

THE COMMODIFICATION OF KIMONOS:
A REFLECTION ON CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

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On my honor, I have not received any unauthorized assistance on this thesis. I have fully upheld the HONOR CODE of Colorado College

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

Kimono (着物), which in Japanese literally means “the thing to wear,” is widely recognized as the national costume of Japan and is an important part of Japanese culture. As the anthropologist Liza Dalby (1993) describes, “[no] item in the storehouse of material culture maintains as strong a hold on the Japanese heart, mind, and purse as kimono.”¹ Although since the Meiji period kimonos gradually retreated from the major fashion trends in Japan, they were opened to foreign markets. From the nineteenth-century French fetishism with Japanese aesthetics² to contemporary tourists’ enthusiasm in renting kimonos, the traditional Japanese garment enjoys an increasing popularity.

Kimono rental businesses have become a major form of kimono commodification as the tourism industry in Japan grows. Rental stores often locate nearby popular travel spots such as the Kiyomizu-dera (清水寺), the most famous temple in Kyoto. The rental service is straightforward. Customers can make online reservations or just walk in the stores, choose and put on their favorite kimonos or yukatas (浴衣, informal kimonos often worn in summer), and they can go sightseeing for several hours in these beautiful

¹ Liza Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001), 3.

² Brian Boucher, “Outrage at Museum of Fine Arts Boston Over Disgraceful ‘Dress Up in a Kimono’ Event,” *Artnet news*, July 6, 2015. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/outrage-boston-museum-of-fine-arts-disgraceful-kimono-event-314534>.

traditional Japanese costumes. The price varies with an average of \$50, and people can request makeup and hairstyling services for a premium.³

Presently in Japan, there are more foreign visitors than Japanese nationals who wear kimonos. A Chinese friend of mine visited Kyoto; as many visitors would do, she rented a set of kimonos and walked in the city. Some other foreigners misrecognized her as a Japanese woman and asked to take her photographs. This experience inspired me to take on this thesis research, starting with following questions: was my Chinese friend representing Japanese culture from the perspectives of those foreign visitors who mistakenly thought she was Japanese? If that was the case, was this Japanese-ness authentic?

Such commodification can be perceived as a form of cultural appropriation: “the taking—from a culture that is not one’s own—of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artifacts, history and ways of knowledge.”⁴ Just like many American people frown at this concept, at first, I also treated cultural appropriation with a negative point of view. Nevertheless, as I furthered my research and actually went to Japan to investigate Japanese perspectives on the topic, I was astonished to find that my own viewpoint had been biased by the American context where people are generally sensitive to various issues, including politics and racial inequality.

Cultural appropriation is also a biased concept. Currently in the United States, the hostility toward cultural appropriation comes from white supremacy. Such arrogance is

³ “Enjoy Kimono in Kyoto!” YUMEYAKATA, accessed April 2, 2018, <https://www.en-kyoto.yumeyakata.com/process>.

⁴ Bruce Ziff and Pratima Rao, *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 1.

the legacy of both America's exploitative history (mainly against Native Americans and African Americans) and nineteenth-twentieth-century imperialism. Japan is excluded from the imperialist aspect because, first, Japan has also been colonized by the West, and, second, the nation does not have a multiracial background (in terms of skin colors).

As a country, Japan has a long history of borrowing technologies and cultures from other civilizations. The development of kimonos clearly sees this unique Japanese aspect of cultural appropriation: kimonos come from Chinese culture, challenged by Western fashion, and adapt to modern commodity culture. I argue that cultural appropriation is an expectable product of globalization, a process that encourages cultural exchange, and cultural contexts have created different understandings of cultural appropriation. In the United States, this concept holds a negative connotation because of its connection with imperialism. In Japan, however, cultural appropriation not only features the character of Japanese history but also provides a means for kimonos and other Japanese traditions to be sustained under fast-paced commercial times. In addition, Japanese-ness stands out when multiple cultures interact.

Review of Literature

Historical background. At present, one of the most frequently cited authors on kimonos is Liza Dalby, who specializes in Japanese culture. Her book *Kimono: Fashioning Culture* (1993) gives a thorough history of kimonos which reflects their changes in Japanese history. For example, the seventh-century Japan absorbed Chinese cultures and started to form the shape of kimonos, while in the nineteenth-century the country saw the decline of kimonos as the modern Western powers emerged. Although

Dalby does not directly address the notion of cultural appropriation, her elaboration implies that the history of kimonos is a history of borrowing. Aside from this academic source, *The Book of Kimono* by Norio Yamanaka (2012), a guide to educate readers to properly wear kimonos, also provides many details in kimonos' background.

Cultural appropriation and related concepts. Bruce Ziff and Pratima V. Rao (1997) edited *Borrowed Power*, a collection of dissertations on cultural appropriation. The authors discover that cultural appropriation is usually discussed with power relations; it is especially problematic when dominated cultures are misrecognized or non-recognized by the dominant ones. Orientalism is a similar concept; Edward Said (1979) argues in his book *Orientalism* that this notion is ultimately a European invention designed for Western imperialists to define and represent the Eastern world. Under this interpretation, Orientalism is related to imperialism, racism, and white superiority. As a result, together with cultural appropriation, this concept is sometimes used to address minorities' rights.

Julie Valk (2015) introduces one such situation. In the article "The 'Kimono Wednesday' Protests: Identity Politics and How the Kimono Became More Than Japanese," Valk suggests that in the case she analyzes, the protestors, most of whom Asian Americans, actually took advantage of the American hostility toward cultural appropriation. The real purpose is to raise the public concern of the Asian and Asian American minority groups. This is a reasonable projection as I argue that cultural appropriation has been biased in the U.S. context.

Globalization and Japanese-ness. With no doubt, globalization promotes more frequent interactions between different cultures and thus stimulates the process of cultural

mixing. Cultural appropriation is, then, a predictable product. In his article “‘Soft’ Nationalism and Narcissism: Japanese Popular Culture Goes Global,” Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) argues that since the late twentieth-century, Japan has gradually raised its cultural influence on the world, especially through the country’s outstanding audiovisual industry. Japanese soft cultural elements such as anime have affected much of Western popular culture. Ken McLeod (2013) demonstrates this fact in his essay “Afro-Samurai: Techno-Orientalism and Contemporary Hip Hop” by providing some examples of Western songs that incorporate Japanese pop culture. He emphasizes the creative character of cultural interactions.

Iwabuchi (2002) also points out that the unique Japanese culture stems from the country’s ability to domesticate foreign elements and modify them to become recognizable Japanese symbols. That is, Japanese-ness is created and identified with the existence of exotic cultures. Millie R. Creighton (1991) draws a similar conclusion in “Maintaining Cultural Boundaries in Retailing: How Japanese Department Stores Domesticate ‘Things Foreign.’” She analyzes how modern retailing has helped affirmed the Japanese identity in the emergence of foreign commodities.

Besides these representative academic sources mainly in sociological and cultural studies, I also use popular medias. For example, in *The Japan Times* there are Japanese reactions toward the “Kimono Wednesday” protest that Valk talks about. Social media such as Instagram as well provide a platform for people to discuss cultural appropriation and related affairs. In both academic field and popular culture, there are various perspectives on the researched topic.

Chapters Overview

Chapter 1 presents the historical background of the kimono and changes in its social status. There are three main stages: ancient Japan sees the rise of kimonos from Chinese culture; modern Japan finds kimonos challenged by Western ideologies; postwar Japan witnesses kimonos' further retreat from mainstream fashions. Chapter 2 focuses on the case study "Kimono Wednesday" protest and reveals the implications, for example, the white guilt, beneath the notion of cultural appropriation. Moreover, cultural appropriation is an unavoidable product under globalization. Chapter 3 analyzes the contemporary commodification of kimonos and corresponding Japanese responses. Such commodification highlights the uniqueness of the kimono and gives it a modern commercial value that benefits this traditional garment.

CHAPTER 1
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:
A BORROWING HISTORY IN JAPANESE CULTURE

Overview

During the Asuka period, Japan, at the time known as Yamato, evolved quickly, and Chinese influences started to enter the country with frequent missions sent from Japan to the Sui and Tang dynasties. Such external cultural impacts are well demonstrated in the year 710 when the Japanese court moved to Nara and the imperial palace was built on the Chinese model of Chang'an.⁵ Besides the introduction of political systems, Confucianism, Buddhism, and many other elements, a trend of adopting Chinese dressing style also became popular in Japan. Although there were various clothing forms before the Asuka period, the shape of the kimono derived from a seventh-century Chinese robe.⁶ As Japanese history progressed, the kimono style formed its distinctive Japanese features,⁷ and the garment became one of the most recognizable cultural symbols of the nation.

The imitation of Chinese Tang culture in the seventh-century was one of the earliest attempts of Japan borrowing cultural elements from another country. Over centuries, there are many other historical periods in which foreign impacts significantly

⁵ Dalby, 27.

⁶ Ibid, 17.

⁷ Sheila Cliffe, *The Social Life of Kimono: Japanese Fashion Past and Present* (New York: Bloomsbury Academy, 2017), 14.

changed Japanese society and affected the style of kimonos. In this chapter, I will examine the major time periods during which the kimono went through notable changes or the social status of this garment changed. These time periods include: the Nara period and the succeeding Heian period, the Meiji Era, and post-World War II.

From Nara to Edo: From Chinese to Japanese

The Han and Tang dynasties, although separated by more than eight centuries, are generally perceived as two of the most prosperous time periods in Chinese ancient history. Han saw the rise of Chinese core cultures (e.g., Confucianism) and the foundation of traditional Chinese clothing (Figure 1). Tang extended the Chinese influence over the rest of the East Asian world during its era. Just as Dalby points out, the seventh-century Chinese culture provided the model of civilization for all of East Asia.⁸ With no exception, various impacts from this powerful neighbor also fashioned Japanese life and politics, starting from within the upper class. Before official missions started between the two countries, however, the Korean Peninsula had also affected Japanese culture.

Korean influence can be explained by two factors. One is that since culture started to form in early Japan, many immigrants came to the islands from the Asian continent through the Korean Peninsula. Artifacts and imperial tumulus of Korean elements found in Japan are demonstrative evidence.⁹ The other factor is that Korea has a long history of being a Chinese tributary; therefore, its own culture is also profoundly affected by China.

⁸ Dalby, 25.

⁹ Milton W. Meyer, *Japan: A Concise History* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), 22, 25.

That being said, it was the product of Chinese and Korean mingling that shaped the early Japanese culture.

Nevertheless, China still exerted the major influence, notably after Prince Shōtoku introduced one of the most important social norms from China: every aspect of life was strictly regulated according to social ranks.¹⁰ According to this norm, Chinese people's choice of clothing styles and colors was confined to their respective social status. After frequent interactions with China, the Asuka Japan instituted a system of caps to suggest ranks, as shown in an A.D 600 record from Sui Chinese court.¹¹ At this early stage of cultural borrowing, there were vague differences in Japanese clothing style across gender: both sexes wore similar narrow-sleeved jackets and ceremonial skirts, beneath which men wore pants while women wore a longer skirt called *mo*.¹² As the Japanese court introduced more Sinitic influences, the costumes for courtly men and women diverged.

Chinese impacts peaked in the year 718, during the Nara period, when Japan implemented the Yōrō Clothing Code. Under this Code, the Nara court required its people to wrap the side of clothes from traditional “right-over-left” to “left-over-right,” and aristocrats adopted Han-style garments.¹³ While palace costume for men followed the Sui dynasty's round-necked, narrow-sleeved robes, women began to wear crossover neckline robes as Tang ladies wore. Respectively they were named *agekubi* (high neck) and *tarikubi* (lap-over neck), and the latter is generally regarded as kimono's embryonic form (Figure 2).¹⁴ Chinese influence remained remarkable until the close of the Nara

¹⁰ Norio Yamanaka, *The Book of Kimono* (New York: Kodansha USA, 2012), 33.

¹¹ Dalby, 26.

¹² Ibid, 27.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, 27-29.

period. Japan reduced its interactions with other countries as it entered the Heian era, a time when the nation started to build a genuine sense of Japanese-ness upon the basis of centuries of cultural borrowing.

During this time period, Chinese influence could still be perceived on courtly men's garments because the "official aspect of culture [such as literature and politics] conserved Chinese form."¹⁵ Japanese men in the political system thus maintained some Chinese styles. In general, there was a focus on motifs and colors which were designed to correspond with nature. This feature is demonstrated by the world's first novel *The Tale of Genji*, written by Murasaki Shikibu in the eleventh-century:

The Empress was wearing the usual scarlet robe, under which she had kimonos of light plum, light green and yellow rose. His Majesty's outer robe was made of grape-[colored] brocade; underneath he had a willow green kimono and, below that one of pure white—all most unusual and up-to-date in both design and [color.]¹⁶

For women, the combination of colors was even more important than it was for men. The reason is that for most of the time, they were hidden behind the bamboo screens and only their lower bodies and edges of dresses would show—kimonos thus represented women themselves.¹⁷

Courtly women's costumes underwent a dramatic change. The most formal ceremonial dress for courtly women was *junihitoe* (十二単), literally, twelve layers (Figure 3). As recorded, it had "a triangular shape, unbelted, relatively unrelated to the human form and with some kind of a train coming out behind it."¹⁸ Comparing this dress

¹⁵ Ibid, 31.

¹⁶ Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (New York: Penguin Group: 1979), 206.

¹⁷ Cliffe, 14.

¹⁸ Ibid.

with that of a Chinese Tang lady's (Figure 4), one can observe that in the mid-Heian period, or the eleventh-century, women's garments had diverged from their Chinese foundation; Japanese clothes had more layers. Interestingly, after adding on multiple layers, there was a process of simplification as time passed, by which the former underwear gradually became recognized with respect. The *kosode* (小袖), one of the inner layers, is one such example. It is a plain white, small-sleeved undergarment for courtiers and it was the standard clothing for ordinary women who could not afford the expensive silk and dyeing materials (Figure 5).¹⁹ Stemmed from the aforementioned Han-style *tarikubi*, *kosode* is the ancestor of modern kimonos (Figure 6). This garment was worn more frequently and became the common outerwear in the Muromachi period; it thus started to be embellished with colors and patterns. With the development of new silk dyeing techniques and the rise of *obi*, or the sash, *kosode* slowly evolved and finally became close to the modern shape of kimonos in the Edo period.

As seen above, the kimono gradually formed its own style after Japan ceased to receive direct Chinese influence at the end of the Nara period. Such Japanese-ness was achieved after the adaptation from Chinese culture and then the self-choice of further development. Japan has been assimilating culture from foreign countries since ancient times. That being said, cultural borrowing is an important aspect in Japan's process of building its culture and society. During the next historical period I am going to discuss, the Meiji Era, the mode of Japanese fashion again experienced a significant change under the force of external impact.

¹⁹ Dalby, 33.

The Meiji Period: Emergence of the West

In 1853, the opening of Japan ended the isolation begun in the Edo period, and feudal Japan was exposed to the powerful Western powers. Forced to open trade and sign unequal treaties, the Tokugawa government was no longer capable of handling both domestic and foreign pressures. In 1868, the Meiji oligarchs abolished the shogunate and started the restoration that brought Western ideologies and technologies to Japan. Quickly joining in the process of modernization and the Industrial Revolution, Japan emerged as a new power and expressed a desire of being recognized by the West. Consequently, Western elements were permeated in almost every aspect of Japanese society to show the nation's strength and to draw a line between Japan and other Asian countries which were believed to be inferior at the time. Aligning with this social shift, the costume was also Westernized, called *yōfuku* (洋服), literally meaning Western-style clothes. For example, in the early years of the Meiji period, formal Western clothing was preferred in official government ceremonies.²⁰

The Meiji emperor helped promote the clothing reform. In his proclamation, Emperor Meiji showed his disdain for the original Japanese costume and its development, saying, “We greatly regret that the uniform of our court has been established following the Chinese custom, and it has become exceedingly effeminate in style and character.”²¹ This was almost a total repudiation of more than a thousand years of culture, and it indicated the weakness of China. The nineteenth-century Western civilizations were

²⁰ Dalby, 66.

²¹ Ibid.

parallel to ancient China, the powerful model for Japan to learn from. In a word, adopting Western clothing represented a form of modernization.

During the Meiji period, there were three stages in the adjustment of kimonos and adoption of western fashion. The first stage is from 1868 to 1883, during which time Western accessories such as hats and capes were worn with the kimono. Then, during the mid-Meiji period, the society was infatuated with Westernization and traditional styles were neglected. Finally, in the 1890s, when politicians became somewhat disillusioned with the West, a trend of returning to Japanese-ness was evoked.²² The kimono, although still worn at homes, only made its return within the public sphere among women and mostly for its traditional value.²³

The result of this time period is that the status of the kimono was overtaken by the Western styles. Although at the end of the Meiji administration a typical Japanese costume was usually a combination of kimono tradition and Western modernization, the status of kimonos was greatly challenged. As the Meiji emperor illustrated, the Chinese-rooted kimono had an image of femininity and weakness, so it failed to fit into the context of modern power.

Standing as a turning point in the history of Japan, the Meiji Period significantly changed the social code and national culture from the Asian focus to a Western focus. Although many people still wore kimonos at the time, the social status of kimonos was degraded because of its Chinese origin. Seeing Western styles as civilization and modernization, Japanese people gradually categorized the kimono as a tradition, no

²² Ibid, 65.

²³ Ibid.

longer a desirable fashion. During and after WWII, further Westernization evoked another trend of decline of the kimono culture, although some slight aspects were retained.

Wartime Narrative and Thereafter

As it entered WWII and became the enemy of many Western countries, Japan came into a state of “ultranationalism.”²⁴ Although the government endeavored to get rid of foreign styles and favored native modes in order to mobilize people’s spirit, wearing kimonos was discouraged. The reason is ironic: kimonos required too much material to sew, and this was deemed unpatriotic.²⁵ Therefore, *yōfuku*, or Western clothing, was preferred during wartime, and, interestingly it no longer maintained its Western connotation.²⁶

Further, while the military lacked resources, ordinary people also met with material and food shortages. As a result, kimonos were often used to exchange for food. The nonfiction narrative *Day of the Bomb* about WWII Japan depicts such poverty, and the following scene occurred when the main character was considering how to survive her abject condition:

...[a]fter all, I can always try to barter something again for food. My beautiful wedding kimono is made of heavy silk brocade. If I go to Koi Railway Station one night and show it to some peasant woman, she will give me plenty of food in exchange.²⁷

²⁴ Dalby, 130.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid, 131.

²⁷ Karl Bruckner, *Day of the Bomb* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1963).

Often times kimonos used for trade were precious ones, such as the wedding kimono in the above example, or the ancestral kimonos of the family—both types were significant at least on the individual level. Such important objects became commodified and degraded during WWII, and it is not surprising to see that kimonos further lost their values.

After the war, people sought to imitate and develop a Western lifestyle, and Japan became culturally dominated by the West.²⁸ The preference for Western clothes became strong, “especially among those who grew up during the war and had no knowledge of how to put on a kimono and no training in the proper way to move and act in a kimono.”²⁹ Therefore, fewer people wore kimonos, and even fewer of them expressed an enthusiasm toward this “traditionalized” culture.

Conclusion

The history of kimonos reflects transformations in Japanese society as well as strong foreign impacts on Japan’s development. The country does not simply adopt technologies and cultures from another; instead, Japan domesticates and embraces these foreign elements in Japanese-ness. Japanese culture can therefore be perceived as a presence of an ingenious mingling of multiple cultures. In Iwabuchi’s word, Japan holds “adaptable ingenuity and indigenizing capacity,”³⁰ and McLeod interprets these features as Japan’s ability to “appropriate the pre-existent [cultures...] and creatively refine them

²⁸ Koichi Iwabuchi, *Recentering Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 2.

²⁹ Yamanaka, 11.

³⁰ Koichi Iwabuchi, “‘Soft’ Nationalism and Narcissism: Japanese Popular Culture Goes Global,” *Asian Studies Review* 26, no. 4 (2002): 449.

such that they became representative of a uniquely [Japanese] identified product.”³¹ The kimono is one such product.

After identifying the borrowing feature of the history of kimonos, I will turn to another important concept in this research: cultural appropriation. While this concept generally receives unfavorable responses in the U.S. context, it does not stir many discussions in Japan. Meanwhile, regardless of the negative meaning that cultural appropriation holds from the Western conception, Japan has been borrowing, or, appropriating foreign cultures throughout its history. Therefore, it is worth re-investigating this controversial idea of cultural appropriation and finding out what has been concealed.

³¹ Ken McLeod, “Afro-Samurai: Techno-Orientalism and Contemporary Hip Hop,” *Popular Music* 32, no. 2 (2013): 259-260.

CHAPTER 2

JUDGING CULTURE—REASSESSING CULTURAL APPROPRIATION

Overview

The concept of cultural appropriation refers to “the taking—from a culture that is not one’s own—of intellectual property, cultural expressions or artifacts, history and ways of knowledge.”³² According to this definition, some forms of cultural appropriation are unavoidable in Japan’s history of cultural borrowing. While Japanese people might not find cultural appropriation problematic, in the United States this notion has raised many sensitive topics including racial issues. For example, a Native American costume for Halloween is contentious because it might be considered entertaining and thus disrespectful to Native people.

In 2012, a white mother threw a Japanese geisha-themed birthday party for her daughter who is also white. In 2015, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) held the event “Kimono Wednesday” for visitors to try on a replica kimono to experience Claude Monet’s mood when he created the famous painting *La Japonaise*. In 2017, a Chinese celebrity named Jackson Wang wore dreadlocks for an advertisement shooting for Pepsi. These three cases share a common feature: they were all accused of cultural appropriation and stirred discussions on social media. There were both protestors and defenders. This

³² Ziff and Rao, 1.

contradiction leads to the discussion: when is cultural appropriation acceptable and where is the line drawn?

I will answer this question by looking into all three cases with a special focus on “Kimono Wednesday.” Behind these events there are some reasons that shape the hostility toward the notion of cultural appropriation in the U.S. context, and one will observe that these reasons are largely associated with power dynamics within the race issue. In other words, white supremacy plays a role. Unreasonably negating all forms of cultural appropriation has affected people who truly appreciate other cultures with an understanding mind.

“Kimono Wednesday”: Beneath the Notion of Cultural Appropriation

Monet’s *La Japonaise*, painted in 1876, is one representative work of the nineteenth-century European obsession with Japanese aesthetics. The painting is a depiction of Monet’s wife, Camille Monet, “wearing a kimono, surrounded by various *uchiwa* fans and holding a fan bearing the colors of the French tricolore” (Figure 7).³³ In the summer of 2015, the Boston MFA engaged its visitors with the event “Kimono Wednesday” that provided museum-visitors an opportunity to wear a replica kimono of Camille Monet and pose for photographs. The museum, however, did not provide enough context of understanding the work, and a small number of protestors, mostly Asian Americans, stood up against the event. They claimed, “this is racism. This is appropriation. This is Orientalism.”³⁴ Dramatically, a group of counter-protestors, many

³³ Julie Valk. “The “Kimono Wednesday” Protests-Identity Politics and How the Kimono Became More Than Japanese,” *Asian Ethnology* 74, no. 2 (2015): 380.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

of them Japanese people living in Boston, showed up defending the MFA, saying “I am Japanese. I am not offended by [‘Kimono Wednesday.’]”³⁵ The affair fermented and started a social media battle. Several days after, the MFA, under pressure, issued an apology and modified the “try-on” activity to only touching the replica kimono.

Valk observes that the museum protestors considered the event from the perspective of Orientalism, a framework that Said interprets as a Western idea constructed to support the West’s colonial control over the Orient, or the East. Orientalism is “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,” which indicates a complex relationship of power between the two entities.³⁶ One example is the imposition of the concept “religion” on China in the nineteenth-century, a time period when China struggled to adapt to the modern world. This is also the time when British scholars began their unprecedented investigations into Chinese national beliefs.³⁷ By defining Chinese culture, in this case, social beliefs, Britain took the initiative of narrative and later claimed colonial power over China. This is a process that exemplifies the nineteenth-century European countries making the distinction of “the West” from the rest of the world and defining the relationship between these two separate parts of the world.³⁸

With the incorporation of Western imperialism, religion came into China as a neologism, and Confucianism was categorized as a world religion. The concept itself,

³⁵ Ibid, 381.

³⁶ Edward Said. *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 5.

³⁷ Anna Sun. *Confucianism as a World Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), xii.

³⁸ Tomoko Masuzawa. *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), xiv.

however, had almost never penetrated into Chinese society; today, most Chinese people still think of Christianity when they are referred to the term ‘religion,’ but regard Confucianism as “a moral outlook” or “a cultured way of life.”³⁹ Back in the nineteenth-century, however, as long as the Western imperialists convinced themselves that they were more advanced than China, whether or not Chinese people understood “religion” was not a concern.

Orientalism is associated with white supremacy, and the MFA protestors found “Kimono Wednesday” inappropriate because the event, they claimed, stressed the otherness of Asian-identified culture.⁴⁰ From another angle, as Valk has pointed out, by relating to cultural appropriation, the protestors actually intended to make the public concerned about the intense racial climate towards Asian and Asian-American people, which is a by-product of Western imperialism. Therefore, the negative sensitivity toward cultural appropriation is ultimately a Western idea which is conceptualized to criticize the “whiteness,” or the privilege of the White in “a racially hierarchical social system.”⁴¹ The denouncement of this practice is a way to relieve the unconscious sense of guilt of the dominant white culture.

In Ziff and Rao’s discussion, they agree on the argument that cultural appropriation is practiced as part of the identity politics, a term that means “the strategic mobilization of political power around a felt sense of common cause.”⁴² For oppressed groups in the society, Ziff and Rao assert that cultural connections could promote “the

³⁹ Ibid, x.

⁴⁰ Valk, 383.

⁴¹ Rosemary Pennington, “Dissolving the Other: Orientalism, Consumption, and Kate Perry’s *Insatiable Dark Horse*,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 40, no. 2 (2016): 121.

⁴² Ziff and Rao, 10.

development of identity, solidarity, and strength.”⁴³ The “Kimono Wednesday” protestors’ actions illustrate this reasoning. Instead of seeing the activity as a celebration of cultural exchange, they more or less overstated the issue to draw the public attention to Asian-American-identified minority groups. In other words, it was a protest in the name of objection to cultural appropriation, nominally to protect racial identity and pursue social equality; it was more than criticizing cultural appropriation.

This explains the contrast between American reactions and Japanese reactions toward the MFA. Before the event was held in Boston, *La Japonaise* was exhibited in Japan and the national Japanese broadcasting company, Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai (NHK), commissioned several sets of replica kimonos for visitors to put on.⁴⁴ Dramatically, the replica kimono at the MFA also came from the NHK. MFA protestors were dissatisfied with the playful character of the activity, but this same playfulness was also found in museums in Japan. Consequently, many Japanese audiences, both in the United States and in Japan, expressed that they failed to understand the point of the protest. Some counter-protestors complained that since most protestors were not Japanese, these protestors were not qualified to determine whether the event was a problematic form of cultural appropriation against Japanese cultures.⁴⁵

Cultural appropriation has more or less become a “rhetoric weapon”⁴⁶ for upholding minority rights in America and throughout Western idealism. The inconsistent responses to “Kimono Wednesday” open an important discussion of context: context

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Valk, 386.

⁴⁵ Shaun O’dwyer, “Of Kimono and Cultural Appropriation,” *The Japan Times*, Aug 4, 2015, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/>.

⁴⁶ Ziff and Rao, 8.

matters. Being Japanese in the United States is different from being Japanese in Japan. If, now, we discard the imposed, negative nature of cultural appropriation and return to a neutral position, where is the line drawn between the appropriate and the inappropriate?

Globalization—An Important Source of Cultural Appropriation

Globalization is a process of interactions and integrations among people of different countries and it affects societies at all different levels including the cultural level.⁴⁷ The seventh-century Tang China spreading its influences is an example of globalization. Twentieth-century French designers adopting kimono style is another example. Both examples reflect an appreciative aspect: the Japanese court borrowed Chinese model, and French people admired Japanese aesthetics. An implication here is that under globalization, various forms of cultural appropriation are inevitable if we go back to its definition: the taking from another culture. That being said, cultural appropriation, regardless of the contemporary negative connotation in the West, is one product of globalization. In the two examples above, we do not perceive disrespect, but instead genuine cultural appreciation.

Globalization introduces cultural exchange, or in McLeod's word, cultural hybridity. In McLeod's discussion of contemporary trends in hip hop music, he observes that elements of Japanese popular culture have penetrated into the production of much Western popular culture.⁴⁸ For example, the American singer Gwen Stefani's songs are

⁴⁷ "What Is Globalization?" Globalization 101, accessed Apr 10, 2018, <http://www.globalization101.org/what-is-globalization/>.

⁴⁸ McLeod, 259.

largely associated with Harajuku culture, a Tokyo street culture (Figure 8).⁴⁹ Meanwhile, there is a focus on Japan's progressive technologies which are often seen in hip hop, with Kanye West's *Graduation* (2007) as a compelling example.⁵⁰ McLeod sees such cultural hybridity as a result of reoccurring cultural appropriation. Interestingly, he expresses a positive (or, at least approving) viewpoint toward this topic by paralleling 'appropriation' to 'adaptation' and describing these practices with the word "creative."⁵¹ Appropriations occur because that culture is recognized and favored. Food, as one of the most common forms of cultural appropriation, demonstrates this statement: people consume foreign cuisine simply because they like it.

If people take advantage of another culture, for example, in a profitable way, the practice is exploitative and is indeed improper. Arguably, then, if one shows respect and understanding to the culture he or she is practicing, it is an acceptable form of cultural appropriation, as with the aforementioned example of the white mother and the Japanese themed birthday party. Similar to the "Kimono Wednesday" case, there were defenders arguing that, from the pictures the mother posted, the family actually treated Japanese traditions with high respect because the mother was careful in decorative details, and the setting was close to authentic Japanese style.⁵² It was the appreciation of culture, and those who "[thought] culture should not be shared [were] the real racists."⁵³ One fashion and culture expert commented that people would be less likely to appropriate (here, the

⁴⁹ Ibid, 262.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 259.

⁵¹ Ibid, 260.

⁵² Isabelle Khoo, "Mom Called Racist for Throwing Daughter a Japanese-Themed Birthday," *Huffington Post*, August 2, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2017/08/02/japanese-birthday-party_a_23061529/.

⁵³ Ibid.

term carries a negative connotation) a culture when they have an appreciation for it because they were aware of whether their actions would be considered disrespectful to the people of that culture.⁵⁴

In 2017, the Chinese celebrity Jackson Wang wore dreadlocks for a Pepsi advertisement shooting. A group of Instagram users, most of them white, criticized Wang for appropriating African and African-American hairstyle and asked him to apologize for his improper behaviors. These kinds of stories seem to share a common storyline; there were black-identified advocates supporting Wang, saying “I’m black and I’m not offended... [you all] can chill especially if it wasn’t your culture.”⁵⁵ Wang also gave a strong response by affirming that he loved and respected all races, and those people who thought he was a racist were on the wrong page (Figure 9).⁵⁶

As globalization progresses, “we have to share the world with people who have different cultural backgrounds [...] unless we want to isolate ourselves,” said Heidi Samuelson, a scholar specializing in Philosophy and Cultural Studies.⁵⁷ For centuries, cultural mixing has promoted the formation of various cultures. The development of kimonos is one example; America as a nation of immigrants is another. While globalization brings together different cultures, there still exists a divergence in mutual understanding among people of different backgrounds. Japanese people could not comprehend the reason why some Americans were hostile to “Kimono Wednesday.” This

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ “How to Evaluate Jackson Wang Being Asked to Apologize for Wearing Dreadlocks?” *Zhihu*, last modified June 11, 2017, <https://www.zhihu.com/question/60952996>.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Heidi Samuelson, “The Philosophy of BTS: K-Pop, Pop Art, and the Art of Capitalism,” October 21, 2017, <https://artplusmarketing.com/the-philosophy-of-bts-k-pop-pop-art-and-the-art-of-capitalism-3ae64e688e6>.

is because Japan does not hold a multiracial context while the U.S. has an intense history of racial inequality. When Japanese people discovered that the MFA was accused of the imperialist aspect, they related it to Japan's WWII invasion of Asia.⁵⁸ Context matters. American sensitivity toward cultural appropriation is understandable, and so is some Asian countries' welcoming of it as one form of cultural hybridity. The character of cultural appropriation, however, should be reassessed instead of continuing the generally negative American understanding. Otherwise, there might be future battles on the West defining concepts for the rest of the world.

Conclusion

Globalization has brought the world together, and mutual appropriations of technologies and cultures are expressions of interactions among countries. Cultural appropriation is perceived as having a negative connotation because of its legacy of white supremacy. Meanwhile, it is a notion created to facilitate minority people (mainly in the U.S., or in Western countries) to protect their identities under the white-dominated culture. Opposing "Kimono Wednesday" is one such example. Context matters; the MFA defenders had their reasons to take actions, but it is unfair to people who admire the culture with a sincere, not superior mind.

In the final Chapter, I will evaluate the contemporary commodification of kimonos, which is mainly in the form of kimono rental businesses. Concurrently, I will include responses from Japanese people as well as discuss how foreign visitors' appropriation of kimonos helps identify the Japanese-ness.

⁵⁸ Valk, 394.

CHAPTER 3
THE CONTEMPORARY COMMODIFICATION OF KIMONOS
AND JAPANESE RESPONSES

Overview

After WWII, Western fashion gradually replaced kimonos for everyday garments, and kimonos were “reserved for those occasions which affirm a Japanese heritage,” for example, Shinto wedding rites and tea ceremonies.⁵⁹ Japanese people also wear kimonos or yukatas on informal occasions such as *hanabi matsuri* (花火祭り), or the fireworks festival. While for traditional activities kimonos remain serious and elegant, in other less formal cases, they are adapted into contemporary fashion.

As more visitors worldwide travel to Japan and see the kimono as a symbol of Japanese-ness, kimono rental businesses grow rapidly. There is a great variation in price. There are expensive kimonos made with high-end cloth such as silk, but visitors often prefer to rent the low-cost ones made with simple materials. Let us take Figure 10 as an example. The Japanese tea master wears a simple but elegant slate blue kimono, arguably made with thick material of superior quality. The two white ladies, on the other hand, wear colorful yukatas that seem to be made of light cotton.

⁵⁹ Millie R. Creighton, “Maintaining Cultural Boundaries in Retailing: How Japanese Department Stores Domesticize ‘Things Foreign,’” *Modern Asian Studies* 25, no. 4 (1991): 677.

At present, the majority of kimono-wearers in Japan are not Japanese nationals but foreigners. There are some interesting questions beneath this phenomenon. Visually, foreign visitors are appropriating and seemingly “representing” part of Japanese traditional culture. Is it a negative form of cultural appropriation? Will the authentic Japanese-ness of kimonos gradually fade away, especially under the contemporary fast-paced commercial era? How do we evaluate the commodification of kimonos?

This chapter looks into the current commodification of kimonos brought by the increasingly large tourism industry in Japan. Combining analyses from different scholars and my on-site interviews and surveys in Japan, I find three points that are worth discussion. First, many American people who criticize the appropriation of kimonos are merely projecting an American perspective on a Japanese issue. Second, cultural mixing helps stress the uniqueness of Japanese culture. Third, a conservative opinion on traditions has limited people’s understanding of cultures.

Commodifying Cultures, Identifying Japanese-ness

The Native Studies specialist Peter Kulchyski predicts that in the twenty-first-century, cultural products will likely become “widely circulated commodities.”⁶⁰ First, with the advancement of globalization, tourism prospers and interactions among different people and cultures increase. Cultural products become popular “commodities” because visitors pay to explore cultures that are different from their own. Second, commodities are designed and adjusted in accordance with consumers’ tastes. For example, visitors

⁶⁰ Peter Kulchyski, “From Appropriation to Subversion: Aboriginal Cultural Production in the Age of Postmodernism,” *American Indian Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (1997): 605.

who travel to Japan, especially to Kyoto, often regard trying on kimonos as one way to explore Japanese traditional culture. Kimono rental businesses have thus risen to satisfy such demand.

While in the American context the commodification of cultures is a controversial issue, the author of *Who Owns Culture?* Susan Scafadi argues that perhaps the consumption of cultural products is “the first contacts that many Americans have with cultural groups other than their own.”⁶¹ The commodification of cultures can be perceived as one product of globalization, and appropriation exists because of the nature of the commodity economy stated above: catering to consumers. The concern then becomes whether the source community sees this process of cultural commercialization problematic, and others cannot determine whether this issue is a problem. As Scafadi continues, the task of preventing cultural misappropriation should not be “to protect a unitary vision of culture but to establish a means of creative self-determination among source communities.”⁶² In the case of the present commodification of kimonos, Japanese perspectives become important in evaluating this practice which is contentious in the U.S.

As concluded in the previous chapter, cultural appropriation is a Western notion. In Japan, there are few concerns about this idea. Many Japanese people are, in fact, glad to see the increasing trend that more foreign travelers are engaged in Japanese culture. I asked survey-takers about their thoughts on the following scenario: if Chinese or Korean visitors wore kimonos and were recognized as Japanese people, would they be offended? Surprisingly, however, 35 out of 40 responses are “I am comfortable about it” or “I don’t

⁶¹ Susan Scafadi, *Who Owns Culture?* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 7.

⁶² Scafadi, 2.

care.” Moreover, a common viewpoint of high school students who took the survey is: “I hope kimonos/yukatas become more popular, so foreign people are able to know more about our culture.” Although a small sample-sized survey, it reflects that while some American audiences negatively view the practice of cultural appropriation, many Japanese people do not consider this concept to be problematic and, in fact, enjoy their traditions being appreciated worldwide.

In Japan, contemporary commodification of cultures allows Japanese people to identify things Japanese from things foreign. The social and cultural anthropology scholar Ashley Carruthers demonstrates this point of view in his dissertation regarding the Japanese obsession with Vietnam in the late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century. In 2004, there were more than 120 stores in Tokyo that sold various Vietnamese sundry such as ceramics and handicrafts, and about 20 shops sold *ao dai*, a Vietnamese long dress that was popular among Japanese young women at the time.⁶³ “In the consumption of Vietnamese [products],” says Carruthers, “it is of course not the [real] Vietnam that matters, but rather the [discovery] of the abstract Japanese self reflected in the mirror of Vietnameseness.”⁶⁴ By consuming and appropriating foreign cultures, Japanese people are able to identify their own culture. Only with the existence of other people and cultures could one society or community recognize its distinct character. In this case discussed by Carruthers, Japanese people see a more comprehensive self through the exotic Vietnamese mirror.

⁶³ Ashley Carruthers, “Cute Logics of the Multicultural and the Consumption of the Vietnamese Exotic in Japan,” *Positions* 12, no. 2 (2004): 407.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 411.

When Creighton studies the division between “the Japanese” and “the other” through the lens of modern retailing, she makes a comparable argument: by consuming foreign products, Japanese people discover the self. Department stores in modern Japan play a significant role in defining the value of commodities, especially domesticating foreign products so that they fit in with Japanese society. For example, in the past, there was no special holiday in Japan for children, but, after WWII and under American influence, the adoption of Christmas has created an occasion to give children their favorite gifts.⁶⁵ Celebrated close to *Oshogatsu*, or Japanese New Year’s (January 1), Christmas does not blur the line between the exotic and the Japanese, but instead “help[s] assure that New Year’s customs do not face pressure to change with waves of fashion.”⁶⁶ That is, even though Christmas becomes more and more popular in Japan, it will never challenge the status of *Oshogatsu*, a festival that most represents Japanese traditions and is known as the most important holiday in Japan. Creighton argues: “It is by exaggerating the difference between Japanese things and non-Japanese things, Japanese customs and foreign ones, and ultimately, ‘*ware ware Nihonjin*’ (We Japanese) and ‘*yosomono*’ (outsiders, literally outside things) that Japanese culture and national identity are affirmed.”⁶⁷ As a result, when Japanese elements are mingled with the foreign ones, the Japanese-ness is more conspicuous.

Kimono rental businesses sell foreign visitors the experience of wearing the traditional Japanese costume and thus help stress the distinction between the Japanese

⁶⁵ Creighton, 685-686. There are indeed Girls’ Day and Boys’ Day, but they are holidays that remind parents of raising children properly.

⁶⁶ Creighton, 686.

⁶⁷ Creighton, 676.

and the other. Stephanie Assmann, a German sociologist currently working in Japan, argues that the kimono is one example of “invented traditions,” a concept proposed by the famous British historian Eric Hobsbawm: “‘Traditions’ which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented.”⁶⁸ Kimonos, according to Assmann, “could only be recognized and named as such through the encounter with a contrasting other, which elevated the kimono to a symbol of unique Japanese clothing.”⁶⁹ Displayed on foreign figures, kimonos highlight their unique Japanese element. The contemporary economic value of kimonos enables this culture to be sustained under the commercial era when domestic people are less concerned about traditions. The historically existent borrowing aspect allows Japanese culture to flexibly adapt to the globalizing world. That is, Japanese traditions are never static.

Preserving Cultures, Reinventing Cultures

When I interviewed Dr. Handa, a Japanese Professor at the International Christian University, she provided some intriguing insights into the growing tourism industry and the corresponding commodification of kimonos as well as other Japanese cultural products. After WWII, the number of Japanese people who still wear kimonos as everyday costumes decreased, and most people live an increasingly Western lifestyle. This led to a decline in the kimono industry: kimono sales declined from ¥2 trillion to one-tenth of that figure between 1982 and 2012, and the number of kimono tailors

⁶⁸ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

⁶⁹ Stephanie Assmann, “Between Tradition and Innovation: The Reinvention of the Kimono in Japanese Consumer Culture,” *Fashion Theory* 12, no. 3 (2008): 361.

dropped from 6,300 in 1984 to 1,351 in 2014.⁷⁰ Foreign visitors coming in and expressing interest in Japanese culture actually provides a means for that culture to keep its value today. Besides traditional value, which is more or less neglected by Japanese people, kimonos and other Japanese cultural products are now infused with economic value that is appreciated by foreign tourists. Therefore, Dr. Handa concluded that current commodification of kimonos is a blessing for this culture.⁷¹

Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, the author of *Kimono: A Modern History*, observes that kimonos also adopt changes to attract domestic customers. Although kimonos are not part of mainstream fashion trends, recently more young women regard kimonos as simply one form of dress.⁷² These young women “freely reimagine the kimono’s use, not unlike their grandmothers’ adaptations of kimonos into tea or dressing gowns a century earlier.”⁷³

Kimono designers begin to incorporate the dress with more brightly colors and unconventional patterns to attract the younger market. Western style clothes, sold both in Japan and other countries, also start to adopt kimono elements such as lining materials and shape of sleeves (Figure 11). Such process of appropriation (and re-appropriation) indicate(s) the change in social trends, and it is not much different from the Nara Japan adopting Chinese robes and the Meiji Japan introducing Western fashion. Milhaupt quotes from Stephen Vlastos, a Japanese historian: “the kimono and its meaning have changed with the times—it is anything but ‘traditional.’”⁷⁴ Just like how young people

⁷⁰ O’dwyer.

⁷¹ Dr. Handa in discussion with the author, November 2017.

⁷² Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, *Kimono: A Modern History* (London: Reaktion Book Ltd, 2014), 9.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Milhaupt, 23.

now redefine the use of kimonos, future generations in Japan will alike add new values to their traditions.

Mr. Kitai is a craftsman living in Kyoto who wears the kimono as his daily costume and has been hand-making traditional Japanese hair ornaments for fifteen years. He agrees with the idea that cultures and traditions are changing and flexible, but not static as generally perceived. Therefore, only people who hold a conservative view on kimonos would see kimonos assimilating modern elements and foreigners wearing kimonos as problematic. Furthermore, Mr. Kitai hopes that people can look at traditions in a more inclusive way, because traditions change dramatically. For instance, *kabuki* (歌舞伎), or the classical Japanese dance-drama, is recognized as a part of high culture of Japan. In its early development, however, kabuki was considered a degraded street culture. Mr. Kitai alludes to the popular but often negatively viewed contemporary Harajuku street culture. Although this culture seems visually excessive and unacceptable to quite a few people, Mr. Kitai sees a possibility of it becoming the next kabuki in the future.⁷⁵ Therefore, people cannot simply deny that traditions are developing while their own societies are changing.

Conclusion

From Japanese perspectives, foreign visitors' appropriation of kimonos does not disrespect or devalue the authentic Japanese-ness. In contrast, the presence of foreigners in kimonos emphasizes the uniqueness of Japanese culture. Furthermore, the commodification of kimonos brings a special benefit for this traditional symbol: by

⁷⁵ Mr. Kitai in discussion with the author, November 2017.

transforming the kimono to a cultural commodity, this traditional costume gains commercial value that has allowed it to sustain in contemporary times. Noticing that more and more foreign visitors are appreciating and consuming Japanese culture, Japanese people themselves will likely start to pay more attention to their own culture. This trend of mingling cultures under globalizing tourism reminds people of how kimonos have evolved, and they will realize that traditions and cultures are flexible in adapting to the changing world.

CONCLUSION

Through the study of the present commodification of kimonos, we discover that the American understanding of cultural appropriation is very different from the Japanese understanding. The United States' complex history of racial inequality has caused contemporary American people to pay particular attention to avoid actions or discussions that might indicate white superiority. As Samuelson concludes, people “filter everything through so many standards[, norms,] and ideas that [they] were socialized to take as truth.”⁷⁶ That is, human beings are socially constructed, and the social context determines their ways of judgement.

Cultural appropriation, as a product of globalization, “is the beginning of new creativity,” said Kaori Nakano, a professor of fashion history at Meiji University.⁷⁷ The history of kimonos is characterized by cultural appropriation. Over centuries, the kimono absorbs influences worldwide; the costume is a harmonious composite of various cultures and Japanese-ness. It is just the creativity and flexibility that enable kimonos to adjust to different time periods. At the same time, mingling with different cultural elements, kimonos stress their unique Japanese-ness. This is how the kimono reaffirms its status in contemporary times as the symbol of Japanese traditions.

Before I visited Japan and looked at Japanese perspectives, I also saw cultural appropriation as a negative practice, without critically thinking about how this concept

⁷⁶ Samuelson.

⁷⁷ O'dwyer.

was created and used. As an Asian student, I have been living in the United States for only two years and a half, but my way of thinking has already been Americanized. I became sensitive to certain topics as many American people are. Originally, I expected Japanese people to criticize the cultural appropriation of kimonos, but I was surprised to find that very few people shared my concerns. When Dr. Handa told me that the commodification of kimonos actually finds a way for kimonos to survive in today's Japan, an idea that I had never considered, I realized that I was completely biased by an American perspective and I had been selfishly imagining Japanese perspectives. I also realized how contexts matter.

My thesis research opens discussions about cases that are similar to the commodification and appropriation of kimonos. American or Western perspectives (or stereotypes) have dominated the discussion while the native voices are ignored. There is some extent of mutual misunderstanding, and as a result, it would be worth reassessing many cultural and sociological studies to see if they have been biasedly conducted.

While this thesis mainly looks into Western appropriations of Eastern cultures and the issue of white superiority is thus pertinent, it would be interesting to investigate cultural appropriations within Eastern societies. For example, although I mentioned that Japan does not have a multiracial social background, it is an incorrect claim in the strict sense. In Japan, there are aboriginal minorities such as the Ainu people who live in Hokkaido. These native people are of the "yellow" race just as the majority of Japanese people are, but in the United States there are races of different skin colors which complicate the issue. How should we perceive the Japanese appropriation of the Ainu culture? Will commodification as well benefit this minority culture in contemporary

times? Similar discussions can be drawn in China, a country of one dominant ethnic group and fifty-five ethnic minorities.

Another pertinent topic is that while white people practicing other cultures can be regarded as inappropriate, what if African Americans, Asian Americans, or Native Americans appropriate the white culture (which most of them are doing today, living a Western style life)? In conclusion, the concept of cultural appropriation needs to be reassessed from a neutral perspective so that people can gain new insights into academic studies and other fields as well.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Figures



Figure 1. A classic Chinese robe. Image from Liza Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*

(Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), 25.

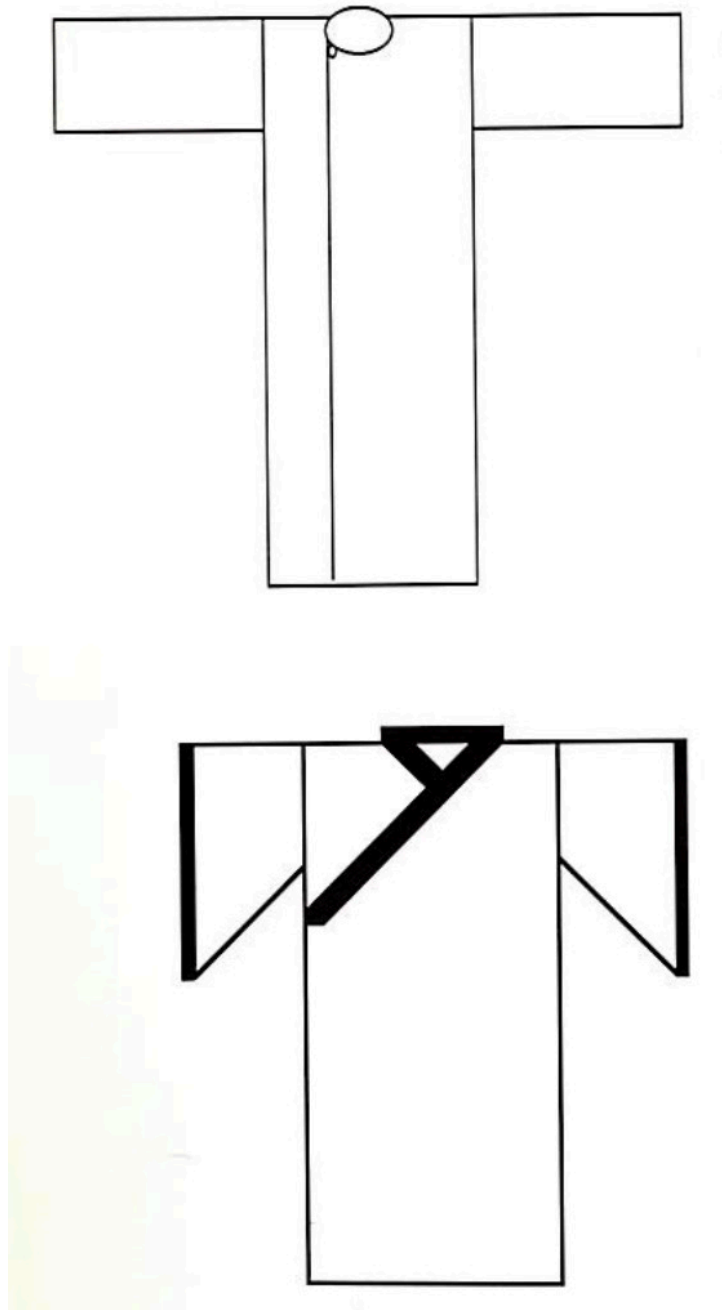


Figure 2. *Agekubi* (top); *tarikubi*. Image from Liza Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture*

(Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), 28.



Figure 3. Junihitoe (十二単), the most formal dress for courtly women in the early Heian period. Image downloaded from <http://kasane.fuyuya.com/kasane-museum.htm> in April

2018.



Figure 4. This painting, *Court Ladies Adorning Their Hair with Flowers* (Tang dynasty) by Zhou Fang, shows the normal costume of Tang court ladies. Image downloaded from <https://sns.91ddcc.com/t/26748> in April 2018.

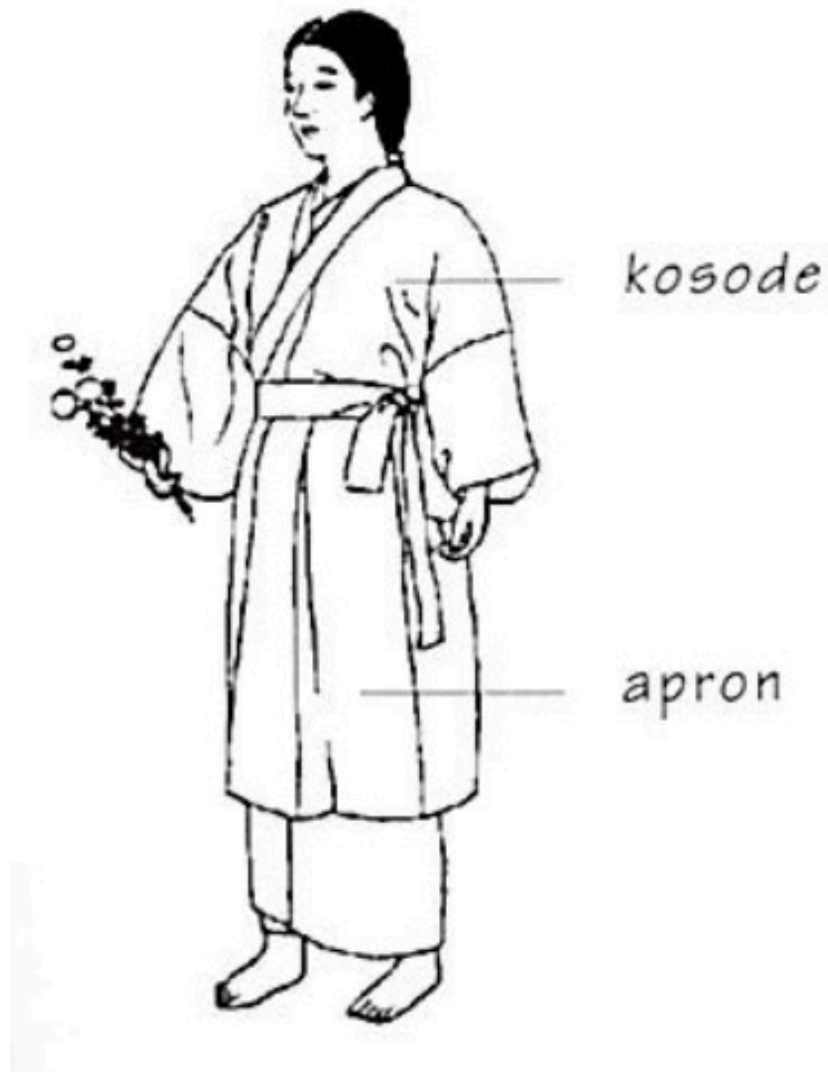


Figure 5. Female commoner in peasant version of *kosode*. Image from Liza Dalby, *Kimono: Fashioning Culture* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), 33.

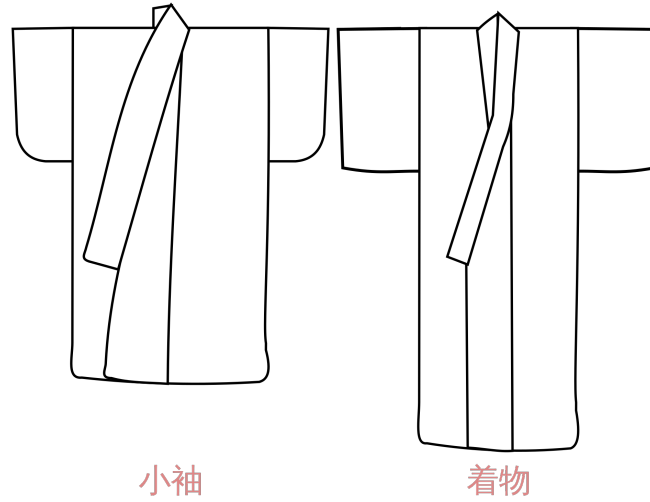


Figure 6. Kosode (left) and kimono. Image downloaded from <http://www.wikiwand.com/ja/小袖> in April 2018.



Figure 7. *La Japonaise* by Claude Monet, 1876. Image downloaded from <http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/la-japonaise-camille-monet-in-japanese-costume-33556> in December 2017.



Figure 8. Harajuku fashion in Tokyo. Image downloaded from <http://allthatsinteresting.com/harajuku-fashion> in April 2018.



jacksonwang852g7  I don't think I'm the only one doing this and if people are gonna point fingers at this, so be it ... haters gon hate. I have all my respect and love for all RACE. But if you think this whole thing is disrespecting or mocking a race, I'm really sorry but you are on the wrong page.



2分钟 37次赞 回复

Figure 9. Jackson Wang's response to the accusation of cultural appropriation. Image

downloaded from <https://www.zhihu.com/question/60952996> in April 2018.



Figure 10. Japanese tea master and foreign tourists. Image downloaded from <https://www.klook.com/activity/910-traditional-japanese-tea-ceremony-tokyo/> in December 2017.



Figure 11. H&M kimono jacket. Image downloaded from http://www.hm.com/us/product/92932?article=92932-A&cm_vc=SEARCH in April 2018.

Appendix B

Survey for High School Students in Japan

*The Commodification of the Kimono (and Yukata) and Corresponding Social Criticism
Student Survey*

1. Your gender: Female **(19)** Male **(4)** Other **(1)**

2. "The kimono/yukata is very important to Japanese culture."
 Agree **(20)** Somewhat agree **(4)**
 Disagree Somewhat disagree Not applicable

3. Is there any club about traditional Japanese culture or the kimono in your school?
 Yes: → the kimono/yukata other traditional culture (floral art, etc.) **(24)**
 other
 No

4. In what occasions do you wear the kimono/yukata? Please check all that apply.
 Ceremonies (e.g., graduation day, wedding) **(7)**
 Casual/daily (after work/school) Festivals **(23)** At work/school
 At home
 Other (please specify: _____) **(1, Disneyland)**

5. Do your friends and family, or people surrounding you often wear the kimono/yukata?
 If so, how old are these people and what are their occupations?
 Age group: 18-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60
 above 60
 Occupation(s): _____

6. Have you noticed that recently there are more foreign visitors than Japanese nationals wearing the kimono/yukata?
 Yes **(16)** No **(5)** Not sure **(3)**

7. Some foreign visitors who wear a kimono/yukata do not behave properly as this traditional dress suggests. For example, they also wear sun glasses and sneakers while they wear the kimono/yukata. You think this is ridiculous and unacceptable.
 Agree **(2)** Somewhat agree **(9)** Disagree **(7)** Somewhat disagree **(3)** Not applicable **(3)**

8. Some Chinese/Korean visitors who wear the kimono/yukata have been misrecognized as Japanese people and asked for a picture. Are you feeling comfortable about it?
 Yes **(5)** Not really **(4)** I don't care **(15)**

9. Would you like to see the kimono/yukata reemerge in daily life?
 Yes **(11)** Not really **(10)** I don't care **(3)**

10. Please share some thoughts on the future of the kimono/yukata.

*Note: Responses for this survey were given by 24 high school students from Omi Brotherhood Senior High School in the city of Omihachiman, Shiga prefecture, Japan.

The bold numbers in parentheses are the number of survey-takers who chose the corresponding answer. The same for Appendix C.

Appendix C

Survey for Japanese Nationals (in English and Japanese)

The Commodification of the Kimono (and Yukata) and Corresponding Social Criticism

1. Please select an age group that applies.
 18-20 **(5)** 21-30 **(8)** 31-40 **(1)** 41-50 51-60 **(2)** above 60 **(3)**
2. Your gender: Female **(14)** Male **(2)** Other
3. "The kimono/yukata is very important to Japanese culture."
 Agree **(13)** Somewhat agree **(3)** Disagree Somewhat disagree
 Not applicable
4. (For students) Is there any club about traditional Japanese culture or the kimono in your college?
 Yes: → the kimono/yukata other traditional culture (floral art, etc.) **(9)**
 No
5. In what occasions do you wear the kimono/yukata? Please check all that apply.
 Ceremonies (e.g., graduation day, wedding) **(15)**
 Casual/daily (after work/school) **(1)** Festivals **(12)** At work/school **(1)**
 At home **(1)**
 Other (please specify: _____) **(3, hotel, party)**
6. Do your friends and family, or people surrounding you often wear the kimono/yukata? If so, how old are these people and what are their occupations?
 Age group: under 18 18-20 21-30 31-40 41-50
 51-60 above 60
 Occupation(s): _____
7. Have you noticed that recently there are more foreign visitors than Japanese nationals wearing the kimono/yukata?
 Yes **(11)** No **(3)** Not sure **(2)**
8. Some foreign visitors who wear a kimono/yukata do not behave properly as this traditional dress suggests. For example, they also wear sun glasses and sneakers while they wear the kimono/yukata. You think this is ridiculous and unacceptable.
 Agree **(1)** Somewhat agree **(1)** Disagree **(7)** Somewhat disagree **(1)**
 Not applicable **(6)**
9. Some Chinese/Korean visitors who wear the kimono/yukata have been misrecognized as Japanese people and asked for a picture. Are you feeling comfortable about it?
 Yes **(6)** No **(2)** I don't care **(8)**

10. Would you like to see the kimono/yukata reemerge in daily life?

Yes (14) No I don't care (2)

着物・浴衣を着る体験の商品化について調査

1. 年齢はいくつですか。

18-20 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 60歳以上

2. 性別は？

女性 男性 その他

3. 「着物・浴衣は日本文化に大切なものです。」

賛成 少し賛成 反対 少し反対 当てはまらない

4. (学生向け) 大学で伝統文化か着物についてクラブがありますか。

はい →種類: 着物・浴衣 他の伝統文化、例えば、華道
 いいえ

5. どんな機会に着物・浴衣を着ますか。当てはまるものにすべてチェックしてください。

行事 (例えば、卒業式や結婚式)
 日常生活 お祭り 会社・学校 家
 その他 (詳しく書いてください: _____)

6. ご友人・ご家族の中で、よく着物・浴衣を着ている人がいますか。もしいらっしゃるなら、年齢はいくつですか。お仕事はなんですか。

当てはまらない
 当てはまる
年齢: 18歳以下 18-20 21-30 31-40 41-50
 51-60 60歳以上

仕事: _____

7. 最近、着物・浴衣を着ている外国の旅行者の方が日本人よりたくさんいる気がすると思いますか。

はい いいえ わからない

8. 「時々、着物・浴衣を着ている外国の旅行者が不自然な行為をしています。例えば、着物を着ながら、サングラスをかけている人やスニーカーを履いている人がたくさんいます。この現状はおかしいです。」

___ 賛成 ___ 少し賛成 ___ 反対 ___ 少し反対 ___ 当てはまらない

9. 和服を着ている中国人か韓国人の女性を日本人と間違えて、他の外国の旅行者が写真を求める場合がたくさんあります。この現状はいいことだと思いますか。

___ はい ___ いいえ ___ わからない

10. 今後、日常生活でもう一度着物を着ることがあると思いますか。

___ はい ___ いいえ ___ わからない

*Note: Responses for this survey were given by 16 Japanese adults at the International Christian University in Tokyo and at the Tokyo Shinkansen Station.

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