An Autoethnography of Kin-aesthetics: Retrieving Family Folklore Through the Wearing of Used Kimonos

by

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ABSTRACT

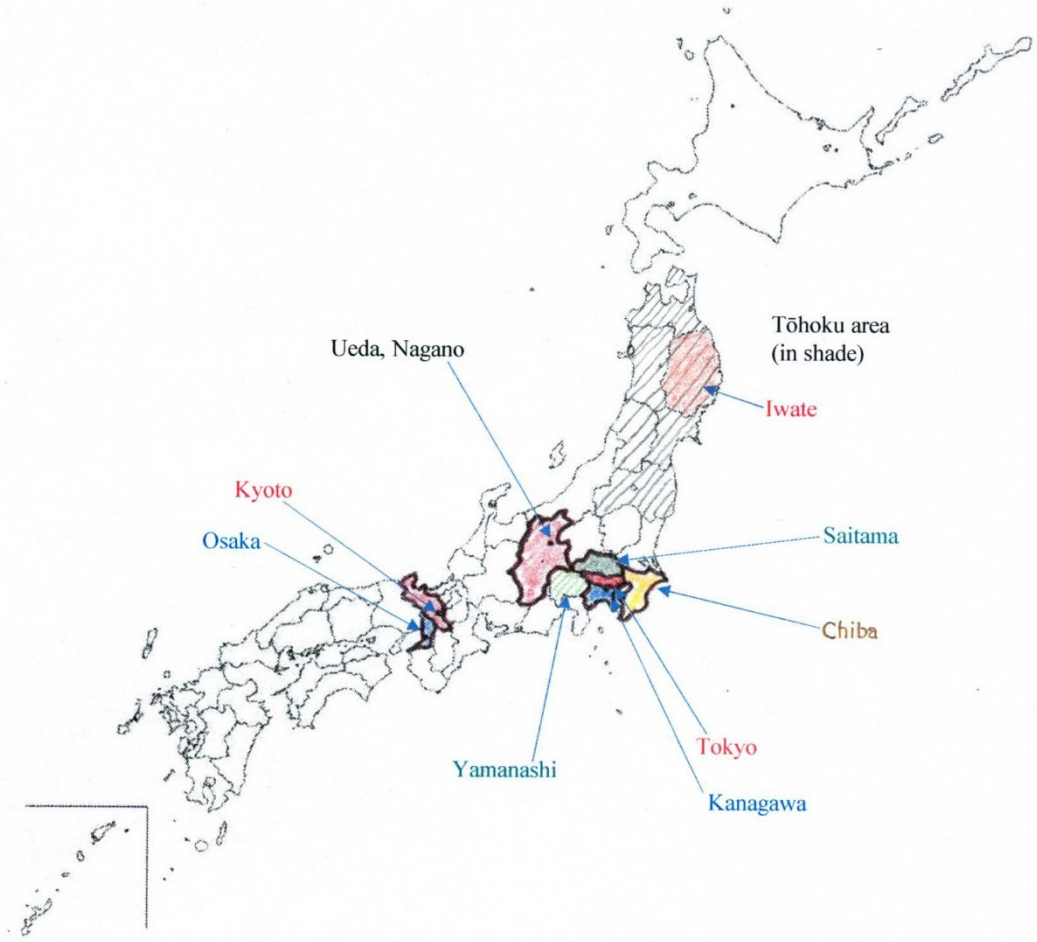
This is an autoethnographic study of used-kimono-wearing as experienced by a folklorist who ventured into the world of kimono culture after inheriting a piece that had belonged to her maternal grandmother. In the course of studying the art of kimono-wearing and kimono fashions in the midst of the current kimono revival (which began in the late 1990s), the folklorist recognizes that she has been enacting "kin-aesthetics": the kinesthetically-acquired aesthetics of behavior and fashion bequeathed to her by her mother and maternal grandmother.

In exploring kimono culture, the author studies the history of clothing and of used kimonos, and the ways in which hobbyist-wearers of antique and used kimonos express their personhoods in contemporary Japan. Treating the practice of kimono-wearing as an aspect of family folklore and material behavior, the author discusses the meaning of the garment in her own personal life, and in the lives of others. Through detailed investigation and analysis of her participation in kimono culture, the author unravels the reasons that some people take an interest in wearing this cumbersome national garment that ceased some decades ago to function as everyday clothing in Japan.

Periods in Japanese History

Jōmon 縄文 (14,000 BCE–300BCE)
Yayoi 弥生 (300BCE–250)
Kofun 古墳 (250–538)
Asuka 飛鳥 (538–710)
Nara 奈良 (710–794)
Heian 平安 (794–1185)
Kamakura 鎌倉 (1185–1333)
Muromachi 室町 (1336–1573)
Azuchi-Momoyama 安土桃山 (1573–1603)
Edo 江戸 (1603–1868)
Meiji 明治 (1868–1912)
Taishō 大正 (1912–1926)
Shōwa 昭和 (1926–1989)
Heisei 平成 (1989–present)

Map of Present-day Japan with Pertinent Areas Highlighted



PREFACE

Growing up I was told often that someday I would make a fine housewife because I was good at basic housework like cooking, cleaning, and sewing. My mother said so, and so did my grandmothers and aunts. They were all housewives, and such a remark was meant as a compliment to a young girl like me; and I accepted it proudly. Yet as I grew older, I began to wonder what else I might be good at. I realized that I was living in a time in which a woman could pursue a career if she so wished. And I devised a grand plan: I would become a career-focused woman, applying to my profession all the qualities that were said to make me excellent housewife material; and once I had become successful I would declare that my accomplishments were owed to the qualities of good housewives, thereby exalting the status of the housewife in society. That would be my way of showing gratitude to my mother and the other women in my family, and of paying respect to all hardworking homemakers who dedicate their lives to their families.

Many years have passed since I hatched this scheme, and I may no longer be working toward it. But I have not lost my aspiration to write something to honor homemakers like my mother and grandmothers. I always cringe when I hear disdainful comments about fulltime housewives, because the women in my family have had a significant impact on the construction of my personhood, including my moral values, manners, and behaviors. I have decided to take this dissertation opportunity to achieve my aspirations by reflecting upon and writing about the ways in which my personhood reflects their influence.

Also, for my dissertation project I wanted to do something that would summarize my training in folklore during these past fifteen or so years. Folklore has been my discipline since

my undergraduate years, and I have conducted ethnographic research many times. The reason that I chose folklore as an academic field was its focus on aspects of everyday life, personal experience, human expressive behavior, and reflexivity. Looking back on my academic path, I recall the word "*jikaku* 自覚 [self-awareness]," which Yanagisawa-sensei (my elementary-school homeroom teacher of four years) used to write daily on the blackboard. He often told us at the end of the school day that we must look back on our thoughts and actions at day's end for the purpose of a morality check, so as to better ourselves. In retrospect I think that he was stressing the importance of reflection. In this dissertation I will elaborate on this aspect of reflexivity in order to highlight my own experience. Because it was my personal experiences that led me to the study of folklore, it is only natural for me to employ an autoethnographic approach, which in this work means an ethnography that contains autobiographical and reflexive accounts of the ethnographer herself.

Hence an autoethnography of kimono-wearing will enable me to fulfil both goals: honoring the women in my life, and reflecting on my life thus far.

Objectives: Scope and Limits

The kimono ceased to function as everyday clothing for the majority of Japanese after World War II. Since then there have been a few kimono revivals, the most recent beginning in the late 1990s. This latest revival has attracted hobbyists charmed by antique kimonos from the first half of the twentieth century.

My interest in kimono culture developed after I inherited from my grandmother a kimono that probably dates from the first half of the twentieth century. Since then I have become curious to learn about the kimono fashions at the time that my grandmother was a young woman. This

has led me to participate in the current kimono culture that revolves around wearing kimonos from the past. Thus in this work I pay particular attention to the history of used kimonos, and to my personal exploration of the kimono culture related to antique and used kimonos in contemporary Japan.[1]

Therefore, the present state and activities of the kimono industry, and the history of the production of kimono textiles, are beyond the scope of my research. Also, though men have had their own ways of cultivating and enjoying kimono fashions, because women's kimono fashion has always operated on a much grander scale than men's, and because I am a female kimono-wearer, my focus is on the investigation of women's kimono culture.

The number of ethnographic reports on kimono-wearing is surprisingly small. Hence my project aims to contribute one detailed contemporary ethnographic account of the kimono-wearing experience, with myself as primary informant.

Although I have interviewed women who enjoy used-kimono fashions, and have incorporated their accounts, my personal and analytical perspectives on the culture of kimono-wearing constitute the largest part of this dissertation. As an ethnographer I believe in the importance of revealing personal aspects of life for the sake of delivering in-depth descriptions of culture. Yet I recognize the ethical dilemma that haunts the ethnographer: it is always a challenge to find individuals who will grant permission to reveal details of their personal lives; and even after finding such individuals, conscientious researchers must consider how much detail to include in their work, and how their work might impact the individuals' lives after

[1] In this project I use the word "used" as an umbrella term to refer to secondhand clothing items. When discussing contemporary kimono-wearing culture, I distinguish between secondhand items made before and after World War II, using the word "antique" to refer to the former, and the word "used" to refer to the latter. I use "antique" because the word "*antīku* アンティーク" (from the English) is often used in today's Japan to refer to pre-war objects, including kimonos. "*Antīku*" may connote monetary value, since items with little monetary value are unlikely to appear in the used-item market in the first place. Yet the word is often used as an alternative to words that mean "old" ("*furu* 古") or "old-time" ("*mukashi* 昔"), regardless of the monetary value of the item to which it is applied.

publication. Because I have gone through this dilemma several times before, this time I will instead expose my own experiences and my own life. This is because I believe that I can best demonstrate my analytical skills by analyzing my own experience. As a woman who has only recently begun to wear kimonos, I can offer detailed personal ethnographic accounts that explicate why and how a Japanese woman today might wear kimonos.

Research Methods

The primary research method employed for this study of kimono-wearing is ethnography. To research current kimono culture, I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in the Tokyo area. This was an ideal locale for this research for two reasons. Japan's capital since 1603, Tokyo has long been a center of fashion, and is home to many secondhand-kimono shops. Within Tokyo there are dozens of antique-kimono and used-kimono shops, and several dot neighboring prefectures like Chiba, Kanagawa, and Saitama. Also, because my parents and grandparents grew up in Tokyo, places within Tokyo appear frequently in my family-history stories. Therefore, for me to explore and understand kimono culture in a way that I can relate to my familial culture, there was no better place to go than Tokyo.

My fieldwork divides into three phases. My first research trip, in spring 2011, lasted one month. With my mother I visited nearly all the used- and antique-kimono shops in the Tokyo area that I had identified, in order to get a firsthand sense of used-kimono and antique-kimono culture. I interacted with clerks, and purchased some kimonos for myself. During the winter of the same year, I returned to Tokyo. At that time I took three different courses to learn how properly to put on a kimono, which afforded me a glimpse into the operation of the special schools that offer instruction in this art. I returned to some of the shops that I had visited in the

spring, and interviewed several kimono-wearers. I also attended kimono-related social events, and visited open-air markets and antique markets where used-kimono sellers have stalls.

My final research trip was more extensive, lasting six months (December 2012–May 2013), during which time I revisited the same shops to further relationships and to learn more about the kimono business. As I began to cultivate my own kimono style, I favored some stores over others because of their selection, atmosphere, and clerks' personalities; this led to my establishing good relationships with particular stores. I also visited shops and antique markets again, and interviewed more kimono-wearers. By this time I had befriended some hobbyist-wearers[2] and store clerks, and I socialized with them at meals and kimono-related events. Our many informal conversations helped me to understand kimono fashions and the used- and antique-kimono business. Thus my study of kimono culture and kimono fashions was made possible primarily through talking with the managers, attendants, and customers of used- and antique-kimono shops, as well as with hobbyist-wearers that I met online.

I documented information by taking photos when I visited kimono-related events, and by audio-recording formal interviews with businesspeople and hobbyist-wearers. In order to reflect on my experience of kimono-wearing and on my observations of events, I kept a journal while in Tokyo.

Information about my family history—when not drawn from my own memory—was acquired through talking with my parents and relatives. My mother was most essential as a source of information because she was able to tell me about her own mother and grandmother. During my last stay in Tokyo, I visited my mother's relatives, whom I knew little, to learn about

[2] In this research, I use the term "hobbyist-wearer" to refer to an individual who wears kimonos as part of her dailywear, and who enjoys kimono-wearing as a hobby—as opposed to one who wears a kimono for occupational reasons.

the early lives of my grandmother and great-grandmother—the time prior to the birth of my mother.

Chapter Overview

Chapter One begins with a brief overview of the kimono (including the definition of the word "kimono," and the current state of kimono culture), followed by a brief description of my initiation into kimono culture. Chapter Two reviews existing literature: museum catalogs that feature antique kimonos; and scholarly works that address dress and identity, autoethnography, material culture, and family folklore. It is here that I propose the concept of "kin-aesthetics" as an aspect of family folklore. Chapter Three outlines the long-term history of clothing and the more recent history of used clothing in Japan. Chapter Four explains how I grew interested in kimono culture and kimono-wearing. I narrate how I took a respite from my exploration of kimono culture in Chapter Five. Chapter Six summarizes my ethnographic investigation of used-kimono culture by discussing my shopping experiences and interactions with other hobbyist-wearers. Chapter Seven concludes my analysis of antique- and used-kimono-wearing in today's Japan, and offers suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER ONE: The Kimono Considered

What is a Kimono?

The word "kimono" has a long history, as it has been a general colloquial term to denote "clothing" for many centuries. It appears in Japan's oldest novel, *Utsuho monogatari* うつほ物語 [The tale of the hollow tree], which is believed to have been written in the late tenth century.[3] Today many regional dialectal forms of the word have been reported from all over the nation.[4] The word "kimono" probably derives from the compound "*kiru-mono*" (the verb "*kiru* 着る [to wear]" plus the noun "*mono* 物 [thing(s)]").

At the same time, the word "kimono" has also been used to refer specifically to traditional Japanese-style clothing—in which sense it is synonymous with the word "*wa-fuku* [Japanese-style clothing]," in contradistinction to "*yō-fuku* [Western-style clothing]." When Japanese society began adopting Western-style clothing in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it became necessary to differentiate conventional Japanese clothing from the new kind introduced from the West. Thus two compound nouns were created, both employing a word ("*fuku* 服") that meant clothing: "*yō-fuku* 洋服" ("*yō* 洋" for Western) and "*wa-fuku* 和服" ("*wa* 和" for Japanese). During the twentieth century, Western-style clothing gradually replaced the traditional kind as

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[3] The date and author of *Utsuho monogatari* are unknown. However, because novels written in later years refer to this work, it is considered the oldest long novel in Japan. The court lady Seishōnagon 清少納言, in her signature work *Makura no sōshi* 枕草子[The pillow book] (1002), suggests that *Utsuho monogatari* was written sometime between 970 and 999. In the typeset edition of *Utsuho monogatari* that is based on a manuscript preserved in the Maeda family (which is considered the most authentic version of the tale by Japanese scholars), the word "kimono" appears in *hiragana* (Japanese syllabary) in the first chapter ("Toshikage 俊蔭"), in which the twelve-year-old male protagonist is described as subsisting by eating roots and wearing clothing (kimono) made of tree bark—despite his aristocratic lineage. He has been living with his mother in a hollow tree due to the loss of patronage precipitated by the death of his mother's father (Utsuho monogatari kenkyūkai 1957, 1:73).

[4] For a list of dialectal forms, see *Nihon kokugo dai-jiten* 日本国語大辞典 [Dictionary of Japan's national language], 2nd ed. (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 2001), s.v. "kimono きもの (着物, 著物)."

everyday attire for the majority of Japanese, and in the second half of the century Western-style clothing became dominant. As a result the usage of "kimono" to refer to clothing in general has become less common, whereas "kimono" as a synonym of the retronym "*wa-fuku*" has become much more common in contemporary Japanese (Koike 1991, 52–53).[5]

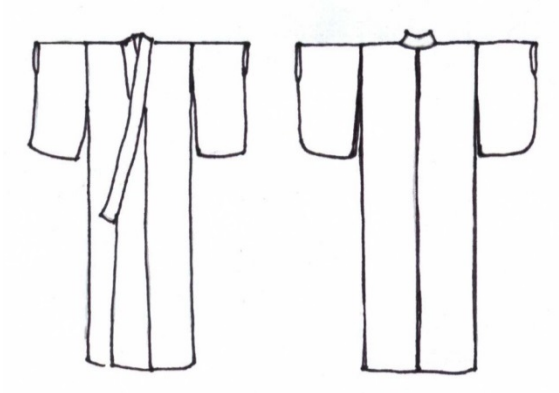

Figure 1: *Nagagi* front (left) and back (right)

In today's Japan, the word "kimono" in colloquial use means "*wa-fuku*" in general, though it often refers more specifically to the outer garment—called a "*nagagi* 長着" [literally, "long clothing"]—that is tailored in the style of a *kosode* 小袖 [literally, "small sleeves"],[6] as well as to any outfit that involves a *nagagi*. This is because *kosode*-shaped clothing (which has been part of Japanese-style attire since around the twelfth century) is the most well-known kind of *wa-fuku* within Japan, and has been regarded overseas as the garment most symbolic of Japanese ethnicity.

In this work, I use the word "kimono" in three ways: "a kimono" to refer to a *nagagi*; "a kimono outfit" to refer to an outfit that involves a *nagagi*; and "kimono culture" and "kimono fashion" to denote the culture and fashion that revolve around outfits that involve *nagagi*s. I

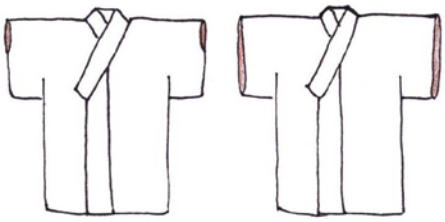

Figure 2: *Kosode* (left) and *ōsode* (right) (sleeve openings highlighted)

[5] Nevertheless current Japanese dictionaries still list "clothing" in general as the first definition of "kimono."
[6] The *kosode*-style garment has small sleeve openings, in contrast to the *ōsode* 大袖 [literally, "big sleeves"], which has wide sleeve openings (because the two pieces that make the sleeves are not sewn together). The distinction between the *kosode* and the *ōsode* is based, not on the width of the sleeve, but on the width of the sleeve opening (see Figures 1–2). The *kosode*-like garment was already common in medieval Japan.

use the word "*nagagi*" only when absolutely necessary: for instance, to differentiate a *nagagi* from the other components of a kimono outfit.

The standard kimono outfit is constituted of multiple pieces of clothing (Figure 3):

- An undergarment, called a *hada-juban* 肌襦袢 (not visible from the outside)
- An inner-garment, called a *naga-juban* 長襦袢
- A collar (*han-eri* 半襟)[7] to sew onto the *naga-juban*
- A *nagagi*
- Several interior sashes (*koshi-himo* 腰紐 and *date-jime* 伊達締め) to secure the *juban* and *nagagi* around the body (not visible from the outside)
- An *obi* 帯
- A sash, called an *obi-age* 帯揚げ
- A decorative cord, called an *obi-jime* 帯締め
- Split-toe socks, called *tabi* 足袋
- Backless thong sandals, called *zōri* 草履 or *geta* 下駄

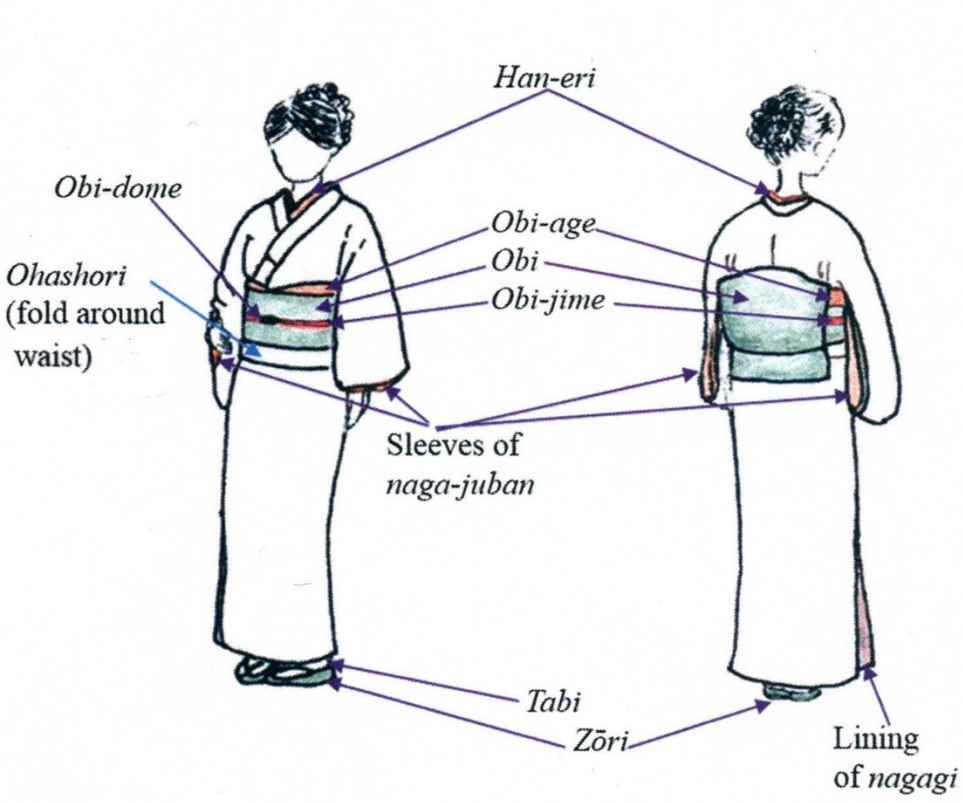

Figure 3: Kimono outfit

[7] A rectangular piece of fabric (approximately forty inches by eight inches).

These are minimums for composing today's standard kimono outfit, with an *obi* tied in the style called "*o-taiko* お太鼓 [the drum]," but other (hidden) supportive and decorative accessories are necessary to perfect the shape and style of the outfit. The vast quantity of items can be intimidating enough to turn a non-wearer away from any thought of ever wearing the garment. For a fashion-enthusiast, however, mastering the art of combining these items to assert a personal style is the apogee of kimono fashion. The illustration (Figure 3) highlights components of the outfit whose interactions (in terms of color, pattern, fabric, and more) bespeak one's taste. This aspect of kimono culture is one theme of my research.

The Current State of the Kimono

The kimono as a hollow symbol of Japan?

The kimono has throughout history been one prominent symbol of Japan, bearing a high artistic value and cultural significance both inside and outside of Japan. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, things Japanese spurred an aesthetic sensation called *Japonisme* in Europe. Along with ukiyoe prints and netsuke, the kimono was one of the exotica exported to the West during this period, inspiring many paintings of kimono-clad Caucasian women, such as James McNeill Whistler's *The Princess from the Land of Porcelain,* Claude Monet's *Madame Monet en costume japonais* [Madame Monet in Japanese costume], Alfred Stevens's *La parisienne japonaise* [The Japanese Parisian woman], and *Meisje in witte kimono* [Girl in a white kimono] by George Hendrik Breitner.[8]

To this day the kimono continues to represent the Orient to the West. More specifically, it is the image of a kimono-clad woman (the most notable example being the geisha) that exudes

[8] For further discussion of notions of *Japonisme* and of an imagined Japan in the West, see Berger (1992); Fukai (1994); Geczy (2013, 116–24); Milhaupt (2005); Weisberg (2011); Wichmann (1985, 16–21); Yoshihara (2003).

the exoticism of Japan. Airline magazines promoting Japanese destinations often contain photos of kimono-clad women; and geishas are featured constantly on Japan's tourist souveniors: T-shirts, cups, chopsticks, greeting cards, wall hangings.

In its home country, too, the kimono is symbolic of things Japanese. It has been more than a century since the Japanese government commenced the systematic program of Westernization that made Japanese culture a hybrid of East and West. Within Japan, Japanese-ness is very much an esoterically constructed rhetoric, and the kimono plays a vital part in the authentication of Japanese-ness. Upscale Japanese restaurants are staffed by kimono-clad servers. Traditional hotels offer Japanese-style clothing for guests to use after bathing in hot springs. Advertisements for traditional Japanese foods such as *udon* noodles and green tea customarily feature famous actors wearing kimonos. Kimono-clad celebrities appear in advertising related to traditional Japanese calendar customs like New Year's Day, Girl's Day, and Boy's Day (but never for imported holidays like Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Halloween). More women than men are used in such advertisements. In today's Japan, there are specific times and places for Japanese people to consume and experience Japanese-ness, and a kimono-clad woman is essential in creating such a sense of tradition in Japanese culture. Thus domestically (as much as abroad), the kimono and kimono-clad women have been part of the visual imagery symbolic of Japanese-ness.

This domestic use of kimono-clad women in the construction of Japanese-ness is explained by the fact that the kimono has become something familiar yet distant to most Japanese, as the kimono ceased during the second half of the twentieth century to function as everyday attire for the majority. After its defeat in World War II, Japan aspired to rebuild itself in the image of the West, and many things that represented Japan's old ways faded from people's everyday lives. Among them was the kimono, which gradually acquired a new position as special-occasion attire

for life-cycle events such as coming-of-age rituals, graduation ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. But the kimono is optional even on those occasions; Western-style dress dominates at special occasions, too. Nowadays, unless involved in kimono-related occupations (kimono-textile sellers, antique- and used-kimono retailers, attendants at Japanese-style restaurants and hotels) or religious and cultural traditions (priests, teachers of flower arrangement and tea ceremony, practitioners of Japanese-style performing arts), Japanese people generally do not wear kimonos as everyday clothing. One rarely comes across kimono-clad Japanese in everyday settings in Japan, and the kimono may now be as exotic to the Japanese as it is to the non-Japanese.

Because several generations have passed since the kimono became obsolete in the daily life of Japan, it is not news that the kimono tradition may be nearing extinction both within Japan and without. Reports on the demise of kimono culture periodically percolate in the media, despite the kimono industry's attempts at reviving this long-loved symbol of Japan. For example, the BBC's 1999 article "Saving the Kimono" summarizes the current status of the nation's emblematic garment: it is not that the Japanese no longer like the kimono; they just don't know how to wear it or don't feel the need to wear it themselves (Hindell 1999). Indeed, Western-style clothing has dominated the daily lives of the majority for several generations. The BBC short documentary *Mastering the Art of the Kimono* (2012) mentions that the ranks of highly skilled kimono craftsmen are thinning, and that the high cost of special-occasion kimonos has driven people further from the kimono, such that in the fashionable city of Tokyo one rarely spots a person in a kimono.[9]

[9] The audio only is available online: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b017chpt (accessed January 25, 2015). An abridged version of the film (entitled *Kimono Culture—A Dying Art*?) is also available online: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-15739403 (accessed January 25, 2015).

The kimono industry is undoubtfully shrinking. Many kimono-fabric wholesalers and retailers have gone out of business in the last few decades.[10] Craftsmen who weave kimono textiles, dye fabrics, or paint intricate patterns on kimono fabrics are disappearing without successors to carry on their traditions and skills, even though some of them have been awarded the title of *Ningen kokuhō* 人間国宝 [Living national treasure].[11] In the past women in the many regions that produced hemp, cotton, and silk wove kimono textiles to supply the kimono industry (the regions established their own brands of textiles, and weaving textiles was an important means of supplementing household incomes for farmers). The streets of these regions were once filled with the sound of household looms. But that is no longer the case, because Japan's domestic production of kimono textiles decreased with the decline in demand in the last quarter of the twentieth century. As a result much of Japan's kimono textiles are now produced in Southeast Asia.

Because the remaining domestic textile makers recognize the crisis in the industry, they make textiles for things other than kimonos (bags, pouches, wallets, wall hangings), so that the textile traditions themselves will not die out. Meanwhile consumers continue to value old kimono textiles. Kimonos can be taken apart, and the fabrics reused to make accessories like bags, scarves, and broaches, and crafts like quilts, dolls, and other decorative objects. It is

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[10] For the sake of survival, one major kimono-fabric company switched to the used-kimono business by opening a used-kimono shop called Tansu-ya in Funabashi, Chiba in 1999. Tansu-ya grew into a successful franchise operating ninety-nine branches all over Japan by 2005 (Nakamura 2006, 38). Mitsuru Konishi runs a shop called Shitamachi omoshiro kōgeikan 下町おもしろ工芸館 in Ningyōcho in Tokyo. The shop used to be a small kimono wholesaler, but due to the decline of the kimono business, the shop became a retailer in 1993, downsizing its kimono selection and expanding into towels and other goods—later adding handicrafts and used kimonos. Although he outsources acquisition of used kimonos, he can appraise used kimonos thanks to his kimono-wholesaler career.

[11] "*Ningen kokuhō*" is the popular term for individuals or groups designated "*Jūyō mukei bunkazai hojisha* 重要無形文化財保持者 [Preservers of important intangible cultural properties]" by the Japanese government's Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The title, which recognizes mastery of a traditional art, is conferred in two categories: performing arts (kabuki, noh, puppetry, dance, music, storytelling), and crafts (textiles, pottery, lacquerware, metalworking, woodworking, paperworking, dollmaking). Thus far a few dozen artists have been registered under the sub-category of textiles.

possible to have fancy kimonos remade into Western-style clothes like shirts, blouses, skirts, and dresses. Wedding kimonos, gowns, and *obi*s can be cut up and repurposed as Western-style wedding garments.

Even though people still cherish kimono culture, it is questionable whether they would take the kimono back into their everyday wardrobes, and it is not likely that the kimono will resume its status as dailywear. Although the kimono's emblematic status within Japanese tradition is unwavering, kimono culture in Japan has slowly waned.

The revival of the kimono and of kimono-wearing

Ever since Western-style clothing became common as dailywear among the Japanese, the kimono industry has tried to revitalize kimono culture through a few niches in the market. One strategy has been to market the *yukata* 浴衣, a piece of *wa-fuku* initially created as a bathrobe, which is popular to wear at summertime events like traditional festivals or fireworks shows. The *yukata* as an outfit is much less involved than the standard kimono outfit, and it is possible for those unfamiliar with kimono-wearing to manage it. The kimono industry has also focused on the marketing of special-occasion or formal kimonos. Such kimonos are more complex even than everyday kimonos—so much so that people must hire professionals to dress them. This can be costly, and one may have to get up early in the morning in order to have one's makeup, hairdo, and outfit perfected. But for a once-in-a-lifetime occasion (e.g., a wedding or coming-of-age ceremony), many people deem the effort and cost worthwhile.

Every year the industry introduces new designs of *yukata*s and special-occasion kimonos, and some companies even go so far as to partner with internationally renowned designers (like Junko Koshino 小篠順子, Kansai Yamamoto 山本寛斎, or Chisato Tsumori 津森千里) or

celebrities popular among young women (recent examples being the Olympic figure-skating medalist Mao Asada 浅田真央; the charismatic beautician Ikko; Yūko Ōshima 大島優子 and Mayu Watanabe 渡辺麻友, leading members of the popular girl group AKB48; and Japan's subcultural icon Kyary Pamyu Pamyu きゃりーぱみゅぱみゅ).

Still, it has been a struggle for the kimono industry to attract younger generations to kimono-wearing, and the industry is on the decline due to the ever-growing market for Western-style clothing. But as the end of the millennium drew near it received a boost.

In the closing years of the twentieth century Japan began to experience a sense of nostalgia, and things that represented bygone days became desirable once again (see Creighton 1992; Ivy 1995). The Shōwa period (1926–1989)—which for most Japanese is representative of the totality of the twentieth century—had become conceptually distant enough for people to recall it fondly despite its wars, depressions, and other challenges. In the twenty-first century this nostalgia has only grown, which has led in the new millennium to a veritable "Japan fad" among the Japanese. Reproductions of early Shōwa-style furniture began to appear on the market, and television dramas whose stories are set during the early Shōwa period to evoke the "good old days" became hits.

At the same time Japan grew more attuned to the gaze of the Other and recognized the marketability of the Japanese style, "*wa* 和" (as opposed to the styles of other cultures). Decorative arts in Japanese style (*wa-mono* 和物) and materials with Japanese-style patterns (*wa-gara* 和柄) became increasingly available in consumer culture. Amidst the *wa* boom of the twenty-first century, kimono culture has captured the attention of young women, as the kimono is one of the obsolete cultural forms now revived to satisfy their appetite for *wa*. In the words of

historian David Lowenthal, "the past is a foreign country."[12] The kimono, along with other things *wa*, has acquired an exotic charm in its own country due to its distance in time. The garment fits into romanticized notions of Japan's halcyon days.

Kimono revivals themselves are not new, but what is new this time is the interest among young people in wearing kimonos as part of everyday fashion—and the market's role in fueling this interest. The kimono industry has begun to market kimonos made of synthetic fabrics (instead of traditional materials like silk or cotton), readymade kimonos (as opposed to conventionally tailored ones), and complete pre-assembled outfits so as to make the garment more accessible to young women, and thereby kindle their desire to wear it (Itō 1990, 129–31). As a result more and more young women have taken an interest in wearing kimonos, kimono-wearing workshops have increased in number, and the kimono phenomenon has been recognized as a part of Japan's contemporary fashion (Jō and Watanabe 2007, 229–30).

Responding to this movement in the fashion industry, stylists, designers, kimono collectors, and kimono-outfit coordinators began publishing how-to books or websites on kimono-wearing, and launching their own blogs (see Endō 2002–2003; Kimino 2004). Traditional kimono companies established brands specifically catering to the interest of young women in dailywear kimonos. For example, Furifu ふりふ is a brand established in 1999 by the kimono-fabric company Mimatsu 三松. The brand features both contemporary designs and reproductions of antique-kimono patterns aimed at young women, including teenagers. Many of its everyday kimonos are made of polyester (making them machine-washable), and the company sells various pre-assembled kimono outfits so that the novice kimono-wearer need not worry about her ability to compose one.

[12] In *The Past is a Foreign Country* (1985), Lowenthal explains that people's relationship with history is diachronic, as they appropriate the past and its elements—from the tangible (artifacts, historical sites) to the intangible (memories)—to serve their present needs. The past is revivable if needed in the present.

Young kimono enthusiasts started their own companies specifically to meet the demand for everyday kimonos. For instance, Kururi くるり is a Tokyo-based corporation founded in 2001 that sells high-quality everyday and formal kimonos to appeal to women in their late twenties and older. Partnering often with skilled traditional craftspeople in Japan, the company attempts to reintroduce the joy of kimono fashions to the generations of women who now find the kimono new and exciting. In addition to selling kimonos and related accessories, the company runs a culture school that offers lessons on various aspects of kimono fashion (the types of weaving and dyeing involved in kimono-making, how to assemble kimono outfits) and on Japanese traditions (tea ceremony, calligraphy, embroidery).

Joining a few long-running women's magazines featuring kimono fashions for older women (such as *Utsukushii kimono* 美しいキモノ [Beautiful kimono], launched in 1953) in the early twenty-first century were two magazines (*Kimono-hime* KIMONO 姫 [Kimono princess], begun in 2003; and *Nanaoh* 七緒, begun in 2004) fully devoted to kimono-wearing for young women. In addition dozens of new books have been published that offer instruction on shopping for kimonos and assembling kimono outfits.

Thanks to the development of social media, multiple online communities of hobbyist-wearers have emerged. Kimono de Ginza きもの de 銀座 [To Ginza, in kimonos] is a monthly event begun in 1999 open to anyone willing to walk four blocks down the main street of Ginza (Tokyo's historically famous fashion district) in a kimono. The gathering takes place on the second Saturday of every month, and there is an option to socialize at a bar afterward.

Kimono Jack is a group, formed in Kyoto, that instigates kimono-wearing flash mobs to "hijack" places or events. The call to assemble is made through Twitter, and anyone interested can participate. Today chapters are located in Kyoto and sixteen other prefectures. Kimono Jack

has gone global, and gatherings have taken place in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The Facebook pages of several chapters show photographs of non-Japanese individuals wearing kimonos and enjoying themselves.[13]

A non-profit organization named Kimono Projekuto キモノプロジェクト [The kimono project] was founded in 2010 with the slogan "We will disband once every Japanese is able to don a kimono with confidence." A group of young kimono enthusiasts formed this group, which convenes events to increase the visibility of the kimono and to promote kimono-wearing. Past events have included fashion contests, kimono-wearing lessons, and used-kimono sales. Kimono Projekuto has sent members in kimonos to pick up litter at tourist spots, and has dispatched kimono-clad models to events in need of some *wa* flair. These activities have been covered by the media, and in 2012 the organization was lauded by the governor of Tokyo for its efforts to promote kimono-wearing.

Many other social-network groups for kimono-wearers exist, and hundreds of bloggers chronicle their kimono experiences on the Internet. Some of them meet in person to form new social groups of hobbyist-wearers. Though the scale is still small, contemporary kimono culture has been revitalized thanks to these emerging groups of hobbyist-wearers.

Kimono-wearing in school curricula

In the past, when everyone wore kimonos, one learned how to put on a kimono outfit from one's family members. Yet since the kimono disappeared from everyday life, people have forgotten—or have never even learned—how to wear it. In order to keep the Japanese in touch with their traditional garment in this age of globalization, a non-profit organization called Wasō

[13] *The Japan Times* recently featured the Kyoto chapter of Kimono Jack (Jackman 2014). The United Kingdom chapter: https://www.facebook.com/KimonoDeJackUk (accessed January 25, 2015); The Netherlands chapter: https://www.facebook.com/KimonoDeJackNL (accessed January 25, 2015).

kyōiku kokumin suishin kaigi 和装教育国民推進会議 [Committee for the national promotion of education in the wearing of Japanese-style clothing] lobbied the Japanese government to make the teaching of kimono-wearing compulsory in the public schools. Members of this organization are drawn mostly from the kimono industry: unions and organizations of textile producers, kimono-fabric wholesalers and retailers, Japanese-style tailors, schools of kimono-wearing, and so on.

Their efforts were successful. In 1998 Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology published national curriculum guidelines (to be implemented in 2002) that included as an option the teaching of basic knowledge of the kimono (such as its tailored form) in junior-high-school classes on technology and home economics. The Ministry's revised 2008 guidelines (scheduled to take effect in 2012) specify the teaching of basics regarding the wearing of Japanese-style clothing.[14]

Because the ministry's guidelines are not law, some interpreted the kimono-wearing initiative merely as optional. At this point it is unclear how many schools nationwide have incorporated the teaching of kimono-wearing, and to what extent kimono-wearing is taught. Yet Wasō kyōiku kokumin suishin kaigi and other non-profit organizations are willing to dispatch expert instructors to any school that requests them. Because learning how to put on a standard kimono outfit is too challenging for students new to kimono culture, some schools offer lessons in how to put on the more basic *yukata* 浴衣 (see Ishii 2014).

One can only anticipate the effect of this new development upon kimono culture, whose survival depends upon future generations.

[14] For the original, its government-supplied English translation, and my own English translation, see Appendix 1.

The Antique-kimono fad

The kimono revival is supported by another important factor in Japanese society. In the 1990s, an antique-kimono boom started. Due to the passing of people in the generations that had enjoyed kimono fashions in the first half of the twentieth century, old kimonos flooded the antique market. Those inheriting these old kimonos did not know what to do with them and were eager to get rid of them, and estate-sale dealers and used-kimono dealers routed them to antique-kimono sellers.

Some heirs were charmed by the beauty of fashionable antique kimonos while sorting through the personal belongings of the deceased, and started to wear kimonos from the era before World War II. And fashion-conscious young people took notice of the colorful antique kimonos on display at market stalls or emerging from old family chests. They have also been inspired by manga and television programs whose protagonists wear colorful kimonos in stories set in the first few decades of the twentieth century. So supply meets demand. Despite the kimono industry's vigorous launch of newly-designed kimonos in response to the kimono revival movement, some hobbyist-wearers take special interest in resurrecting antique kimonos—so much so that the antique-kimono revival constitutes a robust aspect of the current kimono revival.[15]

In fact the number of antique-kimono shops in urban areas has recently increased, as has the demand for antique kimonos. Some antique-kimono enthusiasts have founded their own stores to sell antique kimonos and accessories. For example, Ichi no kura 壱の蔵 is an antique-kimono shop founded in 1999 by the fashion coordinator Katsumi Yumioka 弓岡勝美, who has

[15] For example, young women are attracted to the types of kimono that were popular in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The kimono for young women then reflected the influence of Western art movements such as art nouveau and art deco. The kimono from this period is often described as Taishō romanticism. For a brief article that discusses the current antique-kimono revival, see Firsching-Tovar (2013).

published books on antique kimonos and crafts using kimono fabrics. There are several branches of Ichi no kura in Tokyo, and the shop runs a culture school much like the one operated by Kururi. Mamechiyo 豆千代 is a kimono designer and stylist who opened her own antique-kimono shop in 1998, and in 2002 established a brand that sells kimonos with reproductions of antique patterns as well as kimonos with patterns of her own design inspired by antique kimonos. Her store is very popular among young female kimono enthusiasts. Because the average height of Japanese women has increased in recent decades, antique kimonos can be too small for many young women. But Mamechiyo's appropriately-sized reproductions enable young kimono enthusiasts to enjoy antique-kimono fashions. Moreover, many of her kimonos are made of high-quality silk-like polyester, which can be drycleaned or machine-washed. These kimonos are therefore much less costly to maintain than traditional silk kimonos, which make them affordable for teenagers and college students. Mamechiyo also publishes kimono fashion guidebooks to help her fans to broaden their understanding of kimono fashion.

In the past decade and a half, popular presses have begun to respond to this antique-kimono boom. From 2000 to 2004 Heibon-sha issued in its *Bessatsu taiyō* 別冊太陽 series seven volumes that explained how to shop for and wear antique kimonos.[16] Guidebooks that discuss Taishō and early-Shōwa kimono culture for young women (Ishikawa 2009; Nakamura 2005), and that discuss coordinating techniques for kimono outfits (e.g., which patterns of kimono go well with which patterns of *obi*; how to wear kimonos in unorthodox ways to enjoy kimono fashions), have appeared (e.g., Aoki 2008). Rafu Ōno opened her antique-kimono shop, Ponia-pon, in Tokyo in 2003. Initially a freelance writer as well as an antique-kimono fan and wearer

[16] Heibon-sha was established in 1914 and was in the late 1920s a leading publisher that promoted reading for the masses. The *Bessatsu taiyō* series, begun in 1973, is dedicated to the humanities. Although the volumes are not academic *per se*, they contain articles written by scholars and specialists, and are rich in photographs and other visual aids such as maps and charts.

herself, after establishing her clientele nationwide Ōno published two antique-kimono manuals that discuss how to coordinate outfits with antique kimonos and *obi*s (Ōno 2008; Ōno 2009). Her own fashion sense has attracted many fans, and through Twitter they can follow what is new in her store collection and her latest coordination of kimono outfits.

The aforementioned new kimono fashion magazines for young women include articles that advise readers to start wearing kimonos by purchasing used kimonos. Photobooks have been published that feature young models in contemporary makeup and hairdos, dressed in antique kimonos, inspiring young hobbyist-wearers to enjoy kimono fashions today's way.

Considered obsolete only decades ago, the antique kimono is now in vogue, and wearing it offers many ways to express one's personality. However, hobbyist-wearers of antique and used kimonos approach the practice of kimono-wearing and support the kimono revival in different ways from those who enjoy kimonos of contemporary design.

My Initiation into Kimono-Wearing: In Search of an Individual Style

My initiation to kimono-wearing coincided with the recent kimono revival in Japan. Because I left Japan for North America in 1996, I was unaware of the phenomenon until inheriting my maternal grandmother's kimono and growing interested in wearing it.

Because my grandmother's kimono was an antique kimono, it was primarily antique kimonos that drew my interest. Thus I browsed in antique- and used-kimono shops for *nagagi*s from the past. While I was happy to be able to purchase used kimonos at affordable prices, I felt squeamish at wearing them because they could not be washed in modern washing machines. I have come to prefer machine-washable contemporary *naga-juban*s made of silk that is pre-treated to avoid shrinkage. Also, my feet are rather big for a Japanese woman, and because my

second toe is longer than my first, I have come to prefer contemporary alternatives for my footwear. Traditional socks (*tabi*s) hurt my second toe, as the toe area of the sock is made even. Therefore, I wear *tabikkusu* (machine-woven stretchy socks with split toes).[17] Traditional sandals are too small for my feet, so I purchased a modern type of sandal that comes in larger sizes.

I have come to have these preferences after experimenting with different kinds of clothing and footwear available in today's Japan, by physically wearing and moving in them. There are everyday kimonos, *obi*s, and accessories made of polyester, cotton, and silk; and they come in many different colors and patterns. Kimono-wearers in the twenty-first century have so many options that variations in style exist. To wear a kimono one must have a set of accessories: undergarments, sashes, collar, *obi*, decorative cord, socks, sandals. It is through the combination of all these accoutrements—in addition to the pairing of *nagagi* and *obi*—that one projects one's taste, style, and personhood.

My detailed autoethnographic research will investigate the creation of individuality through kimono-wearing practices. Given the fact that the current revival has thus far lasted nearly two decades, it is interesting to study the ways in which an individual cultivates her own style in contemporary Japan. My case study contextualizes the kimono as clothing in everyday use today, and offers insight into the process of developing my own style through trial and error, while underscoring the importance of kinesthetic interaction with objects in understanding the artistry of their usage.

[17] The term derives from the combination of two words: "*tabi*" and "*sokkusu*" (from the English "socks").

CHAPTER TWO: Autoethnography, Clothing, and Kin-aesthetics

In reviewing the existing literature pertinent to my kimono research, I first discuss the methodology of autoethnography. Autoethnography as an ethnographic method has given rise to numerous publications within Anglophone academia in recent years. However, because the method is still very much new to the field of ethnography in Japan, I will discuss why the method is useful for the study of Japanese folklore from the viewpoint of a native trained in North American folkloristics. Also, publications related to the kimono, used clothing, and family folklore are reviewed in order to discuss how my research highlights the aspect of kinesthetic understanding in kimono-wearing.

Autoethnography as Folkloristic Method

Overview: Definition and genres

"Autoethnography" is a term that has thus far been used more frequently in anthropology than in folklore. In the 1970s two anthropologists published articles using the term. Karl Heider is credited with introducing the term "auto-ethnography" in his study of the Dani people of West New Guinea. "Auto," in his usage, is twofold: "auto" because he elicited accounts from the autochthonous population; and because his way of eliciting the natives' accounts was so simple that information on how the Dani describe their daily routines was collected "automatically" with the open-ended question, "What do people do?" (1975, 2).

While coinage of the term is credited to Heider, today's notion of auto-ethnography stems from a short article by David M. Hayano (1979), in which he repurposed the term "auto-

ethnography," defining it as "native ethnography," wherein the researcher is a member of the group or community that he or she studies. Because of anthropology's colonialist heritage (Caucasian researchers in the West studying non-Caucasian groups in America, Asia, Africa, Oceania, and so on), the discipline has had a long history of disregarding the research findings of non-Caucasian natives who study their own peoples—even while research by Caucasian ethnographers on their own "native" cultures and communities has been welcomed as useful insider knowledge. Arguing against this hegemony, Hayano asserts that ethnographic data collected from non-white native ethnographers should be regarded as no less valuable to anthropological discourse on culture than data collected by non-native white ethnographers; non-Caucasian ethnographers studying their native cultures deserve the same scholarly recognition as their Caucasian colleagues. Because the term "native" itself is often associated within the discipline with non-white people, Hayano's attempt at recasting "native ethnography" as "autoethnography" was itself a breakthrough at the time.

Almost two decades later the term was reintroduced—and its concept elaborated—by Deborah E. Reed-Danahay in order to discuss the complicacy of human experience, since researchers are boundary-crossers (geographically and socio-culturally), and their voices are influenced by their multiple altering and evolving identities (1997, 4).

Reed-Danahay categorizes "autoethnography" into three genres: 1. native anthropology (researchers from groups that were in the past subjects for outsider researchers write about their own groups); 2. ethnic ethnography (researchers as members of ethnic minority groups write about their experience); and 3. autobiographical ethnography (researchers interweave personal experiences into their ethnographic work) (Reed-Danahay 1997, 2).[18] These three genres are

[18] Anne Meneley and Donna Young suggest a different set of four genres of auto-ethnographic writing: 1. Native and insider ethnography; 2. Ethnography incorporating autobiographical reflexivity; 3. Writing that explores

helpful in understanding the growing number of autoethnographic works that have been published in recent decades, since autoethnography has become a buzzword in multiple academic fields: international relations, education, literature, performing arts, and material culture.

Genre 1. Native anthropology: Mary Louise Pratt, in her book *Imperial Eyes* (1992), understands autoethnography as native ethnography in the discourse of colonialism, using the term to refer specifically to ethnographic accounts written by the colonized as a response to ethnographic descriptions produced by the colonizers (7).[19] In this sense, the nineteenth-century writing of a half-Ojibwe man, William Whipple Warren (1825–1853), can be discussed as autoethnography because Warren aspired to add native interpretations of Ojibwe culture to the Caucasian-dominated discourse on his people (Hooley 2012). Similarly autoethnographic is a contemporary memoir by the female Muslim sociologist Fatima Mernissi (b. 1940) (Bourget 2013).

Genre 2. Ethnic ethnography: Education professors Cynthia Cole Robinson and Pauline Clardy published an anthology, *Tedious Journeys: Autoethnography by Women of Color in Academe* (2010), in which non-white female professors recount hardships experienced navigating through predominantly White male academic institutions in the United States. *Asian Canadian Writing Beyond Autoethnography* (Ty and Verduyn 2008) discusses work by Asian Canadian writers and artists as ethnic minority autobiography and ethnography. Autoethnography as the expression of an ethnic minority can be applied to material culture studies, as exemplified by sculptures of the Haida-Canadian Bill Reid (Martineau 2001).

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political economies within the discipline of anthropology; 4. Retrospective writing by senior academics recalling their early ethnographic experiences (2005, 3–4).

[19] Arguing against Pratt's discussion of autoethnography in colonial discourse, James Buzard removes its colonial tint from the term autoethnography in order to widen its definition, discussing that even Charles Dickens' novels can be interpreted as a "metropolitan autoethnography" of Victorian Britain (2005, 105–56).

Genre 3. Autobiographical ethnography: Ruth Behar's *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart* (1997) and Carolyn Ellis's *Final Negotiations: A Story of Love, Loss, and Chronic Illness* (1995) and *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel About Autoethnography* (2004) are among the more famous ethnographic publications addressing personal experience that inspired the ensuing trend for autoethnography in anthropological literature. Both women reveal personal details of their lives, such as the loss of family members, marital troubles, and emotional interactions with informants and students. Rather than portraying the lives of informants, these ethnographers write about themselves (their memories, emotions, and thought processes) in order to explicate the personal lives that ethnographers go through while tending to professional duties like fieldwork and teaching.

As more and more researchers problematize the prevarication required to deny one's subjectivity in academic writing, and place greater value on reflexivity in scholarship, autoethnography has begun to attract those in fields beyond anthropology and sociology—for example, education (Chang 2008; Chang, Ngunjili, and Hernandez 2013; Holt 2003; Hughes, Pennington, and Makris 2012; Jones, Kim, and Skendall 2012), international relations (Brigg and Bleiker 2010; Dauphinee 2010), and hypermedia design (Duncan 2004).

Issues of subjectivity and native status

Autoethnography as a research approach involves two major issues: 1. The tension between subjectivity and objectivity in establishing academic validity in the social sciences; and 2. The role of native or non-native status in determining the authenticity of voice in ethnography. The subjectivity-objectivity discussion is not at all new to the social sciences. Since many fields in the social sciences have long histories of discounting the researcher's personal accounts as

unreliable scholarly data, it is only relatively recently that reflexivity in research writing has become accepted. However, the debate has taken a new turn as the recent trend of descriptive and emotionally "evocative" autoethnography (Ellis 2004) meets criticism that reminds ethnographers of their scholarly responsibility for the analysis and interpretation of personal experience narratives. While reflexivity has enriched ethnography, researchers should not forget their scholarly purposes, theoretical foundations, and disciplinary obligations, and should not base their writing merely on "its experiential value, its evocative qualities, and its personal commitments" (Atkinson 2006, 402–03). Otherwise autoethnographic writing becomes "mere descriptive autobiography or memoir" (Chang 2008, 51).

What I aspire to conduct in this kimono-wearing ethnography is what Leon Anderson calls "analytic autoethnography," the method of ethnography that requires the researcher to be immersed fully in the environment of his or her fieldwork so that he or she can achieve a better understanding of the insider's perspective on the culture (2006, 389). I believe that it is the analysis of self that makes autoethnographic writing valid as academic work (see Erdmans 2007). And one can take advantage of one's insider status to probe more deeply and carefully the culture under study, which includes oneself.

The legitimacy of autoethnography as scholarly work involves another important issue: the authenticity of reported descriptions and analyses in terms of the researcher's native or non-native status. Because anthropology has historically been a field that studies Others in search of differences, researchers have sought cultures that are different from their own. The cultural gap between the researcher and the group under study is believed to provide the distance that enables analytical objectivity. And mastering a foreign language and acquiring cultural knowledge of a non-Western Other has long been a professional rite of passage and a way to measure academic

achievement in Western anthropological schools (see Abu-Lughod 1991, 138–47; Bunzl 2004; Hayano 1979, 99). Yet the researcher must maintain emotional distance so as not to "go native" and thus over-identify with those under study.[20] For this reason, the self-other discussion is inherent to anthropology, as the researcher's self must keep a distance from the researched other in order to observe and analyze the other's activities.[21] And native ethnographers, who by definition study their home cultures, are considered less professionally established than their peers who investigate cultures other than their own, because of this lack of "distance."

For decades native cultural anthropologists have argued against this disciplinary doxa. For example, the Egyptian anthropologist Hussein M. Fahim (1977) notes that while for Western anthropologists his native culture and people remain mere research interests, for him his research is bound up with the matter of his nation's future. His sense of commitment to bettering the living conditions of the Nubians (and by extension, his nation) is owed to his native status. Others argue that language competency and familiarity with the culture under study are distinct advantages of native ethnographers (Hayano 1979, 101–02; Ohnuki-Tierney 1984).

But being a native is not by default an easy ticket into a culture, because the very concept of the "native" is itself very complicated. David M. Hayano (1979) goes so far as to argue that the existence of intra-group dynamics within native populations, and ethnographers' self-identification with their native groups, can be difficult due to differences of gender, ethnic, racial, religious, and residential affiliations between researchers and informants (1979).

Kirin Narayan presents a similar argument: such factors as race, ethnicity, gender, class, familial affiliation, marital status, and educational background prescribe ethnographers' multiplex identities, and simultaneously position them within a society or culture in ways that

[20] The notion of over-identification, *vis-à-vis* "going native," is regarded as less of an issue in today's ethnographic methodology (Lincoln and Denzin 2000, 1057–58).
[21] For a history of the discussion, see Vidich and Lyman (2000).

could both benefit them through broader and more intimate access, and restrain their behaviors in the field. That is, ethnographers' identities are hybrid, and their identities are constantly repositioned in different ways, depending on who they are with at a given time and place (1993, 678–82).[22] Because this combination of positionality and hybridity situates each individual ethnographer in various ways, knowledge acquired through ethnography could merely capture what Lila Abu-Lughod calls a "positioned truth" (1991, 142).[23]

In my view, the advantages and disadvantages of an ethnographer's native status depend on one's research topic. Certain topics are attractive and easy for outsiders to recognize and tackle because they may be able to ask questions directly, and informants may feel comfortable confiding to outsiders who will leave their domain after research. Yet insiders aware of the complicacy of topics or of intra-group dynamics among informants may know other indirect means of assessing the same issues and come away with more detailed research than outsiders would. But ethnographers who care about their ethical responsibilities should know that, in addition to linguistic and cultural competence, it takes a certain sensitivity to write conscientiously about people; and this is a trait derived from one's personality rather than from such factors as race, ethnicity, gender, age, or culture. In that light, the discussion of "native or non-native" in search of authenticity seems peculiar and out of focus. What is important in ethnography is not to determine who can deliver the authentic voice, but rather to self-examine

[22] Such complicacy of researcher positionality is well described by anthropologist Pnina Motzafi-Haller (1997). She is a native of Israel, who was trained in North America. As an Eastern Jewish woman, she is considered "black" in her homeland, because she belongs to the ethnic group Mizrahi, which is dominated by the Western Jewish group Ashkenazi (who are "white"). But in her field sites in Africa she is "white" because she is not racially African. She aspires to dismantle the hegemony of Israel's Ashkenazi-dominated academia by earning advanced degrees from a North American institution, but feels uncomfortable with her North American colleagues who, without knowing the intra-ethnic complexity of the Jews in Israel, ascribe authenticity to her viewpoints on Israeli culture as a whole simply because she is a native of Israel.

[23] Abu-Lughod argues against the notion of culture that has been established by Western anthropological schools. Because culture is so multiplex, ever-evolving, and heterogeneous, the study of varied individual experiences—"ethnographies of the particular"—will enrich our understanding of culture (1991, 149–60).

one's position in the context of the culture under study and become aware of one's personal and professional self in the field (Narayan 1993, 678). Consequently, both native and non-native ethnographers can contribute to better understandings of culture (Hayano 1979; Kuwayama 2004; Kuwayama 2005).

In the discipline of folklore, on the other hand, these self-other and native-versus-non-native issues are treated differently. Because of its historical connection to nationalism, folklore studies encourage researching the folklore of one's own culture. And North American folklorists tend to view the position of researchers and informants as that of cultural brokers and tradition experts, rather than in the self-other dichotomy. Therefore, in folkloristics the discussion of autoethnography as a research method does not revolve around the validity of ethnographic data collected by non-native versus native and ethnic researchers. Also, because the idea of reflexivity has been embedded in folklore's disciplinary methodology to the extent that it is almost always expected, autoethnography has not sparked the kind of criticism that bubbled up in anthropology and sociology.

In North American folkloristics, the use of the term "autoethnography" is still relatively new. In light of the aforementioned three genres of autoethnographic writing, the pieces that I have located are ethnic and autobiographical. For example, Kimberly Lau (2002), in her poignant personal account of life as the daughter of a Japanese American mother and a Chinese American father, reveals her struggle to find her own identity as she navigates across multiple cultural and social boundaries (she is a mixed-ethnicity Asian American, but is regarded as American when she visits her relatives in Japan, who look like her but have grown up in a different culture). In 2005 the *Journal of American Folklore* published a special issue devoted to autoethnographic creative-writing, which included personal experiences of a middle-aged graduate student (Kogut

2005) and of a young scholar juggling life as a mother and professor (Carver 2005). And more of such work has been published: for example, Amy Shuman writing as a mother of a child with disabilities (2011).

According to the classification proposed by Reed-Danahay (1997), my kimono autoethnography will fall under the first genre—native autoethnography—because I am a native of Japan and I research and write about aspects of Japanese folklore.

A native folklorist?

Unlike anthropology, in which researchers are expected to seek cultures different from their own, folklore promotes studying one's own culture. I believe that the biggest advantage of being a native in studying one's own culture is owed to the quantity of cultural knowledge and personal experiences acquired through growing up within the culture. Personal experience can benefit the researcher as an analytical tool when researching and understanding the complicacy of the culture in question (see Voloder 2008; Yoshimura 2015). Because I have been trained in the discipline of folklore by studying others' folklore, I understand the value of personal experience. While I thoroughly enjoyed learning about the folklore of others (Wisconsinites, Americans, and Scandinavians), I saw limits in my ability to grasp fully, precisely due to my lack of intimate personal experience. I felt that the lack of personal experience prevented me from being able to understand things in depth, and this made me think that I should study the folklore of my own culture. I came to this realization as I commenced my master's program in folklore in Newfoundland.

However, as I learned more about Japanese folklore and folkloristics, I started to question my native-ness and my status as a Japanese folklorist, because my native status, too, is rather

complicated. I am a Japanese woman conducting research in Japan, which makes me a native ethnographer. But due to my family's multiple relocations, I grew up having no sense of attachment to a particular geographical location.

I grew up in the city of Ueda 上田 in the prefecture of Nagano 長野, with an older sister and a younger brother, raised by parents who had been born and raised in Tokyo. When I was three years old, my parents moved to Ueda from the city of Kasahata 笠幡 in the prefecture of Saitama 埼玉, where they had had their first house together. We moved three times within Ueda, changing the local communities to which we belonged. When I was a junior in high school, we moved to the city of Kawagoe 川越 in Saitama, and when I left for the United States in 1998, my family continued to live there. Some years after I had departed, my siblings left home to live on their own, and my parents moved to central Tokyo in 2004, where they continue to reside.

As I studied folklore research conducted by Japanese folklorists in Japan, I grew weary of the fact that the things typically studied in Japanese folkloristics were quite foreign to me because I had no background of living in the type of close-knit community often targeted in Japanese folkloristics. Because my family was not originally from Ueda or Kawagoe, most of the time we were not part of the local communities; we did not participate in their traditional customs, rites, and rituals because we were considered outsiders and were never expected to do so. Because my parents were Tokyo natives, living in a provincial city such as Ueda was not always easy because of some stereotypes against Tokyoites. Since our family was often on its own, my base of cultural knowledge in Japan was my nuclear family.

In Japanese folklore studies, it seems normal for one to embark on researching small communities in regions far from Tokyo, and to investigate traditional folklife there (even if it is archaic). However, if I were to conduct folkloristic and ethnographic fieldwork, I would not have

a community in Japan to return to. Nor did I feel like seeking one, remembering some difficulties that my family had faced during our time in Nagano merely because my parents had been from Tokyo. Ironically, my insider knowledge as a native of Japan was preventing me from aspiring to research the folklore of Japan as idealized in Japanese folkloristics.

Due to my multiple moves, whenever I am asked by a Japanese person the question, "Where are you from?," I get slightly nervous because I never know how to answer. I used to say, "Nagano," but I was once scoffed at by a Nagano resident whom I met in Tokyo, because I did not know some of the local history. "Then you cannot say that you are from Nagano!" he said to me, and I found it hurtful because I had lived in Ueda for thirteen years, spending my childhood and adolescence there. I loved living in Kawagoe, too, because it was a historic city, but I lived there for only a year—even though it remained my hometown for almost nine years because my family continued to live there after my relocation to the United States. Now that my parents have moved to Tokyo, my Japanese hometown is Tokyo, but I am not from there because I did not grow up there. Today when a Japanese person asks me where I am from, I usually reply, "my parents live in Tokyo, but I grew up in Nagano." Claiming Tokyo as a hometown (simply because my parents live there now) is not always received well, because among the Japanese, uttering "I am from Tokyo" articulates something more than one's hometown. "Where are you from?" is a question that leads to judgments about one's identity and characteristics—or at worst, to downright negative stereotyping (perhaps the situation is analogous to an American living in the Midwest saying that he or she is from New York).

Moreover, I felt embarrassed that I knew so little about the vast regional folklore of Japan. Due to my lack of personal experience living as a member of a tight-knit community, I did not think that I would be able to understand Japanese folklore. To me this meant that I was unfit to

research Japanese folklore, even though I was ready to study the folklore of my own culture after years of studying the folklore of others; the folklore of my own culture—which I thought of as "Japanese"—had a great discrepancy from what I saw in the studies of Japanese folklore in Japan.

An individual in North America

Furthermore, having lived in North America almost half my life, I have learned the value of individual experience. I automatically became a minority by coming to America, and it was here that I encountered stereotypes about the Japanese. Many of them were bewildering. If I could not eat spicy food, someone would say, "That is so Japanese of you"—but most of my Japanese friends (both here and in Japan) love such food. I spoke up in class, and that was not Japanese because Japanese people were usually quiet—but I always spoke up in class in Japan, and I was never the only one to do so. Fortunately I met Americans who treated me as an individual and did not always analyze me using American benchmarks of Japanese-ness. These personal experiences taught me how essential an individual focus is in studying culture, because I so appreciated it in my everyday life in American society.

Within two years of beginning my higher education in North America I discovered folklore as a field of study, and soon became a folklore major. The reason that I have anchored myself in the discipline of folklore is the focus on individual personal experience; this disciplinary approach made sense to me, as I was a native of Japan with no geographical attachment within my country, and now living overseas. My upbringing has made me understand culture at an individual level, and living overseas as a Japanese made me aware of the value of treating people as individuals because I myself wanted to be treated as one.

An ethnographer with a dilemma in the field

Initially I designed my research on the practice of kimono-wearing among contemporary Japanese women in a way that would illuminate how individual wearers cultivate and enjoy their own styles. However, as I proceeded to get to know my informants through casual get-togethers and recorded interviews, the long-term dilemma that I had had started to haunt me: the responsibility of revealing people's personal lives. I was nervous because this was my first time conducting ethnographic fieldwork on my own in Japan. I had not been trained in Japanese folkloristics, but from reading folklore work by Japanese ethnographers I knew that personal information about informants was often kept to a minimum: my impression of their ethnographic research was that information about people's personal lives and thoughts was revealed only when relevant to the research subject, and the reader would not know the informants' whole lives intimately—perhaps because the goal of the folklore research was to depict communal, not personal, lives. Hence the practice of inserting long quotations from interviews so as to allow the informants' voices to be heard (common in North American folkloristics) was absent. And I was not certain whether including only minimal personal information was considered part of the ethical code in Japanese ethnography.

At the same time, I was aware of my shifting status during fieldwork. I wanted to cultivate long-term friendships with some of my informants because the topic of kimono-wearing practices was something that I intended to research even after the dissertation was finished. Some of my informants were reserved because we did not know each other very well, but some poured out the details of their lives without worrying that their interviews were being audio-recorded, and with some of them I felt as though I could develop friendships even beyond the research. Notwithstanding my researcher status, when people told me about personal matters, we

were sometimes talking as friends, even during the interviews. Then I did not want to ruin new friendships by revealing something personal about my informants just because they had signed consent forms.

Also, I realized how much I talked about myself to my informants because I wanted them to get to know me and understand why I was interested in learning about their kimono-wearing practices. As a result, I found myself telling them about my personal life. I did so, not as a tactic for extracting stories and information useful to my research, but because I wanted to communicate my passion and sincerity as a researcher studying the personal experience of kimono-wearing. And in the field I was constantly wondering whether I was conveying my sincerity to my informants, and whether I would be able to demonstrate it in my writing.

A native ethnographer from Japan trained in North American folkloristics

Because in North American folkloristics a researcher is expected to reflect his or her own viewpoints and feelings in the field and to write them into his or her work, I carefully observed myself during fieldwork.[24] Since I was starting to learn how to wear kimonos myself, I monitored my own reactions to new discoveries and paid close attention to my own experience in the kimono-wearing adventure. The more I tried to learn about kimonos and about other people wearing kimonos, the more I started to think of myself as a possible case study. Soon I began to think that it would be just of me to focus on my own experience and to reveal my life story, as that would resolve my concerns about the privacy of informants' information. After all, my newfound interest in kimono-wearing had a lot to do with personal aspects of my life, and I

[24] Reflexivity in ethnography refers to a stance in which the researcher reflects in his/her writing on his/her own viewpoints and feelings in the field. Through discussion of trials and tribulations, the researcher's selfhood will be revealed to the reader in addition to the selfhoods of informants. Since ethnographers describe the lives of others, it is considered ethical of them to disclose their selves as well.

myself was a good candidate to answer my own research questions: why contemporary Japanese women decide to wear kimonos, and what the attraction of kimonos is. Rather than writing a reflexive ethnography, I became interested in taking an autoethnographic approach to my kimono research.

As I read further, I recognized the scarcity of autoethnographic work in Japanese scholarship. The method is new, and only a handful of Japanese scholars have discussed it, realizing the benefit of the autoethnographic approach for the purpose of self-analysis during research. The method is a direct import from North American scholarship—specifically the work on autoethnography by Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner in *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2000). Within Japanese scholarship, the autoethnographic approach is discussed as a useful tool for a teacher's self-reflection in looking back on his or her path in the profession, and learning from past experiences to improve current and future teaching—for instance, in the fields of performing arts (Hanake 2012; Nakajima and Hanake 2012) and second-language acquisition (Fujieda 2008). Similar discussions by preschool teachers have argued for the value of monitoring their interactions with children by keeping autoethnographic journals of their work (Hayashi 2009; Okada and Nakatsubo 2008; Satō 2011). A teacher who works in an alternative-school argues that it is professionals on site—rather than third-party evaluators—that must assess teaching methods and theorize about what works and what does not work for alternative-schools (Ushida 2004). Also, in the medical field, a patient reports discrepancies in understanding treatments between doctors and patients (Suzuki 2008), and a doctor advocates patient-centered healthcare, narrating his experience as a patient (Hama 2012).

A Japanese translation of the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2000) was published in 2006.[25] However, in the field of cultural anthropology and folklore in Japan, my searching shows that only a handful of examples exist, and they employ autoethnography to discuss the positionality of researchers. A professor trained in the United States discusses her difficulty as a Japanese native studying the ethnic identity of Chinese Americans visiting the homeland, because she was an ethnic minority researcher and there was an expectation on the part of her academic advisors and some Chinese Americans that she study Japanese Americans because of her presumed familiarity with them—despite her argument that the Japanese and the Japanese Americans have had very different histories (Maruyama 2014).

As recently as May 2014, folklorist Yutaka Suga discussed autoethnography as an emerging ethnographic method when presenting at the annual meeting of the Society of Living Folklore in Japan. In a recent book Suga (2013) reflects on his position as a researcher committed to long-term fieldwork and to the well-being of local communities, and discusses the history of Japanese folkloristics and how Japanese folklorists should advocate for people who share their knowledge with researchers.

It is customary for Japanese scholars not to mention their personal lives in scholarly work, and their autoethnographic work is no exception. Though aware that the autoethnographic approach might be deemed narcissistic by Japanese ethnographers, I argue that researchers should be able to include information about their personal lives because the autoethnographic approach is useful as a means of cultivating the analytical skills necessary in academia. Writing about other people requires sensitivity, and autoethnography challenges the researcher to analyze oneself first so as to understand what it takes to expose others' lives.

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[25] *Shitsuteki kenkyū handobukku, shitsuteki kenkyū shiryō no shūshū to kaishaku* 質的研究ハンドブック 質的研究資料の収集と解釈 [Handbook of qualitative research, collection and analysis of qualitative research data], translated by Mitsuyoshi Hirayama 平山満義, Takashi Ōtani 大谷尚, and Isamu Itō 伊藤勇. Kyoto: Kitaohji shobō, 2006.

Moreover, autoethnography is a means for explicating an ethnographer's stance. A researcher who conducts fieldwork with sincerity will share his or her personal life with informants. I told my informants about my personal life experiences. I revealed aspects of myself in the field, so I will do so here, as a first step in my long-term research on kimono-wearing.

When I ask myself how I (a native ethnographer of Japan trained in North American folkloristics) can contribute to a better understanding of culture, I think of promoting cross-cultural understanding at the individual level using Japanese folklore as an example. A researcher's personality affects his or her work. Some native ethnographers produce ethnographic work rich in objective observation, while some native ethnographers may not see things without bias. The same can be said about non-native ethnographers, because some are more observant than others, and some succeed more than others in understanding how natives construct their worldviews. There are minorities within the majority and minorities within the minority, regardless of race and ethnicity; it makes sense to discuss culture on an individual level so as to illustrate the dynamics of human experience. And I hope that an autoethnographic approach that includes insight from the personal lives of researchers will become acceptable in Japanese ethnography; I hope that the present work will be a useful example.

Dress and Identity: Clothing as Personal Matter

Clothes can serve as identity-makers and -markers for various purposes. This quality of clothing has been studied in such fields as sociology (e.g., Crane 2000; Davis 1992; Keenan 2001), material culture studies (e.g., Küchler and Miller 2005), and design/dress studies (e.g., Eicher 1995; Johnson and Foster 2007; Paulicelli and Clark 2009; Roach-Higgins, Eicher, and Johnson 1995). Clothes are worn for ceremonial occasions to celebrate ethnic identity, as

discussed in Annette Lynch's case study of Hmong Americans (Lynch 1999, 71–80), or are used to express negotiated selfhood under the influence of national identity (Noyes and Bendix 1998). Yet identity construction goes far beyond mere reflection of socio-cultural norms, for it is a very personal activity. And clothes can convey personal meanings. Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell, in their book *Not Just Any Dress* (2004), rather than investigating clothing in light of its historical meanings and cultural values, illuminate personal uses of dress (4–6). Ethnic identity can be construed and constructed through one's personal endeavors involving migration, social status (Bahramitash 2004), or as a reaction stemming from the experience of being ethnically mis-identified (Curdt-Christiansen 2004).

In folklore, too, clothing is understood as a means to communicate outwardly one's group or individual identity. Don Yoder (1974), in his discussion of folk costumes, argues that a costume (which for him is synonymous with "dress," "apparel," "garb," and "clothing") is a "badge" coded according to class, gender, occupation, region, ethnicity, religion, political stance, and so on (296–97). Studies of costumes have revolved around peasant costumes and the work clothing of hunters, fishermen, shepherds, and cowboys; fashions of the royal and upper classes, and military styles that influence peasant clothing; and the difference between festival dress and everyday clothing. Costumes thus serve as symbolic indicators of social structure within communities.

Yet peasant clothing and work clothing of the agrarian era today belong to the museum exhibit or ethnic festival (see DuBois 1998; Shukla 2011). In order to put clothing back in the perspective of living folklore, Regina Bendix and Dorothy Noyes (1998) organized a special issue of the *Journal of American Folklore* to feature work that discusses European clothing culture as both historical and ethnographic research. About a decade later Pravina Shukla (2006)

edited a special issue of *Midwestern Folklore* that discusses dress, costume, and bodily adornment as contemporary material culture.

Giovanna P. Del Negro has studied the ways in which dressways and behavioral patterns communicate the identities and social statuses of the various groups and individuals on promenade in the small Italian town of Sasso (2004). Community members check one another's deportment to judge character through observation of self-display and bodily gesture. Individuals who wish to avoid such judgement do not take part in the promenade.

While folklorists customarily investigate clothing as a means of asserting group identity or performing individual identity in public domains, Pravina Shukla (1998; 2008a; 2008b; 2010; 2013) focuses in her work upon body adornment as everyday personal activity. Indian women daily select what to wear—be it saris, bangles, anklets—to stand out or blend in at parties, to please their husbands, to assume the role of the obedient bride, to show defiance when partners are unfaithful, etc. They communicate their personhoods by carefully and consciously adorning their bodies with clothing and jewelry.

Recognizing the personal-ness that dress can entail, I will narrate my personal story of the kimono. Because the study of dress rarely incorporates personal aspects of the actual wearing (Weber and Mitchell 2004, 7),[26] I aim to provide an autoethnographic account of the functions and meanings of the kimono as worn by a contemporary Japanese woman. And I shed light on personal aspects of wearing, because I (and my informants) are hobbyists who wear kimonos by choice and for fun, rather than for occupational reasons.

[26] A few counter-examples include Reiko M. Brandon, who provides a brief personal recollection of her childhood: running among kimonos that her mother and grandmother had arrayed on the clothesline to air out in the crisp autumn breeze (2005, 44–47); and Hiroko Endō's "Kimono to watashi [Kimono and I]" (2005, 112–13).

From Textile on Display to Clothing to Wear

In many publications on kimonos, both in English and in Japanese, it is common for the kimono to be treated as a decorative object. Examples include catalogs of museum collections or exhibitions, or guidebooks for collectors (e.g., Dees 2009; Dower and Atkins 2005; Kokuritsu Rekishi Minzoku Hakubutsukan 1994; Kyoto National Museum 1997; Imperatore and MacLardy 2001; Till, Warkentyne, and Patt 2006; Yumioka 2005); studies of its historical development and of the diverse artistry of its manufacture (e.g., Kawabata 1974; Munsterberg 1996; Murakami 1957; Yasuda 1972; Watanabe 1973); encyclopedias of terminology and designs (e.g., Nagasaki 1999; Nagasaki and Yumioka 2005); or combinations of some of the above (e.g., Yamanaka 1997).

In such publications kimonos are frequently treated as textiles or "wearable art" (Loudon 1996). While these works showcase effectively the artistry of kimono manufacture, the garment's intrinsic worth—which inheres in the artistry of its usage—is depreciated. Because kimonos are first and foremost clothing,[27] the art of this traditional garment would, from an ethnographic perspective, be most efficaciously elucidated by examining how a kimono outfit is created in combination with its various accoutrements. So far I have found only catalogs that showcase kimonos as fashionable outfits. For example, Shigeko Ikeda 池田重子 (a renowned antique-kimono collector, who also designs kimonos and owns a high-end antique-kimono shop in Tokyo) produced during the 1990s several exhibits in Japan, featuring antique kimonos from her collection fashionably presented in the context of outfits; and a catalog was published based on the exhibits (Nihon Keizai Shinbunsha, Isetan Bijutsukan, and Bijutsukan Kyoto 1998).

[27] Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins and Joanne B. Eicher (1995, 9) argue that "dress" is the most useful technical term because it encompasses all possible varieties of body-adornment. I use the term "clothing" here in order to stress the functionality of the kimono, in counterweight to the long history of the garment being treated as mere textile in museums.

Another book (Egi 1989) that features the beauty of the kimono includes photographs of women dressed in antique kimonos to recreate figures from famous pre–World War II paintings of kimono-clad women by such artists as Seiki Kuroda 黒田清輝 (1866–1924), Kiyotaka Kaburaki 鏑木清方 (1878–1972), and Yumeji Takehisa 竹久夢二 (1884–1934). These catalogs include comments explaining why the outfits were fashionable, informing kimono researchers and wearers what kimono fashion entails. However, because these books still treat kimonos as historical artifacts, detailed discussion of how contemporary Japanese women enjoy kimono fashions is not included.

Researching the ways in which a wearer can encode meanings in a kimono outfit will enrich our understanding of the kimono as clothing. Over the course of a woman's ownership of a kimono she creates multiple outfits, such that her personal history is woven into the garment. In the case of a used kimono, its history is multi-layered, as the kimono has lived multiple lives, having been owned by multiple individuals (see Milhaupt 2005). My ethnography of used kimonos and their wearers will enrich our understanding of these historical artifacts.

There exists a sentiment that kimonos are things of the past. Such an idea is reinforced when one sees the garment in a museum exhibit. It is rather disappointing for a kimono-wearer to witness kimonos displayed by being flattened, stretched, and hung on the wall. They look lifeless, relegated to the status of mere tapestries, with the art of kimonos demonstrated by showcasing the artistry of their manufacture rather than the artistry of their usage. Although it is natural for any garment to be re-contextualized for a new audience as a means of intercultural translation, kimonos—when displayed as objects—seem distant to me when celebrated solely for their value as textiles, removed from their original functional context.

While I admire the kimono collections owned by various institutions, I find that their means of display impoverishes the garment's intrinsic worth. The multifarious art of this traditional garment is more efficaciously elucidated when actually worn as an outfit with other accoutrements.[28]

Varieties of contemporary kimono research

There exist two comprehensive books on the kimono in English, published two decades apart. The first is *Kimono: Fashioning Culture* (1993) by anthropologist Liza Dalby. Dalby reviews Japan's clothing history from the Jōmon period on, and introduces various aspects of clothing in Japan (work clothing, fashion systems, rules of formality in kimono-wearing). While her book beautifully captures the essence of the garment, Dalby notes that "today the kimono is said to be dying, … too cumbersome for modern life, … elegantly anachronistic" (1993, 3). This reflects the image of the kimono in Japan at the time of her book's publication. Things have changed two decades later, because kimono culture has been revived. Art historian Terry Satsuki Milhaupt, in her book *Kimono: A Modern History* (2014), illustrates the history of kimono fashion from the Edo period (during which a fashion industry that targeted commoners was established) to the present. She concludes the book by discussing the current kimono revival, in which young Japanese and non-Japanese enthusiasts enjoy the kimono as part of fashion, and by expressing hope for the future of kimono culture.

Nevertheless, because the kimono is no longer everyday clothing for the majority of Japanese, contemporary scholars' work on the kimono by and large deals with the garment as

[28] It is easy to recognize the difference between museum exhibits and catalogs targeting kimono onlookers, and the fashion manuals targeting kimono-wearers. While the former praise the artistry of the garment, the latter discuss the coordination of outfits.

part of clothing history. Specifically for the culture of the *kosode*-style garment, two periods are important in terms of kimono fashion because of its development among the non-aristocratic classes: the Edo period, and the first few decades of the twentieth century. For example, Iwao Nagasaki—a scholar of home economics who specializes in clothing history—has studied the history of different *kosode* styles from the middle ages to the early twentieth century (2002; 2006). Takeshi Endō—a scholar of the history of everyday life—has researched the decline of the *kakae-obi* (a functional sash that women used to hike up their *nagagi*s to prevent them from dragging when they went outside) (1956); the origin of today's standard folding style of *obi* (1936; 1940); and types of women's undergarments during the Edo period (1938).

The first quarter of the twentieth century, during which kimono fashion flourished with the introduction of European aesthetic styles (cubism, art nouveau, art deco), is a popular period for researchers studying the correlation between art and dress (see Aoki 2009).

Because Japanese folklorists are prone to research the folklore of farming and fishing communities, their studies focus on practical types of *wa-fuku*, such as occupational and regional varieties of clothing (see Miyamoto 1981 [1967]). And because different regions have established their own brands of textiles, folklorists research these varieties of regional weavings and clothing (see Segawa 1972). The textile scholar Barbara Kawakami (1993) has researched the clothing (both work clothes and special-occasion attire for weddings and funerals) of Japanese immigrants in pre–World War II Hawai‘i, in order to describe their lives on sugar plantations from a material-culture perspective.

Scientific research on the kimono also exists. For example, a group of home economics researchers has studied the degree of pressure created by the sashes and *obi*s that tie the female torso in a kimono outfit (Mitsuno and Ueda 1998). Such studies have a connection to the

clothing-improvement projects that began at the end of the nineteenth century, for the sake of women's health by increasing their mobility (thus, advocating the adoption of Western-style clothing). As upper- and middle-class women began to go outside for social occasions (thus entering the public sphere rather than remaining in their private households), there was a need to modify the way of dressing in a kimono (see Imamura 2011).

Regarding kimono-wearing practices in today's Japan, research conducted at a regional women's university shows that young female college students enjoy wearing *yukata*s as part of their summer fashions: as forty-three percent of 750 students reported wearing a *yukata* at least once during the summer of 1992 (Toyoda and Yamamoto 1994). Anthropologist Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni has studied the marketing of the two styles of packaged weddings: the Western-style (with wedding gown) and the Japanese-style (with kimono) in modern Japanese society (1997; 1999). A surge of interest in the kimono during the 1990s has been recognized by Masumi Suga (1995), who argues that the kimono is exotic to the eye of the Japanese—so much so that Japan's esoteric marketing of exoticness, which has revolved around Western-style commodities since the Meiji period, now includes Japanese things, one of which is the kimono. The royal wedding of the crown prince and princess in 1993 might have ignited such a trend. I agree with Goldstein-Gidoni and Suga that the kimono is indeed exotic in Japan because it is no longer worn by many. However, their analyses of the cultural phenomenon are limited to theoretical assessments, due to the absence of extensive personal interviews with participants in the phenomenon.

The current kimono revival, to which used kimonos have made so significant a contribution, has already caught the attention of some scholars. A professor of clothing culture recognizes the current kimono revival that incorporates used kimonos, and argues that it is enabled by the fact that young people who did not grow up wearing kimonos have now

discovered the beauty of kimonos from the early twentieth century, and by the fact that online social networking and online sales of used kimonos have facilitated their interest (Kitamura 2004). Sheila Cliffe (2010), an avid kimono collector and fashion enthusiast, argues that the kimono in Japan has had a fashion history of a richness comparable to that of the fashion history of many a Western garment. Although some regard the kimono as a diminishing clothing tradition, it is vibrant among a new group of fans and enthusiasts who have found the kimono attractive as a fashionable garment in their everyday lives. Cliffe too recognizes the role of Internet social networks in enabling today's kimono- wearers to share experiences and photographs of outfits.

Similarly recognizing the trend of wearing kimonos not for special occasions but as part of dailywear, the scholars of clothing culture Tomomi Azuma and Rie Mori (2008) survey why Japanese women wear kimonos in everyday settings, by collecting data from publications, blogs, and interviews with hobbyist-wearers. Their findings are organized according to research questions such as: "What initiated your kimono-wearing?"; "How do you practice kimono-wearing?"; "How do people react to your kimono-wearing?"; "What do you think is the appeal of kimono-wearing?". Some of the sources note the importance of maternal influence in the shaping of kimono styles. Although Azuma and Mori conducted interviews, each one is condensed to a paragraph by the researchers; because the content is not presented in narrative form, the reader cannot hear the voices of the wearers.

My work is certainly not the first ethnography of the kimono. Liza Dalby's anthropological work on the geisha (1983) incorporates a discussion of the artistry of wearing the kimono, though its focus is not the ethnography of kimono-wearing *per se*. Sociologist Stephanie Assmann (2008) discusses current kimono-wearing practices in terms of the making and

marketing of invented "Japaneseness." Comparing and contrasting the activities of two groups (Kimono de Ginza and one particular *kitsuke-kyōshitsu* 着付け教室 [29]), Assmann argues that the kimono is undergoing reinvention. A hobby group like Kimono de Ginza advocates kimono-wearing as a fun activity, while the school reinforces the formality and properness of the garment. Although her research depicts current kimono-wearing culture nicely, despite her claim of having conducted qualitative research involving in-depth interviews (362), her informants remain faceless and voiceless because no narratives of their experiences are presented.

My research goal: a case study of kimono-wearing

In my autoethnographic research of kimono-wearing practices, the primary objective is to illustrate personal experiences of physical interaction with the garment. In analyzing intimately the relationships between materials and people, it is effective to conduct in-depth interviews so that researchers and informants can communicate at an individual level, because that allows the researchers to obtain detailed ethnographic information (see Glassie 1999; Miller 2009). Narratives that explicate personal meanings of clothing-as-worn enable the reader to hear the narrators' experiences in their own words (see Guy, Banim, and Green 2001; Weber and

[29] The 1970s saw the emergence of the *kitsuke-kyōshitsu* [wearing class(room)], which refers both to lessons in kimono-wearing and to the academies that offer them. By this time Japanese society was full of women who had not grown up wearing kimonos, and therefore did not know how to wear formal kimonos for special occasions. Because formal kimonos are harder to put on than everyday kimonos (since they are made of finer and more slippery fabrics, and require extra accessories), a person who is unaccustomed to wearing kimonos finds it difficult indeed to put one on by herself. *Kitsuke-kyōshitsu*s are available both at non-profit and for-profit institutions, including vocational schools. Such vocational schools have programs for *kitsuke-shi*s 着付け師 (professionals who put elaborate formal kimonos on people). There are many chain-schools that operate nationwide, with branches in almost every major city. Some chain-schools partner with kimono wholesalers to convene ancillary fairs for students, at which the wholesalers solicit students to purchase kimonos that may cost several thousand dollars. There have been consumer complaints about the high-pressure sales tactics employed at such fairs. People with whom I talked testified to firsthand experiences of this. This is not to say that there are not conscientious *kitsuke-shi*s. Once certified, *kitsuke-shi*s can remain in academies or offer wearing lessons independently. According to a memoir written by the founder of a *kitsuke-kyōshitsu*, she established her school in 1971 in hopes of creating more employment opportunities for women (Yamaya 2001).

For my kimono-wearing research I participated in three types of *kitsuke-kyōshitsu*.

Mitchell 2004). Narrative in qualitative research not only adds credibility to case studies, but also highlights the particularity of informant experiences and personhoods. Moreover, the responsibility for constructing a relevant narration rests on the informant: he or she takes control (Chase 2005).

Book-length models for my research include three works on Indian culture: Emma Tarlo's *Clothing Matters* (1996); Mukulika Banerjee and Daniel Miller's *The Sari* (2003); and Pravina Shukla's *The Grace of Four Moons* (2008b). In their work, narratives[30] play a central role in making garments spring vividly to life as clothing, revealing ways in which persons choose what to wear on a daily basis, and ways in which personal and social factors affect the selection and wearing of everyday clothes. And contextualization of the kimono through narratives is what I aim to achieve in my ethnography of kimono-wearing, because the kimono is more than a textile or an art piece: it is clothing with which a woman expresses her selfhood. Kimono-wearers are, as Shukla says of sari-wearers, "individual creators—not anonymous members of homogeneous masses, but real people, with real names and biographies, creators who are allowed to speak, interpreting their art and history in their own words" (Shukla 2008b, 6). And because detailed case studies of kimono-wearing are scarce, I aim to deliver one.

Used Clothing

Recent years have witnessed a growing number of scholarly works on used clothing. Notable among them is Karen T. Hansen's *Salaula: The World of Secondhand Clothing and Zambia* (2000), in which the author discusses the vital role that the used-clothing business plays

[30] For example, accounts of the quiet protest against patriarchal authority embodied in Hansaben's wearing of a cardigan over her sari (Tarlo 1996, 168–75); of Memdasi's cherished sari, purchased for her by her son with his first wages, which remains unworn because its synthetic fabric does not suit her (Banerjee and Miller 2003, 72); and of Mukta's preference for light-colored saris and accessories to perfect a refined look (Shukla 2008b, 265).

in the world economy of recycling, and the ways in which the business operates in Zambia. Through ethnographic research on wholesalers and street vendors, she reveals the route taken by clothing that people in the West donate to thrift stores or charities, which ends up being sold to dealers who then re-sell it on the used-clothing market, from where it makes its way to the streets of Africa.

Another important work is *Recycling Indian Clothing: Global Contexts of Reuse and Value* by Lucy Norris (2010). The author's ethnographic research in contemporary India reveals how people recycle their clothes (by repurposing, exchanging, giving away, and discarding) as they manage their wardrobes, which consist of items worn for practical reasons, items received as gifts, items purchased but rarely worn because they do not fit properly, and items that are favored but reserved for special occasions. Case studies of both wearers and used-clothing dealers expose the intimate personal decisions that people make when selecting what to wear. Moreover, through understanding the recycling system of India, one can see how cushion covers and blouses made of Indian silk end up being sold on the Western fashion market.

The anthology *Old Clothes, New Looks: Second Hand Fashion* (Palmer and Clark 2005) features socio-cultural case studies of secondhand clothing: secondhand clothing as part of everyday life in today's India, and in England, Ireland, Australia, and Italy at various points in the seventeenth to twentieth centuries; used Western-style clothing as a symbol of modernity and luxury in present-day Zambia, Philippines, and Hong Kong; old kimonos as objects of curiosity in the West; retro and vintage fashions in Germany and the United States; an African fashion designer who transforms used clothing into high-end garments.

Because of the recent trend concerning environmental sustainability and fair trade in consumerism, many people have begun to purchase used clothes instead of new ones made

overseas, where factories force employees to work under unethical conditions (with low wages, unsanitary environments, no breaks, uncompensated overtime). This movement advocates a boycott of today's clothing industry so as to curb the wasteful manufacture of clothing and the unfair global market system in which developed nations exploit underdeveloped countries and their workers. An alternative way to meet people's clothing needs is to turn to what already exists and is still functional: used clothing. A new generation of researchers has examined this phenomenon, which combines environmental issues, fair trade issues, and the secondhand clothing industry, and has studied the ways in which fashion-conscious young people shop for used clothing and forge their identities as environmentally and socially responsible citizens. For example, clothing swaps have been studied in Australia (Luckins 2010), and shopping habits for used clothing have been researched in Madison, Wisconsin (Ordon 2013).

Among scholars in Japan, researchers in African studies have investigated the global used-clothing market (Ogawa 2006). Although Japan too routes its recycled clothing to the third world, the idea of used clothing as a means to solve environmental and ethical issues in global fair trade has not yet spread among the Japanese population. Recycling is part of everyday life in Japanese society, but purchasing used clothes for the sake of minimizing wasteful consumption is not the norm for everyone (Yamada, Nishizawa, and Shigeta 2004). Numerous used-clothing businesses exist in Japan's big cities, the majority of which sell used Western-style clothing— imported from the United States and from other Western countries—that caters to youth "street" fashion (see Shimomura 2011).

Only a few works exist that discuss used clothing as a socio-cultural—rather than an economic—matter. The only book that focuses solely on used clothing in Japan is *Furugi* [Used clothing], by the folklorist Kōji Asaoka (2003). It discusses the long history of used clothing in

Japanese vernacular culture due to the lack of availability of textiles affordable to common people. In post–World War II Japan, however, used clothing means used Western-style clothing, rather than kimonos. Therefore, Asaoka shifts to the function of Western-style clothing as used clothing when discussing contemporary Japan. A study from 1977 reported that female farmers in the Tōkai area 東海地区 (west of Tokyo) made use of used clothing as work clothing in the fields because work clothing gets dirty easily, and cheap used clothing is useful for farming chores. But at the time of this research women wore used Western-style clothes, and wearing used Japanese-style clothing like kimonos for farming was already a thing of the past (Furukawa and Hori 1977). Rie Mori (2008), a scholar of clothing culture, reports that for about ten years following the end of World War II a women's magazine featured discussions and suggestions for the reform of practical clothing for everyday life, and such clothing was already mainly in the Western style.

In my research on used-kimono-wearing, none of my informants mentioned the importance of recycling for the sake of environmental sustainability, nor raised ethical issues in the global clothing industry as a reason for wearing used kimonos. The kimono-wearers with whom I became acquainted embrace their hobby solely for the enjoyment of wearing kimonos, because they are attracted to the garment and its fashion. It is possible that some Japanese wear used kimonos for environmental or ethical reasons; but because I have not met any, my discussion of used kimonos does not include these themes, so popular in current studies of used clothing.

Regarding the use of used clothing in folk beliefs and customs, folklorist Mina Naitō (2009) discusses a tradition that used to be practiced in one district of the city of Tsushima 対馬 in Nagasaki 長崎 prefecture (located in southern Japan), which involved wrapping placentas in

clothes formerly worn by healthy older children of the family (or of a neighboring family) and burying them underground to wish for good health and rapid growth in newborns. Evidence of such archaic traditions has also been found in other parts of Japan (e.g., a used kimono that had been worn by a healthy child or senior being put on a baby), as the life force of healthy children was believed to rub off on infants.

During my fieldwork some interviewees shared with me that they enjoy wearing kimonos inherited from family members, but nothing that hinted at folk beliefs came up during our conversations.

In my research used clothing is treated in two ways. In the following chapter I will summarize the history of the used-clothing business in Japan. In Chapter Six I will discuss my experiences shopping for and wearing antique and used kimonos.

Kin-aesthetics

Aesthetic sense as family folklore

The absence of community-based folklife in my youth forced me to look elsewhere for the foundation of my personal folklore, and I have thereby come to recognize the role of my family as the source of my cultural knowledge. The discipline of folklore recognizes the family as the "social base of folklore" (Yocom 1997, 279), and as a unit vital to fostering and promulgating traditions (Danielson 1994; Danielson 1996; Frederick 1990; Kotkin and Zeitlin 1983). Calendar customs such as celebrations for Easter, Passover, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year create occasions for the creation and continuance of family traditions, because family members gather together to participate in religious rites and social events, and to share meals. In addition, life-cycle events such as birthdays, coming-of-age celebrations, weddings, and funerals provide

occasions on which family traditions are practiced.[31] Through sharing these events year after year, a family nurtures its status as a cultural unit.[32]

Family folklore research often focuses on the collection of family stories, and on the study of reasons behind the telling thereof. During the 1970s the Smithsonian Institution launched the Family Folklore Project, setting up a tent at its annual Folklife Festival and inviting visitors to share their family stories. These stories were audio-recorded for deposit in the Institution's collection, and excerpts were later published in book form (Zeitlin, Kotkin, and Cutting Baker 1982). Topics of the American family stories in the collection include heroism, migration, holidays, courtship, family feuds, and supernatural happenings.

Sharing family stories—and understanding family members through them—helps to forge identities at both the group and individual levels, because each family has its own types of folk narrative traditions (proverbs, speeches, rituals, music, family rules, proud or embarrassing moments for certain individuals in the family) (Baldwin 1983; Stone 1988). One may not realize one's familial identity until one grows older, but over time family stories can serve as a means to affirm the sense of self and familial belonging that William A. Wilson (1991) discusses as he recalls—later in his own life—his mother's life stories that he heard while growing up. Moreover, the telling of stories specific to certain events can function to inform newcomers to the family of longstanding rules regarding family traditions. In such cases one can learn how to behave by listening to family stories (e.g., in Greenwood [2014], wherein the author discusses how she, a

[31] Recent examples of research into family folklore include *Polish-American Folklore* by Deborah A. Silverman (2000), and the collection *Finnish Folklore*, edited by Leea Virtanen and Thomas A. DuBois (2000).
[32] Some folklorists caution researchers of the difficulty of documenting family traditions. Family members may not fully understand the value of recording their traditions, and may feel uncomfortable in the presence of audio and video recorders. They may feel offended by the fact that some family members are now assuming the role of researchers, and are thus no longer participating fully in the traditions as part of the family. For case studies, see Miller (1997); Sherman (1986); and Yocom (1982).

new female member, joined the family's male tradition of hunting, and how stories shared during camping helped her to understand the "do"s and "don't"s of hunting).

Items such as photo albums and memorabilia are also important components of family folklore (Zeitlin, Kotkin, and Cutting Baker 1982). Materials convey meanings through their associations with family members and events. Diane Tye (2010) reads her mother's recipe cards as the autobiography of a minister's wife/homemaker living in maritime Canada in the second half of the twentieth century. Because her mother scribbled information on the recipe cards (from whom she had acquired them, and who in the family liked them), the cards allow Tye to trace her mother's social network, and to learn how she planned meals according to the tastes of her husband and children.

Food is one part of familial tradition, but so are the materials associated with it. Regarding the familial connection, Tye notes:

> When I use my mother's measuring spoons, my grandmother's cake pan, or one of their recipes, I feel truly connected to them. Food bridges generations of women, and in this book I reach back to my mother and grandmother and out to my sister in my own expression of familial continuity and commonality. This seems natural, for as I remember these women I think of them most often in their kitchens, preparing food, serving food, cleaning up food. (2010, 27)

Her sense of familial connection through food and kitchen utensils is analogous to my sense of familial connection through the fashion items that I discuss in this project. My inter-generational female familial connection has much to do with aspects of material culture like foodways and dressways.

For the purpose of my kimono research, I focus on the ways in which my mother has influenced my endeavor. Since beginning my quest to master the art of kimono-wearing I have come to realize how important my mother's aesthetic tuition has been in the cultivation of my

fashion sense. Since I was young my mother has made me clothes and bags. I have grown out of some of the clothes, but I still have them. And my taste in fashion was inspired most through shopping with my mother in my youth. During our excursions she taught me how to discern high-quality fabric, how to select elegant patterns, which styles and colors of clothing looked good on me, and how to compose graceful outfits—all within the context of Western-style clothing. Although my clothing preferences and styles have changed over time, I have always been aware of the importance of dressing nicely, because doing so is a way for me to enact the values that my mother instilled in me.

My mother grew up wearing Western-style clothing, and wore kimonos only for such occasions as New Year's Day and tea-ceremony lessons. She learned from her mother how to dress nicely both in kimonos and in Western-style fashions, and she developed her own style in her youth. She never gave me formal instruction on how to wear kimonos or how to assemble kimono outfits, as the practice of kimono-wearing was not part of my family tradition then. However, since my decision to learn the art of kimono-wearing, my mother has helped me to hone my fashion sense—for example, during our visits to kimono shops. She tells me what looks good on me, and how I might put together kimono outfits in ways that express my personhood. I recognize that my motivation to master the art derives from the connection with my mother that I have enjoyed. Since it is not uncommon for mothers to instill in their daughters a sense of taste in fashion and corresponding aesthetic values (see Shukla 2008, ix, 244–45), I argue that such aesthetic values and aesthetic instruction in dressways (whether Western or Japanese) from elder family members constitute familial tradition.

Among tradition-bearers the personal connection with family members is often a crucial factor that keeps them engaged in the tradition. For instance, the Finnish-American weaver

Maria Ketola feels that spending hours at the loom keeps alive the art of her female ancestors. Ukrainian-American Betty Christenson has a well-established reputation as a master *pysanka* (Ukrainian Easter egg) artist, yet she appreciates most the praise from her own grandmother, who taught her the art. (Leary and Gilmore 1987, 21)

Along with familial connections, a personal urge motivates folk artists to do what they do. Referring to folk artists in Wisconsin, James P. Leary and Janet C. Gilmore (1987) discuss that it takes personal passion, artistic vigor, and creative drive for artists to excel in the making of traditional folk art. It is often for strong personal reasons—rather than for the expression of regional or ethnic ties—that individuals take up traditional folk arts and crafts in this age of globalization and consumerism, in which ready-made items are conveniently available. Folklorists understand that it is through the "creative will" of individuals that tradition is enacted (Cashman, Mould, and Shukla 2011, 2). It is often the most skillful tradition-bearers that have the strongest creative urge to try the new techniques and designs that breathe new life into older traditions, as described in Michael Owen Jones's case study of a chairmaker (1989). And the dedication and commitment of individuals to master traditional arts and crafts contribute to the continuation and development of these traditions through invention, revival, and creolization, as exemplified in case studies by James P. Leary of Wisconsin-based folk artists (1992; 1998) and of the state's "polkabilly" band the Goose Island Ramblers, celebrated for combining multiple local ethnic repertoires with American popular musical trends (2006). As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues, people adopt various expressive means through which to create a sense of selfhood (whether or not the means have roots in family background), and such expressive means are individuals' creative ways of self-affirmation (1989, 336).

My practice of kimono-wearing has to do with a combination of self-affirmation and familial connection. Although my interest in kimono-wearing is recent, it is merely a new venue in which to express creatively the values that I inherited from my mother. While my personhood impels me to find my own style of kimono-wearing, it is my mother's guidance and approval that I seek as I try to learn the art of wearing the garment fashionably (as I did previously in my wearing of Western-style clothing).

Kimono-wearing as material behavior

Folklorists probe human expressive behavior, and folklorists specializing in material culture investigate the ways in which makers and users interact with materials and objects, and the ways in which social, communal, and personal identities are enacted through the making and using of materials and objects (Georges and Jones 1995; Gilmore 1986; Glassie 1999; Cashman, Mould, and Shukla 2011; Olson and Pryor 1999; Teske 1997). Michael Owen Jones (1997) furthers folkloristic research into material culture by introducing the concept of "material behavior," which he defines as follows: "short for 'material aspects and manifestations of human behaviors' [, it] refers to activity involved in producing or responding to the physical dimension of our world" (1997, 202). Human behavior is affected by one's physical surroundings; therefore, by examining tangible forms (materials), a researcher can extract intangible information (people's emotions or ideas of practicality). For instance, furniture arrangement at home or at work is often designed to maximize comfort or efficiency. When people make, collect, and display objects in their favorite rooms of their dwellings, it is often because they seek order and solace. Certainly individuals have different ideas of comfort, efficiency, order, solace; so the physical environments that they create come out differently. Thus research on material behavior

helps folklorists to understand the various ways in which people engage intimately with the objects around them.

I argue that this concept of "material behavior" can be applied to something as intimate as clothing. My discussion of kimono-wearing as material behavior is twofold. Firstly, a kimono is a flat piece of clothing. Yet since no two bodies are the same, one must master the technique of wrapping the kimono around the body in such a way that it flatters one's body shape without falling apart during the course of daily movements. Compared to Western-style clothing, the kimono requires a great deal of fabric. There is a heft to the fabric that encloses one's body, and the fabric restrains one's movements. A researcher who does not wear kimonos may well examine kimonos and accessories to investigate the artistry of their materials. However, if she is to wear them, she will need to learn—through physical interaction—both how to put them on in a way that complements her appearance, and how to move properly in them. Such kinesthetic skill in wearing clothing items differs from the observational skill essential to material analysis. Secondly, because the kimono as clothing is designed for a person to move and behave in certain ways, proper behavioral patterns that reflect certain cultural values have been created (e.g., the modesty conveyed by not revealing one's skin), and adult women are expected to abide by them. The art of wearing the kimono requires the wearer not only to compose a graceful outfit, but also to acquire behavioral elegance in the outfit.

To develop this discussion in my autoethnographic study of kimono-wearing, I use my own situation as an example. I was a rookie to kimono-wearing when I started my research. I needed to learn how to put on a kimono, and discover what looked good on me in a way that expressed my personhood. My mother advised and encouraged, which was no doubt helpful; but ultimately it was through my own kinesthetic trials that I came to understand what works for me.

My aesthetic upbringing has included behavior monitoring by mother. When my mother and I go out, she still inspects my posture and manners, and if I do something unseemly she will surely let me know—always in private, after the fact. It was my mother who taught me manners and etiquette: how to sit straight in a chair or on the floor, how to bow politely when sitting on the floor, how to get up from the floor (in the Japanese style), how to open and close the sliding door of a Japanese-style room, how to serve tea in the Japanese style and in the Western (perhaps British) style, how to serve a meal for guests in the Japanese style, how to eat Japanese-style meals, how to use cutlery, and so on. There was a set of proper behaviors for everything, and when I was young acquiring such manners meant a lot to me. I wanted to make sure that I had the proper manners to go with kimono-wearing. Then, too, I became aware of behavioral manners that I had learned kinesthetically from my mother.

Kin-aesthetics

Knowledge acquired kinesthetically, as Beverly Gordon (2002) stresses, is essential to the research of objects, as it fosters new understandings of the relation between people and objects. In this project I highlight the kinesthetic experience of kimono-wearing. Learning how to put on the garment and how to move properly in it are as essential to the mastery of the art of kimono-wearing as is learning how to assemble outfits that suit oneself. These aesthetic and kinesthetic values are often demonstrated and acquired kinesthetically from one generation of women to the next, as part of one's upbringing. Thus I have coined the term "kin-aesthetics" to refer to this set of aesthetic values and behavioral manners—and the kinesthetic demonstration and acquisition thereof—within the context of family tradition. And I will explore how familial aesthetics influence women's kinesthetic experiences in kimono-wearing.

A**n Autoethnography of Kin-aesthetics**

The kimono is a clothing article that is known worldwide. Yet because it has long been admired and celebrated as a historical artifact, and because it is no longer dailywear for the typical Japanese, the art of wearing it as part of today's living folklore has not been investigated fully. Once considered a nearly extinct tradition due to its impracticality within the modern lifestyle, the kimono exemplifies bygone days; it will continue to be a part of Japanese culture in the new century, retaining its inherent function as clothing among a small percentage of the population. What, then, is the appeal of this garment? What impels people not only to preserve it, but to wear it in spite of its unwieldiness? These questions will be answered through the illustration and illumination of personhoods expressed in the modern wearing of used kimonos, in a way that benefits fields that study objects and people: art history, design studies, material culture studies, folklore, cultural anthropology.

I underscore this approach to stress my goal of probing an aspect of kimono culture that has been under-recognized: the kinesthetic experience of kimono-wearing. Recognizing the delicacy and intricacy of human complexity, my autoethnography will reveal an intimate account of a contemporary Japanese woman in her thirties who has taken up kimono-wearing as a hobby in hopes of retrieving her familial heritage.

CHAPTER THREE: Historical Background on Clothing (Kimonos) in Japan

My inheritance of my grandmother's antique kimono made me want to explore the kimono fashions from that kimono's early years, a period during which the kimono served as dailywear for most Japanese women. Because I had never seen my grandmother in a kimono, I wondered how she might have dressed in the kimono, and how she might have enjoyed fashion. Although I had seen kimono outfits many times in films and on television, because I had not had any interest in wearing them I had never bothered to examine how the outfits were put together in terms of fashion. Now that I sought to understand what was entailed in wearing kimonos fashionably, I knew that I would need to study which items would go well together as an outfit. This made me change entirely the way in which I looked at kimono outfits. I needed to know the history of the kimono and its fashions within the history of clothing in Japan. Moreover, since kimonos from the past are only available secondhand, I was also led to investigate the history of secondhand (used) kimonos. Thus, as a prelude to my autoethnography, I will provide an overview of the history of clothing in Japan, with special emphasis on the history of used clothing from the Edo period on.

The History of Fabrics and Clothing in Japan

In Japan's prehistory—called the Jōmon period 縄文時代 (14,000 BCE–300 BCE)—the archipelago was inhabited by hunter-gatherers. Archaeological evidence from this period includes pieces of plain-woven hemp that has been dated to 2000BCE–1000BCE, from which

scholars have concluded that the ancient Japanese knew weaving techniques and wore poncho-like pullovers. (See Masuda 2013, 12)

The following period—called the Yayoi period 弥生時代 (circa 300 BCE–250)—was marked by rice cultivation, the use of bronze and iron, and the development of a hierarchical society. In addition to hemp and other plant-based fabrics, silk fabric has been excavated from archeological sites. In the third century sophisticated weaving techniques were introduced from the continent (present-day China and Korea). China's historical record[33] reveals that an ancient Japanese kingdom called Yamataikoku 邪馬台国 offered tributes—including luxurious fabrics made of silk and ramie—to the Wei Dynasty 魏朝 [34] (Nagahara 2004, 179–80). Yamataikoku had a silk farming system to produce for the royal family complex fabrics similar to those in China. Such elaborate textiles were attainable exclusively to royalty; commoners wore simple coarse clothing like pullovers, loose pants, and wrap-skirts made of hemp (Masuda 2013, 16–18; 25–26).

In subsequent centuries Japanese society grew larger and more complex, and established an imperial government that followed the political, economic, and cultural systems of the Chinese dynasties. More developed weaving and dyeing techniques and tools (as well as professional weavers and dyers) were brought from the continent so that the government could establish its own textile operation.[35] The domestic production of high-quality silk fabrics enabled in the seventh century the implementation within the imperial court of dress codes (based on the

[33] The earliest written record of the existence of the Japanese is found in what is known in Japan as *"Gishi"-wajinden*『魏志』倭人伝 [Records of the Japanese in the chapter on Wei], which is a part of *Sangokushi* 三国志 [Records of the three kingdoms], a historical text recorded by Chen Shou 陳寿 (233–297) that is regarded as the official history of China circa 184–280.
[34] An ancient Chinese dynasty from the third century.
[35] In ancient Japan the ruling class (the imperial court or warrior-government) had an elaborate textile production system. See historian Keiji Nagahara's research on the history of textile production in Japan (2004).

system of the Chinese dynasties), in which the color of the official clothing indicated the wearer's rank.[36]

During the Heian period 平安時代 (794–1185) Japan began to develop its own indigenous high culture, rather than merely emulating that of the continent. As a result the syllabic Japanese script *kana* 仮名 was invented,[37] and Japanese-style court poetry and literature matured. An internationally renowned novel of medieval Japan, *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語 [The tale of Genji],[38] dates from this period.

The most important aspect of Heian-period clothing was the system of layering kimonos—called *jūni-hitoe* 十二単 [twelve layers]—that was designed for court ladies. Understanding the beauty of nature was important in Heian aristocratic society, and noblemen and noblewomen were expected to be able to express their thoughts and feelings artistically not only through literature and poetry but also via their attire. Particular orders in which to layer monochrome formal kimonos were designed to evoke various birds and flowers according to the four seasons, and court ladies were expected to master these combinations to demonstrate their aesthetic sophistication.[39]

Garments similar to the *kosode* (the precursor to today's kimono) had developed in previous centuries, but during the Heian period the *kosode*-like garment (which was worn as an

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[36] Japan's imperial family founded the Office of Weaving to produce elaborate silk textiles (*oribenotsukasa* 織部司). A good summary of this development and of the varieties of textiles produced in Japan throughout its history can be found in *Nihon kinu jinken orimono shi* (1959, 4–36); also see Masuda (2013, 29–34). In the Middle Ages Japan had a complex goods-distribution system that transported fabrics. For details, see Sasaki (1990; 1994); and Toyoda (1982).

[37] The early Japanese government imported Chinese-style writing because the Japanese then did not have a writing system. Chinese characters continued to be used in official documents, while *kana*—considered suitable for artistic expression—became popular in such literary forms as poetry, the novel, and the personal diary.

[38] *Genji monogatari* was written in the eleventh century by a lady-in-waiting named Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部. The novel depicts the aristocratic society of the time, and chronicles the numerous love affairs of a male aristocrat called Hikaru Genji 光源氏.

[39] The imperial family today still follows the court fashion of this period on certain ceremonial occasions, such as weddings and enthronements.

outer-garment by commoners) was adopted as an inner-garment within the court. Floor-length *kosode*s were worn by court ladies underneath long layered *ōsode*s and wide skirts called *mo*s 裳, and men wore *kosode*s underneath their official jackets and wide pants (called *hakama*s 袴).[40]

While the nobility enjoyed the elaborate fashions enabled by lavish textiles, commoners in the second half of the millennium continued to wear clothing made of simple fabrics. Picture scrolls from the late Heian period depict people wearing the *kosode*. Figures are shown wrapped in single *kosode*s tied with thin belts.[41]

Because the culture cultivated during the Heian period is regarded as Japan's first indigenous high culture, themes reminiscent of this period resurfaced in the art of succeeding centuries. And motifs evocative of the novels and poems from this period would be used in later centuries for kimono patterns designed to assert the wearer's gentility.

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Near the end of the twelfth century the political power structure in Japan changed: the warrior class rose to claim political power from the imperial family and aristocracy, which marked the dawn of a new period called the Kamakura period 鎌倉時代 (1185–1333). This overthrow ended the era of lavish court culture, as Japan entered a time of civil wars due to the warrior clans' battles for dominance. The civil instability made more practical clothing favored among the nobility, while durable fabric and muted colors became popular among the warrior class. Military conflicts during the Kamakura period and the following Muromachi period 室町時代 (1336–1573) hindered developments in textile production, although influences from the Song

[40] Men's *hakama*s are wide pleated trousers that were developed originally during the classical period to allow free leg movement for such physical activities as running and horse riding. For the history of the *hakama*, see Miyamoto (1981 [1967], 125–53).

[41] The twelfth-century scrolls *Shigisan engi emaki* 信貴山縁起絵巻 [Picture scroll depicting the story of Mount Shingi] and *Ban dainagon ekotoba* 伴大納言絵詞 [Picture scroll depicting the story of Court Counselor Ban] depict ordinary people tending to their daily household chores. For images excerpted from *Shigisan engi emaki*, and other images of *kosode*s in medieval Japan, see Nagasaki (2006, 90–95).

宋, Yuan 元, and Ming 明 dynasties on the continent could be seen in patterns and motifs. It was not until the beginning of the Azuchi-Momoyama period 安土桃山時代 (1573–1603), when a lord named Hideyoshi Toyotomi 豊臣秀吉 seized the top political position, that lavish textiles became popular again thanks to his extravagant lifestyle, which included clothing with elaborate colors. (*Nihon kinu jinken orimono shi* 1959, 38–48)

While the imperial family, aristocracy, and wealthy lords enjoyed clothing made of elaborate silk textiles,[42] commoners owned very little clothing, which was typically made of hemp and ramie. *Oamu monogatari* おあむ物語 [Tales of Oamu][43]—a record of the personal experiences of a late-sixteenth–early-seventeenth-century nun—reveals that she owned only one kimono between the ages of thirteen and seventeen, and felt embarrassed at having to wear a garment so short that it did not cover her shins. This nun was the daughter of a high-ranking provincial samurai who worked under Mitsunari Ishida 石田光成 (who served the aforementioned Lord Toyotomi), so this record speaks to the scarcity of clothing among even the well-to-do at that time. (Nagahara 2004, 174–75)

Then the introduction of cotton production changed the domestic clothing culture. Cotton fabric was a luxurious continental import until a cotton-production system was adopted in Japan sometime during the fifteenth century. Once domestic production commenced many regions in Japan developed their own cotton manufacturing systems throughout the sixteenth century, and the fabric's durability made it highly desirable for military supplies (uniforms, flags, banners,

[42] Keiji Nagahara argues that although farmers in classical and early modern Japan were involved in sericulture, raising silkworms and producing thread was rather difficult. Domestic silk production was unstable and insufficient to satisfy demand, which explains the continued importing of high-quality threads from China and Korea. In addition to thread, farmers made *mawata*s 真綿 [stretched silk cocoons] that were used as batting for clothing and blankets. (2004, 99–170)

[43] Both the recorder and original date of these tales are unknown, but they were written as stories told by a nun as remembered many decades later by the recorder. The oldest known copy of this work that Japanese scholars consider authentic is dated 1744, although a copy dated as early as 1730 also exists. A modern edition of *Oamu monogatari*, as well as a discussion of its various redactions can be found in *Nihon shomin seikatsu shiryōshū*, vol. 8 (1969, 371–77).

sails). After domestic production stabilized and the long era of civil wars came to an end at the dawn of the seventeenth century, cotton dailywear for ordinary people became available, allowing them to own more clothing than ever. (Nagahara 2004, 216–79)

Because the warrior clans became the ruling class after the Heian period, official government attire became *kosode*-based even for outer garments, as the *kosode* eventually evolved into an outer garment in the warriors' high society. Noblewomen and wives of upper-class warriors layered multiple *kosode*s with elaborate embroideries, while commoners had only one or two *kosode*s in which to wrap themselves (Masuda 2013, 105–12).[44]

It was during the sixteenth century that the *kosode* became the standard shape for clothing across the population. Aristocratic men might wear *ōsode*s as formalwear, but *kosode*s as dailywear. Noblewomen adopted the *kosode* both as their dailywear and formalwear. Since the *kosode* had now become a clothing article for all classes, the word "*kosode*" began to be used broadly as a term to refer to clothing in general, in addition to referring to a specific type of garment tailored in the *kosode* style (while other more specific terms existed to refer to different types of *kosode*). (Nagasaki 2002, 30–31)

The seventeenth century saw the beginning of an era of stability, as Lord Ieyasu Tokugawa 徳川家康 rose to the top over other warriors and established the Tokugawa shogunate (thereby ending Japan's civil-war era), which would last for the next two-and-half centuries. The extended reign of this single warrior clan—known as the Edo period 江戸時代 (1603–1868)—brought the political stability that enabled improvement of the social infrastructure, which in turn allowed the social and economic stability that fostered a flourishing merchant class. This growing merchant class contributed to the emergence and development of mass culture (kabuki

[44] For a history of the development of the *kosode* prior to the Edo period, see Nagasaki (2002, 28–39).

theater, geisha culture, ukiyoe prints), stimulating the dispersal of fashion among the masses (as kabuki actors and high-ranking geishas were trendsetting celebrities, and ukiyoe prints served as a tool to disseminate fashion trends during the Edo period).

For the first time in Japanese history, a concept of "fashion" became something attainable by civilians. Kimono-fabric sellers partnered with publishers to issue kimono pattern books to circulate among the warrior- and merchant-classes, and artists and designers launched clothing lines. The idea of fashionableness became important among wealthy townspeople, and the style of *iki* いき emerged as a signature fashion concept in the city of Edo.[45]

Civilian fashion became too extravagant at times—so much so that the Tokugawa government periodically attempted to regulate it. By this time cotton had become an everyday fabric for the masses in Japan, having gradually overtaken hemp and ramie in popularity due to its practicality and durability. Silk, by contrast, remained a luxury fabric. The government several times issued a law that allowed farmers to wear only cotton and hemp fabrics, and strictly banned them from wearing anything made of silk. Among the merchant class, however, high-ranking workers—for example, the top clerks at Shirokiya 白木屋 (one of the most successful kimono-fabric shops of the period)[46]—were permitted to wear silk (Aburai 2007, 150–56). These notions of silk as a luxurious fabric and status-marker, and cotton as an everyday fabric, continue to the present day (and the association of fabric and status is still made in contemporary Japan).

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[45] *Iki* is a notion—even a lifestyle—that developed among Edo's working class. The capital of Japan had for centuries been Kyoto, until Ieyasu Tokugawa moved it to Edo (present-day Tokyo) in 1603. This sparked a movement to discard the traditions long nurtured in Kyoto, and to seek new and unconventional things in Edo. *Iki* promoted a way to be "cool," which meant witty, tasteful, perspicacious, candid, good-spirited, down-to-earth, and so on. It reflected the lifestyle of the people of Edo, who disdained being staid, studious, and formal, and instead encouraged carefree, nonchalant living. For men, another component of *iki* involved visits (in reality or in fantasy) to the red-light district, and popularity among its prostitutes. The *iki* concept was applied to fashion as well. For example, wearing a dark-colored outer kimono with a brighter-colored underkimono was "cool," and for women to dress like men could be also "cool," and vice versa (Koike 1991, 136–48). For the historical development and the wide range of *iki* manifestations, see Kuki (1930); Nakao (1984); Suwa (1980).

[46] Shirokiya was one of the three major kimono-fabric businesses of the Edo period. All three businesses would later grow into department stores. For the history of Shirokiya, see *Shirokiya* (1957).

Regulations on a kimono's outer colors were also issued by the government, and civilians were required to wear dark colors such as black, grey, navy, and brown. However, wealthy merchants enjoyed kimono fashions by having elaborately colorful linings inside their simple dark-colored kimonos, and linings with lavish paintings in their *haori* jackets, and by collecting accessories like the netsuke 根付.[47]

Although international trade was restricted during the Edo period, foreign goods continued to enter the country: textiles from India, China, and Europe were imported, as were new weaving techniques that inspired new types of fabrics and patterns in Japan. Craftsmen produced many different kinds of patterns and colors for kimonos (see *Nihon kinu jinken orimono shi* 1959, 76–113). Indeed, the government regulations only fueled the development of weaving and dyeing techniques and the maturation of craftsmanship, which enabled the invention of various kinds of dyes and a wide range of colors for kimono fabrics (e.g., various shades of black, navy, blue, green, and brown to satisfy the civilian demand), as well as numerous intricate patterns, including *Edo komon* 江戸小紋 [Edo-style fine patterns].[48]

It was also during the Edo period that the dimensions of the *kosode* developed into something close to those of today's standard kimono. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the *kosode* was worn without a fold around the waist (in the *tsuitake* 対丈 style), and the belt was thin. But after the midpoint of the century, the garment became narrower and longer as part of the new trend then. Women now wore *kosode*s long enough to drag on the floor. When a

[47] The netsuke was a men's accessory item that functioned as a toggle to hold a small pouch or container in place when a man hung the pouch or container from his sash around the waist. The netsuke was made of wood, seashell, or ivory. This practical object grew to become a highly fashionable item during the Edo period, as intricately curved miniature sculptures. The netsuke has since become one of the most popular items to collect among Westerners.
[48] *Edo komon* is a style of stencil-dyeing and patterns originally developed for the formal attire of the samurai class, and later adopted by civilians. The main characteristic of *Edo komon* is its minute geometric patterns.

woman went outside she used a sash to raise the *kosode*'s hem to her ankles.[49] The *obi* became wider and longer, and it started to serve a decorative purpose in addition to the practical one of tying the kimono. Various ways of tying an *obi* were also introduced during this time. (See Umetani 2013, 122–23; 132–33; *Nihon kinu jinken orimono shi* 1959, 101–04)

Because the *kosode* had become the standard shape of clothing for all social classes, it was through material (silk vs. cotton vs. hemp), fabrics (some more costly—due to intricate weaving styles—than others), and patterns (enabled by dyeing, embroidery, or both) that class distinctions were made. For example, wives and daughters of the warrior class had their *kosode*s decorated with elaborate dyes and embroideries, while upper- and middle-class merchant women might try to emulate the style of warrior-class women by adding patterns to their *kosode*s with dyeing techniques only (because embroidery was too costly, and was regulated by law for the clothing of the merchant class). In the nineteenth century the merchant class became more prosperous than the warrior class, and women of the merchant class were able to afford intricately dyed kimonos more luxurious than those worn by the warrior-class women. By this time, both warrior-class and upper-class merchant women wore kimonos with patterns suggestive of Heian-period literature and culture to exhibit their level of sophistication.[50] (Nagasaki 2002, 40–70)

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[49] A sash used for this purpose was called a "*kakae-obi* 抱帯." See Endō (1956) for a discussion of the *kakae-obi* during this period.

[50] For example, scenes from *Genji monogatari* were reflected on kimono patterns (see Satō 2011). The combination of a cat, a *koto* 琴 (a string instrument), and a room screen (evocative of court life because aristocrats concealed themselves from the public behind hanging screens) is symbolic of Genji's third wife, Onna San no Miya 女三ノ宮. When Onna San no Miya wed Genji, she was too young for him to take a romantic interest in her. Nonetheless they became acquainted, for example when Genji taught Onna San no Miya how to play the *koto*. However, on one occasion another aristocrat (Kashiwagi 柏木) who was in love with Onna San no Miya caught a glimpse of her behind two screens that opened as a cat passed through the crack between them. Later, Kashiwagi and Onna San no Miya had an affair. Among extant pieces is one elaborate kimono that depicts multiple scenes from *Genji monogatari* (for a color photograph, see Kawakami 2006, 23).

Also during the Edo period the pattern called "*goshodoki* 御所解き [court life unraveled]" was created. This design is a mix of various motifs from Heian literature (seasonal flowers, flower baskets, room screens, lacquerware, chariots) scattered in miniature all over the fabric. This pattern was favored at first by high-ranking warriors' wives during the Edo period, and later spread to the lower classes. Today the pattern is used on both formal and casual kimonos. For color photographs of surviving pieces from the Edo and Meiji periods, see Kawakami (2006, 5–55).

It is important to note that many hues and patterns invented during the Edo period are still used today, and Edo-style fashions are still valid in many ways in contemporary kimono culture.

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The reign of the Tokugawa shogunate came to an end in 1867 due to pressure from Western nations to open Japan's ports to international trade. Political power was returned to the imperial family, and a new centralized government was founded with the emperor at its head. This began a new era—the Meiji period 明治時代 (1868–1912)—in which the Japanese government commenced systematic top-down Westernization. Political leaders strategized to modernize the country, endorsing rapid Westernization and industrialization, so as to avoid being colonized by the powerful Western nations that by then had already gobbled up much of the Orient. Japan needed to prove its capacity to become a "civilized" nation that could match the Western standard.

The government undertook a major reformation of its infrastructure, and the project included clothing as well. Military uniforms and government officials' formal attire were Westernized by 1872, and aristocratic men and women were now required to wear contemporary Western-style clothing for government functions and other formal occasions. The nation also adopted a European-style postal service and police system, and the uniforms of these civil employees were also made to conform to the Western style. Western clothes, therefore, were first adopted by those in the higher echelons of society and by those in civil service.[51]

The Meiji government reformed the educational system, following the European style and establishing compulsory education; along with these reformations the Westernization of clothing for schoolchildren was promoted. Some trend-conscious schools mandated Western-style

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[51] For more details regarding the Westernization of dress codes by the Japanese government from the late-Edo to mid-Meiji periods, see Nakayama (2010, 172–84; 208–14; 234–66).

clothing for teachers (for example, bustle dresses for the women) as early as 1885, and some school principals encouraged pre-teen children to wear European-style clothing (Nakayama 2010, 256–60). Some girls' academies founded by Christian missionaries in the Tokyo area in the last quarter of the nineteenth century would by the 1920s design their school uniforms in the style of sailor suits.[52]

However, for the majority, Western-style uniforms were out of reach, and older girls pursuing higher education wore *hakama*s in combination with kimonos, and this style became standard among schoolgirls after 1900 (Nanba 2012, 143).[53] Women's *hakama*s are pleated skirts that allow active leg movement without the worry of exposing the legs when the kimono bottoms flap up. During the early twentieth century, wearing a kimono with a *hakama* became an iconic style of educated teenaged girls. (Today the style is popular among young women at university graduation ceremonies.)

Handbooks for sewing Western-style clothes began to be published, and several Western-style tailoring schools for girls opened before the end of the nineteenth century (Nakayama 2010, 262–66). However, while the wealthy incorporated Western accessories such as parasols, gloves, hats, and leather boots into their kimono outfits, kimonos without these non-Japanese elements remained everyday clothing for the majority. According to an 1887 anthropological study that observed the dissemination of Western-style attire in Ueno Park (a popular park located in central Tokyo), among adults (aged twenty and above), fifty-three percent of men were dressed fully in the Western style, as opposed to only three percent of women (Tsuboi 1888, 248).[54]

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[52] For example: Ferris Girls Academy フェリス女学院, founded in Yokohama 横浜, Kanagawa by the American Presbyterian missionary Mary Eddy Kidder (1834–1910); Tōyō Eiwa Jogakuin 東洋英和女学院, founded by the Canadian Methodist missionary Martha Cartmell (1846–1945) in Roppongi 六本木, Tokyo.

[53] For a history of improvements to women's clothing for the sake of increased mobility, see Nakayama (2010, 288–98) and Fuma (2007).

[54] These percentages were calculated by the anthropologist Shōgorō Tsuboi 坪井正五郎, who distinguished three categories (hairdos, clothes, and footwear) in which to evaluate the degree of Western-ness and Japanese-ness in

Adult women—especially homemakers—would be the last to adopt Western-style clothing. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first few decades of the twentieth, although Westernization was considered necessary in the public domain for the sake of imperial Japan's prosperity, Japanese society had a strong stigma against adult women (who were supposed to remain in the private domain) wearing Western-style clothes. When out in public some women dressed in the Western style received looks of disapproval or even had stones thrown at them by those who deemed such clothing inappropriate for adult women (see Nakayama 2010, 375)—presumably because, in comparison to the kimono, Western-style clothing reveals more of one's figure. The dissemination of Western-style clothing among women was a slow process. Some intellectuals supported women wearing Western-style clothing for the sake of their health (as clothes made in the Western style allowed for greater mobility, which facilitated exercise, a new concept imported from the West); while traditionalists argued for the importance of adult women, especially homemakers, maintaining the traditional manners, which included wearing the kimono. Yet healthy growth and ease of body movement would continue to be the points repeatedly made by advocates of Western-style clothing for women, as they considered Western-style clothing that allowed freer movement appropriate and necessary for the whole population in a nation that aspired to modernity.[55]

The Meiji government invested heavily in the growth of domestic textile manufacturing, and government-owned cotton and silk mills and textile factories were founded. Japan's silk industry became so successful that within a few decades silk had become a top commodity for

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people's dressways. Tsuboi's research methods are not articulated in the article, but presumably the data were collected by observing passersby on the street. These three percent of women adopted Western-style hairdos, clothes, and footwear; seventy-one percent of women retained the Japanese style in all three categories; and others combined the two styles (e.g., wearing a kimono but having a Western-style hairdo). Tsuboi counted only people whose personal clothing was in the Western style, not those who wore Western-style work uniforms.

[55] From the Meiji period to the end of World War II there had been movements to improve clothing for children and women. For the history of such movements, see Fuma (2007).

export. The growth of the textile industry led to the production of a greater variety of textiles for clothing, which contributed to the spread of kimono fashions in the early twentieth century. (*Nihon kinu jinken orimono shi* 1959, 140–63; 180–92)

People began to have more options for kimono textiles, and to wear kimonos made of different fabrics according to the season. New kinds of fabric such as serge, flannel, and velvet were used for kimonos or parts of kimonos (*Nihon kinu jinken orimono shi* 1959, 188–92). Serge, flannel, and muslin became affordable for people due to the increased availability of imported wool: serge (*seru* セル) and flannel (*neru* ネル) were popular fabrics for everyday spring and fall kimonos in the first few decades of the twentieth century. Muslin (*mosurin* モスリン), too, was used widely for undergarments and kimonos.[56]

Westernization continued in the ensuing Taishō period 大正時代 (1912–1926), in which Western ideals such as democracy and women's liberation rippled through the general public in urban areas. Women's employment opportunities increased, and as had been the case with servicemen's uniforms in the previous period, Western-style uniforms were made for women working as bus attendants, waitresses, and nurses, while department stores marketed Western-style clothing for office workers (e.g., typists). Some factories issued practical clothing like overalls to their female workers. Also, sewing patterns for Western-style clothing were widely distributed through women's magazines, which helped the dissemination of Western-style clothing among adult women. Although a stigma against adult women wearing Western-style clothing outside work still lingered, women expressed joy and excitement at wearing clothes that

[56] Serge, flannel, and muslin were used for everyday kimonos. Muslin especially was used for children's kimonos. Kimonos made of these fabrics are recognized today as signature dailywear in pre–World War II Japan. A book by kimono preservationist Keiko Nitanai (2014) contains many photos of muslin kimonos from the Meiji and Taishō periods.

made it so much easier to move their arms and legs, and that freed them from the rather constraining kimono outfits. (Nakayama 2010, 369–78)

Urban youth culture hailed all things Western in the name of modernity,[57] and the bob hairstyle became popular among modish women, overturning the venerable tradition of long black hair for Japanese women. Short-haired girls clad in Western-style clothing were called "*moga* モガ" (from "modern girls"), and modernity-conscious young men, "*mobo* モボ" (from "modern boys"). (See Nakayama 2010, 385–98)

While Western-style clothing for women was slowly but steadily gaining acceptance as women's dailywear, kimono culture thrived with new artistic inspirations imported from Europe. The romanticism that flourished in nineteenth-century Europe influenced Japanese culture in the early twentieth century, creating the phenomenon called "*Taishō roman* 大正ロマン [Taishō romanticism]." In addition to romanticism, designers and artists looked to various other European styles including neo-gothicism, cubism, aestheticism, art nouveau, and art deco; hence kimono patterns characteristic of the Taishō period reflect such European art movements.[58]

While top-quality exported silk continued to fulfill the demand abroad, the domestic textile industry was prosperous enough to route lower-quality silk for domestic consumption, which enabled the production of casual kimonos made of various silk fabrics (*meisen* 銘仙, *rinzu* 綸子, *kinsha* 錦紗, *omeshi* 御召)[59] that used to be out of reach for most civilians. These everyday kimonos reflected new European designs as well as a revival of classical Japanese motifs, and kimono fashion was quite rich during this time (*Nihon kinu jinken orimono shi* 1959, 201–06). A

[57] For a general discussion of modernity in clothing culture in twentieth-century Japan, see Slade (2009). For essays on ways in which the notion of modernity was interpreted in Japanese society between the 1910s and 1930s, see Tipton and Clark (2000).
[58] For details, see, for example, Aoki (2009).
[59] *Meisen* and *rinzu* are plain-weave silk fabrics—the former with a satin-like finish, the latter with embedded patterns. *Kinsha* and *omeshi* are types of silk crêpe. Among these fabrics, *meisen* became the popular everyday kimono for young women. For a variety of *meisen* kimonos, see the photobook by Miyagawa (2009).

young woman could be a "modern girl" by having a bob hairstyle and wearing a kimono with a pattern inspired by European art (the image of the *moga* remains the quintessential feminine icon of the Taishō period).

Alongside the booming silk and cotton production of the Taishō period, the manufacture of the artificial fiber rayon (which was called "*jinken* 人絹 [artificial silk]") blossomed. Introduced into Japan from overseas in the Meiji period, *jinken* was manufactured for export, and also used for domestic kimono textiles (see *Nihon kinu jinken orimono shi* 1959, 206–33).

Meanwhile a catastrophe ended up promoting the practicality of Western-style clothing to Japanese people. The Great Kantō Earthquake (*Kantō dai-shinsai* 関東大震災) hit the Tokyo area on September 1, 1923. This magnitude 7.9 quake was one of the strongest ever recorded in the area, and it triggered a massive fire because the quake occurred around noon, when many people were cooking their lunches over stoves. More than one hundred thousand people died or went missing.[60] Reportedly kimono-clad women were unable to flee the flames as fast as women wearing Western clothes, because of the cumbersome long sleeves and flapping kimono bottoms. This disaster attested to the importance of mobility, and Western-style clothing proved more ideal as everyday clothing. Around this time a loose-fitting one-piece dress called an *appappa* ア

[60] My paternal grandmother used to tell me that in the immediate aftermath of the quake she had run, carrying an iron pot full of rice. She was only a teen then. As she ran with her family she lost sight of them briefly; but her father soon came to find her, and they continued to run. She said only this much, concluding the story by stating that we grandchildren would not have been born had she not rejoined her family then.

My mother told me that my paternal grandfather had visited the memorial site at Yokoami-chō Park 横網町公園 in Ryōgoku 両国 every year on September 1. But because he never talked about his experience of this disaster, we did not know what had happened to him on that day. When I asked my parents about this, my father revealed that he had in his possession a family history written by his father's brother Sutekichi. According to Sutekichi's record, his and my paternal grandfather's father died in the fire that reached the site of the present-day memorial. Nearly 40,000 people perished there, unable to escape the fire. See Appendix 2 for Sutekichi's account of his and his mother's experience of this disaster.

ッパッパ was invented by an Osaka-based merchant, and it became popular as a “home dress” for adult women (Nakayama 2010, 378–85).[61]

The first half of the twentieth century was the heyday of artistic and fashionable kimonos. (In fact, kimonos from the Taishō period are highly sought after by participants in the current antique-kimono revival because of their colorful, bold, artistic patterns.) However, this kimono fashion boom would wane in the following period, as the rising tide of Japan’s militarism necessitated the rationing of silk, cotton, and wool.

The Shōwa period 昭和時代 (1926–1989) can be divided into three sub-periods, marked by Japan’s involvement in wars: pre-war (1926–1937), wartime (1937–1945), and post-war (1945–1989). The Shōwa period began with the Tokyo area still recovering from the earthquake, followed by the financial crisis that hit the nation in 1927. Politically and economically the beginning of the period was grim. The Empire of Japan was trying to expand its territory. This project threatened Western nations, making Japan internationally isolated. Japan’s imperial army occupied Manchukuo in 1931, for which Japan was censured by the League of Nations. This led to Japan’s withdrawal from the League in 1933, as the Japanese army continued its expansion into China and Korea. In 1937 the second Sino-Japanese war began, and with its 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor Japan joined World War II.

The pre-war period saw the continuation of Taishō-period clothing trends. Some women wore Western clothes, while others continued to wear kimonos. The adoption of Western-style

[61] The *appappa* contributed to the further dissemination of Western-style clothing nationwide among women of all social classes. Its simple design made it easy to sew even for those not trained in Western-style sewing. And because readymade *appappa*s did not cost much, adult women who might not have been able to afford Western-style clothing before were now able to experience a sense of liberation by wearing this type of Western-style clothing that was easier to move around in, and felt much cooler during the summer. The principal of a Western-style sewing school, who was born in Tokyo in 1910, notes that it was around 1935 that Japanese women, regardless of age or social status, truly started to learn the joy of wearing Western-style clothing; and this sense of joy and freedom was owed to the *appappa* (Kuwasawa 1953, 122–23).

uniforms by working women continued (Nakayama 2010, 400–09). But many women had both kimonos and Western-style clothing in their wardrobes. Women's home dresses became more fashionable. They were marketed as seasonal dresses suitable for the hot and humid Japanese summer, in place of the bulky kimono outfit with its multiple layers of fabric. This helped Western-style clothing to gain more popularity and acceptance among adult women (Nakayama 2010, 409–25).[62]

In 1932 Western-style clothing received a boost from another disaster. On December 16, Shirokiya, the erstwhile fabric shop that had by this time grown into a successful department store, had a fire that destroyed most of the building, resulting in the death of fourteen people. Word spread that kimono-clad women (both customers and store clerks) had died from falls from the upper levels because they had let go of the rescue ropes, trying instead to clutch their kimono bottoms. Underpants were not a part of the traditional garment in Japan, and kimono-clad women wore nothing underneath their kimonos to cover their lower bodies. Ashamed to expose themselves to the crowd that had gathered below, they removed their hands from the ropes in the name of modesty. Although this story has proven to be apocryphal, the rumor worked to justify the adoption by adult women of Western outfits that included underpants.[63]

With increased militarism came the need for rationing. In 1937 the government required that at least thirty-percent rayon be added to all wool and cotton fabrics. The following year the entire domestic production of cotton textiles was dedicated for military use only, making cotton unavailable to civilians. This left people only rayon. In 1940 the production of fabrics with gold,

[62] At the same time, the growing acceptance of Western-style clothing helped to increase sales of sewing machines and demand for Western-style tailors and sewing schools. The history of the sewing machine in Japan began when Europeans introduced it at the end of the Edo period. For more on the history of the sewing machine and its dissemination in Japan, see Nakayama (2010, 184–207; 425–36). Because in twentieth-century Japan Western-style clothing bespoke modernity, the sewing machine did so as well (see Gordon 2012).

[63] It is now thought that this rumor was planted as a marketing scheme by the Western-style-clothing business (Inoue 2002; Nakayama 2010, 408–09). For historical background on the sense of shame associated with the lower body, and the adoption of underpants in Japanese society, see Inoue (2002).

silver, or lacquered threads was banned, as was the use of chiffon and velvet. If manufacturers still had fabrics with gold, silver, and lacquered threads in stock and wanted to sell them, they were required to remove the threads or re-dye the fabrics to hide the glow of these threads. This law was presumably implemented for the sake of austerity, but it effectively ended the trend of using these threads in fabrics for everyday kimonos. Kimono culture prospered up until this point despite the ongoing promotion of Western-style clothing, because, for fashion-conscious people, having both kimonos and Western-style clothes meant more fashion options. The two types of clothing served different purposes: while Western-style clothing was practical during the summer for outings that required better mobility, the kimono retained its status and appeal as the traditional clothing for the majority. However, with the implementation of the law requiring fabric rationing, the era of kimono fashion faded. (*Nihon kinu jinken orimono shi* 1959, 316–24; 353–55)

World War II altered Japan's clothing culture drastically. In 1942 fabric rationing tightened to the point that the sale of clothing was regulated with tickets.[64] The government issued *kokumin-fuku*s 国民服 [national uniforms] for adult men, which consisted of a button-down collared shirt and jacket coupled with trousers (thus, a Western style). Women were obliged to wear traditional work garments, such as the *monpe* モンペ (loose-fitting pants with elastic hems). Due to the fabric shortage, women often cut up their casual kimonos to make two-

[64] Each household was given a certain number of points, based on family size and location (those in urban areas were given more points than those in rural regions). Different clothing items were assigned different point values: a three-piece suit for men (50 points); a fully lined kimono (48 points); a kimono with no lining (24 points); a two-piece dress for women (27 points); a *monpe* (10 points). For an illustrated guide to clothing pieces (with their point values indicated) from this period, see Inoue (2002, 121). For a discussion of wartime clothing, see Nakayama (2010, 437–53); *Nihon kinu jinken orimono shi* (1959, 398–407).

piece suits consisting of a wrap top with slightly puffed sleeves and a *monpe*.[65] And due to the scarcity of food, they traded beautiful special-occasion kimonos for victuals.[66]

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The kimono culture that had been curbed by wartime hardship never fully recovered in post-war Japan, despite several small-scale revivals and introductions of new types of kimonos. City-dwellers continued to have a hard time obtaining fabric and food, which forced them to sacrifice their remaining precious kimonos for essentials.[67]

During the occupation period (1945–1952), Westernization in Japan was dominated by American culture. The rebuilding nation welcomed new things, and new things meant Western things. The modernization of everyday life encouraged the adoption of Western-style clothing, and the Westernization of the urban areas eventually reached the rest of the nation.

Although the kimono textile industry attempted to revive the kimono, the garment faded from view because younger generations that had not grown up wearing kimonos did not turn to them. For them the kimono was only special-occasion attire for New Year celebrations and formal occasions. This was particularly true for women. Before World War II, half of all kimono textiles were produced for young women, thirty percent for middle-aged women, and twenty percent for men, children, and seniors. In the decade or so after the war, half of all kimono

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[65] For a photograph of a *monpe* made from a kimono, see, for example, Koizumi (2006, 6).

[66] According to one current antique-kimono handler that I interviewed, it was during wartime and the immediate post-war period that high-quality special-occasion kimonos from urban areas ended up being routed to rural areas, because urbanites traveled to rural areas with these kimonos seeking to barter for rice and vegetables. Nowadays such expensive elaborate kimonos are collected in rural areas and routed to used-kimono auctions and markets in urban areas.

[67] My paternal grandmother told me that she had had to go to farmers on the outskirts of Tokyo in search of food. She brought nice kimonos, but often she was rebuffed. Everyone from the city was trying to exchange nice kimonos for food, so she had to travel farther and farther into the hinterlands to find someone who would give her food in exchange for her garments. Much later in life she would meet those who had not lived in Tokyo during the war, and would learn that non-urbanites had not suffered as much as urbanites from food shortages then, which shocked her greatly.

textiles were produced for middle-aged women, and the other half for young women, men, seniors, and children. (*Nihon kinu jinken orimono shi* 1959, 551–57)

For older generations, once the nation recovered from wartime hardships the kimono became appealing again because they had grown up with it, and the yearning for it was still there. In the 1950s *meisen* kimonos became popular again. So-called *nyū kimono* ニューキモノ [new-style kimonos], two-piece kimonos (which were easier to put on) produced by fashion designers, and machine-washable kimonos (made of wool or polyester) were introduced in the 1950s and '60s. The *ūru kimono* ウール着物 [wool kimono] especially was widely marketed as dailywear in post-war Japan. However, such new types of kimono did not attract the younger population that had already become accustomed to wearing Western-style clothes. The fashions imported from France, Britain, and the United States were far more appealing to young women.[68] And, as production of ready-to-wear clothing developed in the 1960s and '70s, Western-style fashion became more and more affordable. Among the general population, those who wore kimonos daily were typically senior citizens.[69] During the 1980s the kimono established itself as an optional special-occasion garment, which position it has maintained to this day. Although a few occupations (kimono-shop clerks; attendants at Japanese-style restaurants and hotels; religious practitioners; performers in traditions such as noh 能, kabuki, *gidayū* 義太夫,[70] *rakugo* 落語 [71]) still require the wearing of kimonos, it is possible for a Japanese person never to don a kimono in his or her life if he or she so chooses.

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[68] The kimono was not recognized as part of youth fashion in post-war Japan until the current revival. Japan's fashion in the second half of the twentieth century has been much like that of the West. International figures like designers (Christian Dior, Coco Chanel) and actors (Audrey Hepburn, James Dean) influenced youth fashion in Japan as much as they did in the West. For a summary of post-war trends in Japan, see Nōzawa (2013, 167–90).
[69] In the 1970s and 1980s my maternal great-grandmother and paternal grandmother were still wearing kimonos daily. But they occasionally wore one-piece dresses as well. As they grew feeble, they would switch to wearing Western-style clothing entirely.
[70] *Gidayū* is a type of traditional performing art that involves storytelling through song.
[71] *Rakugo* is a type of traditional performing art that involves the narration of comical stories.

The History of Used Kimonos

It is unclear when the commodification of used clothing began in Japan. But because textiles remained precious until recently, it was common for people to recycle and reuse any scrap of fabric.[72] In pre-modern Japan farmers were engaged in silk and cotton production, but the highest-quality silk and cotton were submitted as taxes to their rulers. Kimonos, when worn out, were taken apart and either sold for parts or repurposed as futon covers, cushion covers, sleepwear, collars, thin belts, and so on. Considering how precious fabric was in the past, used kimonos were a necessary part of everyday life in Japan.

Tomizawa-chō as the center of the used-kimono business

The used-kimono business existed prior to the seventeenth century, but many of the earliest documents that provide clues to the business and culture of used clothing come from the Edo period, whose political stability enabled better organization of the economic system (along with a better system of record-keeping). At that time it was common for people to make do with used items (rather than buying things brand-new), as evidenced by the prosperity of the used-item business. Within the city of Edo there were several areas in which used-kimono businesses congregated, but the prime one was a district called Tomizawa-chō 富澤町.

A legend tells that Tomizawa-chō became the center of the used-kimono business because a bandit named Jinnai Tobisawa 鳶澤甚内 (飛澤甚内) established it there, and the name of the district (Tomizawa-chō) derives from his surname. In 1590, when the shogun moved into the castle of Edo (today's royal palace), the city of Edo was infested with thieves. The government

[72] Keiji Nagahara notes that *Ishiyama Honganji nikki* 石山本願寺日記 [Diaries of the Ishiyama Honganji Temple] (1537) mentions *Sakai furute-ya* 堺ふるてや [the second-hand business in Sakai], but this reference is to the pawning of swords, and it cannot necessarily be confirmed as the oldest record of the used-clothing business in the history of Japan (Nagahara 2004, 322–23).

eventually caught Tobisawa, the ringleader of a large group of bandits. Instead of executing him, Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa ordered Tobisawa to help keep other bandits away from Edo by giving him authority to manage the used-clothing business in the city of Edo. Thus Tobisawa was appointed head of the used-clothing business. With the help of his underlings, he monitored used-kimono transactions in the city, so as to prevent stolen items from circulating in the market and to keep an eye on the activities of known thieves.[73]

Due to the lack of historical documents verifying the existence of a man named Jinnai Tobisawa, contemporary Japanese historians tend to shy away from this legend. Instead they look to a historical record that explains differently how Tomizawa-chō became the center of the used-clothing business. According to *Furugi-donya kyūki* 古着問屋旧記 [A report on used-clothing wholesalers], in 1622 a man named Niheiji 仁平治 started a used-clothing business in Edo called Eguchi-ya 江口屋.[74] Niheiji knew that cotton was scarce in northern Japan (i.e., the Tōhoku 東北 region), and he saw a niche in the market. By 1626 eight used-clothing wholesalers had registered with the local administrative office. By the mid-seventeenth century the number had risen to thirteen. The used-clothing market originally started in the district called Konya-chō 紺屋町, but it later moved to the riverside in the district named Kamakura-chō 鎌倉町 in the

[73] The earliest record of this legend that I have located appears in *Ochibo-shū* 落穂集 [A collection of gleanings], a collection of stories about the past as recounted by the military strategist Yūzan Daidōji 大道寺友山 (1639–1730), published in 1727. *Ochibo-shū* is written in Chinese. For a modern edition with Japanese annotations, see Hagiwara and Mizue (1967, 55–57). This legend has recently inspired the fiction writer Yasuhide Saeki 佐伯泰英 to write a series of historical novels that feature the used-clothing business in the city of Edo, *Furugi-ya Sōbee kage shimatsu* 古着屋総兵衛影始末 [Used-clothing dealer Sōbee's work behind the scenes]. Sōbee is a descendant of the Tobisawa family, and he assumes the role of underground hero, dedicating his spare time to ensuring safety and justice in Edo by fighting against the network of black market businesses run by crooked city officials. The original series consisted of eleven volumes published 2000–2004. It was so successful that a second series, *Shin: Furugi-ya Sōbee* 新・古着屋総兵衛 [New series: Used-clothing dealer Sōbee], was launched in 2011; it includes nine volumes to date.

[74] *Furugi-donya kyūki* is a business report that summarizes the history of Eguchi-ya and major events in the used clothing business in Edo, which was submitted to the local administration office. The latest date noted in the record is 1863, so it is assumed to have been written around that time. The original cursive manuscript can be viewed online through the National Diet Library Digital Collections: http://iss.ndl.go.jp/books/R100000039-I000256034-00 (accessed January 25, 2015). For a typeset edition, see *Furugi-donya kyūki* (1965).

Kanda 神田 area of Tokyo. However, because many businesses were located in Tomizawa-chō, the town office agreed to move the market there around 1650. In 1701 the Tomizawa-chō official was appointed head of the used-clothing market, and a guild with its own hall was set up there (*Furugi-donya kyūki* 1965, 436; Haga 1996, 20; Tozawa 1982, 85). This system lasted only two years, but two records published in the next century indicate that Tomizawa-chō remained the hub of the used-clothing business.

In *Edo hanjō-ki* 江戸繁昌記 [Records of Edo's prosperity] (1832–1836), a series of records of the folklife in the city of Edo written by the Confucianism scholar Seiken Terakado 寺門静軒 (1796–1868), Tomizawa-chō is described as the site of numerous used-clothing shops.[75] He observes that a great variety of items line the storefronts in Tomizawa-chō, making the area quite colorful:

> Used-clothing shops fill both sides of the main and side streets, like a comb, and newly-acquired used kimonos and *obi*s are laid out every morning. Items are piled high like hills, and arrayed in rows like clouds. Formalwear with blue and red patterns is mixed in, as though rainbows had fallen from the sky, and winds had brought maple leaves.

He notes that used-clothing shops change their stock and displays according to the season:

> Red fireman jackets lined up in wintertime are like a raging fire, and mosquito nets in summertime are like green leaves swirling in flowing water. Used-clothing businessmen shake out lice in the spring winds and pat off molds on autumn days. Every new day welcomes newly-acquired old items to the storefronts.

That Seiken included his impressions of the used-clothing business in the city of Edo may attest to the fact that even though Edo was booming, only the well-to-do could afford the new

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[75] The series consists of five volumes published 1832–1836. The first two volumes (the Tomizawa-chō chapter appears in the first) were bestsellers, but the Tokugawa government banned their reprinting because they violated a law that prohibited political satire in print media. Seiken ignored the government's warnings and continued with the other volumes. In 1842 he was found guilty of writing immoral materials and was soon forced to leave Edo. He wrote *Edo hanjō-ki* in Chinese, exhibiting his in-depth knowledge of ancient Chinese literature. (Taketani 1980, 12–26)

For my complete translation of the Tomizawa-chō chapter, see Appendix 3.

fabrics from *gofuku-ya*s 呉服屋 (silk-bolt businesses and sellers) and *futomono-ya*s 太物屋 (businesses for and sellers of cotton and hemp bolts)[76] to have new kimonos tailored for themselves. Many residents (including a scholar of Confucianism without patronage like Seiken himself) had to rely on used pieces for their clothing needs.

In addition to Tomizawa-chō, Seiken writes about the nearby district of Yanagihara 柳原. The area was then known during the daytime for used-clothing shops that sold the lowest-quality items (the most used and tattered pieces), and after dark as a place in which older independent prostitutes (typically castoffs from the red-light district) hung around in search of customers. His descriptions are as follows:

> The most used and tattered clothes are routed to Yanagihara. Among used-clothing markets the ones in Yanagihara are of the lowest quality. The quality of items there is low, but the prices are rather high, and the starting price is not even three times greater. Following the proverb "When you don't know, suggest half the price," a gentleman will be deceived and a lower-class man will be left in the lurch. Some items are pieced together with glue instead of with thread. The outer fabric may be clean and shiny, but the inside may be worn out. It is a rip-off. Items are cleaned, mended, and re-tailored. Some used items are refurbished and sold as new, while newly tailored items are sold as used. If one sees an item in the sunlight, though it may not be obvious, the original patterns (before re-dyeing) may show through; and if one measures, the right sleeve may be shorter after re-tailoring. If a customer stops and requests a price, the attendant may suggest a price three times the item's value. If the customer leaves, the attendant calls out after him. If he does not look back, the attendant may chase after him. At each return the price drops. After this happens several times, they may settle on a price. This way, the attendant can act as though he got the short end and say, "You got such a good bargain." If the attendant spots someone from the country, he will not let go of his sleeve. He will suggest items smarmily, and try to sell by force. The scene resembles the way in which a low-class prostitute tries to attract a customer….
>
> By nighttime the used-clothing sellers have packed up and gone home. Now the long riverbank is quiet; there are only willow trees and no people. But at the end of the row of willow trees, something is there, calling out to the people. The calling sounds like

[76] In the past, a bolt of silk for the kimono was called a *go-fuku* 呉服, which originally meant a textile woven with techniques introduced from the Wu 呉 dynasty (220–280) in China (the character "呉," read "*wu*" in Chinese, is read "*go*" in Japanese). Because silk had long been a luxury fabric available only to the upper classes, it was handled separately from other types of fabric. Thus, bolts of kimono fabric made of other materials (like cotton and hemp) were called "*futo-mono* 太物 [thick things]," probably because cotton and hemp fibers are thicker than silk fibers. The business that handled silk bolts was called "*gofuku-ya*," while the one that handled bolts of other fabrics was called "*futomono-ya*."

> crying or pleading. This voice is very different from the loud ones of the daytime. This is the voice of a "nighthawk," an old washed-up prostitute. That she is doing business here has something to do with the location.

Folklorist Morisada Kitagawa 喜田川守貞 (b. 1810) documented the life of Edo residents in a series called *Morisada mankō* 守貞謾稿 [Essays by Morisada] (begun in 1837, and continuing for thirty years). In the entry entitled "Tomizawa-chō oyobi Tachibana-chō no furugi-ya 富澤町および橘町の古着屋 [Used-clothing stores in Tomizawa-chō and Tachibana-chō]" he describes the atmosphere of the markets:

> In the morning, when it is sunny [used-clothing sellers] spread out their mats and place used clothes on them, in addition to lining up used clothes in the shops. They sell used clothes to both professionals and ordinary citizens. After 10:00 AM they close the stores and put up latticework. Shops in Muramatsu-chō 村松町 do not use mats, but hang used clothes inside the stores, which are open all day. Used-clothing shops are also found in Hikage-chō 日かげ町. Hikage-chō is a small street north of the big street that connects Shibaguchi 芝口 and Utagawa-chō 宇田川町. Many used-clothing shops are also found in Higashinaka-chō 東中町 and Nishinaka-chō 西中町 in Asakusa 浅草. (Morisada 1996, 1:175; translation mine)

Kitagawa writes about peddlers known as *takeuma furugi-ya* 竹馬古着屋 [bamboo-horse used-clothes sellers] as well:

> [They] carry four-legged bamboo stands called "*takeuma* 竹馬 [bamboo horses]." They carry used clothes as well as pieces and parts of kimonos and accessories, and visit people's houses. Before the Tempo 天保 period [1830–1844] peddlers of used clothing did not exist in Kyoto and Osaka. However, since this Edo-style selling was introduced, a few can be found there as well. Nowadays Kyoto and Osaka learn from Edo. (Morisada 1996, 1:290; translation mine)

In the repertoire of traditional storytelling, *rakugo*, there is a comical story entitled "Furute-kai 古手買い [Buying used clothes]," which describes two men (one slow-witted, the other bellicose) who get into a quarrel with a clerk at a used-clothing shop over the price of a kimono when the clerk refuses to give the slow-witted customer a discount, and the bellicose

customer picks a fight with the clerk. The story ends with the men snapping at the clerk and stomping out of the store.[77]

Such documentation provides glimpses into the life of Edo residents and their habits of buying and selling used clothing.[78]

The used-kimono business during the Edo and Meiji periods

Throughout the Edo period, in order to implement civil order, the Tokugawa government issued regulations to monitor businesses that handled used items, because any stolen or missing items were likely to turn up on the used-item markets. For example, the government issued business licenses and required individuals engaged in the trading of used items to obtain a license; anyone who traded without a license was subject to punishment. In 1684 law enforcement went further to mandate a guarantor for every transaction involving used kimonos or used tools. In 1692 the government tightened the regulations even more by requiring a guild to be founded for the pawning business; businesses that did not enroll were banned. Moreover, ink stamps—as a means of identification—of both pawnor and guarantor were required for any transaction so as to monitor unlawfully circulating items. In 1701 a similar stipulation was applied to the used-clothing business. This system for the used-clothing business lasted only two years, however. Afterward public servants were given the responsibility of monitoring the business for any lost or stolen clothing items. (Tozawa 1982, 505–10)

[77] This story originated in Osaka where used clothes were called "*furute*" (instead of "*furugi*," as in Edo). The Edo version is entitled "Furugi-ya 古着屋 [Used-clothing shop]" (Nagai 1969, 41).

[78] An Edo-period illustration of a used-clothing shop by Toyohiro Utagawa 歌川豊広 (1773–1828) can be found in an 1805 novel written by Somahito Nansenshō 南杣笑楚満人 (1749–1807), *Katakiuchi tatsutayama onna shiranami* 敵討竜田山女白浪 (a story about the revenge of a female thief in Tatsutayama). For a reproduction of this illustration, see Ishikawa (1997, 162). The original is available online through the Waseda University Library's collections: http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/ kotenseki/html/he13/he13_01961_0098/index.html (accessed April 3, 2015).

In 1723 under the reign of the eighth Tokugawa shogun Yoshimune 吉宗, a new more systematic law was implemented for used businesses. Used-item trading was now categorized into eight business types, and occupational guilds were required to form. This system was called "*happin-akinai* 八品商 [businesses of eight items]": the eight categories were *furugi-ya* 古着屋 [used-clothing shops], *furugi-kai* 古着買 [used-clothing buyers], *furutetsu-ya* 古鉄屋 [used-metal shops], *furutetsu-kai* 古鉄買 [used-metal buyers], *kodōgu-ya* 小道具屋 [small-tool shops], *furudōgu-ya* 古道具屋 [used-tool shops], *karamono-ya* 唐物屋 [import shops], and *shichi-ya* 質屋 [pawnshops]. This was yet another governmental attempt to establish an effective means to identify lost and stolen items. As before, registration was required for those in the eight businesses. Specifically for the used-kimono business, in 1772 a transaction required proof of identification from the seller, as well as a guarantor, whenever a handler was to buy a used kimono from a non-professional individual (someone not registered in the business).

The used-clothing business was part of a large-scale nationwide economic operation sustained by cargo ships (*higaki kaisen* 菱垣廻船) that traveled from one port to another along the coast, with Edo and Osaka as their bases of operation. Along with textiles, food, *sake*, medicines, and other everyday goods, used kimonos were transported to port cities all over the nation; from there they were dispersed inland.[79]

The used-clothing business was profitable in both Edo and Osaka, and those in business in the two cities were rivals. In 1723 Edo had 110 business groups of used-clothing shops and brokers (1,182 members); 17 groups of used-clothing tailors and brokers (200 members); and 113 groups of used clothes buyers and brokers (1,407 members). In addition, sellers of fabric-

[79] In order to preclude pilferage by crew members, in 1694 a business association for ten business groups (*Tokumi-doiya nakama* 十組問屋仲間 [ten bands of wholesalers]) that included a group of used-kimono traders was founded to handle loss and damage during transport (Tamada 2008, 33). Historian Reiko Hayashi includes the entire record explaining the founding of *Tokumi-doiya nakama*, and points out that it was a better-organized version of the existing association, which grew into the largest of its kind during the Edo period (1969, 56–71).

scraps, cotton-scrap sellers, three-piece sellers,[80] peddlers, and auctioneers were registered in the used-clothing business.[81] In 1774 Edo had 3,951 members registered in the used-clothing business (used-clothing shops, buyers, brokers, wholesalers, those who cleaned and re-sewed used kimonos, those who disassembled kimonos to make scraps, etc.). In Osaka, on the other hand, the 1714 record shows that 3,300 individuals were registered in the business association, and the number was 3,425 in 1853.[82] (Tamada 2008, 32–35)

During the Edo period the business of used clothing (*furugi-ya*) was as profitable as the business of cotton fabric (*futomono-ya*) (Tamada 2008, 33). In a popular ranking of profitable businesses published in Osaka, *Sho shōbainin tegara kurabe sumō* 諸商売人出世競相撲 [A sumo match of profitable businesses], the used-clothing business ranked fourth.[83] Interestingly a *gofuku-ya* (a silk fabric business) was listed as the sponsor of this hypothetical sumo tournament, which makes sense because *gofuku-ya*s were the most profitable of all merchants.

One may assume that *gofuku-ya*s and *futomono-ya*s were in rivalry with those in the used-clothing business because an abundance of used clothes would hinder sales of newly produced fabrics for kimonos. As a matter of fact, in *Edo shokunin uta-awase* 江戸職人歌合 [Poetry match

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[80] *Mitsu-mono furiuri* 三つ物振売: peddlers who disassembled padded kimonos into three pieces (outer fabric, padding, and lining) to sell the pieces separately (Hayashi 1992, 163).

[81] By comparison, pawnshops organized 250 groups with 2,731 members; used-tool shops organized 209 groups with 2,335 members; import shops had 15 groups with 128 members. For further details see *Furugi-donya kyūki* (1965, 430).

[82] Many members of *Happin-akinai* were licensed to engage in more than one of the eight businesses. For example, used-clothing shops bought used clothes, and used-metal shops bought used metal. Also, pawnshops bought used clothes and old metal. (Tozawa 1982, 97–98)

[83] During the Edo period, various kinds of rankings were printed and circulated as part of mass entertainment. The ranking usually followed the style of a sumo tournament with a set of East (right) and West (left) divisions, using the hierarchy of sumo wrestlers: *ōzeki* 大関, *sekiwake* 関脇, *komusubi* 小結, and *maegashira* 前頭. On this ranking of profitable businesses, the top two (*ōzeki*) businesses were moneychangers and rice sellers; in the second tier (*sekiwake*) were import dealers and *sake* makers; and the third rank (*komusubi*) was occupied by timber cutters and coal sellers. The used-clothing business occupied the fourth rank (the top *maegashira* position) along with the cotton business. The publication date of this particular ranking is unknown. But in 1855 a similar ranking just for used-clothing shops in the city of Edo was published. (Ishikawa 2001, 76–82, 219–20)

Many such rankings from this period have survived, and others include rankings of food stands, rice, *sake*s, swords, craftsmen, festivals, tourist spots, and so on (see Ishikawa 2001).

of Edo workers] (1808), *gofuku-ya*s and *furugi-ya*s are pitted against each other.[84] Yet the used-clothing trade was very much in partnership with *gofuku-ya*s and *futomono-ya*s. Major *gofuku-ya*s had either branches or business partners in Tomizawa-chō to liquidate surplus stock. Another successful *gofuku-ya* of the Edo period, Mitsui-Echigo-ya 三井越後屋,[85] indicated in their business policies the following: route bolts to Tomizawa-chō if their prices were set high (anticipating profit) but did not sell, and pass them off as used at the end-of-season liquidation at the end of each six-month fiscal period in July and December; if a shop is overstocked, get rid of bolts that have not sold within thirty days; check anything interesting that appears in the Tomizawa-chō market to consider it for purchase (so as to learn what other *gofuku-ya*s are producing, since other *gofuku-ya*s route their leftovers to Tomizawa-chō as well) (Sugimori 2006, 305, 308–10). In 1718 Daikokuya 大黒屋 (another *gofuku-ya* with branches in Edo) assigned a man named Matabee 又兵衛 to open and manage a Tomizawa-chō branch to sell used kimonos (Ueda 2008, 5).[86] Shirokiya had a connection with a used-clothing shop in Tomizawa-chō owned by Tarōbee Iseya 伊世屋太郎兵衛; when this store failed in 1760, Shirokiya purchased the space and license to open its Tomizawa-chō branch (Hayashi 1992, 161).

The practice of routing kimono bolts to the used-clothing market probably suggests that fabrics were tailored as kimonos before being put out at the market so that they would pass as

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[84] The poems are included in Sugimori (2006, 304); the original can be viewed online in the National Diet Library Digital Collections: http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2533750 (accessed January 25, 2015). A reproduction is also available in Hanasaki (1973, 192–95).

[85] Mitsui-Echigo-ya, which established its first branch in Edo in 1673, grew into the most successful *gofuku-ya* during the Edo period, and later became the most successful department store chain. In 1683 Mitsui-Echigo-ya introduced fixed-price-based selling for the first time in the *gofuku* business, which had previously practiced haggling based on the *gofuku-ya*'s suggested prices. For its new business model, Mitsui-Echigo-ya was soon ostracized by other *gofuku-ya*s (so much so that the store had to relocate away from the *gofuku-ya* district within Edo), but it was indeed this new way of selling that made the shop popular with the public, leading Mitsui-Echigo-ya to become the top-selling *gofuku-ya* of the period.

[86] Daikoku-ya Matabee is listed as a tailoring broker for the Tomizawa-chō branch (Ueda 2008, 5). After leaving the branch, Matabee became a merchant successful enough to appear in a ranking of wealthy businessmen published in 1846. For more about Matabee, see Ueda (2008; 2009).

used items.[87] This explains the existence of separate businesses for the cleaning, re-dyeing, mending, and re-tailoring of used kimonos during the Edo period.

During the latter part of the Edo period the used-clothing business remained constant in size. In 1851 the number of those engaged in the business was 3,949 (Haga 1996, 2–3). A ranking of used-clothing shops in Edo published in 1855 lists nearly three hundred retailers (Ishikawa 2001, 219–20).

Trade records from the Meiji period show that used clothing continued to circulate nationwide (Ōtsuka, et al. 2003; Tamada 2008, 37–40). Although the center of the used-clothing market eventually moved during the Meiji period from Tomizawa-chō to neighboring Iwamoto-chō 岩本町, this general area continues to be famous for the textile trade to this day.

In 1873 the government published revised provisions for used-item businesses. As before, proprietors needed to form business associations with a business registration system. For every purchase of used items, verification of the seller's identification was required. These Meiji-period provisions noted that the associations of used-clothing handlers included those who dealt with Western-style clothes.

The number of registered used-clothing shops in 1879 was 4,546, which made it the second largest used-item business (after the 4,775 registered used-tool shops). In 1881 two used-clothing businessmen petitioned the Iwamoto-chō civil office for permission to open a market there. Permission was granted, and was later obtained from the nearby district of Hisamatsu-chō

[87] During my fieldwork one used-kimono dealer confirmed the reason behind this practice. While shopping for used kimonos, I had a chance to talk with a clerk of a used-kimono business (which is a branch of a kimono-fabric business), and he told me that a kimono-fabric business cannot sell bolts cheaper than their set prices. When liquidating, the company needs to transform bolts into kimonos by first forwarding the bolts to tailors. Then they route such newly-tailored kimonos to the used-kimono market. The business protects the price of kimono fabrics this way.

久松町.[88] In 1884 the government implemented further-revised provisions for used-item businesses (for instance, the license system was improved for better tracking of business registrations); but the core purpose of the provisions—to detect stolen items—remained.[89] (Sakazume 2008, 186; 182; 179)

How did the used-clothing business operate outside of Edo and Osaka? One record from Yamanashi 山梨 prefecture shows the 268 transactions that occurred in a village[90] from 1896 to 1900. It is a bookkeeping record of a female used-clothing seller, who operated her business both by visiting people's homes and having people visit her residence. She acquired used clothes to sell by traveling to bigger neighboring towns to purchase directly from used-clothing sellers, who had their own shops there. Because the law required that her records be checked regularly by a local official, she logged details such as the date and place of her purchases; a description of each item, and the price paid; the date and place of each sale; the price obtained for each item; and the net profit from each sale. The list shows *nagagi*s, undergarments, and *obi*s for men, women, and children. Many items were sold within a few days of acquisition. For instance, an unlined *chirimen* female kimono was bought for 85 *sen* 銭 (0.85 yen) from a used-kimono seller in another town on May 26, 1897, and was sold on May 28 for 90 *sen* (0.90 yen). (Niitsu 2012)

[88] The business guidebook *Tokyo hitori annai* 東京独案内 [Guidebook to Tokyo] lists Tomizawa-chō, Muramatsu-chō, Tachibana-chō, and Yanagihara-dote-dōri as locations where used clothing markets took place every day (Satō 1881, 17–18).
[89] The provisions have been revised since; the current provisions for used items started in 1949.
[90] Today's Minami-arupusu City 南アルプス市 in Yamanashi prefecture, located 62 miles west of Tokyo.

The Used-kimono business in the twentieth century and beyond

Used clothing remained big business until the end of the third quarter of the twentieth century. A description by Kanjin Nakoso 勿来関人 (1922)[91] of the used-clothing market in the early twentieth century resembles those from the previous century. It reports that used-clothing stores in Yanagihara and Hikage-chō have storefronts that face north to make it difficult for customers to detect poor dyework or rips in the kimonos[92]; and that clerks flatter potential customers to coax them into buying something, but turn nasty at the first sign of disinterest. Used items by this time include Western-style clothes, and the stock of kimonos and Western-style clothing can be categorized into three types: heavily worn, slightly used, and new. Among the used kimonos are a few treasures, but it is more common for stores to have decent-looking ones that are in fact poorly sewn. Some used-clothing sellers buy directly from the public at their stores, but many get their stock from pawnshop warehouses. Other kimonos are purchased at used-clothing markets or bought from tailors of both kimonos and Western-style clothing. Used clothing is traded between Tokyo and Osaka, but is also sent to Korea and Taiwan.[93] (Nakoso 1922, 29–32)[94]

After the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, central Tokyo underwent a major replotting. Yet the locus of wholesalers of clothing fabrics remained the Iwamoto-chō area and its vicinity.

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[91] In *Yokome de mita Tokyo* 横目で見た東京 [A furtive glance at Tokyo] Nakoso describes the life of Tokyo in a style similar to Seiken's *Edo hanjō-ki*. As Seiken did in his work, Nakoso reveals the harsh realities of city life with a hint of cynicism. In the preface Nakoso explains that people generally see Tokyo as a place of dreams, but that it may take five to six years to understand what it is really like for those who have come from other regions of Japan to live in Tokyo; therefore he intends to deliver a realistic description of Tokyo life. The author's name might be a pseudonym, because there is no other known work by him, and the first three characters of the name 勿来関 (read "*Nakoso no seki*") is the name of a *sekisho* 関所 (a governmental checkpoint to monitor the movements of people and goods that existed in many parts of Japan until its abolition in 1869) that appears in medieval Japanese literature. "*Nakoso*" means "don't come" in classical Japanese.

[92] This reason makes sense, but it could also be for the sake of protecting the kimonos from the fading effects of sunlight.

[93] Used clothes were probably sent to Korea and Taiwan for Japanese migrants there.

[94] For my translation of the complete chapter, see Appendix 4.

By this time, however, the share of Western-style clothing was growing in the used-clothing business. In a 1930 guidebook for clothing wholesalers in the area, there already existed wholesalers specializing in Western-style used clothing and Western-style military and school uniforms. There were also used-clothing stores that sold imported Western-style clothing re-tailored to sizes that would fit the Japanese. (Asaoka 2003, 165–81)

Used clothing (both kimonos and Western-style clothing) continued to be distributed nationwide through wholesalers, shops, and peddlers, even reaching small villages in rural areas (Asaoka 2003, 219–44). The fabric shortage that began before World War II continued even after the war's end, and the repurposing of fabric was a necessity in most households.

Although Japanese society recovered steadily during the era of U.S. occupation (1945–1952), life in rural areas did not improve as rapidly as that in urban areas. There is one regional case reported by a man who worked during this period as a peddler of used clothing in the prefecture of Iwate 岩手, in the Tōhoku region. The man's name was Ryō Ōmura 大牟羅良 (1909–1993). He had returned to his home prefecture of Iwate after his service in the war. Life in the Tōhoku region was difficult, and poverty was a reality for many. He witnessed firsthand the hardships of Iwate farmers when visiting their houses as a peddler.[95] In his award-winning book *Mono iwanu nōmin* ものいわぬ農民 [Muted farmers] (1958), Ōmura described the dire living conditions of farmers in northwestern Japan. The lack of funds made it difficult for farmers to purchase goods. Ōmura sometimes sold his used clothing on credit, or accepted vegetables, rice, or wheat as payment. He reported that among the farmers thick cotton clothing, work clothing, clothing for schoolchildren, and fabrics for bedding sold well, while everyday clothing such as

[95] Driven to improve the lives of the farmers, Ōmura launched the periodical *Iwate no hoken* 岩手の保健 [Health in Iwate prefecture] (1947–1970) to provide a venue in which locals could share their feelings with others in similar circumstances. This periodical was one of the first journals run by locals for locals. Issues treated in the periodical included: raising children; family conflicts; health problems and medical treatments; caregiving for seniors; abortion; suicide; and the plight of migrant workers, injured soldiers, and war widows.

*kokumin-fuku*s,[96] *meisen* kimonos for women, or clothing for infants and toddlers did not. He figured that this was because farmers did not need the everyday clothing that townspeople wore, as they worked in the field all day, came home for supper, and changed into nightwear. They needed only work clothes, special-occasion kimonos for seasonal festivals, and clothing for their school-age children, whom the families did not want to send out in their patchwork homemade clothes (1958, 47–48).

After the end of the occupation era Japan entered a phase called the "post-war economic miracle," which lasted through the 1980s (during which time Japan became the world's second-largest economy). Consumerism boomed. Clothing became available in abundance, and used clothing gradually receded from the everyday lives of many people.[97] Of course by this time the kimono was no longer everyday clothing in Japan, and "clothing" meant "Western-style clothing." Nowadays the used-clothing business is for those who import used Western-style clothing from the United Kingdom and United States, catering to young people who enjoy affordable casual fashions (Asaoka 2003, 262–70).

My maternal family's economic status before World War II allowed my maternal grandmother to grow up wearing Western-style clothing. By the time that my mother was born in 1948, the family's status had declined. Yet she grew up wearing Western-style clothing, because in post–World War II Japan Western-style clothing had established itself as standard dailywear.

[96] *Kokumin-fuku*s continued to be worn after World War II because of the clothing shortage.

[97] In the second half of the twentieth century, many kinds of new synthetic fabric were invented and mass-produced. This revitalized the clothing industry, but synthetic fabrics were harder to recycle than cotton, silk, or wool, both at home and by the recycling industry. And the traditional system of fabric recycling started to change. Clothing used to be repurposed and recycled at home until it became fabric scraps. But people started to discard clothing still in good condition—either because it was out of style or because it was made of synthetic fabric and was not repurposable. For the recycling industry, it was more economical to export used clothing to less developed countries than to recycle it domestically to make, for instance, waste cloth. (Nakano and Nakano 1987; Asaoka 2003, 245–62)

People in my mother's generation thought of the kimono as clothing for senior citizens. My mother took tea-ceremony lessons before marrying, so she had some tailored semi-formal kimonos that she wore for lessons or for other special occasions. By the time that I was a teen, the kimono had faded away as daily clothing for the general population. By then the kimono had become optional special-occasion attire. Many women in my mother's generation hardly wore kimonos, yet they kept kimonos after the wearers had passed away. Even if they did not wear them, they recognized their value as fabric, and/or cherished them as keepsakes. And my mother was no exception.

CHAPTER FOUR: Encountering My Grandmother's Kimono

Introduction

In 1996 I came to North America because I wanted to study cultures by immersing myself in a multicultural environment. After spending three semesters at a small college on the East Coast, I transferred to the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Within a year I had selected folklore as my home discipline. While I enjoyed thoroughly the disciplinary training that taught me about other people's folklore and folklife (Scandinavian, Scandinavian American, Wisconsinite, Canadian, and Newfoundlander), by the time that I had finished the coursework in the master's program at Memorial University of Newfoundland, I found myself yearning to reconnect with my native culture. I had left Japan while still a teenager, and I was becoming increasingly aware of my lack of in-depth knowledge about Japanese folklore. Moreover, living away from my family, I had missed out on many family events, and I wanted to reconnect with my roots. Both personally and professionally I wanted to retrieve my cultural heritage. In 2006 I returned to Japan to take a brief respite from academia, hoping that living with my parents and working in Japan would help me to evaluate my career possibilities and myself as a Japanese.

During this period, I mentioned to my mother that I ought to acquire some basic knowledge about the kimono. Certain that I wanted to study material culture in a Ph.D. program, I reckoned that dress would be one of the topics with which I would need to become familiar. As a native of Japan, learning about kimono culture would surely be unavoidable.

Then one day my mother showed me all the kimonos that she had saved after my parents had moved into their Tokyo condominium. They had purchased this place several years before in

preparation for my father's retirement, and this was the first time in decades that they would live in a dwelling that was not a house. As is the case for many retirees who give up their houses, space limitations forced them to reduce significantly the number of family possessions. During their relocation I was in the United States, and had no idea what they had decided to retain. When my mother pulled out the kimonos that day, I was surprised that they had survived because they had hardly ever been outside of the closet. I wondered why my mother had chosen to keep kimonos that no one would ever wear.

Different kinds of kimonos emerged from the closet. Some I recognized from my childhood; others I knew dated from my mother's pre-marital life; still others were unfamiliar to me. Of all the kimonos, one that I had never before seen piqued my aesthetic sense the most. Mesmerized by the kimono, I asked my mother how she had acquired it.

"What's this?"

"Oh, that was Grandma's. It's nice, isn't it? I told you before that she was fashionable."

This kimono had a pattern of asymmetrical multi-colored stripes, and it was made of silk woven in the style called *omeshi* [98] (Figure 4). The kimono was one of the two pieces that my grandmother had sent to my mother in the late 1980s. According to my mother, my grandmother

Figure 4: My grandmother's *omeshi* kimono

[98] *Omeshi* is a type of crêpe kimono fabric whose silk threads are spun unevenly so as to create a slight roughness of texture. This mode of spinning requires more silk and a higher level of craftsmanship, and yields a high-quality textile of great durability. Initially developed exclusively for the ruling class, the fabric became easily available to ordinary citizens in the twentieth century. Not for formal outings or for home-wear, the *omeshi* kimono was at that time a type worn for personal outings. My inherited kimono was made in the first half of the twentieth century, which roughly coincides with my grandmother's pre-marital teenage years, a time during which a variety of fashionable silk kimonos were produced.

was wont to discard unneeded items. In 1977—when my mother's parents moved from Tokyo to a new house in Makuhari 幕張, Chiba 千葉—many kimonos were thrown away or given to relatives. My grandmother always liked new things, and those that were obsolete were routinely eliminated from her household. But my grandmother knew that my mother liked these two kimonos, and saved them for her. When my parents built their own house ten years later, my grandmother sent the kimonos to my mother. Thus was this kimono transferred from my grandmother's chest to my mother's, even though it was destined only to rest in the drawer, neatly folded.

The intact *shitsuke ito* しつけ糸 [tacking threads] indicated that the kimono had never been worn (Figure 5). My mother had no idea when, where, or for whom it had been acquired, for she had never once seen her mother in a kimono. And since my mother had never told me about these kimonos before, I had no idea that my mother possessed kimonos that used to belong to my grandmother. Now the kimono manifested itself nearly two decades after coming into my mother's possession.

Figure 5: *Shitsuke ito* on the *omeshi* kimono

Although we had no information regarding this kimono's origin or its usage by my grandmother, the garment gained new meaning that day. With my mother's assurance that it would suit me well, my inheritance of this treasure was granted on the spot. This sparked my desire to participate in a long-standing Japanese tradition that had hitherto been largely foreign to me. For the first time in my life I grew interested in wearing kimonos personally, in addition to just learning about kimono culture.

My desire to master kimono-wearing, which originally stemmed from a sense of professional obligation, became a personal matter to me. My grandmother's striped kimono seems to have presented itself to guide me through my homecoming to my family roots.

The Kimono Recalled

Kimonos had been foreign to me for the greater part of my life, and I never questioned this foreignness in my youth. I do not recall encountering kimono-clad women in the various places in which my family lived, and none of the elderly members of my extended family wore kimonos regularly (as far as I could remember then). I never saw my mother or her mother in a kimono. Because the garment did not appear in my daily life, it remained too remote to inform my worldview. My mind must have concluded that this traditional attire was something distant that did not fit into the lifestyle of our contemporary nuclear family—with father as businessman and mother as housewife—from the provincial city of Ueda in Nagano.

Yet there were a few occasions on which I wore kimonos. My paternal grandmother worked as a contract kimono tailor for much of her life, and though she had retired by the time that my sister and I were born, she sewed kimonos for us to wear at New Year's celebrations. In my childhood, our family had a routine of twice-yearly trips to visit both sets of grandparents. Since we lived in Nagano, apart from all of our relatives in the Tokyo area, during every summer and winter recess my mother took me and my sister and brother to see our paternal grandparents in Kawasaki 川崎, Kanagawa 神奈川, and then to visit my mother's parents in Chiba. This order never changed, and my father accompanied us only for the New Year's celebrations. We traveled by train and bus to visit my father's parents, arriving on New Year's Eve. My uncle's family

would join us, and by dinnertime all members of the Yoshimura family were present, with my grandfather as the head.

On the morning of New Year's Day, my brother and I finally would be allowed to get up after lying awake for what seemed like hours but being told by our parents to stay still (we two were always eager to get up, while my sister wanted to stay in bed as long as possible). In the chilliness caused by the nighttime absence of heat,[99] we sneaked out of the futons and slowly tiptoed down the long wooden hallway connecting the guest room to the dining room. We tried our best not to make any noise (as instructed by our parents) when sliding the squeaky old wooden-framed glass door. My brother and I watched morning cartoons on the muted television in the dining room brightened by the cold winter sun, listening to the monotonous tick-tock of the old wall clock, whose sound we never noticed amid the daytime cacophony of people chattering, water running, dishes clinking.

Figure 6: My sister (back row, right) and me (center) in kimonos, with my counsins and brother, at my grandparents' home in Makuhari, Chiba, ca. 1981. Photographer unknown.

Eventually the others started to rise, and it was time for us to get ready for the New Year's celebration. This is when the kimonos made their appearance. Before my mother joined the crowd in the kitchen to ready the celebratory foods, she dressed me and my sister in the kimonos made by my paternal grandmother. The two kimonos were made from the same orange wool fabric with a flower pattern, and it was only by the color of the *obi* that my outfit could be differentiated from my sister's (Figure 6). Unfortunately, the kimono itself did not

[99] Even today, central air systems are rare in Japanese homes. In my grandparents' house, built in the mid-twentieth century, heat was provided only by portable gas heaters, which were turned off at night.

have much impact on me. After all, donning it was just another routine in the New Year's celebration. I knew that my grandmother had hand-sewn it for me, but neither its orange color nor its checked pattern appealed to me, and my grandmother never remarked on our wearing these kimonos that she had created just for us—such as whether or not we looked good in them. In fact, I never heard any comments from anyone.

What I do recall, however, is the care with which my mother dressed me. I liked the way she took the time to do it properly, exhibiting her maternal love by paying attention to me. She would make sure that the clothing lines were crossed precisely, straightening the *ohashori* (the fold of extra fabric at the hip), pinching and pulling every corner of the garment.

This rite took place in the dark hallway just outside the guestroom in which my family slept. Because the guestroom's sliding doors to the yard would be wide open to let the fresh crisp January air into the room, the hallway was thought to be warmer. I would stand still, making a T-shape with my outstretched arms, holding the rims of the sleeves while my mother concentrated on wrapping me properly. Watching my mother busy being attentive, I did my best to stay still and maintain my T-shape. It was never clear what made her so serious about dressing me in this garment. Her motherly dedication was performed often in silence, yet it was clear enough to warm my juvenile heart. And this dressing routine is the only thing that I can remember. I do not know what I did in the kimono afterwards, though I imagine that we all indulged in festive foods, played cards, watched television, went for walks—only because that was our practice in later years, when I had outgrown the kimono, and New Year's Day came each year without me wearing it. It is not the kimono that I recall fondly now; rather, it is the motherliness that my mother exhibited while dressing me in it.

The second memory of myself in a kimono involves the coming-of-age ritual for a girl who is turning seven years old, called *shichi-go-san* 七五三.[100] I was dragged into this event suddenly without forewarning, something that my parents often did with us children. Things, no matter how out of the ordinary they may have seemed, happened without forewarning or explanation; and we could do nothing but accept what was to befall us (even for fun events like family trips). One autumn day my mother told me that I needed to go to a beauty parlor, and so we went. The salon was located on the street that I walked to school every day, but this was my first time ever entering. My mother had always cut our hair, and beauty parlors existed outside my worldview at the time. I sensed that something special was about to occur. I knew that I would soon turn seven, but no one told me that I was to undergo the ritual on that specific day. But then there I was in the back of the shop where two middle-aged women (a beautician and a *kitsuke-shi*) began coiffing my hair, wrapping me in an exquisite kimono covered with elaborate embroideries and vivid colors, and smearing my face with cosmetics. I felt uncomfortable in such an exotic environment, and I kept licking the lipstick that

Figure 7: (Left to right) my brother, my father, me, my sister. At the Hachiman Shrine in Ueda, Nagano, 1984. Photo by Kazuko Yoshimura.

[100] *Shichi-go-san* (literally, "seven-five-three") is a traditional custom in which children at the ages of three (boys and girls), five (boys only), and seven (girls only) are celebrated for their growth and health. Customarily parents take the children to local shrines to receive blessings, and the family shares ceremonial foods afterwards. This rite of passage provides one of the life-cycle special occasions on which kimonos are worn by the children being celebrated.

the beautician was trying to apply to my lips; it tasted awful.

My mother told me that the kimono that I was wearing was the one that she had worn at age seven. In retrospect, I should have felt honored to be dressed in my mother's kimono (Figure 7). However, I noticed that the kimono had been waiting for me at the parlor prior to our arrival, and this only validated my suspicion that she had made arrangements in advance. "How come you never told me about this in advance?" was the phrase that kept repeating in my head. My memories of the rest of the day are rather spare. My father and siblings joined us later when we went to a local shrine, where I must have undergone some kind of ritual of which I have no recollection. It was a cold damp day, which only exacerbated the trauma caused by the series of uncertainties. I might have been consoled had the autumn leaves that carpeted the ground made crunching noises as we walked, for this was one of my favorite seasonal sounds. But rainwater had soaked the leaves, muting any festive sentiments.

I can glean no more kimono-related events from my memory. Had I stayed in Japan to pursue higher education, I could have experienced other milestones that many young women go through in adulthood, such as *seijin-shiki* 成人式 and college graduation ceremonies.[101] Although I was not able to attend a *seijin-shiki* ceremony, I still could have rented a *furisode* 振袖 for the sake of photo-taking during my holiday visit home. As a matter of fact, my mother asked me whether I would like to be dressed in the *furisode*, as is customarily arranged for young women.

Great cultural significance is attached to this coming-of-age occasion. Not only is a girl celebrated for growing into a woman, but she can be presented in the best light possible. Photos

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[101] *Seijin-shiki* [adult ritual] is a ceremony held for those turning twenty years old, thus legally becoming adults in Japan. Local administrative offices usually host ceremonies for young men and women to attend. Many women participate in these events dressed in elegant expensive *furisode* kimonos (a type with long sleeves for unmarried women).

The college graduation ceremony is another occasion on which young women dress in *wa-fuku* (a *nagagi* with a *hakama* skirt), the uniform for female students in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Both types of kimono can be purchased new, passed on by parents or grandparents, or rented.

taken for *seijin-shiki* are often used for traditional matchmaking, and for parents it is a way to register publicly that they have the financial means to attire their daughters properly. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for a young woman. But I never really liked the skin-rubbing caused by the thong sandals or the tightness of the kimono around my neck. Nor did I like the formality of the dress or the marketing surrounding this whole coming-of-age event. Moreover, when I saw a photo of my sister in a *furisode* for her *seijin-shiki*, I thought that she did not look that nice in her old-fashioned hairdo and excessive makeup. She told me that the beautician—without asking permission—had shaved half of her eyebrows so as to pencil on fake ones. She hated this, as she had to keep drawing on her eyebrows for several weeks thereafter until they grew back.

And this *seijin-shiki* event is expensive. Just renting a *furisode* and having a *kitsuke-shi* dress one in it for a commemorative photo-shoot costs about 2,000 dollars. Having asked myself why I would endure all that rigmarole just to make myself look like someone that I am not, I had already made up my mind when my mother told me that she would not mind paying for it. In retrospect, I understand that she really would have liked to have seen me in a *furisode* to commemorate my passage into adulthood. Yet it was not until recently, when I discovered that antique *furisodes* that suit my taste were available for rent at one antique-kimono shop, that I regretted not having taken part in this *seijin-shiki* extravaganza.

Undoubtedly my move to North America rendered kimonos even more distant—physically because of my complete detachment from kimono culture, and mentally because of my general disinterest in the garment. Yet the strongest factor contributing to the foreignness of the kimono was my aversion to Western notions of obedience and demureness associated with kimono-clad Japanese women.

My antipathy toward such notions had developed gradually. As I grew competent both linguistically and culturally in English-speaking society, I became aware of the ways in which Japan and Japanese women had been portrayed over the long history of Western fascination with the Orient. Since the era of *Japonisme*, a kimono-clad Asian woman has been regarded as exotic—to the extent of epitomizing the Orientalism topos.[102] As a Japanese woman living in the West, it was difficult to avoid this cultural phenomenon. I have received comments regarding my Asian appearance (which were probably meant as compliments, but which I found offensive). I have heard men talking about Asian women as sexual objects, calling them "geisha girls." In my early years in North America, I strategically stayed away from studying things pertaining to the allure of Orientalism. Even after I began to focus on material culture studies and on Japanese folklore during my master's program, I consciously avoided selecting dress as a research topic because I was not yet ready to face the Orientalist notion surrounding kimono culture. When my physical appearance is obviously Asian, why would I want to wear something that would make me look even more exotic, thus contributing to the exoticisization of Japanese women? This is precisely the reason that I had avoided getting involved in kimono culture in adulthood.

But my attitude changed. What enabled the change I do not know. Perhaps I myself ended up acquiring the same sense of fascination toward the garment that the West had. Perhaps my sense of professionalism did not allow me to remain ignorant of my native culture's traditional garment, which had been acclaimed for its aesthetics and artistry. Or perhaps I was tired of running away from the rhetoric of kimono-clad women that Orientalism had begotten.

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[102] I am referring here to Orientalism in the arts. While *Japonisme* is often regarded as a phenomenon of the past, the Western fascination with the Orient has never disappeared. Instead, it resurges time after time, as exemplified by the American Arthur Golden's bestselling novel *Memoirs of a Geisha* (New York: Knopf, 1997), and its 2005 Hollywood adaption. The plot has to do with a poor unfortunate girl who eventually meets the man of her dreams. It is a quintessential Cinderella story, whose geisha-culture setting seems calculated to capitalize on notions of the "exotic Orient" so attractive to Anglophone audiences.

Nonetheless, by the time that I returned to Japan in 2006, the kimono was an object of my curiosity.

And there awaited my grandmother's kimono, emerging to see the daylight in this transitional phase in my career. When I was getting ready to return to Madison, Wisconsin to begin a Ph.D. program in folklore in the fall of 2007, I packed the kimono to take with me, even though I did not really know how to wear it. Grandmother's kimono entered my life at the right time, as this encounter was to initiate my rediscovery of the kimono world in a way that I could never have imagined.

The Women in My Family

My inheritance of the kimono made me think of my familial heritage in a way that I never had before. The kimono as a type of clothing had never captured my interest. Yet once my grandmother's kimono came into my life as a part of my family heritage, I had to reconfigure my relationship with this traditional garment. This led me to browse my memories that involve kimonos. Although I realized quickly that I had few kimono-related memories, seeing the hitherto-unknown kimono of my grandmother made me ponder the lives of the women on my mother's side of the family, with whom I had never had a chance to develop relationships as an adult. Since I considered my upbringing to be an inheritance chiefly from my mother's side of the family, my memories of these women were stirred up upon encountering the kimono in my parents' residence.

Great-grandmother "Bāba" (Katsu Nakamura)

My great-grandmother Katsu was born in Hota 誉田 in the prefecture of Chiba. Her birth record is dated October 10, 1897 (Meiji 30), which is the date on which her birth was registered at the local administration office. She was raised as the only child of a single mother, and when she was a teen she worked as a domestic at the house of a nobleman in Tokyo, where she learned basic household skills, and was lucky enough to have lessons in flower arrangement, tea ceremony, and comportment (including the speech of well-to-do women).[103] In 1922 she married my great-grandfather Daisuke, who was probably also from the Hota area, and gave birth to their only child, my maternal grandmother.

Figure 8: Bāba holding me at home in Nakano, Tokyo, late 1977 or early 1978. Photographer unknown.

My great-grandmother, whom we called "Bāba [Granny]," was someone who, according to my mother, cared much for me as a baby. As proof, I have a picture of her in a kimono, holding me on her lap—whereas neither my sister nor brother has any such photo (Figure 8). Yet I have no substantial memories to validate my mother's claim. I have no recollection of conversing with her. She was always quiet, so quiet that I had no idea what kind of person she was even though I knew that she was my mother's grandmother. Whenever my grandmother and mother would discuss something, like what to have for dinner, Bāba would never voice an opinion. Always observing silently what was

[103] In pre–World War II Japanese society, it was customary for girls of working-class families to work as live-in domestics for upper- and middle-class families until they married. The treatment of domestics varied among different households. If the lady of the house was willing to educate her domestic help, girls received cultural lessons alongside the daughters of the house. This practice continued until shortly after the war. For the life of domestic help during the second quarter of the twentieth century, see Koizumi (2012).

happening around her, she never seemed to assert her personality. But I remember that there was something about her, which now I regard as grace—the kind that a placid old woman has.

My only vivid memory of Bāba before she entered the nursing home is the way that she would cool a boiled cob of corn or steamed sweet potato (common lunches during the summer) by tossing it between her hands before serving it to me. One time we kids hurried around the dining table to get our corn cobs; I climbed onto a chair next to Bāba, who was standing to take the cobs out of a steaming pot. I was still too small to see inside the pot from the chair. She was standing to the left of me, then she did her usual tossing before leaning toward me to place the cob in my hand. I was startled to see Bāba's face so close to mine and to make eye contact with someone who rarely spoke to me. I paused for a moment to examine her thin wrinkly visage. She did not say anything as she handed me the cob, but she smiled without showing her teeth (the same facial expression that she has in the photo). I am sure that I had an expression of wonder, mesmerized as I was by the attention that she exhibited. This image of her, sitting to my left at the dining table, is imprinted on my brain. Bāba was mysterious to me for her silence and for her care and elegance; I was too small to understand.

During our visits to my grandparents' place, I was too busy playing with my siblings and cousins to talk with the elderly. For instance, my grandfather would call one of us randomly to show off his garden, explaining about the flowers, plants, and birds within. But I did not think much of his talk—something that I regret today because I am certain that he was disappointed at not being able to share his interests with his grandchildren (he tried this with my sister, too). I knew that Bāba was always in the house, but because she never talked to me, I had no idea what she thought of me. Even her generous actions like cooling the corn cobs, though performed

without a word, came as a wonder to me. I did not know why this woman took notice of me and was kind to me.

My lasting image of Bāba is of her confined to a hospital bed, too feeble to feed herself or even to speak. When we visited her in the hospital, my maternal grandmother put me in charge of feeding her, while her husband watched my siblings play in the waiting room. I would cut the food into small pieces with a spoon, then bring the spoon to her mouth. My desire to take on this task was due solely to the fact that my mother had told me that this woman had provided good care to me as a baby. Although we never exchanged a word during these visits, I felt good about having this responsibility, and proud when my grandmother told me that I was doing a good job of feeding her mother.

However, the last time I saw Bāba alive, I was heartbroken. My family traveled to the hospital one final time because the doctor had proclaimed that her days were numbered. There we found her in the intensive-care ward. As we all surrounded her bed, I heard her speak for the first time that I can remember. She looked at my brother, who was standing next to me, and said, "*Ōkikunattane* 大きくなったね [You've grown]." I was shocked that she had spoken to him instead of to me, for I was the one who had fed her so patiently in the hospital—and I was the one for whom she had reportedly cared so much. She did not even look at me. Soon we were asked to leave the room, and within hours she passed on. I felt deflated, as the other adults speculated that she might have mistaken my brother for my older cousin, so surprising had been this utterance to everyone present. This experience might have been my first tart taste of reality, the earliest that my memory can retrieve.

And her death was my first experience of death in my family. As a fourth-grader, I was too little to understand death, and no one explained it to me, nor did it occur to me to ask about it. On

the day of the funeral, my grandparents' house was profusely decorated. The gate was adorned with an artificial rock with a waterfall. The casket was on display in the guest room, which had been transformed into a miniature shrine with an altar covered with white and yellow chrysanthemums (the flowers most commonly used for funerals in Japan), along with offerings such as fruit and sweets.

At the crematorium, we saw the casket slowly being slid into a crematory already red with fire. Unable to comprehend death in the first place, I was horrified to imagine Bāba waking up while being burned, thinking that nobody would be able to help her out of the chamber. This thought would torment me for the next few days. A few hours later, she came out of the crematory as fragile bones barely keeping the form of a skeleton, which indicated how old and feeble she had been. Some of her bones had a tint of pink, orange, and green, and we all thought that they were pretty. The crematory staff explained that the colors of the flowers that we had placed around her body before sending her to the chamber must have been transferred. I thought that the colored bones were beautiful, and thought it nice that the flowers' hues transferred onto one's bones during cremation. After the crematory staff placed the leg bones in the urn, we paired up and used chopsticks together, and took turns picking up pieces of her bones and placing them in the urn.[104]

Such was the end of Bāba, a quiet enigmatic woman with whom (in my recollection) I never spoke.

In the photo of Bāba with me, she is dressed in a dark-colored simple kimono, appropriate for an elderly lady. She is seated in the *seiza* 正座 position in her room with *tatami* 畳

[104] It is common in the Buddhist cremation ritual for surviving family members to pick up the bones of the deceased with chopsticks for placement in the urn. This is the only time when two Japanese persons touch a single object together with chopsticks. Because of this funereal practice, children are told early on never to use their chopsticks to touch food that is being touched by the chopsticks of another.

flooring.[105] I have another photo taken around the same time, in which I am looking up at her as she gazes into my eyes with a modest motherly smile. These two pictures show that I had physical contact with kimonos when I was a baby.

Grandmother (Mie Nakamura)

Of my maternal grandmother (Figure 9) I have more substantial memories. My mother often commented, "You are just like Grandma," referring to her mother, mainly when complaining about my implacable stubbornness. From a very early age, my personal episteme was formed in a way that went beyond my parents' handling—my lack of self-reproof, my tenacity when it came to searching for exactly what I wanted, and my unshakable "all-or-nothing" philosophy. I was a tomboy as a pre-teen: playing with action figures and cars rather than with dolls. At school I played soccer with the boys during recess. I played more often with my brother than with my sister; therefore we inevitably fought over who got which toys and so forth. In such cases, my father would take us outside. It was common in those days for ill-behaved children to be made to stand outside their houses for the sake of public humiliation. Shunned temporarily by the family, the children were to contemplate their wrongdoing and be ready to express remorse when their parents came to see how they were doing. While my brother typically cried and apologized quickly after being scolded, I never complied. I would accept

Figure 9: Mie Nakamura, ca. 1996. Photo by Kazuko Yoshimura.

[105] In Japanese culture *seiza* is the proper style for sitting directly on the floor or ground. Although benches and chairs were used outside and in public places, the introduction of chairs as indoor household furniture occurred only in the late nineteenth century, as a part of Westernization.

Tatami is a type of floor covering used in traditional Japanese houses. It consists of compacted straw in the shape of a mattress covered by woven rushes (*Juncus effusus*).

punishment rather than apologize for having done something that had, in my opinion, been justified.

In our family, this punishment meant that the offender had to skip dinner. But I was so stubborn that I could easily go without dinner. I would stand defiantly outside for hours. It was always my mother who had to yield, finally letting me back in the house after dark. Frustrated, she would lay out my portion of supper while my siblings were getting ready for bed. They called my impertinent attitude stupid, whereas to me it was dignified. My parents presumed that I must have gotten this strong-mindedness from my maternal grandmother, because neither of them had behaved that way as youths, and my paternal grandmother was never stubborn. And since neither of my parents was responsible for my stubbornness, they did not know what to do with me.

I always felt close to my grandmother because of this stubbornness that I supposedly shared with her. She never spontaneously treated me differently from the other grandchildren; but when I asked, she would let me sleep in her bed and sing me a lullaby. During our annual summer visits, she would have me help her collect vegetables from her garden. She would point out which tomatoes, cucumbers, eggplants, and ears of sweetcorn were ready to be picked. I recall how even a little comment like “Ah, thank you” from her filled me with bliss. These vegetables appeared everyday on the dining table. Tomatoes were cut and served as a side dish. Cucumbers were quartered into sticks for us to eat fresh with *miso* paste. Eggplants were blanched and served with grated ginger and soy sauce. These were everyday summertime dishes. And just as Bāba had done, when we had boiled sweetcorn for lunch my grandmother tossed the shiny steaming ears from hand to hand before passing them to the children. The corn was still too hot for us to eat right away, but we knew that this gesture came from her motherliness.

My mother always told me that my grandmother had been fashionable. But my grandmother was a senior citizen when I was a child, and I did not understand fashion then, let alone the fashion of the elderly. What I recall is that my grandmother always had several scarves with her when we went out. Whenever I felt cold, she had a scarf ready for me to put around my neck. I very much disliked wrapping anything around my neck then, so I always tried to decline. But she insisted that I wear one, explaining that keeping one's neck warm was a good way to keep one's entire body warm. I do not remember what those scarves were made of, but recalling the way that they felt on my skin, I imagine them to have been silk. Silk scarves became fashionable among Japanese women after French fashion was introduced in the early twentieth century, so my grandmother having many silk scarves suggests that she was fashion-conscious. The way that she offered her scarf was not particularly motherly, but rather was quiet and stern. So I always ended up having to put it on, and covering my neck did indeed warm me. Offering me a scarf was another way for my grandmother to exhibit her care.

My mother used to tell us children stories about her mother's strictness. As a child, my mother was not an especially picky eater; but if ever she expressed dislike for a dish that her mother had prepared, she was sure to receive that dish at every subsequent meal—until she learned to eat it without showing any sign of dislike. Her mother wanted to teach her to be able to eat anything, so that she would behave politely no matter what she might be offered as a guest in someone else's home. My mother did not adopt her mother's hardline stance. But because she had studied nutrition science in college and was confident that she prepared meals that were good for our health, she insisted that we eat every morsel of every dish laid in front of us. She served everything on separate plates and bowls for each of us, and we were not allowed to leave the dining table until we had finished our portions.

The episode about strictness at the dining table sufficed to show us how serious our grandmother was about manners. And I had a memorable experience in which she displayed her disciplinarian nature. When we stayed with our grandparents, they often took us to places by train. One time I was riding the train with my grandmother. The car was already crowded when an old woman came on board. My grandmother told me that I should approach and offer her my seat. For the timid child that I was then, walking up to a stranger to speak to her in front of people took an enormous amount of courage. We lived in Ueda then, and riding the train was not part of our daily life. So my mother had not taught us how to behave on the train. I did not want to do it, and I was hoping that someone else would, because the lady was some distance away. There were many other people who could have offered her a seat. So I tarried. But my grandmother quietly yet firmly prodded me to go. She explained that children should not sit down on the train anyway, but should instead build strength by learning to stand inside the moving car. Since I was the only child nearby, I was the one that had to get up. So I summoned my courage, walked up to the woman, tapped her on the arm, and said, "Would you like to take a seat over there?" The lady turned around with a big smile on her face, and followed me to the seat next to my grandmother, praising me for offering my seat to the elderly, as any good child should. Then she gave me a *kusudama* くす玉 (an ornamental origami ball). She was on her way to a hospital, and was carrying multiple origami ornaments to give as gifts to the patients. I was happy enough that she had accepted my offer, because otherwise I would have been mortified.[106] But it felt good to receive a gift for my good deed. I must have been about eight or nine, and this experience was rewarding because it taught me the value of doing good even if it makes you stand out in a crowd. It gave me confidence.

[106] There are elderly people who reject such an offer if they are planning to disembark soon.

Formidable stern Grandma crumbled when my grandfather passed away in the winter of 1995. Soon she grew feeble. Her grief over the loss of her long-term companion was evident from the decline in her self-assurance. My grandfather had regularly taken her out for dinner and on trips; and even though she had always posed as a woman of strong mind, it became apparent after her husband's death how dependent on him she had been. The way in which my grandfather died was a shock to us all. In preparation for our usual visit during the winter break, he had ridden his bicycle to procure some sweets for us grandchildren. About fifteen minutes away was an outlet for Fūgetsudō 風月堂 (a long-standing company famous for its Western-style sweets) that sold bags of factory seconds (broken cookies, slightly over-baked cupcakes) cheaply. After buying a bag or two my grandfather was walking his bike uphill on a bridge over some railroad tracks when a heart attack felled him. He was found by a pedestrian and taken to a nearby hospital, but when my grandmother arrived at the hospital, he was unconscious; he would soon die without waking up. How devastating it must have been for my grandmother to lose her husband so suddenly.

It was my senior year of high school, and I was busy making preparations to leave Japan to study in the United States. To spend time with my grandmother, in the following spring I took her on a trip to Nikkō 日光, a UNESCO World Heritage site (which boasts shrines and temples from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) that we both had wanted to visit. It was our first time alone together, and I do not recall having any breakthroughs to bring us closer. After all, I was only an awkward teenager who did not know how to relate to someone who spoke so little. I did not know her very well, and even though I knew that she cared for me, as an adolescent I was too inexperienced in life to have any deep conversations. I was not sure if I should talk to her about the passing of my grandfather, or if I could ask how she had been doing; I was too

inexperienced in life to know. She was not particularly talkative, and neither was I. The only exchange that I remember fondly is that we both agreed how much we enjoyed traveling by train because one is able to see a variety of people and beautiful landscapes. With trusted faithful companions one can share stories, foods, and comfortable silence on the way to a destination. Although we both knew that many people felt this way, it meant much to me that we agreed on something, because she was a woman whom I was said to resemble.

The day before I left Japan in May 1996, my grandmother surprised us all by showing up unannounced at our house, which was a three-hour train ride from her own. Because of her deteriorating physical condition, my uncle's family—who lived close to her then—had asked her not to go anywhere alone, and my mother had pleaded with her not to come to our house when my grandmother had called to inquire about my departure date. Yet she came anyway. Despite her condition, she had not lost her willfulness. I was upstairs getting ready for my big day when the doorbell rang. Hearing my mother's slippers shuffle to the door, I instantly imagined that it must be my grandmother, because no one else would have rung our doorbell that day. The moment that I heard my mother exclaim, "Oh, you've come!?," I knew it was her. Overhearing my mother's persuading her mother the night before, I was wishing that she could come, so I was happy about her unexpected arrival.

I was too busy packing to spend much time with her then, and it was rather awkward to have her in the house that day because we all knew that my mother was somewhat displeased by her visit (as she now had to worry about how to explain this to her brother, how to take her back home, and so on), and I was unsure if I would be allowed to express freely how glad I was that she had come. I was so consumed by the thought of leaving Japan that my grandmother's visit was only a small part of my grand departure. It touched me deeply, however, that she had

traveled all that way to see me despite her declining health and her family's pleas not to leave home. It gave me a sense of assurance that she cared about me even though she was never the sort to express such things verbally.

The next day she accompanied my parents and me to the airport to see me off. My trip had been arranged by an agency that assists Japanese students in studying abroad, so I needed to join other students who were also leaving for the United States. And I was too full of anticipation about going overseas to remember anything at the airport. I do not recall how I bid farewell to my grandmother and parents, but we were all silently concerned about making sure that my grandmother was okay. And that was the last time that I saw her still well.

My grandmother's health—mental more than physical—deteriorated steadily. She began wandering off aimlessly. She once went missing, and the police found her in a distant town the next day. It was decided then that she should live in a nursing home. I was in North America during all of this family turmoil, but whenever I returned to Japan (which was roughly once a year), I would visit her for a day with my mother and sister. And on every visit I found her in worse condition. She would repeat the same questions—asking where I had been and what I had studied—for hours; I was told that the part of her brain that processed language had been damaged. But it was her best attempt to welcome me. Eventually speaking became difficult. She had never been loquacious; now she became almost mute.

What was most striking was that my grandmother insisted that we eat her mid-afternoon snack. A nurse would bring a bowl of mini biscuits or a cup of gelatin, and put it on her table. Then in silence she would extend her arm toward us to indicate that my sister and I should eat it. We both would say that we would prefer to see her eat. But of course she insisted that we eat. There was no way of persuading her once her mind was made up, so we always ended up

acquiescing. She would smile quietly and look satisfied as she watched us putting her food into our mouths. Her gesture of caring was so overwhelming that we had to struggle to hide our tears.

Occasionally we would stay until suppertime, when most of the residents gathered in the dining hall. Without uttering a word, my grandmother would tap the dining table with her hand rather loudly, to which a nurse would reply, “Mie-san, wait your turn, please.” But my grandmother would keep tapping in silence. And my mother, smiling, would politely apologize to the nurse. When her meal arrived, she would gesture to us that we should eat it. This signaled that it was time for us to leave so that she would eat her meal. Her insistent tapping always made us chuckle, because it signified her persistence and stubbornness, for which she seemed to be known even at the nursing home. Speechlessness did not hinder her fortitude.

After falling in the bathroom, my grandmother became partially paralyzed, and was never again able to get up or speak. When my mother, sister, and I visited her, my mother would rub her stiff limbs, explaining that sensory stimulation could be beneficial even after nerves failed. Often we found her sleeping when we entered her room in the afternoon, but after a while she would awaken and acknowledge us with her eyes. And while we stroked her body, she would gaze at us with her big innocent evocative eyes, common in the feeble elderly. Seeing her in such a state provoked tears, which I always had to try to keep under control.

Her condition worsened further, such that the last time that I saw her alive she was little more than skin and bones. Her front teeth appeared so large amid the sunken skin that I gasped. Her face no longer retained its familiar appearance. But this unfamiliar face still had the eyes that were as hauntingly poignant as I remembered, and those eyes still stared at me, though it was unclear whether they registered who I was. My mother wondered aloud why her deceased father had not come to take her away with him—it had been too long, and my grandmother being this

way was unbearable to everyone. I wept quietly all the way back home in the backseat of the family car. But my grandmother lived like that for two more years.

Mother (Kazuko Yoshimura)

In the fall of 2003, shortly after I moved to Newfoundland to begin my master's program, my grandmother finally passed away. A few weeks later, my mother visited me, even though she must have been tired from dealing with family matters. I offered to meet her at St. John's International Airport, but she insisted on taking a cab by herself, so I greeted her in my apartment. Opening the door, I was surprised to see my own mother looking suddenly very old. The wrinkles on her face appeared deeper, and her skin sagged. Melancholy throughout her stay, she mused about how old she had become, and how she was growing more dependent. "*Aya-chan nimo meiwaku kakeru yōni naruwane* あやちゃんにも迷惑かけるようになるわね [I too will eventually become a burden to you, Aya-chan]," she murmured, as though trying to reconcile her feelings toward her own mother.

She had visited her mother every Wednesday throughout her protracted stay in the nursing home. This required several hours of train rides, during which my mother was often forced to stand in cars packed with commuters. Years of these weekly trips had exhausted my mother physically and mentally. Finally being released from this duty must have brought relief. Yet at the same time, I knew that my mother had accumulated unexpressed emotions toward her mother. With her now gone, my mother was destined to continue harboring long-suppressed feelings.

My mother's view toward my grandmother differed from mine. According to my mother, her mother was a spoiled only child from a rich family. Thanks to my great-grandfather's entrepreneurial acumen in the pre-war margarine and jam business, the family had sufficient wealth to take in her husband so as to preserve the family name and heritage.[107] One of the tales most often recounted by my mother is the one of how my grandparents ran out of money on their honeymoon in the south of Japan, at which point my grandmother simply asked her father to send more.

Figure 10: Yukio-san and Mie-san (my grandmother), probably at their home in Nakano, Tokyo, ca. 1940. Photographer uknown.

Born in 1922 in Tokyo, my grandmother had access to the city's considerable opulence. Due to booming international trade, Western goods poured onto the Japanese market, but these were not yet equally available to all. Owing to the family's means, my grandmother was able to dress herself in the latest Western clothes, which explains my mother's claim that she lived a life of affluence (Figure 10). But post-war changes in the societal structure, as well as the decline of my great-grandfather's business, caused the family gradually to sink to normal middle-class status.

At the time that my mother was born, the family lived in a small house with a single maid, rather than a mansion with multiple attendants (Figure 11). In my mother's young eyes, my grandmother was a woman who would routinely go out at night, leaving the children to the nanny. The nanny was the *de facto* mother in her childhood, for instance often coming to pick up

[107] Japan is a patriarchal society, and a family with no male heir can either adopt a male child or can have a man (typically a second or later son) marry into the family. In the case of such a marriage, the man changes his surname to that of his wife. This custom—which has become less common in recent generations—is practiced so as not to terminate a lineage.

my mother at kindergarten. My grandmother did not get up in the morning to make breakfast, so my mother learned to put something together herself. Just as she was ready to leave the house, her mother would emerge sleepily to see her off. My mother did not like that her mother did not make breakfast for her, as mothers were supposed to do.

Additionally, my grandmother adhered to patriarchal norms of the day, making my mother feel neglected from a young age. She regarded her son—the family heir—as the most precious. Daughters were to be married off, and it was the parents' responsibility to find husbands for them. And as a part of preparing her daughters to be desirable on the marriage market, my grandmother arranged for my mother and her older sister to learn various skills befitting a lady-to-be: flower arrangement, tea ceremony, calligraphy, and sewing (it was common for women of their generation to have taken all such culture lessons). My mother wanted to take violin lessons, but her mother told her that she would not have a good sense for music—for no reason that my mother could understand. She just judged and decided that way; and she told my mother so.

Figure 11: Mie-san with her family (my mother being held by her father), location unknown, 1948. Photographer unknown.

Watching her two older siblings rebel against their mother's discipline, my mother did not dare to stand up for herself. Feeling pressure to be the lone obedient one, she always complied with her parents' wishes. She wanted to go to a four-year college as her older sister had done, but she ended up going to a two-year college instead, because her parents thought that a girl did not need a bachelor's degree, and because she could not persuade her parents as her sister had. Her mother insisted that both daughters be married before her son could find himself a wife, lest a

prospective bride of his be dissuaded by the prospect of living with sisters-in-law. So my mother was pressured to marry. She went through arranged meetings with potential grooms, but she ended up wedding my father, whom she knew from work. They worked at the same company and belonged to the company's mountain-hiking club. We children know that our father approached her, thinking that she would make him a good wife, but my mother was not exactly smitten by him. One episode that I heard retold involved camping trips by the hiking club. My father was snoring so loudly that my mother, who was trying to sleep in another tent, thought to herself, "Whoever ends up marrying him will have a tough time sleeping." Little did she know that she would end up being the lucky one.

My mother was to become a fulltime housewife married to a *sararī man* サラリーマン,[108] with whom she would create a typical middle-class family. My mother was a model housewife and caregiver. All three kids agree on this. Tending perfectly to household duties quietly and patiently, she catered to the needs of her children. She always got up early to make breakfast for us all; she saw us off when we left home; she was home when we returned from school; she made dinner every night. When we went on day trips, she packed lunches consisting of rice balls, fried chicken, steamed vegetables, cut fruits, and tea. On our birthdays she baked decorated cakes. She cooked special meals on New Year's Day, Girls' Day (March 3), Boys' Day (May 5), and Christmas. She sewed clothes and bags for us. Strict yet loving, she allowed her children to choose their own paths rather than imposing parental ideals on them.

In my case, it was my mother who supported my decision to study abroad, and persuaded my father to allow me to leave my homeland. She alone weathered the criticism from her in-laws for what they perceived to be the action of an irresponsible mother. My mother took this criticism in silence, and it was only much later that I learned that my relatives had been critical

[108] A *sararī man* (from the English "salary man") is a salaried company employee.

of my parents (and of my mother especially) for letting me study abroad. I am certain that my mother was the only supporter of my decision to leave for North America. “I used to dream about studying abroad, and I was hoping that one of my kids would,” she told me after all the travel arrangements had been made.

Also, it was only after I became an adult that I learned that my mother had striven to raise her children in the way that she wished that her mother had raised her. When I was younger I thought that my mother was doing what her mother had done for her. When I found out that this was not the case, I felt sad—because I had had no idea that what my mother did for us was not a motherly caring automatically inherited and passed on. My mother carefully decided how to care for her children. And that included expanding and enhancing their potential and letting them pursue their dreams. Thanks to that, I was able to pursue my dream of studying abroad and making a career for myself.

Although my mother occasionally hinted at her childhood discontent with her mother, I knew that there were aspects of her youth that she recalled fondly. My grandmother had made clothes for her and her sister, choosing and obtaining the patterns and fabrics herself. Once she was old enough to dress like an adult, they went on shopping expeditions together, visiting every department store in Tokyo until they found exactly what they wanted. Through shopping with her mother, my mother honed her aesthetic sense. Immersed in this variety of fabric types and clothing styles, she learned how to distinguish high-quality materials by feeling them by hand. And through shopping with her mother, my mother learned how to behave with elegance, with a graceful poise, in public. From the feel of quality silk to proper mannerisms, my mother absorbed the knowledge appropriate for a lady by watching her mother.

This knowledge was valuable to my mother, and she wanted to pass it on to her daughters as well. She made clothes and bags for us, as her mother had done for her. Unfortunately my sister showed little interest in sewing and did not care for handmade things; she preferred store-bought products because she associated handmade objects with financial hardship (I have no idea where she obtained such a notion). On the other hand, I acquired needle skills at a very early age, and I loved my mother's handmade objects. Naturally my mother made more things for me than for my sister. I took pride in wearing handmade clothes and carrying hand-sewn school bags because of their one-of-a-kind value. And they were very well constructed, just like things sold in stores.

Connecting with my mother through our love of making things was a joy to me. My mother and I discussed designs and went to fabric stores together, just as she and her mother had done. I learned how good fabrics felt to the hand by following my mother around, listening to her explain the textiles, and actually touching them.

After I grew older, we went shopping together, and she taught me—as her mother had taught her—how to select high-quality clothes or inexpensive clothes that looked expensive. Seeing and touching the fabrics, I learned the difference between materials that were well-made and those that were not. Moreover, my mother had a graceful way of interacting with storekeepers, other customers, and strangers on the street. Thus spending time with me was also her way of teaching me femininity and manners. When it came to behavioral aesthetics and shopping philosophy, "*Yoi mono wo nagaku* 良いものを長く [Acquire high-quality goods that last a long time]" was the motto. This was a value that my mother had learned from her mother, and when she told me about these memories and her experience of clothing, she spoke of her mother with fondness.

Last summer, when my mother was showing me my grandmother's kimonos, she praised the quality of their silks and dyes. Having never seen my grandmother in these kimonos, and knowing neither why she had kept them nor what they could have meant to her, we laid out the kimonos, touched the fabrics, and concurred that they were of high quality and value. "Your grandmother knew how to pick quality items, you know," my mother said as she raised each kimono with spread palms and placed it diagonally on my shoulder, as a kimono tailor would.[109] Each of the kimonos suited me well in one way or another, but especially of the striped kimono she said, "*Arah, yoku niau wane*! あら、良く似合うわね! [Ah, this looks really good on you!]."

Retrieving Kin-aesthetics

When I returned to Madison, Wisconsin, in the fall of 2007, I brought the striped kimono with me. In one material culture course in which I enrolled, the term-paper assignment was to pick one object and write about it. Without hesitation, I decided to write about my grandmother's striped kimono. On October 4, 2007, for the very first time I tried to put on the kimono by myself in my apartment. It proved much harder than I had expected, which made me realize that I had been naïve to think that I could do it by myself just because I had watched carefully as my mother had dressed me in the wool kimono as a child, and in a *yukata* a few times as an adult. For those casual kimonos, I did not need extra undergarments. But the striped kimono, though casual, is a *nagagi* that must be worn over an undergarment and other accoutrements. Both wool kimonos and cotton *yukata*s are easier to put on because their surfaces are relatively coarse. But

[109] Traditionally, one never grasps a folded kimono, but rather lifts it gently on one's upturned forearms. To gauge its suitability for a prospective wearer, the pattern is held at an angle approximating that which it will assume when worn.

the *omeshi*, made of silk, has a softer and slipperier surface that is harder for an inexperienced person to maneuver. After nearly four hours of struggle, I had to give up.

My kimono-wearing knowledge was more limited than I had anticipated. I had obtained the undergarment from my paternal grandmother, and the other necessary articles from my mother. However, I really did not know, for example, how many strings and under-belts would be required to secure the garment. And because I did not have a *han-eri* [collar] to attach to the neckline of the *naga-juban* [inner-garment], I used a thin Japanese gauze towel (*tenugui* 手拭ヽ).[110] But this towel became so thick when folded multiple times that the collar of the undergarment grew awkwardly bulky and wavy. And of course that unmatched *han-eri* was incommensurate with this fashionable *nagagi*. Furthermore, I could not figure out how to adjust and maintain the kimono's neckline in the manner appropriate for my age.[111] The kimono is a flat garment, but I was unable to comprehend how to wrap my three-dimensional body in a way that would create an elegant drape at the nape, especially with the two garments (*naga-juban* and *nagagi*) layered. Adjusting the opening was nearly impossible because of the thick *tenugui* (my makeshift *han-eri*). Also, I did not know that the *ohashori* (the fold that one makes at the waist) was unnecessary for the undergarment, so I struggled to create one. This caused the waist area to bulge, which prevented the neckline from being properly secured. Because I was not able to dress myself in the *naga-juban* in the first place, it was impossible to put on the kimono properly.

I was very frustrated by these unexpected struggles. That week my mother was away on a trip, so I could not telephone her, which reminded me of the importance of her existence. I could

[110] A *tenugui* (literally, "hand-wiper") is a rectangular cloth (approximately fourteen inches by thirty-five inches).
[111] The drape at the nape indicates a woman's age. Because sensuality is associated with the nape, the amount of skin revealed is critical: for instance, an opening that is too wide would be inappropriate because this is the way that courtesans wear their kimonos.

not do anything without her initial help. Also, I regretted that I had not practiced wearing the kimono during the summer.

Several days later, I called my mother to explain what had gone wrong in my first attempt at wearing the kimono. She gave me several tips, like putting a piece of thin cardboard underneath the collar of the undergarment so that it would hold the proper shape.

My second chance came on October 28. I was invited by a Japanese family resident in Madison to a birthday party for their teenaged son, and was determined to make myself look at least presentable to the other Japanese expatriates whom I expected to see there. Also, I anticipated that some of the older Japanese women would be able to adjust my kimono correctly or offer some advice. It was important that I go to the party in the kimono so that they could fix me on the spot. And for this reason, it was crucial that I dress myself decently enough to be able to step outside.

It must have taken nearly two hours to put everything on. My improvised collar for the undergarment was more stable than before. Thanks to my mother's suggestion, I cut a cereal box to make a lining to place inside the collar, and I used a pillowcase as padding to flatten the waist area. Eliminating the curve around the torso makes it easier to wrap the kimono around one's body and prevent the awkward bumps and dents that ruin the graceful straight lines of the outfit. I secured the kimono with a sash first in a way that prevented me from making the *ohashori* properly this time. I tried to remember the height of my grandmother. She could not have been that short. Had she not, in fact, been taller than I? I almost began to doubt that this kimono really had been my grandmother's, yet it seemed more reasonable to think that my confusion might be the result of not putting the kimono on properly.

If putting on the *naga-juban* and *nagagi* was a struggle in itself, tying the *obi* posed yet another challenge. I looked at online instructional photos, but found them not especially helpful. The pictures showed the various stages of the tying procedure. Yet I needed to determine the processes that led from one stage to the next. Should I flip the belt toward myself? How many times should I fold the leftover length of belt in order to create the bow? I tried to remember what my mother had done. I was reminded that I was the kind of person who learned things by watching someone do them. I could not read instructions and do something myself. So I could not don a kimono outfit because I had no one who could show me how. How nonsensical was this that I was unable to put on the garment that in pre–World War II Japan was worn by everyone?

I ended up settling on the style called *bunko musubi* 文庫結び,[112] the easiest way of tying the kind of *obi* that I was using (*hanhaba-obi* 半幅帯 [113])—albeit my least favorite. In the end, I was dressed in the kimono. It was not perfect, but I concluded that my appearance was decent enough for me to feel that I could venture outside.

It was a lovely sunny day, perfect for wearing a kimono. The temperature was warm, and best of all there was no wind to flip the wraps up around my legs. Never before in my adult life had I worn a regular kimono, but to my amazement somehow my body remembered how to walk and how to behave in this type of garment. Clips of old movies in which women demurely strolled flashed through my mind as I tried to emulate them. I tried simultaneously to retrieve my mother's teachings on how a woman should behave in a kimono. Everything came so naturally to me that I wondered if my mother would be proud to see me behaving as I had been taught so long ago. Soon I was reminded how my mother's aquiline eyes had always checked my every

[112] A way to tie the *obi* to create a bow-tie shape.
[113] The *hanhaba-obi* is a type of informal *obi*, often worn with *yukata*s and other everyday kimonos.

move wherever I was. When I neglected household duties like cooking and cleaning, I thought of her, imagining how she would lament the degradation of the homemaking skills that she had taught me in my youth. If she were to walk with me in the kimono, she would be making sure that my behavior adhered to the expectations for a proper lady. Quietly she would be assessing my posture, the way I stood or sat. As I approached the stoplight, I tried to visualize how she would behave in a kimono, for I had only seen her so dressed in old photographs. She would know the secrets of the intricate finger movements that would go with her graceful bearing. I played with my fingertips until my muscles seemed to regain movements remembered from the past, and I placed my hands, very conscious of my fingertips, on my chest where the two sides of the kimono overlapped, hoping to pose primly. I was indifferent to the gaze of others on the street. I only wanted to appear right, such that my mother would approve.

My insouciant side wanted to tease my other half for acting so coy, reminding me how I had disliked for so long the image of demure kimono-clad Japanese women. Yet I quickly denounced my sarcasm, telling myself that I was only exercising comportment and adhering to the behavioral codes proper for my attire, which bespoke my upbringing. As regards demureness, I had never disliked it *per se*; rather, I eschewed the fetishistic association of demureness with Asian women. What I felt myself to be was not this image of a Japanese woman, but a bearer of my familial heritage. Convincing myself of this liberated me from my long-held fear of being stigmatized by that portrayal of Japanese women.

My grandmother's kimono had not seen the sunlight for many decades. Amazed that it was more than twice my age, I examined what was covering my body one more time. Now that I had finished maneuvering the fabric around myself, I could take a good look at it. This kimono had

been well kept. Its colors remained astonishingly gorgeous, and the woven silk was so soft, delicate, and exquisite to the touch, yet bold and refined in its color combination. Capturing the fashion of early-twentieth-century Japan, somehow this kimono represented well my image of my grandmother. A trendy out-of-the-ordinary striped kimono would have suited her formidable nature. And I felt proud to be wearing it, and felt empowered by the fact that I looked good in it—not because of its potential historical value, but because of its familial value.

What mattered then was whether or not I could recuperate a sense of the aesthetics running through my maternal lineage. It was more my mother than my grandmother that I was thinking of, I realized. She had decided to save the kimono, recognizing its value to her mother, and its value to herself as a token of her mother. Whatever the reason might have been, my mother had discerned the attractiveness of the kimono upon encountering it, as had I. My wanting to wear it had much to do with my yearning to connect to both my mother and grandmother. By wearing this kimono, I wanted to unburden my mother of her ambivalent feelings toward her mother. My mother knew the value of the aesthetic sense bequeathed to her by her mother. That was for certain a sunny aspect of my maternal heritage. If inheriting my grandmother's kimono was to symbolize the transmission of the aesthetic sense that had run in the family, then my donning her kimono was to signify my assertion of the values in both types of familial heritage: behavioral and tactile. Ultimately my action was to connect all three of us through kin-aesthetics.

That autumn day contrasted sharply with the one that I had experienced many years ago. The sun was shining ceremonially, and although there were no leaves to trample, my mind foresaw bright prospects. In many ways, this memorable day marked a resurrection: the resurgence of my grandmother's kimono, which had not wrapped a human body for nearly seventy years; the reaffirmation of my mother's belief in our familial aesthetics; and the revival

of my personal kimono culture upon disentangling it from ethnic and gender stereotypes. Dressed in my familial heritage, I was to enter new chapters in both my professional and personal lives.

I was not able to build a relationship with my grandmother in adulthood. When she was still well, I was too young for us to share the many conversations that adult women have. Yet my mother and I have cultivated a relationship that resembles a friendship between two women, through sharing an appreciation for the same kinds of aesthetics, which connects us as well to our predecessor, my grandmother. Aesthetic sense was the part of the familial heritage for which my mother appreciates her mother and for which I owe my mother. My mother devoted her life to raising her children in the way that she believed proper, and to passing down values that she wanted us to inherit. And I am her daughter; that is why I am wearing the kimono.

CHAPTER FIVE: The Kimono Back in the Closet

Meeting My Destiny Kimono

My interest in kimonos continued to grow after I finished the semester project. I wanted to continue looking for kimonos similar to my grandmother's, in hopes of contextualizing it. Over the winter break I ordered several used kimonos from an online retailer in Osaka, Japan, and had them sent to my parents' place in Tokyo. I asked my mother to inspect each piece and to give me her impressions of it in terms of quality and fashion; as a result some of the kimonos had to be sent back: either because they were in poor condition, or because my mother thought that they would not suit me well.

Three approved kimonos made their way to my apartment in Madison. Among them was one that I call my "destiny kimono," which I loved for its bold *Genji-guruma* 源氏車 [Genji wheel][114] pattern (the kimono was greenish blue with large wheels in yellow and red). I first saw it online in December, and was instantly attracted to it. But the sense of guilt at shopping for something unnecessary prevented me from clicking the "add to cart" button. This online market is popular enough that anything rare, unique, or high-quality usually gets snapped up quickly. So I was surprised to find the kimono still available a few weeks later. Better yet, it was now included in the vendor's end-of-year sale. I told myself that perhaps I was meant to have this kimono, and I proceeded to click the button. As I had predicted, the kimono suited me very well indeed. The garment's length was perfect for me, which only confirmed (so I thought) that it had

[114] *Genji-guruma* is a design motif that takes its name from the name of the protagonist of *The Tale of Genji*, and from the name of the typical conveyance ridden by nobles of his ilk (the two-wheeled ox-drawn chariot called "*gosho-guruma* 御所車"). This pattern appears on both formal and casual kimonos.

been destined to come to me. (I would continue to indulge this notion of a destiny kimono for this *Genji-guruma nagagi* for a few years.)

At that time I still had no idea how to compose a kimono outfit, nor did I realize how challenging it was. I was simply happy to have found and purchased some kimonos that I liked. I entertained the idea of learning more about kimono culture and thought of writing about it for my dissertation. This was in the winter of 2007–2008.

A Respite from Kimono-Wearing

But my plans to continue exploring kimono culture were derailed due to a sudden tragedy on February 22, 2008. My long-term partner, James N. Salt, passed away from a stroke in the afternoon. I was working as a teaching assistant on campus that day, and I did not find out until evening what had happened. One of our mutual friends, who had not known my schedule, called the Folklore Program Office and told me that she would come to pick me up. Foreseeing something unusual but not knowing what was going on, I was put in a car driven by another friend and taken to the building where he lived. In the building I was greeted by yet another friend. After I was offered a chair and a cup of tea, she told me what had happened to Jim: he had died on the couch looking up with his mouth open. Our friend had found him that way in the afternoon. Because she could not revive him, she called an ambulance. The paramedics came and tried to revive him, too; but Jim was gone already, and they took his body away. The only phrase that my friend said that I can recall was “So he is not there [in the apartment] anymore.”

This news was (and it still is) the worst that I had ever received in my life, but at that moment I surprised myself by exhibiting a high degree of self-control. I did not lose my calm demeanor. I took a few moments to swallow the news before thanking my three friends in a quiet

yet steady voice. We did not know if Jim's parents had been informed, so we all stayed in the building until the end of the evening. In those few hours, I remained in the chair and observed myself being awfully calm. I thought to myself, "Gee, this is how I react to the news of my dearest's passing. People have always told me that I am observant, but this is how observant I can get. I am analyzing myself in this state of utter devastation. I am not upset. I did not scream or faint. I guess that I know how to stay unruffled; and I would not have discovered this unless I was put in this sort of situation." And I remained composed, surrounded by my friends, until we parted after talking with Jim's parents on the phone.

Although I behaved calmly in a way that I found admirable, deep down I wanted to be alone so that I could collapse and cry. After thanking my friends again, I ran upstairs to Jim's apartment where I was greeted by his cat, Merlin. "Poor thing, you must be hungry!" I said, and did what Jim had always done for him: mashed his canned food onto the ceramic plate with the blue willow pattern. Merlin was not upset, I could tell. But I felt bad that I had not come earlier to feed him. Then I walked into the dark living room and turned on the floor lamp. I checked the clock to see what time it was in Tokyo. It was mid-morning there, so I grabbed the phone and dialed my parents' number. My mother answered and said "*Aya-chan*?" because she could tell from the caller-ID that she was getting an international phone call. All of a sudden all the emotions that had earlier been under control gushed out, and right after managing to utter, "*Okāsan* お母さん [Mom]," I burst into tears and cried loudly for the first time in my adult life. And I cried for several minutes, listening to my mother repeating softly: "What happened? Something happened to Jim?" When I pulled myself together, I told my mother that Jim had passed away. I do not remember how long we talked, but after our phone conversation, I went to sleep in Jim's empty bed, and Merlin soon joined me. That was Friday.

Jim's death was unexpected, although he had had a stroke-like event five weeks earlier. He went to the emergency room, but was released within a few hours because he seemed fine. A month after, he returned to the hospital for a follow-up, but the doctor was not able to find anything wrong with him, so Jim came home cheerfully. And a week later he was dead. I found myself in utter despair. Jim had defined my life in North America, or more importantly my adulthood and womanhood because we had been together for nine years, since 1999. Jim was not just my partner but also my best friend; I can say with confidence that had I been a man we would have become best friends as well. Without him I saw no reason to take my next breath.

Morning came. Thankfully the day after his passing was a Saturday. I followed Jim's routine. I had to get up early to feed Merlin, who was squealing for breakfast; and I had to make my own coffee because Jim was not there. Jim had always set his coffee maker the night before, but I found the filter full of cold moist coffee grounds—of course Jim had not been able to set his coffee the previous night. Picking up the wet filter and tossing it in the garbage, I thought of Jim, but quickly shook him out of my mind so that I wouldn't tear up. I did not know how many spoonsful of coffee I would need.

I sat in Jim's recliner and turned on the television to watch the morning news and the other programs that Jim always watched. Because Jim was not available, Merlin settled on my lap for his morning petting. After a while he got off to nap in his bed beside the recliner. After my second cup of coffee I lay down on the couch. Then I was overwhelmed by a sense of despair. "There is no need for tomorrow, if Jim is not here," I thought to myself. My activities were limited to sobbing, sighing, and lying on the couch absent-mindedly—except for when I needed to feed Merlin. I watched Merlin and it was clear to me that he had made peace with Jim's passing. They had been together for nearly twenty years. When Jim would go camping with his

friends, Merlin would sit by the door for hours waiting for him to return. But now Merlin did not look for him inside the apartment, nor did he stand by the door waiting for the return of his buddy. I, on the other hand, was not okay with the leader of our posse being gone for good.

On my computer I watched over and over a video clip from the film *Four Weddings and a Funeral* in which Matthew recites Auden's elegy "Funeral Blues"[115] at the funeral of his lover, Gareth, who had died suddenly of a heart attack at one of the weddings that they had attended. Matthew recites the entire poem, which begins with "Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone…." Many of the verses described how I felt: "He was my North, my South, my East and West; My working week and my Sunday rest; My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song." But now that he is dead, the world means nothing: "The stars are not wanted now; put out every one; Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun; Pour away the ocean and sweep up the woods; For nothing now can ever come to any good."

The warm beam of winter sun no longer made me feel blissful because "nothing now can ever come to any good." I repeated the poem in my head many times, recalling my first viewing of the film in Japan with Japanese subtitles. I was only a teenager then, and knew nothing of the joy of having someone dear, and the fulfillment of loving someone and being loved in return. And I could not have imagined how meaningless life would be without this. Matthew's face tense with pain reflected my own. I went to bed each night, praying that I would find myself dead by morning, along with Merlin. And I thought to myself: "I was the best thing that ever happened to him." I knew it, he knew it, and so did everyone who knew us. But what good would it do now that death had broken our bond?

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[115] Published as the third of "Four Cabaret Songs for Miss Hedli Anderson," in W. H. Auden, *Another Time: Poems* (New York: Random House, 1940): 78.

Several days passed, and I figured that I was not meant to accompany Jim to the otherworld. I took Merlin to my apartment, and for the first time in my life I became responsible for the life of another creature. Merlin's ailing intestines made him vomit food and drop soft stools so frequently that I had to stow away my valuables, including the kimonos. Not once did the desire to wear a kimono enter my mind. So my grandmother's kimono went back into a closet—this time, mine.

What was worse, Jim's passing diminished my sense of joy at the idea of wearing kimonos or learning about kimono culture. Jim was an artistic person, with whom I shared an appreciation for art; and his creativity and aesthetic sense were something that I enjoyed very much. Of course he liked kimonos as art pieces and took joy in the aesthetic appraisal of their patterns and fabrics. Losing someone with whom I had enjoyed talking about art made me want not to think about kimonos, since I saw no point in learning about the kimono when he would not be there to share and enjoy my newfound passion with me. Jim was the one who had photographed me in my grandmother's kimono for my term paper, so looking at her kimono and at the photos of myself in her kimono only reminded me of the greatest loss of my life. This alienated me even further from the kimono. It became foreign again, and I could not have cared less.

My grandmother's kimono, which had travelled across the globe to be with me, seemed destined to rest in my closet with no promise of ever coming out. I became haunted by an odd similarity between my grandmother and me: the death of my loved one had come suddenly, as had the death of hers. Afterwards she gradually lost her mind, and I could see myself heading in that direction.

"Time will heal," many said, but no one could tell me how long it would take for me to get over the loss. Would five years be long enough? Ten years? One day on television Lauren Bacall

was giving an interview, during which she was asked to reflect on her marriage to Humphrey Bogart. Regarding his death, she commented in her signature smoky contralto, “You never get over that sort of thing.” Even decades after his death, she was not over it. This did not bode well for me.

A year passed, and I stayed busy trying to keep my chin up. But the second year proved harder: I had no idea how long my term as a caregiver for Merlin would last. I had no prospect of returning to Japan to conduct preliminary research for possible dissertation topics. I had just enough sanity left to keep up appearances in public. Many times I thought of quitting graduate school and returning to Japan; but there was nothing waiting for me there, either. So I had to keep paddling in the dark sea with no land in sight.

Often I wondered how my grandmother must have felt when her husband had passed away. Occasionally I wondered if her kimono was cursed, but quickly I dismissed this notion: my grandmother would never wish me ill fortune. Nonetheless I knew for sure that I was experiencing what she must have experienced. I felt bad that I had failed to care enough when she was going through her difficulties. But we did not live nearby, and I had a high-school life then. Also, I could not have done much, because my uncle’s family was in charge of looking after her. But I might have done something had I known then how painful it was to lose a life partner.

Life seemed meaningless without Jim. In the past, when things got me down, I focused on my academic work; this made me feel better because I was able to submerge the worries and heartaches beneath my passion for research. That had been how I knew that I was meant to pursue a career in academia. But this method was no longer working for me, and that was devastating. The last line of Auden’s poem (“Nothing now can ever come to any good”) sounded

really right. “When life gets tough, the tough get going,” Jim used to say to me. That unique twist on the popular proverb would always get me back on track, but that also ceased to work.

During this period, I confided to my mother that I was considering quitting the academic program and returning to Japan. Knowing that I had been going through a tough time, she asked me very kindly if I would like to come home and start meeting people for an arranged marriage. From the tone of her voice, it was painfully clear to me that she offered this option out of the utmost motherly care for me, the daughter who had lost meaning in her life after the passing of a loved one, and who remained distraught. Still it shocked me. Though still a student, I had built the beginnings of a career by getting actively involved in academic circles. But none of this meant much to my mother. After all, she had always wanted me to become a homemaker and mother just like her, because she believed that I would make a very fine one. My sister had never been interested in learning homemaking skills, but I had been, and I became good at them. So my mother enjoyed teaching me, showing me how to launder, iron, and fold clothes; how to cook and bake; how to sew by hand or with the machine. Even though she had always been supportive of my academic pursuits, she continued to think that I would be very happy as a homemaker.

This is a woman who came annually to the *sankanbi* 参観日 (a day for parents to visit the school to observe their children in the classroom) in a nice bicolor designer suit. I knew that she was fond of the suit, though she wore it only for the *sankanbi*. For a homemaker living in a provincial city, there were no other occasions on which to wear such a fashionable suit. Looking over my shoulder during class I would spot her standing alone in the suit. She, an urbanite from Tokyo, stood out among the women dressed in dark colors, wearing this boldly-patterned suit in brown and mustard. She declined to join in the conversation of a group of chatty mothers. She disliked gossip so much that she preferred to remain by herself. She would politely bow or

exchange greetings, but she did not comment—as some mothers did—on the other mothers' attire, or on the children's behavior in class. And seeing her like that every year made me realize that I did not need to join the crowd if I did not want to. When people are around and everyone is checking each other out, it is okay to be alone and independent if one does not want to join in the activities. That had rather a profound impact on the construction of my personality. Stubbornness I got from my grandmother; but my independent mind I developed following the example of my mother.

Yet now speaking to my mother about my future, I recognized that there was a huge gap between her and me. "That's what's waiting for me in Japan? An arranged marriage?" I did not utter these sentences aloud, but at that moment I knew that returning to Japan was no longer an option. I had just discovered what my mother really thought about my academic career: it was not important to her. Of course, it need not have been. It was my career, not hers. I had never felt that she was particularly interested in my academic activities, but it did not bother me since they mattered to me, and I worked hard at them. I did not feel that I could ditch everything and get excited about the new path laid out by my mother. She meant well, but I knew that a life as a homemaker would not bring me happiness and fulfillment. Perhaps it could have when I was younger, but I had now identified things that I wanted to achieve in academia, and I could not give up. Furthermore, after losing someone dear, I harbored only pessimism toward the idea of love, marriage, and all that.

My mother had had some disagreements with her mother, and now I was becoming aware of differences between my mother and me. All these years I had thought that I was doing something that she had wanted to do (studying abroad, for instance). I was wrong. But just as in my mother's relationship with her mother, it was our interest in dressways that connected us. I

would not comply with her ideal of happiness in life, but I would fully abide by her behavioral manners. At the *sankanbi*, the way that she stood with her back straight, in that suit, with her hands crossed in front of her, her lips closed, attentive to what the teacher was saying at the front of the classroom, was still a vivid memory for me. Her mien—including her elegant way of bowing—would be the kind of thing that I would later copy as an adult.

It was my mother who demonstrated to me the way in which one's personhood could be expressed aesthetically and kinesthetically. My mother had womanly qualities that bespoke modesty, grace, and class. She was a proud homemaker who cooked every day. So her fingers wore no jewelry except for a wedding ring, and her nails were kept short and unmanicured. She hardly wore makeup, but always looked clean. She had nicely trimmed short hair, which made her look very nice with the tasteful earrings that she wore on the rare occasions that she went out. She never dressed in revealing clothes, and she never had shoes with very high heels; but still she exuded a sense of womanliness. She knew what colors and shapes of clothing made her look nice, and she achieved such a look without expensive items. Although she was aware of her status as a homemaker and mother, she did not want to look mundane. So she had clothes that, though not necessarily trendy, were different and fashionable. She might not look glamorous, but she asserted her personhood as a modest yet classy woman with a mind of her own. She knew that she would stand out in the bicolor suit in the classroom of the provincial school, but her fashionable side could not pass up this rare opportunity to wear the suit. She wore it not to impress others by asserting her Tokyo background; she just wanted to wear the suit that she favored for personal enjoyment. And because she behaved modestly and respectfully in the group of mothers, her personhood was recognizable without being outwardly imposing. Other mothers might comment on her attire, but no one could say that she looked outlandish or

inappropriate. Even though I was young, I thought that how she dressed and behaved was very refined and attractive.

When I grew into an adult woman, even though I was away from my mother, her way of exhibiting her personhood and womanhood was something that I wanted to follow. Because I cooked regularly, I kept my nails trimmed. I did not like wearing jewelry, but I liked wearing earrings to go with my bob hairstyle. I did not like wearing makeup. But following my mother, I learned what colors and shapes looked good on me, so that I looked clean and decent. My mother did not have the physique of a supermodel, and neither did I. And both of us spent our sensitive teenage years being chubby. But with aesthetically proper behavior that exhibits grace and elegance, a woman can still look respectable. Even though I needed to acquire behavioral patterns pertinent to Anglophone society, my mannerisms—such as the way that I walked and talked—were very much influenced by my mother. I learned from her that behavioral aesthetics can compensate for one's body complex, and that womanhood can be expressed without manicures, lipstick, and pin heels.

Moreover, I was proud of myself for being disciplined. I had never seen my mother lose her composure. It must have been hard to raise three children in a region in which she had not grown up without support from her relatives. And dedicating her life to the well-being of her family took a lot of patience, perseverance, and sacrifice. She was quiet but tough. And that was why I insisted that my father deliver the news of her father's passing when she was in the hospital for a preventive mastectomy. It was the night before her surgery, but I convinced my father that she was mentally strong enough to take the news, and that she would rather know sooner than later. And when I was given the devastating news of Jim's passing, I did not lose my

composure. Thanks to my self-discipline, I took it calmly. My mother would have approved of the way in which I behaved then.

I had grown into an adult while separated geographically from my mother, but my aesthetic sense of proper appearance and behavior was a result of my mother's kinesthetic demonstration. The qualities that she conveyed were instilled in me, for which I thought that she would be proud of herself. But the fact that I was not becoming a homemaker who would exercise all the household skills that she had taught me was disappointing to her.

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Nearing the second anniversary of Jim's passing, I could tell that I was going to experience depression sooner or later. Every day as soon as I returned home, I had to lie down. Even though I had things to get done, I had difficulty making myself get up and get to work. I was exhausted taking care of the senescent Merlin, whose health had deteriorated so much that my daily routine now included wiping his vomit and feces from the floor multiple times. I pleaded with Jim for guidance from the otherworld, since he had told me several times in life that he would come to me after death if he could find the way. I had read many ghost stories for my folklore research, and some women had had visits from their deceased husbands. Why wouldn't Jim come to me? But (as far as I could tell) no sign of communication came, and for that I was mad at him. If he chose he could neglect me, but not Merlin. Our mutual friends suggested that I put Merlin to sleep. One of them assured me that Jim would never get upset with me for that. I knew that I was headed for depression due to the overwhelming task of constant caregiving, so I talked with other friends and decided to let Merlin go on January 15, 2010.

During this phase I had a conversation with my academic advisor, Professor Leary, who reminded me of my passion for folklore research. When I hinted that I might consider leaving the

academic program, he said that I would need to make a living regardless of what went on in my personal life. Since I would have a hole in my heart due to the loss no matter where I was and what I did, why not continue on the academic track, since I enjoyed researching and writing? I could not argue with that, so I stayed.

I had been trying to remember how I used to be and what I had liked before meeting Jim, so as to regain my identity as a person without him. I had to look for something that could define who I was without him. I ended up reverting to the kimono—partially because the topic seemed the most feasible in my weary condition, but more importantly because I wanted to recoup the inspiration that I had felt when seeing my grandmother's kimono. Her kimono had by now accumulated layers of sorrow. Nevertheless, seeing the pretty kimonos in the magazines and books that my mother had sent, and browsing on the Internet for old and new kimonos, began to provide some solace. I did not want to enter the world of the kimono without Jim, but after all I had liked fabrics long before meeting him, and my fascination with the beauty of textiles in the form of kimonos, *obi*s, and other accessories started to revive my yearning to dress in them. And that somehow guided me to think that perhaps I could reconstitute my selfhood by mastering the art of kimono-wearing. Slowly life after Jim and Merlin started to seem possible.

My recognition of the gap between my mother and me deflated me, but that only made me put more faith in her behavioral aesthetics and her sense for dressways, which were still valid and valuable in my sense of personhood. Before Jim's passing, my grandmother's *omeshi* had symbolized the cheerful aspect of my maternal lineage. I wanted the *omeshi* to regain that bliss, and shine again under the sun. Two years in the closet had made my grandmother's *omeshi* kimono damp with pain and despair, as well as with the negative similarities that I had noticed between my grandmother and me. In order to refresh the *omeshi*, I knew that I must take it out of

the closet and air out the sadness. I rose again to the challenge of mastering the art of kimono-wearing, determined to infuse a sense of joy back into my grandmother’s kimono.

CHAPTER SIX: Retrieving Kin-aesthetics and Searching for My Own Style

By the time that I went to Tokyo to commence fieldwork, I had read many Japanese novels whose stories were set in pre–World War II Japan, and whose characters wore kimonos. Whenever I encountered new terms referring to types of fabric or to patterns and motifs, I checked for definitions and descriptions. But knowledge obtained through reading took me only so far in understanding kimono fabrics and fashions. Without access to the actual objects, I did not feel that I understood much. The knowledge that I lacked was kinesthetic. I was eager to see, and more importantly to touch and wear, kimonos in Japan so that I would be able to engage with them on my own terms.

Until my return I was not certain how widespread the current kimono revival was among the general population. I walked the streets of Tokyo, expecting to see young women in the garment. But I hardly saw anyone in a kimono. The area in which my parents resided was not a shopping district for young people, so on the rare occasion that I spotted a woman in a kimono in my neighborhood, it was a middle-aged or older woman who appeared to be involved with *buyō* (judging by the way that she walked—in a stylized glide). However, even when I went to youth-fashion districts, I almost never saw kimono-clad women. It was only when I visited antique- or used-kimono shops or kimono-related events or exhibits that I came across a few women in kimonos of the kind that I had seen in magazines and books. I was disappointed to learn that the revival was not as widespread as I had expected. Nevertheless, small bookshops in my parents' neighborhood stocked the aforementioned kimono magazines for young women as well as

kimono hobby-books.[116] Although the increasing prominence of antique- and used-kimono shops and of books and magazines catering to those interested in wearing antique and used kimonos attested to the revival of kimono-wearing, a large part of the general population, it seemed to me, could go on with their lives without having anything to do with the kimono. But since it was not the revival *per se* that had sparked my interest in kimono-wearing, and since I had a very personal mission to achieve with kimono-wearing, I embraced what the revival had made possible.

In this chapter I highlight shopping experiences at three types of kimono store: high-end, middlebrow, and low-cost. In the course of shopping I befriended shop clerks and hobbyist-wearers who gave me advice on kimono-wearing. Through kinesthetic interaction with kimonos I gradually came to understand what suits me and what works for me. I discuss this process of cultivating my own style of kimono-wearing. And as the finale of my autoethnographic research I describe a visit to relatives in search of answers about my grandmother's striped *omeshi* kimono.

For the parts of the *nagagi* mentioned in this chapter, see Figure 12.

[116] As in the United States, bookstores in Japan are struggling to survive due to the increased presence of online sellers, including Amazon Japan.

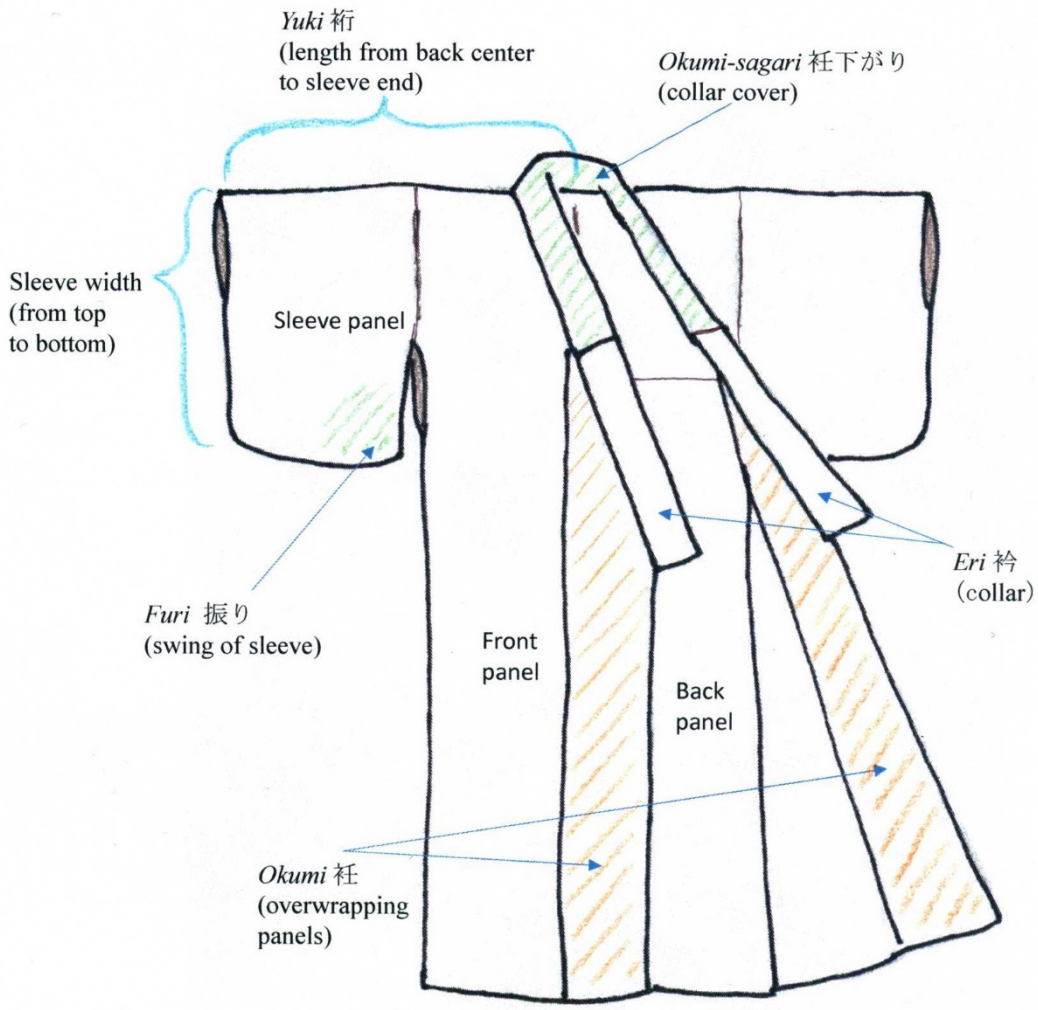

Figure 12: Parts of *nagagi*

Shopping for Used Kimonos

When I was ready at last to visit used-kimono shops in the Tokyo area, I asked my mother to come along with me. Having grown up in Tokyo, she is familiar with the streets and the complicated public transportation system of central Tokyo. Also, since I was embarking on an investigation of an unfamiliar realm, and I had no idea how to behave, I needed someone who could show me how to comport myself when shopping for kimonos. Although my mother had never shopped for antique or used kimonos, I knew that she would make a good guide, and that I could trust her behavioral tuition.

I showed her all the shops selling antique or used kimonos in central Tokyo that I had located by browsing in magazines and on the Internet. We made plans to visit about two dozen of them over the course of a few days by figuring out the most efficient way of traveling in Tokyo's subway and train system.

Many shops that we visited handled post-war used kimonos and *obi*s. Not knowing what to look for, I nevertheless looked for things that might pique my aesthetic interest. I had studied many books and museum catalogs that showed numerous beautiful kimonos and fabrics, but this did not make me an expert in identifying types of fabric or types of kimonos. Because we both felt a bit out of our depth, on many occasions we entered a shop, browsed the stock, and left. I did not know what I liked or what to look for, because I did not know what kinds of kimonos would look good on me. And my mother did not know either, because this was the first time that we had ventured to shop for kimonos. The world of kimonos and accessories was so new to me that I felt as though I had no way to discern the difference between high- and low-quality materials. But I thought that one must look at and touch as many materials as possible until acquiring the requisite knowledge through physical interaction. So I continued.

Akariya 2 灯屋２

Figure 13: Akariya 2 interior, 2013.

I had a memorable experience at a shop called Akariya 2, where I met another destiny kimono:

The shop is located on the second floor of a building that faces a main street in Ginza (Japan's historical fashion district). Because the shop is not on the ground level, it is impossible to inspect its ambience or selection from the street. I feel nervous riding the elevator to the second level; and I am thankful for my mother's company. The doors open, and we land at the entrance of the shop. The store space is a well-lit rectangular room, and much of the floor is raised slightly and covered with synthetic *tatami* mats. This means that visitors are expected to take off their shoes—as they would be expected to do in a Japanese home—before browsing the shop's collection. The atmosphere is nice, with a vase of fresh flowers and a tasteful wall-hanging opposite the elevator, an antique *haori* hung by the entrance, and several antique *obi*s on display on one side of the room.

There are other customers attended by two women in kimonos (whom I figure for clerks). One of them greets me as I take off my shoes. *Obi*s and *nagagi*s are folded neatly and stacked on shelves that fill one side of the shop. At the center of the room is an island on which more *nagagi*s are stacked. By the window that faces the street are three chairs and a table (for customers to rest with tea and snacks) (Figure 13). It is shortly after starting to browse the shelves of *nagagi*s that I spot a dark brownish one. I slowly pull it out, gently lifting the other

*nagagi*s above it. The fabric is made of brown and black yarn, together appearing dark brown. The yarn is finely twisted, creating a texture of fine even ridges. Because of the ridges, the fabric of this *nagagi* looks thick, but I am surprised to discover how light it is.

One of the women in a kimono approaches and says to me, "*Yoino wo oerabi ni narimashitane* 良いのをお選びになりましたね [You have picked a nice one]." The timing of her arrival is very good, I think to myself. While tending to the other customers she must have been checking to see what I would pick. She has never seen me before, and because I am not wearing a kimono outfit, she could not have known if I have come to buy or just to browse. "This is called *Yūki-chijimi* 結城縮.[117] It takes a lot of intricate craftsmanship to make this, but they don't make this any more," she continues, and asks if I want to put it on to see how it looks on me. Whenever a store attendant asks this question it makes me slightly nervous, because she might shower me with compliments, coaxing me to buy the piece that I have just tried on. I know how to decline to buy things that I do not want, but it still takes energy to do so respectfully. So far, I like the atmosphere of the shop, and I find this clerk very polite and refined. But will she do what store attendants often do? I glance at my mother, who has grown tired and is standing by the display of *obi*s on the other side of the room. "Why don't you try it on? Otherwise you'll never be able to tell," she prods me. So I agree to try on this *Yūki-chijimi nagagi*.

The middle-aged clerk—I later learn that her name is Shirai-san [Ms. Shirai]—offers my mother a stool before leading me to the triple-mirror stand. From my experience at other shops, I know what she will do: she will put a special collar around my shoulders. Kimono shops use

[117] *Yūki-chijimi* is a silk textile made in the region of Yūki in the prefectures of Tochigi 栃木 and Ibaraki 茨城 (located north of the Tokyo area). In 1956 the plain-weave textile (*Yūki-tsumugi* 結城紬) from this region was designated a *Jūyō mukei bunkazai* 重要無形文化財 [Important intangible cultural property] by the Japanese government. *Yūki-chijimi*, which is crêpe, was however not recognized, despite the elaborate process required to make it. The lack of governmental imprimatur led to a decline in the production of *chijimi*, making the fabric quite rare today. In 2010 *Yūki-tsumugi* was designated a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, while *chijimi* again was overlooked.

these special collars to simulate the *han-eri*-covered collar of the *naga-juban*, so that customers can try on *nagagi*s without going to the trouble of first dressing in the standard undergarment. This allows the customer to try several *nagagi*s in relatively rapid succession, visualizing herself in each one; it also helps the kimono shop to keep its stock clean, by preventing the *nagagi* from touching the customer's neck.

Shirai-san secures the collar on me with strings, then spreads the *Yūki-chijimi nagagi* while standing behind me. I extend my arms backward so that she can help me to put my arms through the sleeves. She comes in front and pinches the bottom ends of the *nagagi*'s collar where they meet the *okumi* panels. She adjusts the *nagagi* on me, wrapping around the front left side of the *nagagi* until it aligns with my right hip. Having taken this guide measurement, she unwraps the left side in order to wrap the right side under, then folds the left side over the right, asking me to press my right hand to my right hip to hold the left side of the *nagagi*. She ties a sash around my hips to secure the lower part of the *nagagi*, adjusts the collar of the *nagagi*, and smoothes out the upper part to make the *ohashori*. Another sash tied around my torso cinches the upper *nagagi*. Shirai-san now withdraws, saying "*Ima, obi omochishimasune* 今、帯お持ちしますね [I will bring some *obi*s now]."

I look at myself in the mirror and think that this *Yūki-chijimi nagagi* looks good on me. My mother exults, "That looks better on you than any other *nagagi* that you have tried on!" Shirai-san agrees that it looks good on me and tells me how valuable *Yūki-chijimi* is as a fabric, and how warm it is during the cold winter months. But that information is not really important to me at the moment. This fabric feels great; it has a consistent smoothness due to the neatly aligned ridges. I have never seen this kind of thing before, but I can tell that it is a very fine fabric. I am surprised at how lightweight the *nagagi* is. Others that I tried on elsewhere felt heavier.

I also like the color. Dark brown is my color; that is why I spotted this *nagagi* in the first place. When I was in elementary school, my mother told me that the color brown suited me best (better than black, grey, or navy). Dark brown suited my skin tone, she said. So since then it has been my standard color for clothing. Black looks good on my mother, but it is too strong a color to suit my complexion, and so is navy. Based on her judgment, my mother bought me dark brown overalls with pink lining when I was young. This was my favorite piece of clothing until I grew too tall to wear it. And because I was fond of this color combination, my mother made me a school bag in dark brown and pink for my gym clothes. Her present enthusiasm for this *Yūki-chijimi nagagi* informs me that she still thinks that I look good in dark brown. That is nice to know, because I think so, too.

Shirai-san now searches for *obi*s to match the *Yūki-chijimi*. "*Kochira, sakihodo gorandeshitane* こちら、先ほどご覧でしたね [You were looking at this earlier]." Earlier I had had my eye on one with orange and pink stripes with running stitches, which she now picks up. But my mother points to one of the *obi*s on display: this one is a patchwork made of multiple beige fabric squares accented by a single blue fabric square with a flower embroidered on it. This blue piece is designed to come in the front of the kimono outfit. Shirai-san brings the two *obi*s, and she places the one that I picked against my stomach so that in the mirror I can visualize the combination of the *obi* and the *Yūki-chijimi nagagi* as an outfit. "*Kore wa oniaidesuyo* これはお似合いですよ [They go well together]," she says, and my mother nods (Figure 14). Shirai-san says that the fabric is called "*kantha*." It is from India—the

Figure 14: My *Yūki-chijimi* outfit with the *kantha obi*. (The *ohashori* could be smoother.)

shop owner visits India periodically to import Indian textiles from which to make *nagagi*s and *obi*s. The shop boasts *obi*s made of fabrics imported from all over the world: Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Europe.

Then Shirai-san wraps the beige patchwork *obi* around me and secures it at the back with a clothespin. The blue patch rests on my stomach. “That looks more classy!,” my mother exclaims. Shirai-san says, “*Sasuga okāsama desune. Sutekinano wo oerabininatte* さすがお母様ですね。素敵なのをお選びになって。[Your mother has a very good eye; she has picked a nice one],” and tells us that the patchwork *obi* is made of many precious antique fabric pieces that the shop has collected over the years. I can tell that this *obi* makes me look a lot classier; the *obi* looks more refined and expensive and elevates the value of the *nagagi* because of the craftsmanship required to make it. “But blue is not my color…,” I murmur, “I wish that the blue patch were red, pink, or orange.” “That *obi* makes the outfit more formal and exquisite, but I knew you would pick the orange and pink one because you like warm colors,” my mother says. “I like blue if it is combined with warm colors,” I reply.

I thank Shirai-san and ask her to undress me, which she does. Now it is a thinking time. I did not even check the prices of these items. I am worried. The *Yūki-chijimi*’s tag shows a price such as I have never seen on any piece of clothing that I have ever worn: more than a thousand dollars. I see that I have come to a shop where I am out of place financially. While I tell my mother the price of the *nagagi* and the *obi*s, Shirai-san retreats to help other customers (which shows that she is skilled in customer service: she observes discretion). “This is too expensive,” I whisper to my mother, pointing to the *Yūki-chijimi*. “But this suits you like no other. I have never seen a kimono that looks this good on you.” And my mother reminds me that I have a large sum of money that my grandmother gave her for my sake, so I can buy this if I really want to. I

thought that the money was for a special occasion like a wedding, but why not use it for this kimono that suits me so well, so as to celebrate my initiation into kimono-wearing? It will honor my grandmother, whose kimono introduced me to kimono-wearing in the first place. It takes about twenty minutes before deciding to make the biggest purchase of my life. I ask Shirai-san to wrap up the *Yūki-chijimi* and the *kantha obi* for me. She does so, as she tells us that she will include a pure silk *han-eri* as a gift.

The *tatōshi* たとう紙 (wrapping paper for kimonos and *obi*s) that Shirai-san is using indicates that this shop is high-end indeed. It is made of thick *washi* 和紙 [Japanese paper], whereas the *tatōshi* that I have seen elsewhere was made of thin paper. Akariya 2's *tatōshi* and paper bag bear the shop's logo at the right bottom corner. Shirai-san asks us to take a seat by the window for some tea, but my mother wants to go home. It is getting late, and it is time for her to prepare supper. So Shirai-san walks us to the elevator with my shopping bag, and presses the button to call the car. We get in the elevator. She hands me the bag, then her business card. "*Dōmo arigatōgozaimashita* どうも有り難うございました [Thank you so very much]," she says, bowing deeply and politely. We thank her and bow, too, but not as deeply as she does because we are customers. She keeps her head down as the door closes.

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I felt good about this shopping experience at Akariya 2. This was my first time shopping at a high-end clothing store. I was impressed by how pleasant the customer service was, thanks to Shirai-san. She was attentive, polite, discreet, not superficial; and she used *keigo* 敬語 [118] in a way that was warm and friendly. I was happy to meet someone like her. Nowadays many Japanese people, especially those in younger generations, tend to disregard *keigo* because it can

[118] The Japanese language has a system of honorifics—called *keigo*—for demonstrating respect, courtesy, and humility.

Figure 15: A refurbished *nagagi* at Akariya 2. (Note the patched sections.)

create distance between speaker and addressee. But I favor *keigo*, and when it is used properly it sounds exquisite. Although Japanese learn *keigo* growing up, not all Japanese master it. I learned it mostly from my mother, and although I am not perfect I like people who can use it naturally with elegance. Shirai-san used *keigo* beautifully in a way that accorded with her polite demeanor, which matched the class of Akariya 2, a high-end shop famous for its refurbished *nagagi*s (Figure 15), repurposed antique *nagagi*s and *obi*s, and items made of antique and contemporary imported fabrics. I had seen Akariya 2's advertisement in several kimono- and antique-related magazines, but it was only much later that I would learn that the shop offers its collection to famous Japanese actresses for television appearances. I would come to favor this shop most because I liked the store's ambience, and because the kinds of items that they make and sell suit my aesthetic sense. I was able to befriend Shirai-san, who was kind enough to invite me to the shop to study its stock in order to learn about kimono-fabric varieties, and to talk with other customers to hear their kimono stories. According to the owner, Shibuya-san, this shop used to make Western-style shirts with kimono fabrics, and its clientele included John Lennon and Yoko Ono. Shibuya-san's husband is an antique dealer who convenes a monthly auction of used and antique kimonos (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Mr. Shibuya (seated at center) displays a kimono up for auction, Tokyo, 2013.

Yumeichi 夢市

It gave me confidence that I was able to select such a fine fabric at Akariya 2. Although I was new to the kimono world, my sense for good fabrics still worked. I felt a huge relief at this, which encouraged me to venture out on my own in search of a *nagagi*. There were a few shops that had been closed during the excursion with my mother, so later I visited them on my own. There was a shop in Yanaka 谷中 called Yumeichi:

Unlike Ginza, where Akariya 2 is located, Yanaka is more of a residential area with old buildings that exude hominess. Yumeichi itself looks like a remodeled old-fashioned store: an old wooden building with sliding glass doors and large windows. Because the surrounding buildings crowd it, the store does not get a lot of sunlight, so the interior is bright only near the entrance. The floor is raised high above ground level, except for the entrance area, as is customary for a traditional Japanese shop. Here, too, visitors are required to take off their shoes before stepping up to the main area. *Obi*s are folded and shelved in one corner of the shop, while *nagagi*s are folded and shelved according to their lengths. From visiting other shops, I have learned that the garment length and the *yuki* 裄 (length from the center of the back to the end of the sleeve) are the factors that determine the fit of secondhand kimonos initially tailored for someone else.

To my surprise, Yumeichi is having a going-out-of-business sale. The owner is a woman in her fifties, Egami-san. She has been running the shop by herself, but is getting tired of the used- and antique-kimono business. Because she is eager to unload her inventory, the *nagagi*s and *obi*s are thirty to fifty percent off. “Lucky for me,” I think to myself, as I commence browsing her selection. I am the only customer on this weekday afternoon.

From behind me I hear Egami-san calling, without using *keigo*: "*Donna no ga suki nano* どんなのが好きなの [What do you like]?" and "*Donna no ga iino* どんなのがいいの [What are you looking for]?" I like to be addressed in *keigo*, but I like people who use informal language also. She is not being rude by not using *keigo.* She knows that I am a first-time visitor to her store, and that I am younger than she. She aims to welcome me amicably. The only problem is that I do not really know what I like or what I want. To tell the truth, I am not even sure if I am able to wear kimonos properly yet. But I do not want to disclose this secret, so I just tell her that I am a novice wearer. "*Ah* あぁ、[Oh]," she replies, "*Jā dondon kiteminaito. Janakya wakannaikara. Sukinano dondon mottekite kitemiyō* じゃあどんどん着てみないと。じゃないと分かんないから。好きなのどんどん持ってきて着てみよう [Then you should try on as many as possible, because that is the only way for you to figure out what looks good on you. Grab any that might interest you, and we will see]!" Taking her up on this kind offer, I start to pull out items that look interesting to me. I bring her about three *nagagi*s and five *obi*s. Egami-san puts me in front of the mirror stand, and holds up one *nagagi* after another to do a quick appraisal. "*Kore wa iiwane, demo kore wa dame* これはいいわね、でもこれはダメ [This will look good on you, but that one will not work]." She does this so rapidly that I am unsure of her criteria for determining what looks good or bad on me. One *nagagi* has a diagonal stripe pattern: each stripe is three or four inches wide, and the stripes are red, grey, orange, and blue-grey. These colors are not vivid, and they blur together, making the garment bold yet subdued. I like it very much, but she casts it aside: "*Kore wa dameda* これはダメだ [Not this one]." I think that this kimono would look great on someone tall, but I am shorter than average. Because I am still too new to kimono-wearing to think creatively in adapting things that do not suit me perfectly, I lack the moxie to disagree with Egami-san. She is probably right anyway. I have to admit that, a moment

ago when she put the garment over my shoulder, I realized that the piece does not suit me as well as I had imagined.

Since she is being nice, I ask questions about how to compose kimono outfits. But I know so little and I own so few items that I do not really understand her copious advice. Yet all of a sudden I am inspired to match two items selected earlier: a light-yellow striped *nagagi* and a multicolor *obi* with a diagonal check pattern. Egami-san approves the combination, pronouncing it modern. Naturally these two items are set aside for purchase. We chat about many things, and she is kind enough to tell me that I should sew a backing fabric to the bottom half of the back side of the used *meisen nagagi* that I purchased at another shop. Antique *meisen* fabrics are fragile, so if a *nagagi* is unlined the fabric can tear in the back when the wearer bends over. “Just adding a backing fabric protects antique kimonos. Don’t be lazy about looking after antique kimonos,” she says. I nod, and I feel like I have been in this shop for a few hours. Apart from some neighbors stopping over to say hello to Egami-san, asking what she will do after closing the store, no one has come during my visit. I end up purchasing two more *obi*s in addition to the *nagagi* and *obi* that have been paired together. I have very much enjoyed shopping here and talking with Egami-san. I wish that she would stay in business.

I leave Yumeichi while it is still bright outside. I retrace my steps to the subway station, thinking to myself that I will never walk in this neighborhood again because Yumeichi is closing in a few days and there are no other stores to visit in the vicinity. I will go to my parents’ place for dinner to show my mother what I have just bought. I find Tokyo in May too warm for wearing kimonos, and I do not feel confident enough in my kimono-wearing skills to dare to go anywhere in Japan anyway. I am buying *nagagi*s and *obi*s so as to build my collection before actively attempting to compose outfits.

When I arrive at my parents' residence, my mother is in the kitchen making supper. I am eager to show her what I got. "*Okāsan, katte kita no miru* お母さん、買ってきたの見る [Mom, do you wanna see what I have gotten]?" But she asks me to wait until after supper. "*O-kimono ga yogorechaudesho* お着物が汚れちゃうでしょ [You don't want your kimonos to get dirty]." She has a point, so I withdraw from the kitchen, feeling slightly deflated by her lack of enthusiasm. It will still be a while before supper is ready, so I go to the entrance, where there is a big rectangular mirror, to put on the new *nagagi* and place the *obi* in front of my stomach to recheck the combination that I came up with at Yumeichi. It still looks good; it is gratifying to confirm that my aesthetic judgement was not clouded by the excitement of being in the store.

Figure 17: My outfit with the *nagagi* and *obi* from Yumeichi, 2012. Photo by Sorako-san.

After supper I show the combination to my mother. She likes the *obi* very much because it looks so modern. She has never seen an *obi* like it: "*Arah, sonnano arunone* あら～、そんなのあるのねぇ [Oh, I did not know that such a thing existed]." I like it when my mother likes what I bought by myself. But it will be a while before I can wear this outfit on the streets of Tokyo (Figure 17).

The tricky part of kimono-wearing is that in addition to matching a *nagagi* and an *obi*, one needs to find complementary accessories: *han-eri*, *naga-juban*, *obi-age*, and *obi-jime*. I am too inexperienced to have even a hunch of how to select these items. Yet I must keep trying. Now that I have been collecting *nagagi*s and *obi*s for a while, the time has come to procure some accoutrements.

Setagaya no boro-ichi 世田谷のボロ市

When I returned to Tokyo the third time, it was wintertime. And I knew what I would do: buy accoutrements. Because it was difficult for me to visualize kimono outfits without having the actual objects, I decided to collect, for instance, inexpensive *obi-jime*s just so that I could determine which colors worked with certain pairings of *nagagi* and *obi*. One place that I went was Setagaya no boro-ichi, a flea market that takes place in the Setagaya 世田谷 ward in Tokyo. The market's history goes back to 1578. During the Edo period the market took place only at year's end and flourished with vendors selling farming tools and food and decorations for the New Year celebration. Since the end of the nineteenth century the number of sellers handling used clothing or fabric scraps increased, and because of this the market began to be called Boro-ichi ボロ市 [*boro* market].[119] Today Boro-ichi takes place annually on December 15–16, and again a month later on January 15–16. As in the past, the market is filled with various types of vendors, many of whom travel from other regions of Japan. There are stalls that sell fresh fish, pickled vegetables, and balls of steamed sticky rice; celebrity posters and cards; antiques and secondhand knick-knacks; miniature shrines to the Shintō household deity; decorations for the New Year celebration; handmade crafts such as bags and clothes; and used Western-style clothing.

Because there are many stalls that sell used and antique *haori*s, *nagagi*s, *naga-juban*s, *obi*s, and accoutrements for kimono outfits, the market attracts antique-kimono wearers and those who make crafts with antique-kimono fabrics. Serious shoppers come at 9:00 AM on the first day, but

[119] *Boro* (襤褸, ボロ, ぼろ) means used or tattered fabrics. The market takes place on a street that is 0.3 miles long, and it extends to some side streets. A 1903 article written by the journalist Shūsui Kōtoku 幸徳秋水 explained that sixty percent of the market was filled with sellers of *boro* (used kimonos, *haori*s, shirts, undergarments, socks, aprons, gloves, etc.), thirty percent consisted of sellers of everyday items (kitchen goods and metal tools), and the final ten percent included food stands and street performances and shows. (Setagaya-kuritsu kyōdoshiryōkan 2011, 1, 8–9)

there are good opportunities for discounts during the afternoon of the second day. Unlike at antique- and used-kimono shops, the stalls at an outside market like Boro-ichi sell a mix of wearable items and heavily damaged pieces, and they sell them differently as well. *Nagagi*s, *naga-juban*s, and *haori*s are more often displayed on hangers, rather than being folded neatly. *Obi*s and stained and low-quality items are jammed into cardboard boxes or piled on vinyl tarps laid on the ground. Shoppers dig through the boxes and piles. By midday all kinds of items are chaotically intermingled (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Setagaya no boro-ichi: (top) antique stand; (bottom) used-kimono stalls, 2013.

I was told that bargaining with the sellers is customary. But I did not know how to bargain, so I coaxed my mother into coming along with me to Boro-ichi:

I am not sure if she knows how to bargain, either, but I count on her to show me behavioral manners and to assess the quality of things at the kimono stalls. I go through items on hangers, in piles, and in boxes. If I find something that I like, I show it to my mother and ask for

her opinion: “Is this nice?” or “Is the price right?” She has a sharper eye for stains and flaws, and that helps me to reject many things that I have grabbed. So I just buy some inexpensive *obi-jime*s (at a few dollars apiece) to practice composing outfits.

It is at a stall that sells knick-knacks that I watch my mother displaying her knack for bargaining. I wanted a wooden serving tray and have spotted one underneath various junk. The seller, who is taking a soup break a short distance away, sees us checking out the tray. He hollers at us “*Sore 5-hyaku-en de mottekanai* それ 5 百円で持ってかない [Won’t you take it for five hundred yen (roughly five dollars)]?” Then he comes over to move the junk aside so that we can have a better look at the tray. I do not mind paying five dollars for this tray, but my mother tilts her head and coyly suggests, “*3-byaku-en* 3 百円 [How about three hundred yen]?” He laughs, and says, “*Iiyo* いいよ [Alright].” Amused by this interaction, I pick the coins from my purse to pay the seller.

❀ ❀

I return to Boro-ichi alone the following month to take photos, but I want to shop for things too. Maybe I will even get a chance to emulate my mother’s bargaining technique. There is one small stall that I happen to wander into. It is common for good items to be hung at the rear of the stall. A man, who appears to be the seller, is chatting with someone, so I start to browse through the items on hangers in the back. I want to do this quickly, so that if I find nothing of interest I can leave without having to interact with the seller. One *naga-juban* looks nice. It is not antique—and this is good because I prefer contemporary used *naga-juban*s, as they are machine-washable even if they are made of silk. I see the price, and it is seven thousand yen (roughly

seventy dollars). That is too much for a used *naga-juban*. Another *naga-juban* next to it is similarly overpriced. So I turn around to leave, but there the seller is to greet me:[120]

S: Did you find anything that looks good?
A: Well, a bit expensive.
S: Which one?
A: These two.
S: Oh, you have picked expensive ones. Go ahead, name your price. Tell me.
A: ….
S: Go on and tell me, how much works for you?
A: …A thousand yen.
S: [Laugh] That's extreme!
Here [pointing me to a plastic bin] is the stuff for a thousand yen over here.
[Walking over to the bin]
In *sun*?[121] [picking one up to find a garment of a size (in terms of length and *yuki*) comparable to that of the expensive ones on hangers that I was checking.]
A: In centimeters, please.

S: Nanika iimono, arimashitaka? 何かいいもの、ありましたか？
A: Chotto takainā. ちょっと高いな～。
S: Dore? どれ？
A: Kono futatsu. この二つ。
*S: Māta takaino erande. Iiyo, ikura ga iino? Ittegoran.*ま～た高いの選んで。いいよ、いくらがいいの？言ってごらん。
A: ….
S: Iiyo, ikuranara ii? いいよ、いくらならいい？
A: …Sen-en. 千円。
S: Mata kyokutan na! また極端な！
Sen en no nara kocchi ni aruyo. 千円のならこっちにあるよ。
Sun? 寸？
A: Senchi de iidesu. センチでいいです。

I do not care for the ones that he has selected from the bin for me, but while I am inspecting them, another customer comes by, so he attends to him. I see my chance to escape, and as I get up to walk away, the seller gestures to me with his five fingers to suggest five thousand yen for the seven-thousand-yen *naga-juban* on the hanger. That is still costly in my opinion, so I say to him, "*Demo mō okane ga nakunacchattano* でも、もうお金が無くなっちゃったの [But I don't have

[120] In these dialogues, my English translations are followed by the Japanese originals (in both roman and Japanese type). Descriptions in brackets are included in the translations only. Ellipses indicate pauses and hesitations, not omissions.
[121] A traditional unit of length.

enough cash left],” which is true. He says that I can get some from an ATM at any nearby convenience store. I tell him that my card works only at a postal ATM. I feel like I can let the *naga-juban* go, so I attempt a joke to excuse myself: “*Rainen wa* 来年は [Next year]?” “*Rainen niwa mō naiyo* 来年にはもうないよ [It will be gone by next year].”

“Isn’t it past five now?” I say aloud as I check my clock. It is still 4:30 PM. This means that the “Sorry, no cash” excuse will not work. So I walk up to a security guard to ask him where the nearest post office is. He says that I will need to ask at the information booth at the center of the market. Without promising to return, I walk away from the stall. I go to the information booth and learn that the post office is on the other side of the market. It is just close enough for me to make it before closing time, but I concoct a potential scenario: I can walk to the post office, maybe get cash, kill time by checking out other stands at the market, and return only to find the item gone. When I return to the stall nearly an hour later, it is already dark. I see the seller talking to someone, so I sneak in to check the spot where the *naga-juban* was hanging. It is not there. “*Ojisan, are nakunacchatta* おじさん、あれなくなっちゃった [It’s gone, isn’t it]?”

But from the behind the stall he pulls out a plastic bag. I am pleasantly surprised that he has waited for my unpromised return. Now I have to buy it, and I do not mind at all. As I dig out the money, I kid him:

> A: [Mock-flirtatiously] Did you believe that I would come back?
> S: Yeah, I did. And I was going to hold you tight when you did.
>
> *A: Watashi ga chanto modottekurutte shinjitetā?* 私がちゃんと戻ってくるって信じてた～？
> *S: Un, shinjiteta. Modottekitara dakishimeteyarō to omotte.* うん、信じてた。戻ってきたら抱きしめてやろうと思って。

His forward reply makes me blush because I realize that I have never before had such a conversation in Japanese. The Japanese generally do not make a habit of hugging (though the custom is now spreading among some younger people), so this is quite an unexpected response.

Thank goodness it is dark and I am looking down, so he cannot see my face turning red. Meanwhile he mummers, "*Itsu modottekunnokanā to omottesa* いつ戻ってくんのかな～と思ってさ [I was wondering when you would be back]." I pull myself together in a second, as I must play it "cool" in this banter:

A: I had to go all the way to the other end of the market. And I stopped at other stalls.
S: You bought things that you don't even need, didn't you?
A: [Picking up a *nagagi* that I purchased elsewhere a while ago] No, I got this. It was 1,000 yen.

A: Ichiban haji made ikanakucha ikenakattanoyo. De, sonoato yorimichi shichatta. 一番端まで行かなくちゃいけなかったのよ。で、そのあと寄り道しちゃった。
S: Mata iranai mono kattetandesho. またいらないもの買ってたんでしょ。
A: Uun, kore kattano. Kore sen-en dattano. ううん、これ買ったの。これ千円だったの。

He is looking away, so I raise the tone of my voice slightly and repeat with a hint of mock innocence:

A: It was 1,000 yen!
S: [Laugh] Whatever!

A: Kore sen-en dattano! これ千円だったの。
S: Shiranaiyo! 知らないよ。

He is handing me the bag, so I raise my palm with my thumb folded in to make the gesture for the number four, suggesting four thousand yen (thus asking for a further discount). I flash my four fingers and an impish grin as I look up into his face innocuously yet intently.

"*Matā* また～ [Oh, you]!," says he. I do not really expect any more of a discount, so I broaden my smile and hand him five thousand yen. He gets a bigger plastic bag so that I can consolidate everything that I have purchased today into one bag; that is nice of him. As I depart, I bow deferentially in a feminine way and say, "*Dewa mata rainen* ではまた来年 [See you next year]." He says with a smile, "*Hai, otagai genki de* はい、お互い元気で [Indeed, and to our health until then]!" I have no idea if I will return next year, but it has been fun shopping at the market.

Shopping behavior as a research topic

Daniel Miller's *A Theory of Shopping* (1998) is one of the first ethnographic studies of shopping behavior. Miller argues that the act of shopping in everyday life is a means of expressing love for family members and of nurturing social relationships with others. I myself have researched the shopping experience (among other things) at an Asian grocery store in Madison, Wisconsin (Yoshimura 2009). In my case study, I discuss the ways in which a mom-and-pop Asian grocery store's atmosphere is maintained by the owner and her husband. They make their workplace homey by displaying their hobby items and gifts from regulars. Their relationships with customers are fostered and nurtured through food exchange.

In this kimono project, too, shopping behavior has become a topic of interest for me. At a business establishment, visitors' movements and behaviors are often monitored by clerks in charge of the place. For instance, Michael J. Bell (1989) studies the verbal lore of bartenders, and the ways in which it controls a bar's atmosphere. In addition to serving drinks, bartenders regulate customer behavior by greeting them; encouraging them to relax; actively talking or quietly listening to customers; and, when necessary, intervening in quarrels. The bartender plays a key role in maintaining the social order of the workplace while creating an amicable atmosphere for everyone there.

The examples above illustrate three different types of businesses involved in the selling of antique- and used-kimonos. The atmosphere of each place is influenced by its location, interior design, clerks/sellers, and the tone of language used between clerks/sellers and customers. Norine Dresser (1971) examines dialogues between Jewish American storekeepers and their customers, and discusses their bantering and bargaining as performances that characterize ethnicity. My interactions with clerks reveal different levels of linguistic and gestural formality.

While gender, age, and environment influence the tone of language and the level of formality in our dialogues, each side quickly makes character judgements about the other. For instance, the male seller at Boro-ichi asked me the first question politely, but I responded in a casual tone to lessen the formality of our dialogue. From that point on, our conversation was casual and informal, which led to the playful bantering upon my return. But when we parted, we reclaimed a sense of politeness to mark the end of our business transaction.

There are certain manners expected of customers in shopping. On one occasion at a different used-kimono shop, when my mother and I departed after purchasing a *nagagi*, the clerk came outside and bowed deeply, thanking us for our business. Since I was unaccustomed to a woman much older than I being deferential to me just because I was a customer, and since I was unsure how to behave in a kimono shop, I looked back a few times to thank her and bow back to her. Once we were far from the shop, my mother told me that my behavior had been inappropriate. I should have thanked the clerk and bowed only once, and kept walking without turning back. That would have allowed the clerk to return to work sooner. That is the polite and appropriate behavior—efficiently grateful, without being obsequious—for a customer in such a situation.

Kagawa-san, a middle-aged woman whom I befriended, once shared with me her policy as a customer. When she was still trying to learn about kimono fashions, if a clerk shared some knowledge about kimonos or fashion, she always bought at least a *han-eri*, even if she did not need it. She said that she thought of this as paying a lecture fee as a courtesy for the knowledge that the clerk had shared—"They have taught you something, so you express gratitude by contributing to their business." So I follow her advice by buying an accoutrement of some kind at any shop in which I gain information about or insight into kimono culture.

Also, although this is tangential to my current research, there are kimono shops whose clerks are young men. Such stores cater to women who enjoy a man's perspective and attention while choosing a kimono. These are a few of the various facets of shopping experience and behavior worthy of further research. Such research is much desired, as it will enrich depictions of kimono culture.

Cultivating My Own Style

Taking lessons at a *kitsuke-kyōshitsu*

My mother taught me the basics of putting on a kimono. But because she had relied on her mother's help in dressing, she did not remember everything perfectly. So, desiring formal instruction, I signed up for two types of *kitsuke-kyōshitsu* in order to learn how to wear kimonos as neatly as possible.

One was a twelve-week beginner's course offered by a chain-institute. On the first day of lessons, about fifteen women ranging in age from the upper twenties to the mid-thirties gathered in a small yet clean and well-lit *tatami*-covered classroom in a highrise building near a train station in the heart of Tokyo. We introduced ourselves by saying what had brought us to the lessons. One woman explained that she wanted to learn to wear kimonos on her own because she was a server in a Japanese-style restaurant that required the staff to wear kimonos; although she could always get help from her colleagues, she wanted to do it well on her own. Another woman said that she had always had her mother's help when wearing kimonos for tea ceremonies, but that now she wanted to be able to do it by herself. Other women wanted to take up kimono-wearing as a hobby. The course consisted of eight weekly lessons on the basics of kimono-

wearing: from how to wear a *naga-juban*, how to wear casual outfits consisting of a *yukata* and *hanhaba-obi*, how to put on a *komon* 小紋 and *Nagoya-obi* 名古屋帯, to the wearing of formal garments with *tomesode*s 留袖 and *fukuro-obi*s 袋帯.[122] We had one female teacher and one female assistant, both in their fifties. Unlike at other schools, we were not allowed to use mirrors during the lessons, so that we would learn to put on the kimono outfit using only our kinesthetic sense. And unlike some schools, this school had a policy of not using contemporary devices such as the special corset that makes it easy to wrap the *nagagi* and *obi* around one's torso. I was enjoying the lessons. I was making progress in learning how to smooth out a *naga-juban* and an *ohashori* so as to minimize wrinkles on the garment. Wearing a kimono is one thing, but wearing it neatly is another; and I liked that I was acquiring techniques to better my kimono-wearing. I noticed that the number of students decreased as the course proceeded, but I did not think much of it. Then during the fourth lesson, the teacher mentioned out of the blue that she had encountered students who do "*kitsuke*-lesson-hopping": they go from one school to another, comparing how kimono-wearing is taught at different schools—sometimes out of personal curiosity, sometimes as informants for competing schools. Abruptly she said aloud, "We should all thank Yoshimura-san for upgrading our course. We will cover slightly more than a normal beginner's course so as not to disappoint her." Evidently my skills—meager though they were—had aroused her suspicion. She mistook me, it seems, for an undercover operative from another institute, who had picked up a thing or two on prior reconnaissance missions. For the next two lessons, she tried to figure out from which school I had been sent as a spy, by watching my every move, and by directly mentioning the names of other institutes to me during her individual inspections to check my progress. So finally I reminded her, "I said on the first day that I had

[122] The *komon* is a type of casual *nagagi*, usually worn with the *Nagoya-obi*, a type of casual *obi*. The *tomesode* is a formal kimono for married women to wear at the weddings of their relatives; it is worn with the *fukuro-obi*, a formal type of *obi*.

learned how to put on a kimono from my mother, but that I was not sure that I was doing it right, and that is why I wanted to take this course." Still she regarded me warily, though a while later she said aloud, "Well, that is how people learned to put on kimonos in the past." This allowed me to exhale. Nevertheless I was losing enthusiasm for the lessons at this point. I had become all too aware of the tactics of this chain-school: the beginner's course is free, but students are required to purchase a thin textbook that contains only basic information about kimono-wearing, and to pay a fee in advance for a certificate of completion (together about fifty dollars); students who do not own the items necessary for the lessons must rent them from the school (at a cost ranging from a few dollars to twenty dollars); halfway through the beginner's course the teacher and assistant pressure the students to enroll in the next course (the tuition for which is about five hundred dollars for ten lessons). I had heard *kitsuke-kyōshitsu* horror stories about hidden fees and excessive pressuring, and I had seen a flyer for a kimono fair aimed at students in more advanced courses. Since I had already learned some helpful techniques, and was not interested in the formalwear instruction scheduled for the end of the course, I stopped going.

The other *kitsuke-kyōshitsu* took place at the home of a professional *kitsuke-shi* who offered private lessons. She had earned a professional certificate from a well-known *kitsuke* school. I requested a series of five lessons to suit my needs, at a total cost of about 150 dollars. The lessons were designed for those who needed reminders on how to put on a kimono because they did not wear kimonos regularly enough to remember every step. I told the teacher that I wanted to practice wearing kimonos in the presence of a professional so that I could better my wearing. She was more than happy to assist me, although she did not find any particular flaws in my wearing. I thought that we had to wear kimonos wrinkle-free, but this teacher advocated leaving the natural wrinkles on the garment. My mother was the same way, but it was nice to see

a professional having such a stance. My lessons there were nothing more than good opportunities to practice kimono-wearing. Nonetheless it was nice to be told by a professional that my wearing was fine. And I appreciated the opportunity to practice in a stress-free environment. The teacher usually had a few lessons going on at the same time. There were beginners who had never worn a full kimono outfit on their own, and those who aspired to become professional *kitsuke-shi*s who practiced tying elaborate *obi*s for young women in formal attire.

These two types of *kitsuke-kyōshitsu* were overall very helpful. First of all, I realized that what I had learned from my mother was already acceptable. Yet learning from professionals some techniques for smoothing out the fabric by removing wrinkles and excess lumps helped me to improve my appearance in a kimono outfit.

Yet the teachers were wearers of contemporary kimonos, who were not necessarily interested in or knowledgeable about antique kimonos and their fashions. They could afford new kimonos tailored for themselves—they did not wear used ones that were not a perfect fit for them. Since I like to wear antique and used kimonos that are not tailored to my size, I needed help of a different sort to search for my style. Now that I had learned to don a kimono, I would need to learn to wear it on my own terms.

Choosing from multiple styles

There exist multiple styles in the culture of the wearing of antique and used kimonos: wearing antique kimonos like costumes in attempts to recreate outfits from the pre–World War II era; composing kimono outfits by combining elements from different eras (e.g., a contemporary *nagagi* and an antique *obi*, or vice versa); treating antique kimonos in a postmodern manner by wearing them in conjunction with Western-style accoutrements and contemporary makeup and hairdos. There are people who repurpose antique fabrics to create their own *han-eri*s and *obi*s,

and who make their own *nagagi*s and *obi*s from new non-kimono fabrics. Depending upon how one mixes and matches new, used, and antique items, the possibilities are endless. It is up to each wearer to seek what suits her taste.

When I was purchasing my many *nagagi*s and *obi*s, I lacked the ability to discern antique items from used ones. I simply purchased what was attractive to me and what seemed wearable, without having any clear idea about my style. So I had accumulated a mix of antique and used items that did not necessarily go together, except for the two pairs of items purchased at Akariya 2 and Yumeichi.

I like antique kimonos, but I realized that, because I do not do much with my hair and do not wear a lot of makeup, in wearing antique-kimono outfits I would risk making myself look dated and uninspiring. Since I did not want to wear an antique kimono like a costume, I had to ponder what might look good on me as an outfit. I wanted to be able to wear kimonos in contemporary ways by combining Western-style accoutrements with antique kimonos, but I was not sure if my comportment would suit that style.

Books and magazines about antique kimonos or kimono-wearing can do only so much. What helped me the most were living examples: people clad in kimono outfits that they had composed for themselves. Fashionable people are those who know what looks good on them. So I sought hobbyist-wearers. I was introduced to some by friends and store clerks; others I met through blogs. I met working women who enjoy relaxing in kimonos on off days, and homemakers who enjoy kimono-wearing during the day when they have time for themselves.

For example, Moo-san took up kimono-wearing several years ago after her husband relocated alone to another part of Japan due to a job transfer. With a fulltime job but no children, she found herself with a lot of free time once her husband became unavailable. One day she

wandered into a kimono shop inside a department store. Tempted by a friendly clerk to try one *nagagi*, she felt as though she had found a new hobby. The clerk taught her how to put it on, and she was drawn to learn more. She has purchased several kimonos from this shop over the course of a few years. Rather than expanding her collection, she enjoys wearing the kimonos that she already owns. She wears not used or antique kimonos, but new ones (Figure 19).

Figure 19: Moo-san in a contemporary kimono outfit with leather bag and shoes, at Kimono de Ginza, 2013. (Note the *obi-age* tied in a bow.)

Sorako-san began wearing kimonos in 2011 after she quit her job upon marrying. Looking for new things to do, she decided to learn how to don a *yukata* and found a local *kitsuke-kyōshitsu* run by an NPO organized by a certified *kitsuke-shi* in Yokohama, Kanagawa, that offered free lessons. Because she enjoyed her lessons, she continued by learning to wear a *nagagi* and an *obi*, and eventually established a personal style that combines antique, used, and new kimonos and *obi*s. She has logged her progress in her blog, which has gained her many online fans. She lists new additions to her collection with store names and prices so that her followers can see where to get them, and can understand the price-range. She uploads photos of her outfits before and after going out in order to report how well she put them on. She features her friends in kimono outfits, as well as restaurants and cafes (and their foods) that they visit together. This enables other wearers to

Figure 20: Mai-san (left) and Sorako-san (right)—wearing antique ensembles in a contemporary style—interact with a woman in Edo-style garb (center) at Kimono de Ginza, 2013.

check out not only a greater variety of kimono outfits, but also options for dining in the Tokyo area. Her blog is so popular that it always stays in the top ten in the kimono-related blog rankings. In 2013 she launched a business that crafts and sells accessories made of beads and artificial flowers, which can go either with kimonos or with Western-style garments. The business has since expanded to include *hanhaba-obi*s made with regular fabrics (like calico), decorated with frills and lace (which is not traditional).[123]

Mai-san decided to learn how to wear kimonos after moving to Tokyo from Osaka. She also started a blog in 2011 to upload her fashionable outfits, which mix and match antique, used, and new kimonos and *obi*s.[124] She founded a club of hobbyist-wearers called Tokyo de kimono raifu wo tanoshimu kai 東京で着物ライフを楽しむ会 [A group for those who enjoy the kimono life in Tokyo] so that hobbyist-wearers like herself can gather and converse with one another.

Figure 21: Different kinds of footwear worn with kimonos, at Kimono de Ginza, 2013.

These three women are in their thirties, and go out in kimonos regularly (Figures 20–21). Especially Sorako-san and Mai-san are avid fashionistas with large selections of both *nagagi*s and *obi*s, and their outfits inspire other wearers with fashion possibilities.

One group based in Chiba is organized by the *kitsuke-shi* Momo-chan, who enjoys teaching her friends at a local culture center. She is assisted by another *kitsuke-shi*, Hiiragi-san, who sells used and antique kimonos at a local flea market. Both are professionals certified by a well-known *kitsuke-kyōshitsu*; yet unlike the teachers from whom I took lessons, they are active

[123] Sorako-san's blog is entitled *Wabi, sabi, konpeitō* わびさび、こんぺいとう: http://manmarumatoko.blog.fc2.com/ (accessed April 9, 2015). *Wabi* and *sabi* are traditional Japanese aesthetic concepts originating in Buddhism that promote acceptance of naturalness and imperfection; *konpeitō* is a type of confection.
[124] Mai-san's blog is entitled *Kimono raifu tanoshimi makuri* 着物ライフ愉しみまくり [Very much enjoying the kimono life]: http://enjoykimono.blog.fc2.com/ (accessed April 9, 2015).

wearers of both used and antique kimonos. They are willing to experiment with different ways of wearing kimonos and different ways of tying *obi*s (beyond the standard *o-taiko* style), often using historical references (there was more variety in kimono-wearing when the kimono was dailywear). Their openness to different styles has attracted hobbyist-wearers of new, used, and antique kimonos. The members of the group are mostly homemakers and self-employed professionals, ranging in age from the late twenties to the fifties. The group gathers to socialize through kimono-wearing, and they occasionally lunch in kimonos on weekday afternoons (Figure 22).

Figure 22: Activities of a circle of hobbyist-wearers: (left) a lesson at Momo-chan's *kitsuke-kyōshitsu*; (center) lunching in kimonos after a lesson; (right) showing each other outfits, Chiba, 2013.

There are also women who enjoy wearing kimonos more independently. Kanon-san is a homemaker in her thirties who wears kimonos when she goes out with her friends or husband. She inherited some kimonos from her aunt, but she purchases new or used ones, too. She wants to wear kimonos as part of her daily wardrobe.

Kosaka-san is a middle-aged woman who started to wear antique kimonos after she and her sister discovered several chestsfull of kimonos left by their deceased mother. Though having had little interest in kimonos when younger, as an artist she found them quite inspiring. She split the inheritance with her sister. Kosaka-san is petite and thin, whereas her sister is not. It was easy

for them to figure out what suited them. With her independent mind she does not mind standing out in a crowd, wearing a kimono. She wears kimonos when she goes out, even by herself. Because she likes antiques, she makes *han-eri*s from antique fabrics that she purchases at flea markets. She favors *hanhaba-obi*s because they are easy to put on.

Kagawa-san is a middle-aged health-insurance salesperson. In 1998 her daughter had her *seijin-shiki*, which she and her mother-in-law attended in kimonos. A family portrait arrived some weeks after the ceremony, and she was shocked to see herself looking disheveled in the kimono. She decided to redeem herself by mastering the art of graceful kimono-wearing. Since then she has become a devoted kimono-wearer, making *obi*s out of regular fabrics, and incorporating complementary eyeglasses into her outfits. She wears kimonos daily to work, so she favors *naga-juban*s with zip-on collars and *Nagoya-obi*s that are sewn into pre-made *o-taiko* shapes, so that no elaborate wrapping is required. Her unique style has caught the attention of

Figure 23: (Left) Konishi-san taking photos of Kagawa-san's outfit; (right) Kagawa-san's Fūjin-Raijin 風神雷神 (deities of wind and thunder) *obi* worn upside down in May to wish for no storms. At Shitamachi omoshiro kōgeikan, 2013.

Konishi-san, the owner of Shitamachi omoshiro kōgeikan. He devotes a section of the shop's webpage to photos and descriptions of Kagawa-san's kimono outfits[125] (Figure 23).

Seeing various compositions inspired me with possibilities in terms of color-combination, pattern-combination, and fabric-type combination. But because what works for one wearer does not necessarily work for another, it was through my own attempts—wearing or trying to wear—that I started to get a grasp of what suits me.

Learning through kinesthetic trial and error

My mother suggested that, because my hair and face are plain, I indulge my fashion sense by wearing simple kimonos and matching them with colorful or unique *obi*s to express my individuality. She was right in a way, but through practice I have come to realize that when I wear a simple monochrome *nagagi* with an *obi* decorated with bold colors and patterns, the *obi* stands out too much—in a way that does not really flatter my body shape. My shoulders are wide for my height, making my body shape an inverted triangle (a V-frame). Due to the volume of fabric in the sleeves, a kimono outfit only adds to the girth of the upper body. This means that a kimono outfit itself does not really compliment my body in the first place. But I can camouflage my wide shoulders by wearing a patterned *nagagi* with a patterned *obi*, which diverts attention from my upper body.[126]

My awareness of body shape informs me about the choice of fabric types. Fabrics that do not drape nicely make my upper body voluminous. But plain-weave silk is so smooth that it is hard to maneuver; and it reveals every little bump and dent, which makes me self-conscious

[125] The section is called "Kongetsu no Kagawa-san 今月のカガワさん [This month's Kagawa-san]": http://www.matae.com/kagawa/ (accessed April 9, 2015).
[126] My solution for this in Western-style clothing is to wear a loose-fitting top with an open neckline.

about my body shape. I have come to the conclusion that silk crêpe (like *omeshi* or *chijimi*) is my best bet. I did not realize this when I wore my grandmother's *omeshi*, or when I selected the *Yūki-chijimi* at Akariya 2. It was only after I bought and wore plain-weave silk *nagagi*s that I recognized how unflattering they were on my body.

As for the *obi*, it took me a while to understand that it determines the formality of the outfit. I read many times in handbooks and magazines about how the *obi* changes the impression of the kimono outfit. But the examples given were almost exclusively in orthodox semi-formal styles for today's kimonos, and I did not find the guidelines helpful for the wearing of antique *obi*s. When shopping at Akariya 2, because I selected an *obi* based on my color preference, I did not consider the classiness of the patchwork *obi* that my mother had selected. After browsing and trying different kinds of *obi*s, I have come to favor those made of repurposed fabrics taken from antique *naga-juban*s, *nagagi*s, or *haori*s. I find myself attracted to antique-kimono fabrics, but wearing such old garments may make me look dated. Wearing the fabrics as *obi*s, however, allows me to enjoy antique fabrics while making my kimono outfits look contemporary (Figure 24).[127] There are *obi*s that are ornamented only on the areas that should come in the front (on both sides) and on the area for the *o-taiko*. I prefer the kind that has its pattern all around, rather than one in the front and one for the *o-taiko* area. Because I am not as thin as many Japanese women, I cannot wrap the *obi* in such a way that the front image comes around my stomach area. This is rather embarrassing, so I have learned to select *obi*s that are made of fabrics with patterns all across them. This is another reason that I like *obi*s made of antique *nagagi*s or *haori*s, for they tend to have patterns across the front areas, as the fabrics were not initially meant for *obi*s.

[127] Like Akariya 2, the antique-kimono shop LUNCO repurposes antique-kimono fabrics to make *obi*s. Its owner, Ranko Nagata, started making handicrafts using kimono fabrics a few decades ago, before selling antique kimonos and repurposing antique fabrics. Her taste is on display in her book (Nagata 2004).

Figure 24: *Obi*s made from antique *haori*s, worn with used *nagagi*s: one from LUNCO (left), the other from Akariya 2 (right)

I have learned that accoutrements cannot be overlooked in an outfit. For a *han-eri*, bleached white is standard and formal. But its whiteness is too bright for me, so I opt for a natural silk, which has a slightly yellowish off-white hue. I have seen several fashionable senior citizens wearing black *han-eri*s. Although I suspected that black would be too strong for my complexion, I wanted to try wearing a black *han-eri*, since blackness on antique fabrics is less strong than blackness created by artificial dye on synthetic fabrics. However, antique black did not work so well for me, for the same reason that contemporary black does not work for me in Western-style clothing. It did not complement my complexion.

Shirai-san at Akariya 2 advised me that the *obi-age* functions as an accent color that lightens up the outfit and the wearer's facial complexion. Indeed the *obi-age* can change the tone of the entire outfit. One can select an *obi-age* whose color either blends or contrasts with that of the *obi*. In autumn one can select darker colors such as burgundy and orange, while in spring light blue or pink may be more appropriate. The *obi-jime* also accentuates an outfit. But because

this string comes in the middle of the outfit, if its width and color stand out too much, it may inhibit the projection of the *obi*'s character.

I have not yet explored the *obi-dome*. At the beginning I purchased inexpensive ones, thinking that they would suffice. But after learning how important the *obi* is in setting the tone of an outfit, I realized that the *obi-dome* should also be of high quality. There are kinds made of silver, brass, tortoise shell, coral, and wood. The quality depends on craftsmanship. When I wear the *Yūki-chijimi*, I match with it a porcelain *obi-dome* with a plum pattern. On the other hand, for the casual ensemble that I purchased at Yumeichi, an *obi-dome* made of clay works well. I have heard and read about making *obi-dome*s from brooches, buttons, and even chopstick rests, by gluing on the metal part needed for the *obi-jime* to pass through.[128] But I have not made anything myself. The *obi-dome* is something extra in an outfit, as it is solely decorative. So I have decided to focus on trying to master wearing the necessary parts first.

Undergarments are important. Today there are many kinds of *hada-juban*: two-piece, one-piece, a wrap, a slip, and so on. I have tried two kinds—a cotton one-piece wrap with short narrow sleeves, and a kimono slip with fitted sleeves (whose upper part is made of cotton, and whose bottom is synthetic). The cotton wrap did not work for me, as it either did not stay wrapped around my legs, or it clumped and rose up. On the other hand, the slip worked well because I did not have to worry about a strong wind flapping my outfit because the slip is a skirt with no slit. The slip is effective even when I use the bathroom: I can wrap everything in its skirt. One never considers how to maneuver the garment in the bathroom until one starts to wear it. Thus have I learned the functionality of the *hada-juban*. A wrap is closer to a traditional undergarment, whereas a kimono slip is a non-traditional undergarment derived from a slip (a

[128] The *obi-jime* used with the *obi-dome* is different from the kind of *obi-jime* that ties around the *obi* by itself. This means that one needs a different type of *obi-jime* to wear with *obi-dome*s.

Western-style undergarment). But in my kimono-wearing experience, when it comes to undergarments, functionality trumps tradition or authenticity.

In order to make it easy to wear a kimono, there are those who wear a special corset or a lot of padding (often using towels) between the *hada-juban* and the *naga-juban* to make their bodies as flat as possible. But since I do not care for having too many extra items around my body, a cotton towel to wrap around my waist is the only padding that I use.

Polyester *naga-juban*s are common today, but they lack breathability as a fabric (they induce more perspiration), and cause too much static electricity in Madison, where the climate is much drier than in Tokyo (the bottom of the *naga-juban* clumps and rises up underneath the *nagagi*). I have a fast metabolism and I perspire easily, so my undergarments need to be made of breathable fabrics that are machine-washable. Therefore I prefer contemporary undergarments made of cotton or silk.

For an advanced fashionable wearer, the sleeves of the *naga-juban* that peek out from the *nagagi*'s sleeve openings are important details. However, I have not reached so advanced a stage in my kimono-wearing. This is because I am still at the point where I need to worry about matching sleeve widths. The width of the *naga-juban*'s sleeves should ideally match that of the *nagagi*'s sleeves, though it is forgivable for the *naga-juban*'s sleeves to be wider than the *nagagi*'s. A *naga-juban* sleeve that is shorter than the *nagagi* sleeve (and sticks out of the *nagagi*) is considered unfashionable, even inappropriate. *Nagagi* sleeves come in different widths (long ones for the young, shorter ones for older wearers). For a used-kimono wearer on a limited budget it is challenging to have a variety of fashionable *naga-juban*s with different sleeve widths. Although I purchased several antique *naga-juban*s, since they are not machine-washable I ended up not wearing them. For now, I have two contemporary machine-washable silk ones

that I rotate. There are *nagagi*s that I have not worn because I do not have suitable *naga-juban*s to match them (in terms of sleeve width and fabric pattern). Frequent kimono-wearers wear *usotsuki-naga-juban*s 嘘つき長襦袢 (“lying” *naga-juban*s) whose sleeves are detachable. With detachable sleeves, the width is less of an issue because the wearer needs a few *naga-juban*s and multiple sleeves in various widths, rather than multiple full *naga-juban*s. *Usotsuki naga-juban*s are more economical, and they were not uncommon under daily kimonos in the past. I am contemplating either making or buying *usotsuki-naga-juban*s. Also, there are two-piece *naga-juban*s with separate top and bottom parts. They are considered easier to put on, but I find them cumbersome.

In terms of footwear, I have come to prefer *tabikkusu*s or *tabi*-shaped socks. Because bleached white *tabi*s are required for formalwear, many women wear them even with casual outfits. But since I do not want my feet to stand out in light colors, wearing white *tabi*s was never an option. There are many *tabikkusu*s and *tabi*-shaped socks for women, which have cute flowery patterns or feminine embroidery on them. However, because I have big feet for an Asian, they never fit. I have resorted to wearing *tabikkusu*s and *tabi*-shaped socks for men. Men’s socks come in masculine patterns featuring carp, tigers, and dragons. Although I like such patterns, I need to select ones with subdued colors and patterns so that they do not spoil my outfits when I choose to dress femininely.

My options for sandals (*zōri*s and *geta*s) are also limited. Since it was hard to find used pairs that fit my feet, I opted to buy new pairs. Rather than traditional *zōri*s, I purchased a pair made by a company called Calen Blosso, which makes leather-soled *zōri*s in big sizes. *Zōri*s in this line are designed to go with contemporary kimonos. The color variation is wide. Their synthetic soles are thicker than those of traditional *zōri*s, making it easier to walk on asphalt or

pebbles. *Geta*s are less formal than *zōri*s, but I purchased a pair to see how they feel in comparison. Of course I had to go to a store that stocked large sizes for women. The kind of *geta*s that I bought had soles made of wood. Although thin cushions are attached to the bottom soles, there are none for the uppersoles. Wearing my *tabikkusu*s, my feet slide easily, which causes pain between my toes. So I almost always wear the *zōri* pair. My larger-than-average feet prevent me from enjoying footwear fashion for the kimono.

For contemporary kimono-wearing practices, the use of some supporting devices is almost a necessity. For example, in order to perfect the curve of the *naga-juban* around one's nape, one can insert a thin slightly curved plastic strip between the collar cover and *han-eri*. I tried wearing my *naga-juban* with the strip, but the strip made me very uncomfortable. I also tried thin folded pieces of paper or other soft material as alternatives, but to no avail. But when I had my kimono-tailor friend re-sew the *naga-juban* that I had acquired from Boro-ichi, she offered to sew onto its collar an extra collar-cover made of hard fabric. I had not known that such a thing existed. This was a great solution: it sits on my shoulders comfortably and withstands machine-washing, making this *naga-juban* my favorite.

In order to secure the front panels of a *naga-juban* and *nagagi*, several sashes are necessary: at least two thin ones (called *koshi-himo*s 腰紐) and two wider ones (called *date-jime*s 伊達締め). Contemporary alternatives for these sashes are elastic bands and synthetic bands with Velcro, so that no tying is required. I do not mind tying sashes, so I use cotton or silk *koshi-himo*s. As for the Velcro band, it is convenient for cotton and wool kimonos. But I was told that one should use silk sashes for silk kimonos because the coarseness of non-silk fabrics will damage silk's sensitive surface, especially on antique kimonos. So I bought silk *date-jime*s to use for my silk *nagagi*s.

In order to make a perfect *o-taiko* with an *obi* at the back of a kimono outfit, it is customary today to use an *obi-makura* 帯枕 (a rectangular mini-pillow that creates a lump for the *o-taiko*). The *obi-makura* is wrapped with the *obi-age*, so it is not visible from the outside. The kimono industry sells a synthetic pillow that people commonly use. But I was averse to buying this pillow to carry on my back. The idea of wearing multiple devices made me lose interest in wearing kimonos; I thought that they would make me feel like a robot. Why bother wearing a kimono with multiple devices when one can simply wear Western-style clothing? In some handbooks I had read that a *hechima* へちま (a dried gourd that has traditionally been used as a scrubber) could be used as an *obi-makura*. I wanted to try this, but I did not know where to get one. Kosaka-san told me that she used a piece of foam mesh (the kind used to wrap fruit). She would wrap it with gauze before wrapping it with the *obi-age*. I loved this idea, and so that is what I use as an *obi-makura*. The foam mesh is lightweight, and the gauze can be washed, whereas it would not be possible to wash a readymade synthetic padded *obi-makura*.

For the sake of creating a smooth front for the *obi*, it is necessary to insert a slightly curved stiff paper board (the *obi-ita* 帯板) in the front fold of the *obi*. Because of my aversion to the use of devices, I wanted to get away with not using an *obi-ita*. Historical photos depict kimono-clad women not using such a thing, and their *obi*s have vertical wrinkles made by tightly bound *obi-jime*s. But nowadays use of the *obi-ita* is the norm. So I use a summer *obi-ita,* which is made of synthetic hard mesh. It is softer than a board, and it feels less unnatural around the torso.

People who advocate the use of devices wear them in order to look proper in kimonos. I want to dress finely as well, but if the wearing has to feel uncomfortable or unnatural I would rather not wear a kimono. So I sought ways in which to don the garment without relying on too

many supporting devices. And veteran wearers of daily kimonos knew all the secrets that an orthodox *kitsuke-kyōshitsu* would never sanction.

Because the maintenance of silk kimonos is costly (it costs over a hundred dollars per item for professional cleaning), I bought several cotton *nagagi*s and *obi*s. But cotton is heavier than silk, and I find myself tired after wearing it all day. Also, cotton is coarser than silk, and the bottom of the cotton *nagagi* rubs my ankles when I walk, causing abrasion. I have learned to wear either longer *tabikkusu*s, or beige knee-high stockings under *tabi*-shaped socks.

Figure 25: My *Genji-guruma nanagi*. (The *yuki* is a little too short for me.)

The wool kimono was the popular dailywear kimono in post–World War II Japan. Because it gained popularity for its machine-washability (it was pre-washed and treated to avoid shrinkage), I gave it a try. Nowadays used wool kimonos are valued little—considered trash, even—due to the low demand for such non-silk casual kimonos. Used ones sell for next-to-nothing on the used-kimono market, and retailers sell them for about ten dollars.[129] Because I cannot wear polyester kimonos (another type that withstands machine-washing) due to their lack of breathability, I opt for wool kimonos for their affordability and machine-washability. Used wool kimonos have either woven patterns or print patterns. Wool kimonos with woven patterns are coarser and denser, and the fabrics do not drape nicely—thus they cause problems with my wide shoulders. So now I am careful to pick only ones with print patterns. Wool is coarser than silk, and when I walk in a wool kimono, I notice that the rubbing fabric makes rather an uncouth

[129] In the inventory of one online seller, wool *nagagi*s are the cheapest. Used polyester *nagagi*s are sold at around fifteen dollars, while used silk ones range from around thirty dollars to several hundred or even more. One *kitsuke-shi* told me that nowadays one should not go outside in a wool kimono because it is so casual that it is inappropriate to leave home in it.

sound (silk kimonos make a quiet delicate sound as I walk in them). The ranking of fabrics even takes into account the sounds that they make, I realize.


Figure 26: A casual home *obi*

Because all of my *nagagi*s and *obi*s are secondhand, originally tailored for others, they are of different sizes. Each required some customization because of excess or insufficient length. Once I became accustomed to kimono-wearing, I started to notice the mistakes in the earlier outfits. For instance, now I know that the *yuki* of the *nagagi* with the *Genji-guruma* pattern is a little too short (Figure 25). So much for the exultation that I felt, thinking that it was my destiny kimono (it was not as perfect a fit as I had thought). Because I was not aware of the levels of casualness within the domain of the casual *obi*, I went out wearing an *obi* for daily use (woven and unlined) (Figure 26), which is nowadays deemed too casual to wear outside. It seems that this kind of *obi* is a type to be worn at home. When one goes out, one should exchange it for a better kind. I bought several of this kind, and I even went to Ginza wearing one. Not even my mother knew this distinction, so how could I have known?

At the birthday party that I attended in Madison wearing my grandmother's *omeshi*, people were surprised to see me in a kimono for the first time. One of the older women was kind enough to take me into a bedroom to readjust my garment. Other than that, no one took any action, nor made any comments on my outfit. At the time I thought that it was because my way of wearing it was deemed acceptable. Now that I see a photo of my outfit, I feel embarrassed at the injustice that I did to the *omeshi*. My grandmother's fashionable *omeshi* deserved better than the unmatching *han-eri*, synthetic casual *obi*, and *obi-jime* (Figure 27). The outfit is not necessarily

horrendous, but it is most definitely far from fashionable. The outfit that I composed some years later shows some improvement; at least I matched it with a silk *obi* with a plum pattern (appropriate for the season, because it was winter then) (Figure 28). But now another two years later, I see room for further improvement. I am imagining how nice it will look with the *obi* made at Akariya 2 from the antique *haori* (see Figure 24).

Figure 27: My grandmother's *omeshi* kimono with an orange synthetic *obi*, 2007. Photo by James N. Salt.

Figure 28: An outfit with my grandmother's *omeshi* and *meisen haori*, Chiba, 2013. Photo by Anon.

Such was the process of trial and error that has led me to my present stage in the cultivation of my own sense of kimono-wearing. It has taken aural, visual, and tactile learning for me to realize the Japanese saying "*Narau yori narero* 習うより慣れろ [Learn through practice rather than by taking lessons]." That is, experience is the best teacher.

Behaving Aesthetically

I have long been aware of some behaviors particular to kimono-wearing. Because a kimono comes with long wide sleeves, when one reaches out—say, toward something on a table—with the right hand, one should gently lift the right sleeve with the left hand, so that the sleeve will not touch anything. One should walk pigeon-toed in small steps to prevent the wrapped kimono bottom from flapping too much. For the same reason, one should pinch the left panel on one's right thigh area when walking up and down stairs. When one drops to the floor to sit, as one is crouching one should use one's right hand to smooth the free flap over one's shins, place the left knee on the floor first to pin the overlapped front panels to the floor, then slide the right hand over the bottom panels to make sure that they are smooth before the right knee joins the left. When one gets up from the floor, one should use both hands to raise one's body slightly from the floor, then use the left foot to get up, because leading with the left leg allows the front panel to drape across the body such that it remains closed. These behavioral patterns came naturally to me. I have seen kimono-clad women—at restaurants, for example—move swiftly and elegantly despite the excess fabric around their bodies. I find it pleasant to see these manners enacted properly, because it looks almost ritualistic. So now that I was trying my hand at wearing a kimono as an adult, I wanted to make sure that my movements were not uncouth. At home I asked my mother how my kimono-wearing behavior was; she said that it was fine. How did I know these manners as an adult? My mother does not remember. But she says that she always made sure to point out proper behavioral manners to her children, especially her two daughters. So why *wouldn't* I know the proper behaviors associated with kimono-wearing? Similar manners apply to Western-style clothing. She is sure that she taught me how to carry myself in Western-style clothing and in the kimono, just like her mother did for her. So although I only recently

started to wear kimonos, I remember how to behave in a kimono. My mother says, “Isn’t that the way it is?” A woman picks up behavioral patterns from her mother, consciously and unconsciously. The manners were instilled in me kinesthetically, and my body remembers them after all this time—it’s just like riding a bicycle: it comes back quickly, because one’s body remembers it kinesthetically.

My mother has a point, because I did not know how to behave in a kimono on certain occasions in public. I had never dined out in a kimono until I began this project, so I did not know how to spread a napkin over the kimono. When I went out with a woman my mother’s age, she showed me how: If using a handkerchief, or if a napkin is provided at the restaurant, rotate it diagonally to produce a diamond shape; fold the top corner of the napkin into the opening of the two front panels at the chest; tuck the two side corners under the *obi*; let the bottom corner drape over the *obi* and the lap. This way, the *obi* and the lap section of the left panel are kept clean. Finding it very useful, I follow this procedure.

Also, I realized for the first time how tiresome it was to maneuver in a kimono in public. A kimono outfit takes more space due to the bulky sleeves and the *o-taiko obi*. It is awful to be on a crowded train. If I get pushed, I worry about my outfit coming undone. Because one should not raise one’s arm upward without pinching the sleeve opening to prevent revealing the arm, it is unseemly to hang onto a strap. I try to stay in a corner of the train car so that I can hold onto a pole without raising my arm, but this is not always possible. So I avoid travelling during rush hour.

Weather affects kimono-wearing as well. When it is raining, I have to worry about getting the garment wet. When it is windy, the wrapped *nagagi* will flap around. I need to walk pressing the left panel to my right thigh area to prevent exposing my undergarment. It is exhausting to do

this all day long. Many times I have thought, “Why bother wearing a kimono when Western-style clothing is so much more practical?”

To be honest, when I was in a kimono, I was happiest hanging around at Akariya 2. The clerks were in kimonos, and time moved more slowly according to the pace of kimono-clad people, even when customers came in in Western-style clothing. I went there dressed in a kimono outfit, and stayed for several hours. Surrounded by tasteful *nagagi*s and *obi*s, the clerks and I—as well as some other customers—talked about our love for pretty kimonos. It was heavenly. But even the clerks changed to Western-style clothing after closing the shop at day’s end. They needed to ride the train home. Kimonos are like uniforms for them. One kimono tailor told me that she had become a tailor because she loved kimonos. But since kimono-wearing is a lot of work, she satisfies her love for the garment by sewing kimonos for others. The kimono is not practical; this I know thanks to having worn it myself. But I still want to wear it. Why? I like fabrics, I like clothes, I like fashion. I could satisfy myself by wearing Western-style clothing. But since inheriting my grandmother’s *omeshi*, I have risen to the challenge of extending my wardrobe to include the kimono. I like the idea that I am able to wear the kimono, and I want to do it well.

Dressed in a kimono, I know that I stand out even in Tokyo. But I do not mind because my mother demonstrated for me the private aspects of dressing differently. By dressing differently a woman can communicate that she has a mind of her own, but with proper respectful behavior, she can still show her modesty. She is not trying to boast that she can dress differently; she is just wearing what she likes, and it happens to be different. And she exercises her dressways privately for her personal enjoyment. She may not have a beautiful face or a perfect body, but she can still assert her personality by exhibiting that she knows how to dress because she knows what looks

good on her. She does not do much with her hair, and she does not put on a lot of makeup, but she still looks clean and healthy. She presents herself in a natural way, which means that she is comfortable with herself. If she can do this with Western-style clothing, she can do it with the kimono, too. And that is what I want. Since the inheritance of my grandmother's kimono, my kimono-wearing has been a symbolic performance of the kin-aesthetics bequeathed to me by my mother.

I once saw a woman in a pink kimono. I was walking the streets of Tokyo alone, looking downward, when two feet in *tabi*s and *zōri*s came into view. As I started to look up I saw a kimono in the bright pink color of a *sakura* 桜 [cherry-blossom], accompanied by an *obi* with red and white stripes. Given these two items I expected the wearer to be a young woman. But when I looked at the face, I saw a senior citizen, probably in her seventies or eighties. She walked as though gliding, with a solemn and feminine demeanor. With such a dignified look and masterful comportment, no one would dare to tell her that so bright a kimono and so bold an *obi* were only for the young; it was clear from her movement that she knew what she was doing. She must have been an unorthodox woman, but her mien silently demanded respect for the way in which it expressed her style, taste, and personhood. And she was breathtaking. And I want to be like her. Once I master the art of kimono-wearing and behavioral aesthetics, I aspire to convey that dignity in a kimono outfit, because it will be my way of honoring my maternal heritage.

Searching for Clues for My Inherited Kimono

On a crisp sunny day in February, my mother and I took a bus from Tokyo Station to Tōgane 東金 in Chiba to meet with our relatives (an uncle and aunt of my mother, Yukio-san and Kayo-san) in the hope of learning about our family's kimono history. Yukio-san is a cousin of

my grandmother, but because Daisuke-san and Bāba did not have a male heir, Daisuke-san adopted Yukio-san (his nephew, a son of his brother) as a little boy. But this information was never explained to us, and we hardly saw Yukio-san. This was my first time meeting him and his wife as an adult, so I was nervous. I did not know how well my mother knew them, whether or not they liked one another—and what they had thought of me when they saw me last as a child (because I was something of a tomboy then, I do not really like meeting people who remember me as a child). My mother called Kayo-san a few weeks prior to our visit to ask her and Yukio-san whether they remembered the striped *omeshi* kimono. They did not, but they kindly invited us over. Kayo-san has some kimonos that she received from Bāba and Mie-san (my grandmother), and Yukio-san has photos of Bāba and Mie-san when they were younger. Kayo-san thinks that these kimonos and photos might be useful.

When the bus arrives at the stop for Tōgane, Yukio-san and Kayo-san are already there to greet us. They look very happy to see us. Kayo-san is very friendly to my mother, which indicates to me that they have a good relationship. And since I know that Yukio-san visited Tokyo with my mother's sister a year before and had a good time, I feel relieved, thinking that Yukio-san and Kayo-san get along well with my mother. As I anticipated, Yukio-san seems impressed at how I have turned out: "Oh, I remember you having red cheeks and running around the house with your brother." I smile, thinking to myself, "*Yappari* やっぱり [I saw that coming]—but perhaps if I behave well today, I can atone for my past misbehavior."

Yukio-san drives us to his house, located in a dense residential area. We sit in the living room of the two-story house. My mother and Kayo-san have not seen each other for some years, so they are talkative. My mother hands several gifts of food to Kayo-san, while Kayo-san explains that she has dug out the kimonos, which we will look at later. Yukio-san and I sit

quietly, listening to them talk about other relatives. I am still trying to figure out how I should behave so as to give a good impression to Yukio-san and Kayo-san in the presence of my mother. Kayo-san and my mother are facing each other, and I am facing Yukio-san. I am thinking that I should probably not start a separate conversation with him, so I listen intently to Kayo-san update my mother about relatives whom I do not know.

Figure 29: A closeup of the patterns on Kayo-san's *tomesode*

After an hour or so, we three women go upstairs to look at the kimonos. Kayo-san shows us *haori*s, *nagagi*s, and *obi*s that Bāba gave her, and my mother responds to the ones that she remembers having seen Bāba wear. The items here that used to belong to Bāba are clothing for seniors; they are beige, black, or grey. I am not familiar with kimono fashions for seniors, but the pieces seem tasteful. Kayo-san and my mother are talking about my grandmother Mie-san complaining about Bāba's being a fashionista even as a senior. Once when they were shopping Bāba wanted something that in Mie-san's view was nearly identical to clothes that Bāba already owned. Mie-san told her so, but Bāba insisted that the color tone or material was different, justifying her purchase.

Figure 30: Bāba's *naga-juban*

And there is a *tomesode*[130] that Bāba made for Kayo-san. Bāba had one of her kimonos repurposed (re-dyed and re-tailored) to make it, and she herself picked the design. The design reminds me of the shafts and fan vaults characteristic of English cathedrals built in the perpendicular Gothic style. Bāba

[130] It was customary for a young woman to receive upon marriage a *tomesode*, often as a wedding gift from her parents. Kayo received hers from Bāba (her mother-in-law). The *tomesode* is black with patterns only on the lower half of the garment. It also bears the family crest.

probably ordered this *tomesode* during the 1960s when Kayo-san married Yukio-san, but the design looks stylish even today (Figure 29). Kayo-san shows us a *naga-juban* that used to belong to Bāba (Figure 30). It is too long for Kayo-san, and since she grew up wearing Western-style clothing, she has not gotten around to having it re-tailored for herself. This *naga-juban* was probably for Bāba when she was young; it looks like an antique piece, judging by the color combination and design. We spread it out, and I wrap it around myself. It is too long for me, too—I had no idea that Bāba was tall. It feels strange to put on something that belonged to Bāba, whom I knew so little. But I like the color very much; it is very feminine and I can see how it would have suited young Bāba. I wonder how often she wore it.

Figure 31: My grandmother's *nagagi, haori,* and disassembled kimono

There are pieces here that belonged to my grandmother, too. Neither Kayo-san nor my mother ever saw Mie-san in a kimono (except perhaps at funerals), so my mother and I are delighted that Kayo-san has kept these kimonos: one *nagagi*, one *haori*, and a *nagagi* that Kayo-san took apart to make a *nenneko banten* ねんねこ半纏 (a *hanten* that is big enough to wear while carrying a baby on one's back)—which project she never finished (Figure 31). The *nagagi* is a casual everyday kimono, with a pattern that evokes the nandina plant. The color is reddish pink, appropriate for a young woman. Its lining is heavily stained, so my grandmother must have

worn it often. The *haori* has *kikkō* 亀甲 [tortoise shell] motifs with a flowery pattern inside each one. I like the pattern of the one that has been taken apart: it has thick stripes in different shades of red and white cross-like motifs. This, too, is casual dailywear, but it is hard to tell if my grandmother wore it now that it is no longer in the shape of a kimono.

Kayo-san and my mother are sharing an episode that they both know: Mie-san was so spoiled as the only child that her parents got her anything that she wanted. As a young girl, she declared that she wanted to take *koto* 琴 [131] lessons. Her parents got her a brand-new expensive *koto*, only to have her give up soon after. Then she wanted to take ballet lessons, but those did not last long, either.

Figure 32: (Left to right) Yukio-san, Bāba, a relative, location uknown, ca. 1940. Photographer unknown.

It is getting dark outside when we go downstairs. Yukio-san, who has remained downstairs, brings me some old photo albums. They contain monochrome photos of the young Bāba and Mie-san, as well as color photos that include my mother in her childhood and adolescence. There are not many photos that capture Bāba, but she appears in a kimono in almost all of her photos. In one, Bāba is holding the hand of Yukio-san, and standing next to a relative. She is already a mother, so her kimono is simple (Figure 32). Another photo captures a family outing. Bāba and her family are out strolling on a paved path, perhaps in a park. Judging by their garments, the season must have been fall or winter. Bāba is looking back at the camera, and her bearing is very feminine (Figure 33). This was when Bāba was still an *okusama* 奥さま

[131] The *koto* is a traditional string instrument.

(a married bourgeois woman) who lived in a big mansion. The photo is probably from the 1930s. Typically for its time, the affluent man and children wear Western-style clothing, while the wife wears a kimono. Unfortunately the photo is monochrome, and I cannot tell what kind of *haori* and shawl she is wearing.

We find no photos of Mie-san in a kimono, which disappoints me. But she looks better in Western-style clothing anyway. Yukio-san—carefully checking the faces of Kayo-san and my mother—tells me an episode: once in her youth Mie-san boarded a train to chase after her father, who was traveling with his mistress to Atami 熱海, a vacation destination famous for its hot springs. Yukio-san knows no more details, but this tale speaks to my grandmother's heroism. We all laugh because it is not difficult to imagine her doing something like that. Maybe she wanted to stop the affair by confronting her father while he was with his mistress.[132] Hopping on a train alone would have been quite daring for a young girl from a well-to-do family. For a courageous tomboy like her, the Western-style clothing suited her better than a kimono.

Figure 33: (Left to right) Daisuke-san, Bāba, Mie-san, Yukio-san, location unknown, ca. 1940. Photographer unknown.

I ask Yukio-san if he remembers anything about kimonos associated with Bāba or Mie-san. He responds that because he was a boy, he had little interest in kimonos, let alone women's kimonos. But there was a kimono seller called Shōjiki-ya 正直屋 who used to visit houses on his bicycle with a big box full of fabric bolts for *nagagi*s, *obi*s, and *haori*s. As a young boy Yukio-san peeked into the living room, where the peddler rolled out one kimono fabric after another on

[132] In the past it was not uncommon for wealthy Japanese men to have mistresses, so this did not shock me.

the *tatami*-covered floor, to show to Bāba and Mie-san, who were oohing and ahhing. They picked what they liked, sometimes spending several thousand yen.[133] Yukio-san was surprised at the high prices. He remembers them spending money buying kimonos this way.

I show Yukio-san and Kayo-san the photo of my grandmother's striped kimono and ask them if they have ever seen it. Neither of them has; so I have come to a dead end in my search for answers regarding the mystery of my grandmother's *omeshi*.

Now that it is dark outside my mother says that we should depart. I wanted to talk to Yukio-san more about his memories of the past, but I accede to my mother's wish to leave before dinnertime. Kayo-san checks the train schedule, and suggests that we take the train back home. She wants me to take Bāba's *naga-juban*, my grandmother's *nagagi* and *haori*, and a *nagagi* of hers that she has never worn. I gladly accept them, and we get into the car to go to the train station. I have a lot to process from this visit. Seeing Bāba as someone around my age was a surreal experience, as was touching something as intimate as her *naga-juban*.

❀ ❀

In the past kimonos that were worn-out were taken apart to be repurposed. This was a standard house chore for the generations of women who, like Bāba, grew up with kimonos (Koizumi 2010). From kimonos Bāba made blanket covers and *hanten*s 半纏 (padded loose-fitting gowns usually worn at home) for her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. It was not until I began this project that I learned that those objects were made by Bāba of fabric from worn-out kimonos. I only vaguely remember my blanket cover, but I recall that as a teenager I wore a *hanten* that Bāba had originally made for my mother. In a recent conversation my mother

[133] This would be several thousand dollars today, which roughly matches the price of a fabric bolt for a new kimono.

reminded me that it had silk padding (which is more expensive but lighter and warmer than cotton padding). I do recollect that it was lightweight yet very warm, and that the outer fabric was dark red with black stripes. I think that this *hanten* might have been made from a *meisen* kimono, because the fabric was a shiny plain-weave. My mother suspects that the original kimono had been worn by her mother, and that seems plausible because the *meisen* was a type of everyday kimono for young women in the first half of the twentieth century. When I asked my mother recently what had happened to those items, she said that she had discarded them in our move from Nagano to Saitama. Ideally she would have kept them, but we needed to downsize. So she thanked Bāba in her thoughts as she took the items out to the garbage. Not once did I think that the blanket cover and *hanten* that I used daily in my childhood were made of kimono fabrics. Nor did I know that they had been made by Bāba. My mother was by herself when she quietly thanked Bāba for having made these things to keep her family warm during many winters. I wish that I had known all of this earlier. I feel sorry for not having been appreciative of Bāba, and for not thinking to ask sooner who had made those items, because now they are gone for good.

Figure 34: Family photo on New Year's Day: (back row, left to right) Kayo-san, my aunt, my mother, my uncle; (front row, left to right) Bāba and Daisuke-san, in front of Bāba's house in Hota, Chiba, ca. 1970. Photo probably by Yukio-san.

CONCLUSION

It was not so long ago that the kimono was everyday clothing in Japan, though it was only for a few decades in the twentieth century that everyday-kimono fashions boomed for ordinary citizens. The kimonos that have survived to this day are precious artifacts. They survived because they did not get worn much—perhaps because their owners did not favor them, or conversely because their owners found them too precious to wear often. Kimonos that did not find successive owners within families ended up being unearthed and routed to the used-kimono market, and contemporary hobbyist-wearers benefit from such surviving pieces. I have become more appreciative of my inheritance since learning the history of the garment, and I cannot deny that I feel sentimental about kimonos that have outlived their initial owners. When I see antique and used kimonos on the market I wonder to what sorts of women these kimonos might once have belonged.

Autoethnography as a Method, Revisited

When I commenced my kimono fieldwork, I knew that the kimono revival had already been recognized by some scholars. I contemplated how my work might contribute to the study of the kimono. I soon realized that kinesthetic investigations and personal experience narratives of kimono-wearing were lacking in the existing academic literature on the garment. Because folklorists probe the reasons behind why people do what they do, I decided to research the personal reasons, aspirations, and goals of kimono-wearers in contemporary Japan. Being an ethnographer, I decided that it was imperative to learn how to wear the kimono. This

professional duty, coupled with my personal passion and mission (born of my familial inheritance), made it natural for me to employ an autoethnographic approach.

Autoethnography has proven to be the most effective method for describing the process of acquiring a kinesthetic understanding of kimono-wearing, because there is no substitute for firsthand experience. Without this I would not have known what is entailed in composing a kimono outfit, and how different types of kimonos feel when I put them on and move around in them. At the same time, my experiences helped me to understand both what it means for a Japanese woman to wear a kimono, and why women choose to wear kimonos for leisure in today's Japan. Certainly my account does not speak for all hobbyist-wearers, but no one story ever could.

The kimono's symbolic status has grown so grand that the garment is no longer treated as clothing. Yet thanks to the current revival (though it may still appear small in scale), the number of hobbyist-wearers has grown, and each one will have stories to tell about kimono-wearing. I expect more ethnographic accounts of kimono-wearing in the future, so that the kimono and its wearing practices can be researched further.

Also, it is for ethical reasons that I, as an ethnographer, have decided to focus on the autoethnographic aspect of kimono research. I was frequently asked by informants to share my own personal story of kimono-wearing, and I provided them with brief versions of the story detailed above during the process of establishing rapport. Revealing my own story was my way of showing sincerity as a researcher, and of projecting my personal and professional passion for the subject. Therefore I have presented here what I presented to my informants during my fieldwork. I let this autoethnography serve as a prelude to my own future kimono research.

Moreover, I firmly believe that it is important for ethnographers to become cognizant—through self-analysis—of the weighty responsibility entailed in revealing the lives of others. Taking an autoethnographic approach will help ethnographers to evaluate their personal and professional selves, as well as to hone their observational skills. It is good practice for becoming self-aware. So I invite any ethnographer—including Japanese folklorists who study the Japanese in Japan—to consider autoethnographic approaches.

Suggestions for Further Research

My autoethnographic study of kimono-wearing leads me to ponder opportunities for further research into overlooked aspects of kimono culture. Most discussions of contemporary kimono culture revolve around the plight of the kimono industry. Much of its textile production and tailoring are now outsourced overseas, while remaining domestic textile manufacturers have sought ways to market their wares outside of kimono culture. However, because used kimonos play such a vital role in sustaining today's kimono-wearing culture, they deserve more scholarly attention.

Similarly, the study of contemporary used clothing in today's Japan focuses on Western-style clothing because it is the dominant kind of clothing. Yet the business of used kimonos not only has a long history of its own, but also continues to contribute to current kimono-wearing practices in Japan. The used-kimono business has been studied by Japanese scholars as part of economic history, but probing its operation in today's context has not attracted them. Yet antique dealers, used-kimono dealers, and collectors of unwanted clothing (who gather both Western-style and Japanese-style items) have their own business networks. Some even visit people's homes upon request to assess the value of old kimonos, and to purchase them for the market.

Although the used-kimono business today is overshadowed by that of Western-style clothing, its continuing existence deserves scholarly attention so as to connect its history to the present.[134]

Also, shopping is worth close investigation by those who analyze behavior and verbal lore. Customer service has its own traditions (clerks observing customers' behaviors before approaching, the use of *keigo*, the serving of tea, the addition of small gifts to large purchases) because the key to successful businesses is the establishment of trusting relationships with the clientele. The examination of different types of business operations and services (the level of *keigo*, opportunities for price negotiation) would prove interesting.

The practice of refurbishing and repurposing kimono fabric itself warrants extensive research. Terry Satsuki Milhaupt (2005) has discussed this practice by referring to centuries-old patchwork kimonos and contemporary Western-style clothing made from antique-kimono fabrics. But as a folklorist I argue for the importance of ethnographic investigation of the repurposing of kimonos (making *hanten*s and futon covers) as a part of household chores. Kazuko Koizumi has documented such activities by filming her mother's demonstrations (*Kiroku eiga, Shōwa no kaji* 2010). This documentary is invaluable, and detailed ethnographic research to collect narratives associated with such activities will further our knowledge of the lives of garments and those who have lived with them.

Furthermore, some contemporary antique-kimono shops like Akariya 2 are known for extending the lives of antique *nagagi*s. They refurbish these *nagagi*s by rearranging the panels to make them wearable again. The *kosode*-style kimono is tailored so as not to waste any fabric; thus, when the *nagagi* is disassembled, the panels could reconstitute the original bolt of cloth. Though perhaps not practical for wearing, the kimono is extraordinarily practical in terms of

[134] Because pawn shops have played a large role in the used-kimono business, study of the pawn business is also desirable. The pawn business has been researched as an aspect of economic history, but ethnographic studies will be useful.

textile longevity. The practice of refurbishing affirms this point, and may help to explain why the *kosode*-style garment remained the standard shape of everyday clothing in Japan for centuries.

Akariya 2 also repurposes *nagagi*s, *naga-juban*s, and *haori*s by disassembling them to make *obi*s. Rather than transforming these garments into Western-style clothing, bags, or handicrafts, they repurpose them so that the fabrics stay within the culture of kimono-wearing. In repurposing kimono fabrics (for example, making a new *obi* from a worn-out *haori*) it takes a good aesthetic sensibility to determine which part of the *haori* fabric to use for both the front and *o-taiko* area, as these will be the prominent faces of the *obi*. This type of repurposing practice is not new, but it has not been investigated fully in folklore studies. I have begun to research this aspect of repurposing kimono fabrics, and I intend to go further.

As a folklorist who studies everyday life, I feel sad to see wool kimonos treated more as waste than as used clothing. Due to both its status as daily kimono and its relative newness in the history of kimono culture, the wool kimono is something of a forgotten garment. Yet as a wearer of used wool kimonos today, I can attest to the variety of wool kimonos that existed some decades ago, which seems to have satisfied the fashion interest of many. I argue for the collection and study of various types of wool kimono, so that its contribution to everyday fashion in post–World War II Japan can be analyzed.

Finally, I believe that further research into the kin-aesthetic aspect of the kimono will enrich our understanding of the garment as clothing, and of the importance of the garment's place within familial heritages. Michael Owen Jones argues that "by studying the aesthetic impulse we gain insights into ways that people interact, communicate, express deeply felt emotions, cope with problems, and strive to improve the quality of life" (1989, 262–63). Based on this notion of his (and on his aforementioned formulation on material behavior [Jones 1997,

202]), I—using my kimono-wearing practice as an example—have discussed two aspects of kin-aesthetics: the behavioral values and sense of aesthetics that run in my family. Both aspects can be applied to garments and associated behavioral patterns beyond the kimono. It is common for people to wear hand-me-down clothing during childhood, and for brides to wear wedding gowns that once belonged to their mothers or grandmothers. Moreover, material objects such as family quilts can be analyzed kin-aesthetically because quilts made from family fabric will attest to the aesthetic values of both the acquirers of the fabrics and the makers of the quilts.

Different types of clothing require different types of movement. Behavioral patterns associated with garments will be understood fully only through kinesthetic learning. Since older family members often pass on the behaviors associated with garments, kin-aesthetic education will be useful in the study of family folklore.

Kin-aesthetics Revisited

My grandmother's kimono not only brought me back to my roots but also reintroduced me to kimono culture as an adult. Now I wear the kimono by my own will, with a determination to master its wearing for both personal and professional reasons. As a folklore student studying Japanese culture, I thought that I should be familiar with the traditional garment in terms of the ways in which people interact with it. Never did I expect this whole experience to draw upon so many personal aspects of my life, as I retrieved my familial heritage through personal interaction with the garment. Yet these different strands have come to be interlaced quite nicely in the end. However well I might learn kimono-wearing, it would mean little without the validation of actual personal experiences. I would not be able to discuss kimono culture with professional confidence

were it not possible to draw upon my personal experiences. And my grandmother's kimono has helped me to launch a refreshed identity.

In my wardrobe I have many items associated with my mother: a skirt that she used to wear when she worked in an office, which I inherited; tops and scarves that she picked out for me when we were out shopping. My office bag is one that she used when she was still working. My autumn/winter purse is something that she bought for me when I was in junior high school. My spring/summer purse is something that she selected for me when we shopped in Ginza. I was going to get one in beige-and-green, but she recommended one in beige-and-pink, telling me that it would make the tone of any outfit softer and gentler—therefore more feminine. So I got the beige-and-pink one, and since then every spring when I take it out of my storage bin I am reminded of how right she was.

In my daily life I have something to wear or carry that reminds me of my mother, even though we live on opposite sides of the planet. I like having fashion items that remind me of my mother because I feel the connection to her through our shared sense of aesthetics—that is, a sense of kin-aesthetics. And my wearing and carrying them constitutes a kinesthetic embodiment of our kin-aesthetics, which bespeaks my personhood. In my daily execution of kin-aesthetics I recognize my mother's aesthetic and kinesthetic education.

For most of my life this kinesthetic manifestation of my kin-aesthetics was done with Western-style clothing and accessories. But now it incorporates the kimono, thanks to the inherited *omeshi*, which connects me to my grandmother. And my recent inheritance of Bāba's *naga-juban* connects me to her aesthetically. That makes four generations of women connected through a sense of kin-aesthetics. And this sense of connection explains why I wear kimonos.

As I continue to aspire to cultivate my own style of kimono-wearing, I realize my love of fabrics, clothing, and fashion; my values regarding behavioral manners; and my interest in kimono fashion. Each of these aspects has a familial connection, and each time that I wear my grandmother's *omeshi* another layer of personal history is added. The sad memories of loss will fade, as the joy of meeting new friends will revivify this kimono in my lifetime.

Because my mother likes to sew, she has repurposed fabrics frequently. Recently she made *furoshiki*s 風呂敷 (fabric squares used for wrapping and carrying articles) by taking apart kimonos that had belonged to her mother-in-law (my paternal grandmother), who passed away in 2013. Digging for photographs in family albums and learning about my family history has caused me to recognize that kimono fabrics have been around me all my life. I had thought that the kimono was foreign to me; but it was so only conceptually.

I am looking at a family photo that was taken for my and my sister's *shichi-go-san*. I was two years old. I have no recollection of the event, but there I am in a kimono, along with my sister and my paternal grandmother dressed in their kimonos, and the hands of kimono-clad Bāba gently holding my shoulders (Figure 35).

Figure 35: Family photo for *shichi-go-san*: (back row, left to right) my paternal grandmother, my father, Bāba, my maternal grandfather; (front row, left to right) my mother, me, my sister, in front of our house in Kasahata, Saitama, ca. 1980. Photo probably by Mie-san.

Appendix 1: *Shin gakushū shidō yōryō: ikiru chikara* 新学習指導要領・生きる力 [New curriculum guidelines: life-skill proficiencies]

The following are excerpts from *Shin gakushū shidō yōryō: ikiru chikara* 新学習指導要領・生きる力 [New curriculum guidelines: life-skill proficiencies], published in 2008 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The wearing of Japanese-style clothing is mentioned in a note that supplements general agendas on the topic of housing and clothing. I quote the sections that mention kimono-wearing.

The original in Japanese:[135]

第 2 章：各教科
第 8 節 技術・家庭

2 内容

C 衣生活・住生活と自立

(1) 衣服の選択と手入れについて，次の事項を指導する。
ア 衣服と社会生活とのかかわりを理解し，目的に応じた着用や個性を生かす着用を工夫できること。
イ 衣服の計画的な活用の必要性を理解し，適切な選択ができること。
ウ 衣服の材料や状態に応じた日常着の手入れができること。

3 内容の取扱い
(3) 内容の「C 衣生活・住生活と自立」については，次のとおり取り扱うものとする。
ア (1) のアについては，和服の基本的な着装を扱うこともできること。(1) のイについては，既製服の表示と選択に当たっての留意事項を扱うこと。(1) のウについては，日常着の手入れは主として洗濯と補修を扱うこと。

English translation provided by the government:[136]

Chapter Two: Subjects
Section Eight: Technology and Home Economics

2. Content

[135] The excerpt is available online:http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/youryou/chu/gika.htm (accessed January 25, 2015).
[136] The excerpt is available online in PDF formant (pp. 5, 7): http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/micro_detail/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2011/04/11/1298356_9.pdf (accessed January 25, 2015).

C. Clothing, Housing, and independent life

(1) The following items should be targeted in instruction with regard to selecting and caring for clothing:
(a) To understand the connection between clothing and social life, and to be able to understand what to wear according to the purpose and by using one's individuality
(b) To understand the necessity of utilizing clothing in a planned manner, and to be able to select it appropriately
(c) To be able to care for daily wear according to the clothing material and its condition

3. Handling the content
(3) With regard to "C. Clothing, housing and independent life" in "Content," the following items should be dealt with.
(a) With regard to (1)-(a), basic ways of putting on Japanese clothing can be dealt with. For (1)-(b), things to keep in mind regarding the labeling and selection of ready-made clothes should be covered. For (1)-(c), caring for daily wear should primarily deal with washing and mending.

My translation:

Chapter Two: Subjects
Section Eight: Technology and Home Economics

2. Content
C. Clothing and Housing for Independent Living
(1) Regarding the selection and care of clothing, instructions should cover the following:
(a) Understanding the relation between clothing and social life, and devising strategies for selecting garments appropriate to particular occasions, and in a way that shows one's individuality.
(b) Understanding the importance of strategic use of clothing, and of making appropriate clothing selections.
(c) Being able to care for dailywear according to its material and condition.

3. Notes
(3) With regard to the content under C. Clothing and Housing for Independent Living, include the following in the instructions:
(a) With regard to (a) under (1) above, students should be able to handle the basics of wearing Japanese-style clothing [*wa-fuku*]. With regard to (b) under (1), students should be able to understand the labeling system for ready-made clothing, and should learn what to take into consideration when selecting clothing. With regard to (c) under (1), regarding caring for dailywear, instructions should deal primarily with laundering and mending.

Appendix 2: Sutekichi's recollections of the Great Kanto Earthquake

Sutekichi recorded the story told by his mother, Tsuta: Right after the quake on September 1, 1923, around noon, a fire broke out in the entrance of an eatery down the alley (near her residence in the Honjo-Fukawa 本所・深川 area). With her husband, Naojirō, Tsuta walked on the roofs of destroyed houses to get to Mitsume dōri 三ツ目通り [Mitsume Street], and reached Hifukushō-ato 被服廠跡, which was then an open field where the army's clothing factory once stood.[137] The place was already full of people. After 2:00 PM, gusts of wind brought sparks to the field, which ignited the people's belongings. Naojirō and Tsuta ran to escape the fire, but Tsuta tripped, fell, and fainted.

When she woke up, feeling pain in her back, Tsuta found herself buried under a pile of corpses. She crawled out of the pile and discovered that it was daytime. Not knowing what to do, she sat there. She remembered how she had run around with her husband, and that she had fallen. She was surrounded by numerous dead bodies, but did not feel scared. She stayed there another night. The next day rescuers came, looking for survivors and handing out ice cubes. She could not utter a word, so she waved to get their attention to receive a piece of ice. Then she heard a weak voice asking for some. But a moment after she put a small piece of ice in the person's mouth, the voice stopped, and the body ceased to move. Also, Tsuta noticed that a corpse that the day before had had a big ring on its finger was missing the ring along with the finger because it had been chopped off. Later she managed to walk to her parents' place in Katsushika-ku 葛飾区. This was on September 5th or 6th. Because Naojirō was missing, Tsuta assumed that her husband had died in the fire.

[137] Hifukushō-ato was an open field then, and was considered a safe place to gather in time of natural disaster.

Sutekichi was serving in the military, and was stationed in Korea between 1922 and 1924. Thus he was absent from Tokyo when the disaster occurred. Unosuke [Sutekichi's younger brother; my paternal grandfather] was living in a different part of Tokyo, working as an apprentice at a pawnshop in Ushigome 牛込. Sutekichi heard about the quake and worried about his parents, hoping that they had escaped to Hifukushō-ato. On September 3rd he learned that thousands of people had died. Wondering about his parents' whereabouts, he was unable to sleep that night. On the 7th, however, Sutekichi received a letter from Naojirō that said that everyone was doing well. But Sutekichi realized that in the letter his father said that he would post it at night on August 31st. It was not until September 28th that the telegram system was restored in the Tokyo area. On October 5th, Sutekichi received a telegram from Unosuke dated October 2nd, which read "Father missing; mother well." On October 14th, he received a letter from Unosuke, which told him that the government had provided some money to their mother and aunt. Sutekichi himself received 100 yen as compensation, which he sent to his mother. After returning to Japan, he placed that last letter that he had received from his father in his father's grave.[138]

[138] Nearly 40,000 died in Hifukushō-ato. The bodies were piled and burned there. A portion of the ashes (all mixed up) was given to those who requested it. Sutekichi received some for his father after his return to Japan.

Appendix 3: "Tomizawa-chō no furugi-ichi (Yanagihara tsuketari) 富澤坊の旧着市 付柳原 [Used-clothing markets in Tomizawa-chō (with a note on Yanagihara)]" from *Edo hanjō-ki* 江戸繁昌記 [Records of Edo's prosperity]

Note on the translation: *Edo hanjō-ki* is written in Chinese. My English translation of this chapter is based on two sources: an edition with Japanese annotations by Tatsuo Hino (1989, 45–49), and a contemporary Japanese translation by Chōjirō Taketani (1980, 103–08). The footnotes combine information from the annotations in these two sources with my own additional explanations. For the transcription of Chinese characters in historical documents and in the names of historical or legendary figures of ancient China, I use *pinyin*.

Among the many markets out there, the biggest one is the fish market in Nihonbashi 日本橋. Produce markets exist in many places, but the ones in Tamachi 多町 and Renjaku-chō 連雀町 [139] are the biggest. The ginger market in Jinmyō 神明 is unique, and the doll market in Jukkendana 十軒店 is beautiful. Markets for flowers and decorations for the *bon* 盆 festival[140] are held in many places; and among end-of-year markets, the one in Asakusa 浅草 is the largest. Flower markets are held in various places according to the local holidays, and antique markets are always hosted by tea-ceremony practitioners. A market that takes place before the house of an authoritative figure I call a "samurai market [*samurai ichi* 士市]." This kind of market attracts the biggest crowds. There are many different kinds of markets held in various places.

Tomizawa-chō has one such booming market. Used-clothing shops fill both sides of the main and side streets, like a comb, and newly-acquired used kimonos and *obi*s are laid out every morning. Items are piled high like hills, and arrayed in rows like clouds. Formalwear with blue and red patterns is mixed in, as though rainbows had fallen from the sky, and winds had brought

[139] Both Tamachi and Renjaku-chō were areas within the district of Kanda 神田 in central Tokyo.
[140] The *bon* 盆 festival is a Buddhist custom to honor the dead and is held in the seventh month of the lunar calendar. During the middle three days of the month, it is believed that the deceased members of the family visit the home from which they departed. The living members of the family prepare their family altars by decorating them with flowers and food.

maple leaves. Or it is as though the red silk fences commissioned by Shi Chong[141] had fallen over. What young woman once owned that *hiyoku*-bearing kimono with the *mimasukōshi* pattern?[142] One-half of a matched set of sleepwear (the kind invented by Emperor Yang[143]) in the brownish color favored by Baikō[144] is likely to have belonged to a widow. A cushion cover made of a silk brocade that once belonged to a female *gidayū*[145] performer, a kimono with a flowery pattern at the bottom that used to be owned by a wealthy family's maid, and a kind of undergarment that might have been worn by someone like Xia Ji[146] still smell like flowers, whereas a worn-out piece like the one worn by Fan Shu[147] is about to disintegrate like an autumn leaf. That rather big headcovering must be a memento of the founder of the Kamakura government: Yoritomo[148] is said to have been short but big-headed. This rather long jacket must be a used item that belonged to Lord Enya: Mr. Yakushiji made fun of his jacket for being so contemporary.[149] The wide *obi* with a blot of ink is like the one of Zi Zhang,[150] and the item with

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[141] Shi Chong 石崇 (249–300) was a Chinese aristocrat, who is said to have competed with his rival in wealth by lining up silk fences.

[142] A *hiyoku* 比翼 is a layer sewn inside a formal female kimono. *Mimasukōshi* 三升格子 is a checked pattern made of a motif of triple squares, which is the family crest of the kabuki actor Danjūrō Ichikawa 市川団十郎.

[143] Emperor Yang 煬帝 (569–618) lived in China during the Sui dynasty (581–618). He is credited for creating matching sleepwear for couples. This kind of sleepwear was called "*enō-hi* 鴛鴦被" in Japanese, which literally means "Mandarin-duck clothing." Because a pair of Mandarin ducks was believed to remain together for life, in Chinese tradition a pair of ducks symbolizes the fidelity of husband and wife.

[144] Baikō 梅幸 is the stage name of the kabuki actor Kikugorō Onoe 尾上菊五郎 (1717–84). Baikō-cha 梅幸茶 is a brownish spring-green color named after him.

[145] *Gidayū* 義太夫 is a storytelling tradition that developed during the Edo period.

[146] Xia Ji 夏姬 was an ancient Chinese empress, who is said to have been famous for her beauty.

[147] Fan Shu 范叔 (also known as Fan Sui 范雎) was a politician who lived during the Qin 秦 era (778–206 BCE). This reference has to do with a legend about him: Fan Shu used to serve a lord faithfully, but the lord betrayed him by subjecting him to severe punishment for a crime that he did not commit. He was left to die, but managed to survive and escape. Many years later, when Fan Shu had become a chancellor (the highest-ranking official in the ancient Chinese dynasty), he chanced to meet the lord (whose political status was now lower than his). Fan Shu appeared in disguise, wearing tattered clothing, only to reveal his well-deserved respectable status later so as to admonish the lord for his past wrongdoing.

[148] Yoritomo Minamoto 源頼朝 (1147–99) is one of the most famous warriors in Japanese history.

[149] Lord Enya 塩冶判官 and Mr. Yakushiji 薬師寺氏 are characters in a play entitled *Kanadehon chūshingura* 仮名手本忠臣蔵, which was originally created for *bunraku* 文楽 [puppet theater] in 1748. The play became so successful that it was adapted for kabuki, and since then it has been one of the most popular plays in both kabuki and *bunraku*. The two characters appear together in a well-known scene: the shogunate envoy Yakushiji delivers a sentence of

a few dirt stains is like a landlord's *hakama*.[151] A red piece of underwear is faded and stained with tears like the ones shed by the Xiang Fei.[152] A black kimono is darkened by the grime of the previous generation. When bonito is in season, the market swarms with *awase*-kimonos like a swirling tide, and on the days that lottery tickets go on sale, kimonos and *obi*s blow to the market like dust.

People may value old people, but they do not necessarily value old dishes.[153] Yet from transporters and peddlers to us down-and-out scholars of Confucianism, how could the millions of lowly people living in the city of Edo ever have the opportunity to have a new kimono tailored for themselves? And how could we care that the [used] ones that we wear do not fit? There are no ordinary clothes, and one should not care about wearing used clothes. Seeing used-clothing businesses prosper is enough.

A pawnshop's loan period is eight months, and unredeemed items from dark pawnshop warehouses are released from their contracts and see the sunlight again. The circulation of used clothes is not very different from the circle of life. Worn-out pieces are shipped as far as Ezo [Hokkaidō]. Something that was worn for a funeral yesterday can be worn for a wedding today. A formal piece from a ceremony last year can be obtained by a scholar of Confucianism this year. A very good raincoat that belonged to a horse-trader (they often wear raincoats) will not be sold for a price three times greater. A padded cotton kimono will not catch the eye of an expert, so

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seppuku 切腹 [a ritual suicide accomplished by cutting one's own stomach] to Lord Enya at his residence. Then Yakushiji sneers at the lord's out-of-date long jacket, remarking sarcastically how trendy it is.

[150] Zi Zhang 子張 (b. 503 BCE) was a disciple of Confucius, who is said to have inscribed his master's teachings in ink on his wide belt.

[151] When landlords visit local offices, they kneel on the ground because their social rank is lower than that of the officials.

[152] The Xiang Fei 湘妃 are the guardian goddesses of the Xiang river 湘江. A Chinese myth tells of the two wives of Emperor Shun 舜, who threw themselves into the river after learning of the emperor's death, at which time they became the goddesses. The spots on spotted bamboo stalks are said to be stains from the tears shed by these goddesses.

[153] This is a citation taken from *Shunjing* 書経 [The book of documents], a record of ancient China.

there is no need to worry about it not selling. A red demon will come and purchase underpants made of tiger fur, and Idaten[154] will run to buy a leather jacket (there is a dandyish saying: "I will not be scared even if Idaten comes, wearing a leather jacket and riding on a wild bay horse"). Not all the items [in used-clothing shops] are actually used; there are some new ones mixed in. A gambler may win some cash, walk to the market naked, and walk away layered in clothes. From head to toe he is renewed, down to the bone. Red fireman jackets lined up in wintertime are like a raging fire, and mosquito nets in summertime are like green leaves swirling in flowing water. Used-clothing businessmen shake out lice in the spring winds and pat off molds on autumn days. Every new day welcomes newly-acquired old items to the storefronts.

The most used and tattered clothes are routed to Yanagihara. Among used-clothing markets the ones in Yanagihara are of the lowest quality. The quality of items there is low, but the prices are rather high, and the starting price is not even three times greater. Following the proverb "When you don't know, suggest half the price," a gentleman will be deceived and a lower-class man will be left in the lurch. Some items are pieced together with glue instead of with thread. The outer fabric may be clean and shiny, but the inside may be worn out. It is a rip-off. Items are cleaned, mended, and re-tailored. Some used items are refurbished and sold as new, while newly tailored items are sold as used. If one sees an item in the sunlight, though it may not be obvious, the original patterns (before re-dyeing) may show through; and if one measures, the right sleeve may be shorter after re-tailoring. If a customer stops and requests a price, the attendant may suggest a price three times the item's value. If the customer leaves, the attendant calls out after him. If he does not look back, the attendant may chase after him. At each return the price drops. After this happens several times, they may settle on a price. This way, the attendant can act as though he got the short end and say, "You got such a good bargain." If the

[154] Idaten 韋駄天 (whose Sanskrit name is Skanda) is a war god in Hinduism and Buddhism.

attendant spots someone from the country, he will not let go of his sleeve. He will suggest items smarmily, and try to sell by force. The scene resembles the way in which a low-class prostitute tries to attract a customer, or the way in which the demon at Rashōmon fights with Tsuna Watanabe.[155] The place is loud beyond imagination.

By nighttime the used-clothing sellers have packed up and gone home. Now the long riverbank is quiet; there are only willow trees and no people. But at the end of the row of willow trees, something is there, calling out to the people. The calling sounds like crying or pleading. This voice is very different from the loud ones of the daytime. This is the voice of a "nighthawk," an old washed-up prostitute. That she is doing business here has something to do with the location.[156]

In *Lunyu* 論語 [The analects of Confucius] it is noted that "[Confucius] had his dailywear tailored longer, with the right sleeve short."[157] Some think that this was for practicality's sake [for right-handed people]; but even for the sake of practicality, making one sleeve shorter than the other goes against common sense. Confucius also said, "One should not wear clothes lacking properness." So he would not have worn anything improper, even as everyday clothing. He was poor all his life. I wonder if he may have worn used clothes from Yanagihara.

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[155] Tsuna Watanabe 渡辺綱 (953–1025) was a samurai who was famous for his martial skills. There are many legends about him, and this reference has to do with his battle—at the gate named Rashōmon 羅生門—with a demon who would not let go of his sleeve.

[156] She is trying to sell her old overused wares in an area known for its used clothing markets; so there is a relation between the two types of business.

[157] *Sekkyū ha nagaku, migi no tamoto wo mijikakusu* 褻袈長 短右袂: from the section in the analects that describes Confucius's clothing.

Appendix 4: *Yokome de mita Tokyo* 横目で見た東京 [A furtive glance at Tokyo]

Two chapters from Kanjin Nakoso 勿来関人, *Yokome de mita Tokyo* 横目で見た東京 [A furtive glance at Tokyo] (Tokyo: Seiseisha, 1922).

A digitized version is available online through the National Diet Library Digital Collections: http://kindai.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/906009 (accessed January 25, 2015).

"Nihon ichi no furugi-ya machi 日本一の古着屋町 [Japan's number-one used-clothing business districts]" (29–32):

Businesses that sell used clothing are found in many regions, but Yanagihara 柳原 and Hikage-chō 日陰町 are noteworthy because of their nationwide reputations as districts for the used-clothing business since the olden days. Extending from Jūjigai 十字街 of Suda-chō 須田町 in Kanda 神田 (before which stands the solemn bronze statue of the "military god" Commander Hirose 軍神廣瀬中佐 [158]) to the edge of the Asakusa Bridge 浅草橋 (where one can see the round roof of Kokugikan 国技館 [159] beyond the clouds of chimney smoke rising from the residential area) is the district for used-clothing businesses in Yanagihara. There the majority of shops lining the right [i.e., north] side of the street, as long as fifteen or sixteen blocks, are used-clothing shops. In Hikage-chō, the majority of shops lining both sides of the narrow path stretching about ten blocks from the plaza in front of the Shinbashi Station 新橋駅 to Daimon Street 大門通り (which leads to Sanenzan Zōjōji Temple 三縁山増上寺) are used-clothing shops.

Because [the street in] Hikage-chō runs north and south and is extremely narrow, sunshine does not reach the ground, and as its name indicates, the area is dimly lit as though it were in the

[158] Commander Takeo Hirose 廣瀬武夫 (1868–1904) was a naval officer who died trying to rescue a colleague from a sinking ship. For this heroic deed the imperial government consecrated him as a *gunshin* 軍神 [military god]. The statue was erected in Kanda in 1910 but was removed in 1947 as part of the national reformation instigated by the United States Army during the occupation era (1945–52).

[159] Kokugikan [national sports hall] is a sumo arena located in Ryōgoku 両国, across the Sumida River 隅田川 from Yanagihara. Sumo has long been Japan's national sport, and at the time that this book was written, Kokugikan had a signature dome-shaped roof, which was called the *daitessan* 大鉄傘 [large metal umbrella].

shade all day.[160] [The street in] Yanagihara runs east to west. Since no used-clothing shops are located on the south side of the street, the shops are shaded, especially after 10:00 AM when customers start to wander the area. Come to think of it, the storefronts of used-clothing shops elsewhere also face north. This makes sense, as it would be disadvantageous to the stores if flaws in the fabrics and dyework—or even tears—were too well illuminated by the sun.

Some store salespersons are skillful, as they are able to pick out those who have come to purchase used clothes among the many passersby. If they appear to be unfamiliar with how to shop for used clothes, the attendants flatter them so cunningly that it is almost enough to give one the heebie-jeebies. But as soon as the customers show a lack of interest after the attendants have shown one piece after another, those attendants begin to make comments that get on one's nerves.

Generally speaking, used clothing—both kimonos and Western-style clothes—can be divided into three types: the totally worn-out; the only slightly used (worn only once or twice); and the newly tailored. It is possible to find items of used clothing that have been worn only once or twice and that are well-tailored and made from well-woven and well-dyed fabric with no flaws. But it is more common to find items that appear decent but that are in fact skimpily made and not fully sewn, so one needs to be mindful of that in advance. An attendant will assess the customer's face before suggesting a price that is set two or three to fourteen or fifteenth percent higher, so the customer needs to inspect it before deciding on its value. When the value of used clothing seems to go down (when the season changes, and before the year's end), those in the used-clothing business become eager to sell. So it is a good strategy for buyers to act with confidence, and to start the negotiations by cutting the price in half.

[160] Hikage-chō literally means "shaded town."

Speaking of the provenance of various types of used clothing: there are some vendors that post ads in the newspaper saying “We buy high and sell low,” and others that put up signs in their storefronts announcing that they buy directly at their stores. But many items are brought from pawnshop warehouses, from used-clothing markets that are held periodically, and from tailors of kimonos or of Western-style clothing who regularly route [unsold] items to used-clothing shops. The vendor’s cost is of course a pittance.

Nowadays shipping routes are improved, so used clothing travels easily from Tokyo to Osaka and vice versa. Used clothing handled by major retailers is shipped frequently even to Korea and Taiwan. The fact that this business has continued to be in demand all these years proves that there are people whose lives depend on the supply of used clothing.

“*Shichi-ya* to *Oki-ya* 質屋と置き屋 [Pawnshops and flippers]” (85–88):

As a small-scale financial agency, no business works better than a pawnshop because of its easy process for convenient cash withdrawal. Every pawnshop has its entrance set up in a way that allows people to go in and out hidden from the public eye, and people expect discretion from customers going in and out of such a place. It is after all out of this kind of sentiment that a pawnshop is also called a “*nanatsu-ya*.”[161] But a recent inclination to call it an “*ichi-roku-ginkō*”[162] or a “*heimin-ginkō*”[163] reflects a societal view that thinks that there is no need to be ashamed of visiting pawnshops openly. Many households nowadays struggle to make ends meet, so why should anyone hesitate or feel ashamed to make do by pawning his valuable stuff? “Not

[161] “*Nanatsu-ya* 七つ屋 [seven-shop]” is a euphemism for “pawnshop” based on the pun “*shichi* 七” for seven and “*shichi* 質” for pawning. By using an alternative pronunciation “*nana*” for “*shichi* [seven],” the euphemism achieves the effect of an indirect reference.
[162] “*Ichi-roku-ginkō* 一六銀行 [one-six-bank]” is a hypereuphemism stemming from “*nanatsu-ya*” because one plus six makes seven.
[163] “*Heimin-ginkō* 平民銀行” means “bank for ordinary folks.”

good at singing, but good at juggling the finances; got a compliment at a pawnshop this morning." Isn't it good as long as one handles it well? Though of course it is better if one aspires to manage one's household without resorting to pawning.

Enough with such preaching. I will review the basic pawnshop transaction. The amount of the loan is about one-third to one-fourth the value of the pawned item, the interest is two to three percent, and the loan period lasts four months. If you pay the interest, you can extend the loan period by another four months; but if the period ends without your paying the interest, it is common for pawnshops to claim the item. Some shops are kind enough to send you a notice. Unredeemed [clothing] items are brought out of warehouses and taken to used-clothing markets that take place on a specific day every month; put up for auction at a price with the initial cost, interest, and some profit added; and passed on to used-clothing dealers. The profit may be given to the clerk of the pawnshop or split between the clerk and the shop owner. A receipt for a pawned item can take two forms: a small piece of paper, or a passbook. The passbook can be shared among several people depending on who owns it.

Pawnbrokers have trained eyes, so they are unlikely to misjudge a pawned item and loan money beyond the item's worth, but they can by chance get outfoxed by pawnbroker-trickers so badly that they may feel like crying. Pawnbroker-trickers are called "*oki-ya* [flippers]," who specialize in handling pawned items. As mentioned before, there are twenty-two or twenty-three auction markets that consolidate into one place all the unredeemed pawned items that have come from numerous pawnshop warehouses within Tokyo. Businessmen who gather for the markets are those with certificates for used-clothing business, and they are usually either store managers or peddlers. But *oki-ya*s are mixed into the crowd.

For example, an *oki-ya* purchases a used *omeshi* and a *maru-obi* made of *shuchin*[164] for fifteen yen at a market in Asakusa. He takes them to a business partner in Shiba, so that this person, who has a passbook, can pawn them for between fifteen and thirty yen. He always goes to the pawnshop around the time that the lights need to be switched on, because he knows that this is the best time to conceal the condition of the dye and fabric. From the get-go he has no intention of retrieving the items; so he is not really pawning them, but is instead taking a quick profit of ten to fifteen yen. One third of the profit goes to the passbook holder, and the *oki-ya* pockets the rest. The more resourceful the *oki-ya*s, the more extensive their networks, which means that they can pawn items at different pawnshops, make a lot of profit, and lead extravagant lives. Presumably this business is possible only in a big city such as Tokyo.

[164] *Shuchin* 繻珍 is a type of weave made of silk. Threads in different colors are woven into the textile to create patterns.

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