in the shopping arcades—was taken up by Japanese shops selling cheap surplus goods. With nothing but old goods on their shelves, there was nearly nothing that was new. While there were examples of beautiful

wafuku, she did not even want to look at them at this point. The farmers who had come from the fields bought even the junk, calling it “cheap.” (*ibid.*: 425–426; emphasis added)

The above excerpts are from the Japanese-language novella, *The Potsdam Section Chief* (ポツダム科長), by Wu Chuo-liu (1900–1976). Wu was a leading Taiwanese novelist who was active from the time of the Japanese occupation of Taiwan until after its independence. *The Potsdam Section Chief* was completed on October 8, 1947, and published in May of the following year by a publisher *Gakuyu-shokyoku* (学友書局) in Taipei (Toyoda 2013: 2). The novella is notable because it depicted the circumstances in Taiwan before and after the restoration of its independence, including contemporary testimonials of the February 28th incident. The *kimono* makes an appearance in the novella in a scene where Gyokuran—a middle-class Taiwanese woman who married a man from mainland China—reminisces about her time spent in Taiwan when it was under Japanese rule.

Several studies have examined *kimonos* in Taiwan during Japanese rule. Historian Ko Ikujo observed that “Taiwanese women did not accept kimono as a type of everyday wear but rather as nothing more than a formal wear option” (Ko 2010: 273). Although some women enjoyed wearing *kimonos*, many others had completed their secondary education and were “unenthusiastic about wearing Japanese clothes.” Among the reasons cited for this attitude was the “merciless gaze of Japanese friends,” who scrutinized how others were dressed. Taiwanese women also refused to be judged by the standards of beauty held by the Japanese, whom they viewed as the “other” (*ibid.*: 276). Wu Chuo-liu captured this feeling in his work. The Japanese colonizers forced the Taiwanese people to wear *kimonos* while simultaneously demeaning them through verbal criticism, such as “Look at how they wear [their *kimono*]. It’s so strange!” Although the colonized natives were instructed to behave more Japanese, they were not accepted as Japanese people.

He also skillfully described the contradiction of the Japanese assimilation policy (which can be considered different from that of European colonialism), which assumed that the colonized could “become Japanese” (Ching 2001: 104–106). *Kimonos* bought as surplus goods in Taiwan after the restoration of independence symbolized the loss of authority for Japan, which was once wielded to establish *kimonos* as a symbol of Japanese control over the colony.

However, Chinese literature scholar Joseph R. Allen asserted that the *kimono* was utilized in certain photographic portraits of the Taiwanese upper class during the 1910s as an example of “Japanese-ness” and was inserted to symbolize a modern nation (Allen 2014: 1030). In his analysis of articles appearing in the *Taiwan Nichi-Nichi Shinpo* (台灣日日新報), Dean Brink, who has extensively studied Taiwanese literature, stated that the praise accorded to “modern” Taiwanese women wearing Western dresses from the 1920s up to the first half of the 1930s shifted during the Sino-Japanese War, when the *kimonos* were promoted to the extent that Taiwanese women were forced to wear them during ceremonies and other formal occasions (Brink 2012: 58–59). Taiwanese literature scholar Chang Hsiao-hung noted that at the end of the Japanese occupation (1939–1945), the effort by the Japanese government to force people to abandon Chinese traditional clothing (and replace it with Japanese clothes, or at least Western dresses)—known as the Clothing Reform Movement—led to the postwar “overwhelming Westernization (modernization) phenomenon” (Chang 2017: 184–185). The *kimono* had multiple meanings and methods of being worn. Therefore, comprehensively describing it through a single statement is an impossible task.

3.2. The *Kimono* in Colonial Korea

I ran into a friend wearing a *yukata* who had just come from a public bath.

“Hey, where are you going?” my friend inquired. “To the bath. Earlier, there was a situation [author’s note: his wife was refused entry into a public bath] and my wife started crying and went home, so I am going to get my revenge by going here for a bath. If I hear a word of complaint, I will not accept it.”

“Oh, that will not work! You cannot enter a bath like that. If you were wearing the Japanese *haori* and *geta*, they would let you in, but they will not let anyone wear **white clothes**.” (Choi 2004: 201–202; emphasis added)

Double (二重) by the Korean novelist Choi Seo-hae (1901–1932) was published in the May 1927 edition (no. 4) of the Korean magazine *Modern Criticism* (現代評論); however, there are no remaining original copies because it was destroyed by censors. The Japanese translation of the work was included in the Government-General of Korea’s “Survey Materials” Collection No. 21 (October 1927), which made it possible to read the work (Hotei 2004: 341). In his writing, Choi depicted the lives of impoverished

people in Japan-occupied Korea and Manchuria (*ibid.*: 332). The story focuses on a family that has nowhere to live and thus moves into a neighborhood where the Japanese occupiers live. Surrounded by tall, luxurious buildings, their outlook improves, and they become friendly with the old Japanese woman who lives next door.

However, they are refused entry to a public bathing facility and are eventually forced to leave their homes. The short story depicts their “double sorrow” of having lost their home as a result of the actions of the Japanese occupiers and the discrimination they experienced. Although the original language used in the story remains unknown, there is a scene (quoted above) in which Japanese clothes are mentioned. In this scene, the *yukata*, *haori* (羽織, a type of jacket), and *geta* are used to symbolize the Japanese occupiers, whereas white clothes (referring to Korean clothing) were used to symbolize Korean people. The story does not reveal whether the “friend” in the quote above is a Japanese or Korean person, but the line stating that “If you were wearing *haori* and *geta*, they would let you in,” suggests that the native people could pass for the colonizers based on what they wore (Lee 2012: 257–258). This was also one of the vulnerabilities of Japanese control during their occupation of Korea.

After coming here, Eiki changed her name to the Japanese-sounding “Tsubaki” and suddenly she became a queen...

‘How wonderful you look! You have renewed charm. You will attract men who will want to fool around with you behind their wives’ backs, ha ha ha!’

In keeping with the character of the location they were in, Yoshu spoke Japanese clearly and crisply as he looked up and down at Eiki’s appearance in her *wafuku* and bobbed hairstyle. (Kim 2004: 285–286; emphasis added)

Artists of the Peninsula by Kim Seong-min (1915? – ?) depicts the *kimono* in a different way—as the work clothing of a bar waitress. Kim was a Korean novelist who wrote and published his works in Japanese at the end of the colonial era. In the scene quoted above, Eiki—an actress and former dancer—is serving as a waitress at a bar called “Marronnier.” In 1936, this novel was awarded the first prize in the inaugural Chiba Prize in the “Modern Works” category of “Feature-length Popular Literature,” which was sponsored by the *Sande Mainichi* magazine (Hotei 2004: 320). The novel was serialized in the *Sande Mainichi*, running from August 2 to September 20 (a total of eight installments) in 1936 and was illustrated by Iwata Sentaro—a popular illustrator at

the time (*ibid.*). This Japanese-language novel deals with the trials and tribulations of a thrilling love affair, while simultaneously depicting the underbelly of the entertainment industry and the manners of young urban men and women in Japan-occupied Korea. The popularity of this work was noted by influential Japanese novelist and publisher Kikuchi Kan (1888–1948) and other judges (Yi 2018: 10–11).

The *wafuku* that appears here is the work clothing of a waitress at a bar and is not a symbol of Japanese rule, nor is it depicted as a symbol of resistance to that rule. It is not even a symbol of aspiration to embody an authentic Japanese spirit or culture. Along with the statement “[Yoshu] spoke Japanese clearly and crisply,” it is a sign of the frivolous urbanity of Keijo (present-day Seoul) at the time.

In the colonies, the *kimono* was primarily considered and represented as the clothing of the colonizers. However, the natives were also depicted as wearing kimonos for various reasons. Although the kimono was a symbol of Japanese culture, it was also a symbol of modern urban culture. The kimono—as an example of the permeation of “Japanese,” “modern,” and “urban” culture—was a stepping stone toward resistance in colonial literature but could also serve as a critique of modernity.

4. The *Kimono* in Propaganda During the Pacific War

4.1. The *Kimono* and the Taiwanese Indigenous Peoples

A photo collection called *The Great East Asian War and Taiwanese Youth*, published by the Japanese newspaper company Asahi Shimbun in 1944, contains a page captioned “Work in the Mountains” (in the table of contents, it is called “Brave Fighting in the Mountains”) (Figure 6; Asahi Shimbun newspaper company, ed. 1944: 53). The page contains four photographs and simple descriptions of their contents. The photographs illustrate how commonplace it was for people to wear *kimonos* at the time. Published in Osaka, this book was likely produced for the purpose of driving up enthusiasm for the war among people living in Japan at the time, because the book reported on Taiwanese youth engaged in military training and factory labor. In the book, *kimonos* are only featured on the page devoted to reporting on what appears to be a village in the mountains inhabited by indigenous Taiwanese people.

The photographs feature five types of clothing: Chinese, Western, *kokumin-fuku* (国民服, a Western-style men’s uniform worn in 1940s Japan, similar to the



Figure 6. "Work in the Mountains" (Asahi Shimbun-sha ed. 1944).

military uniform), Taiwanese indigenous people's original garb, and the *kimono*. The photographs depict women washing clothes and weaving, and *kimono*-clad men and women listening to records. Historian Nakanishi Miki (2008) asserted that the fact that *kimonos* were worn in Taiwanese indigenous society is not necessarily an indication that they were forced to wear *kimonos* as part of the assimilation policy, but rather that the *kimono* was intentionally worn by indigenous women to signify that they had freed themselves of the local culture. In examples such as this, the *kimono* was not a symbol of Japan, but of modernity. Therefore, this work provides some insight into *kimonos* as a form of modern clothing that spread throughout the Japanese Empire.

4.2. The Kimono in *Djawa Baroe*

Djawa Baroe was a bimonthly publication (photogravure magazine) published by the Jawa Shimbun newspaper company (set up by the Asahi Shimbun parent company in Japan-occupied Java) from January 1943 to August 1945 (Kurasawa 1992: 1). In this publication, the *kimono* was depicted as a symbolic tool for the assimilation policy. The depictions of *kimonos* in this publication comprised: (1) photographs of *kimono*-clad

Japanese women interacting with Javanese people in Java, (2) photographs of Javanese women wearing Japanese *kimonos*, and (3) photographs of *kimono*-clad Japanese women living in Japan. There were almost no photographs of men wearing *kimonos*.

An example of the first type of depiction is a photograph on the cover of the inaugural issue published on January 1, 1943, with the caption “Japanese and Indonesian children playing happily together” (Figure 7). Another example of the first type is a photograph captioned, “Japanese girls working in Java” (January 15, 1943, issue; Kurasawa ed. 1992a). The photographs particularly contrast Japanese girls and women wearing *kimonos* in the style worn on the Japanese mainland with that of Javanese girls and women wearing clothes in the Javanese style. In the photographs, *kimonos* and the women who wear them represent Japan, whereas Javanese-style clothing and its wearers symbolize Java.

An example of the second type of depiction is the photograph on the cover of the January 15, 1943 issue captioned “Miss Retna, daughter of Dr. Poerbotjoroko, wearing a kimono” (Figure 8; *ibid.*). Another example is a photograph that appeared on the cover of the January 1, 1944 issue with the caption “Mrs. Sukarno happily wearing a

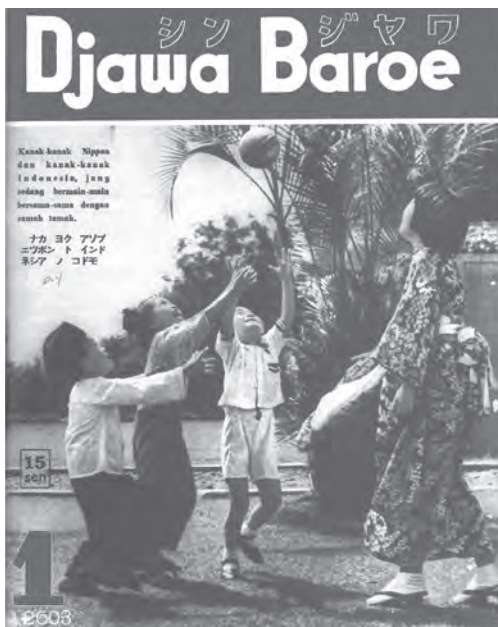


Figure 7. *Djawa Baroe*. Cover of the January 1, 1943 issue (Kurasawa ed. 1992a).



Figure 8. *Djawa Baroe*. Cover of the January 15, 1943 issue (Kurasawa ed. 1992a).

kimono” (Kurasawa ed. 1992b). The *kimono* in the second photograph was presented to the wife of Sukarno, the leader of the Indonesian independence movement, by the wife of Tojo Hideki—the Japanese Prime Minister at the time—when Sukarno visited Japan. These two examples depicted the *kimono* and *obi* (sashes used with kimono), which are luxurious and of extremely high quality. The magazine also featured photographs of Javanese people wearing authentic Japanese-style *kimonos* while performing on stage, dancing, and singing.

There are three examples of the third type of depiction listed above: photos of *kimono*-clad Japanese actresses, *hina* dolls (Japanese dolls used during the springtime “Doll’s Festival”), and *kimono*-clad women seated in front of Japanese gardens. The “good manners” of traditionally dressed Japanese women were emphasized in these photographs.

The *kimonos* depicted in the aforementioned examples share a sense of luxuriousness, have norms associated with them, and were “purely” Japanese. The “hybrid” *kimonos* presented in the photographs covered in the section on *Karayuki-san* were nowhere to be seen. As a result, the eroticism associated with the *kimonos* worn by sex workers is absent in these examples as well. These images abide by the norms created for what the Japanese colonizers considered an “idealized Japan.” Therefore, the *kimono* served as an authentic national symbol that completely rejected any hybridization with “others.” The use of such photographs was a conciliatory attempt by *Djawa Baroe* and the Japanese military government to construct a beautiful, kind, and feminine image of Japan.

However, this excerpt from *Report from the South (in Shonan)*, written by Japanese novelist Koyama Itoko (1901–1989) during a visit to Japan-occupied Singapore, presents an interesting contrast:

If one was to wear a kimono and walk around the town, one would be warned as follows: “You must not walk around in broad daylight wearing a kimono. You will be mistaken for a particular type of woman and bring shame to the nation.” (Koyama 1943: 34)

Shonan was the name for Japan-occupied Singapore. Unlike the “authentic” *kimono* of *Djawa Baroe*, throughout Southeast Asia, the *kimono* culture had been cultivated primarily in the sex industry and the *Karayuki-san* had promoted it since

the latter half of the 19th century. Therefore, there was a vast gulf between the propagandized image of the *kimono* and the actual *kimono* worn on the streets.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have explored various representations of the *kimono* in Asia, starting from the latter half of the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century. As imperialism and nationalism developed, the *kimono* took on a variety of ever-changing meanings, such as the exotic *kimono*, the hybrid *kimono*, the national *kimono*, the *kimono* that symbolized the suppressor, the *kimono* that symbolized the degenerate urban culture, the *kimono* that symbolized modernization, and the authentic *kimono*. In addition, *kimonos* were also moved around, distributed, established, and transformed throughout Asia as an actual clothing type.

The complex relationships between laborers, ethnic groups, colonizers, colonized peoples, and various other people served as the backdrop to these processes. Japanese workers and emigrants sometimes held on to or let go of their *kimonos* to ensure their own survival. The colonizers utilized the *kimono* for propaganda. The colonized people, for their part, used the *kimono* to express resistance and other sentiments, depending on their circumstances.

The roots of the national *kimono*—a contemporary Japanese symbol—can be traced to Japanese rule over Asia. However, even today, the *kimono* continues to signify different things to different people worldwide, as noted in, for example, cosplayers' mixing of *kimonos* and other clothing types. Due to its various transformations, the *kimono* will continue to eventually develop into a more global form of clothing.

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Notes

- * The original paper was published in Japanese in “*Mienai kankeisei*” *wo miseru* (Showing “Invisible Relationships”) (Relational Studies on Global Crisis 5, Hiroshi Fukuda and Emi Goto, eds.), 26–44, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2020.

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