

# The Woman in Kimono: An Ambivalent Image of Modern Japanese Identity<sup>\*</sup>

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When the Meiji Government opened *Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō* (an Art School of the Ministry of Technology), the first national institute for the education of Western style art in Japan, in 1876, female students were admitted as well as male students. However, the government closed the school in 1882 and discontinued its promotion of education in Western style art. It was only after 1896, that the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, established in 1887 by the Ministry of Education, opened a department of Western style painting and started life-drawing classes. Only male students were eligible for admission to this school from its opening until as late as 1946.<sup>1</sup> The female nude became an ardently desired genre by Japanese male artists, though exhibiting images of the female nude to the public remained controversial until the early twentieth century. Neither allegorical paintings of female nudes nor divine mythological female figures of the sort in the Indian art assumed a major presence in Japanese modern art. Diverse images of women wearing kimono, however, were extremely popular in Japanese visual culture. This essay analyzes the emergence of the kimono-clad female figure as a Japanese icon abetted by nationalism and imperialism in the age of the Japanese Empire.

## 1. Western Clothes as Modern Fashion in Early Meiji Japan

The Meiji Emperor was only fourteen years old when he succeeded to the throne after his father's sudden death in 1866. Two years later, the Meiji government was established, and the Meiji Emperor became the head of the state. Prior to this, the Emperor conventionally received only a very limited number of visitors in the imperial court and spent most of his time surrounded by court

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<sup>\*</sup> This article was first written for a symposium held at the Victoria and Albert Museum on June 25/26, 2004. The symposium, entitled *Nation, Identity and Modernity: Visual Culture of India, Japan and Mexico 1860s-1940s*, was organized by Camberwell College of Arts, Chelsea College of Art and Design and the University of Sussex. This symposium was a result of an Arts and Humanities Research Board - funded project *Modernity and National Identity in Art: India, Japan and Mexico, 1860s-1940s* started in 2002 that was conceived and organised by Professor Toshio Watanabe with Professors Oriana Baddeley and Partha Mitter. For various reasons the publishing plan has been suspended, and I have decided to contribute my article to this journal without changing it as I finished it in 2007. The content of this article was included in my Ph.D. dissertation titled "The Image of Woman as a National Icon in Modern Japanese Art : 1890s-1930" in 2006.

日本語では、本稿の内容に大幅に加筆したものを「着物の女性像に見る近代日本のアイデンティティ」（鈴木杜幾子、馬淵明子、池田忍、金恵信編『美術とジェンダー 2 交差する視線』ブリュッケ、2005年、p.109-143.）に発表した。

ladies. However, after becoming the head of state, it became necessary to grant foreign ambassadors audiences with the Emperor. Ministers of the Meiji government had to guide a young and awkward Emperor to assume the role of a powerful representative of Japan. At the same time, the Meiji Empress needed to present herself before the public in the manner of the queens of Western countries. In 1872, the Meiji government distributed photographs of the Emperor and the Empress to ambassadors (Kunai-chō 1969a, 739). In these photographs, the monarchs were dressed in traditional costume used at formal ceremonies of the court. However the government soon realized that these photographs succeeded only in attracting ethnological interest among Westerners.

The following year, the government adopted Western style uniforms for men of military fashion and commissioned a photograph of the Emperor clothed likewise in a Western style uniform (Kunai-chō 1969b, 134). In addition to the Emperor's uniform, his moustache, beard, and sword give him a much more Westernized and masculine appearance than in his earlier photograph. On June 23, 1886, the Meiji government renewed the regulation of female court dress and declared that the Empress and court ladies should wear Western clothes as the need arose (Kunai-chō 1971, 602). On January 17, 1887, an informal note to encourage women to wear Western dress was issued in the name of the Empress (Kunai-chō 1971, 680-1). Foreign advisors employed by the Meiji government regarded this reform with disfavor. For example, Dr. Erwin O. E. von Bälz, a German medical doctor, complained of the oddity of Japanese women in Western dress to a high government minister, Itō Hirobumi. Itō, however, answered, "You know nothing about politics. Japanese women dressed in traditional clothes are not treated as equal by Westerners, but regarded as something akin to dolls" (Bälz 1977, 149-50). Itō understood that when the Empress and court ladies dressed in traditional garb they were gazed at by Westerners as specimens of the exotic 'other.'

The Meiji government produced another new pair of portraits of the Emperor and Empress in 1888. Now the Empress was shown fully dressed in a *mantle de court* (fig.1). But she was also furnished with a set of bound Japanese (or Chinese) books and flowers in a Chinese style vase on a small table, while the Emperor simply appeared in military wear. Perhaps the Empress's portrait follows the iconography of images of 'a wise woman' formed in the Edo period and the books beside her were intended to signify her intelligence. Such iconography originated in Chinese culture and was used in representations of intellectuals (Nakamachi 1998, Kojima 2002). A stack of books and vase of flowers had been common attributes of beauty and wisdom in paintings and prints of women since about the mid-eighteenth century. Moreover, even the Western dresses of the Empress were made with Japanese cloth and Japanese-style embroidery. Thus, although the Empress had to wear Western dresses in her capacity as a representative of Japan, official representations of her were not merely copies of portraits of European queens, but included cultural signifiers of East Asia.

The Europeanization policy of the Meiji government was at its peak when *Rokumei-kan* (Deer Cry Pavilion), designed by Josiah Conder (1852-1920), opened in 1883. The Meiji

government held parties at *Rokumei-kan* inviting foreign guests, where dignitaries of the government had to join them, and their wives wore Western-style dress and gathered there. Western-style dress even prevailed among some geisha in Tokyo, whose look was popularized by lithographs. However, such government promotion of Western culture declined by around 1890. A handbook for the public titled *Ifuku to Ryūkō (Clothes and Fashion)* published in 1895 reported that Western-style clothes for women were not in fashion any more (Ohashi Matatarō ed. 1895, 129-130), with the exception of court dresses. Magazines for young women often included photos of the female members of the imperial family in Western-style formal dresses. Such attire became privileged fashion for the upper class as a mark of distinction.

## 2. Japonisme and the Japanese Woman in Kimono

Images of Japanese women in kimono prevailed in Europe and the United States during the age of Japonisme. As Toshio Watanabe has noted, in the 1870s and 1880s British painters regarded kimono and *byōbu* (folding screen paintings) not only as exotic ornaments but also as symbols of beauty. When they depicted a beautiful woman with Japanese ornaments, these ornaments served to enhance the beauty of the woman (Watanabe 2000, 80-1). In addition to pictures, other media also popularized the image of Japan as a land of women wearing kimono. *Madame Chrysanthème* by Pierre Loti is one of the most famous portrayals of this theme in literature, but Japanese women also made appearances in operas and comedies. According to Mabuchi Akiko, several comedies with Japanese subjects were presented in Paris as early as the 1870s (Mabuchi 2001). She points out that the motif of the Japanese woman was quite appealing to European men but not women. The huge success in 1896 of Sidney Johns's operetta titled *The Geisha: A Story of a Tea House* helped popularize the word "geisha" in Europe (Hashimoto 2003). Historically, the geisha was primarily a musical performer, but Saeki Junko points out that sexualized images of *oiran* (the highest rank of prostitute in the Edo period) in gorgeous dress had been confused by Westerners with geisha. (Saeki 2000, 126-7). Images of a Japanese woman in kimono were readily associated with sexual fantasies dreamed by male Europeans. Love stories about European men and young Japanese women who were in most cases geishas reflected the gendered structure of the relationship between the modernized West and the undeveloped land of Japan.

The first international exhibition in which Japanese participated in an official capacity was the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris. Here, the Tokugawa shogunate constructed a Japanese style pavilion at the Exposition where three Japanese women served tea. From that time on the Japanese government sent female receptionists dressed in kimono to serve in Japanese pavilions at the successive international exhibitions. Kimono-clad women were 'exhibited' as part of Japanese displays. On the occasion of the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900, Sada-yakko, a former geisha and actress with a theatrical company operated by Kawakami Otojirō, created a huge

sensation with her performance at the Loie Fuller theater. The Japanese government allocated a very large budget for this exhibition and sent an unprecedented number of objects for display. Japanese officers, scholars and artists traveled to Paris for this occasion with government support. Meanwhile, Japanese art magazines published group photographs of mail oil painters in Paris in fully Western attire during their period of study in Paris. Such photographs confirmed the assimilation of these men to European culture and conveyed their homo social life. Kuroda Seiki studied in Paris from 1884 to 1893 under the Salon painter Raphaël Collin. After his return to Japan, Kuroda was appointed professor at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and placed in charge of selecting oil paintings to be sent to the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris. Okada Saburōsuke and Wada Eisaku were both students of Kuroda and followed his career path by joining the faculty of the Tokyo Fine Arts School after a period of study in Paris under Raphaël Collin.

Kuroda sent four oil paintings depicting a Japanese woman in kimono to the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900, such as *Kohan* (*Lakeside*, 1897, Independent Administrative Institution, National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo). Wada painted a young Japanese woman in an apartment in Paris in 1902 under the title of *Shikyō* (*Homesickness*, 1902, The University Art Museum, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music) (fig.2) and sent it to the *Salon des Artistes Française*. Wada's model was a geisha who worked at the international exhibition (Asai 1909, 16, Wada 1905). No doubt, the Japanese women in such oil-on-canvas depictions appealed to French audiences as geisha who were both real and exotic.

While Japanese artists presented paintings of Japanese women in kimono to the French public, they painted nude European female models in Paris to bring back to Japan. Kuroda Seiki's *Chōshō* (*Morning Toilet*, destroyed during the Pacific War) and Wada Eisaku's *Kodama* (*Echo*, 1903, Sen'oku Hakuko Kan, Tokyo) were both painted in Europe during the last months of their stay in Paris and exhibited in Japan. As Norman Bryson observed, Kuroda mastered the male-centered visual system of late nineteenth-century France during his years of study in Paris (Bryson 1994, 22-30). Bryson argues that the bodies of European women were crucial for Kuroda and his fellow painters because, "the process of cultural assimilation was figured through a female iconography; the relationship between the men who ruled the modern world was visualized across the bodies of women whom modernity excluded, in a process that might be called 'transnational voyeurism (Bryson 1994, 27).'" The nude paintings of European women that Kuroda and his colleagues painted in Paris testified that they themselves had become members of modernized male European society. Coming back to Japan, they proudly exhibited such nude paintings to certify their status as *shinkichōsha*, or 'new returnees' from Europe.

The image of the kimono-clad woman in works such as Wada's *Shikyō* betrays the assimilation of European perspectives by their Japanese artists. According to the artist's account of the production of this work (Wada 1905), it started out as a painting of a Japanese woman standing

in an apartment looking at the Eiffel tower through a window on a large canvas. However, Wada then followed the advice of his French teacher and removed the view of the city from the composition. The teacher argued that French viewers would easily understand the Japanese woman's feeling of alienation just by seeing her standing by a French window wearing a kimono. Accordingly, Wada completed the painting for French viewers, by placing himself in the position of the French male viewer. In other words, he internalized the European gaze for the Japanese woman in kimono and painted her as 'exotic.' By representing Japanese women in kimono through the 'Westernized' gaze, Japanese oil painters who had been to Europe identified themselves as modernized men. Such paintings as well as the nude paintings that they brought to Japan from Europe bolstered their chances for career success in Japan.

### **3. 'National Dress' promoted by Mitsukoshi Department Store**

According to *Tokyo Fūzoku-shi (Life-style in Tokyo)* written by Hiraide Kenjirō in 1899-1902, Tokyo fashion changed markedly after the Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895 (Hiraide 1991, 171-83). First, Western clothes became quite popular for men, while women still wore kimono. Second, taste in kimono changed from a delicate sensibility to something much bolder. Before the Sino-Japanese war, most people wore kimono of sober colors with fine patterns. However, after the war, kimono in dark colors with clear patterns became popular. The operators of the Mitsui Kimono shop in Tokyo were the first to perceive the 'victorious' mood of Japanese people and they launched a new marketing campaign to tap this sentiment. Their promotion of luxurious kimono for urban bourgeois women contributed to a historical process of constructing 'national dress' in modern Japan.

The Mitsui Kimono shop established the Mitsukoshi Company and opened the first Japanese department store in 1904. Mitsukoshi aimed to produce newly designed kimono as formal dress for Japanese women. In a speech about fashion, Takahashi Yoshio, a Mitsukoshi executive, said that Japanese clothes would change under the influence of Western fashion (Takahashi 1900). He argued that kimono for Japanese women should be gorgeous in design to be attractive when socializing with Westerners at parties. Yet, he also said that Japanese people should have their own taste. Mitsukoshi developed new designs for kimono modeled on Japanese art works. The retailer held exhibitions devoted to the artist Ogata Kōrin (1658-1715) in 1904 and sold a new style of kimono dubbed the 'Genroku Style' in reference to the Genroku Period (1688-1703), which was when Kōrin was active. This retailing initiative, including another exhibition to commemorate the 200th year of Kōrin's death in 1915, promoted the appreciation of Kōrin as exemplary of the uniqueness of Japanese art (Tamamushi 2004). In addition to selling kimono, Mitsukoshi also supplied facilities for urban life and, indeed, offered a comprehensive model of modern life. Mitsukoshi designed and realized the interior of the new buildings of the Japanese ambassador in

Paris in 1906-08. Rooms were created in a modernized Japanese manner, and the ambassador's "Bamboo Room" was recreated in the Mitsukoshi store in Tokyo. After retiring from Mitsukoshi, Takahashi became famous as a producer of sophisticated tea ceremonies for rich businessmen. Mitsukoshi's initiatives to produce urban lifestyles for the bourgeois lead to the invention of new Japanese cultural identities. The kimono that Mitsukoshi promoted, however, were women's kimono, not men's. For its male customers, Mitsukoshi created a division for Western clothes and imported Western suits. The Europeanization of the bourgeois Japanese male, secured for him the gendered gaze with which to subject Japanese women.

#### 4. The Popularization of 'Kimono Beauty'

In 1899, Mitsukoshi installed large signboards at major railway stations featuring paintings of women wearing kimonos. The retailer published lithographs and postcards of images of beautiful women. The Paris-trained oil painters, Wada Eisaku and Okada Saburōsuke, played influential roles in the development of these media. Wada showed an oil painting titled *Aruka nakika no toge* (*Glimpse of a Thorn*, location unknown) at the 9th exhibition of the *Hakuba-kai* (White Horse Society) in 1904. Okada showed a study for a painting titled *Genroku no omokage* (Reminiscence of the *Genroku* Era, location unknown, fig.3) at the same exhibition. Both paintings depicted early Edo-period girls dressed in kimono in the Genroku Style designed by Mitsukoshi (Miyake et al. 1904, 21-36). Okada completed *Genroku no omokage* the next year and showed it at the 10th exhibition of the White Horse Society. Such works by Wada and Okada represented idealized beautiful Japanese women in the academic painting style of the French Salon. Wada and Okada created imaginary Japanese women with small egg-shaped faces and whitish skin. The realistic representation of figures in kimono in the medium of oil painting enhanced the beauty of the models in much the same manner as imagery associated with Japonisme in European oil painting.

Okada painted a portrait of the wife of Takahashi Yoshio, the head of Mitsukoshi, and exhibited it at the *Tokyo Kangyō Hakurankai* (The Tokyo Exhibition for the Encouragement of Industry) in 1907 where it won first prize. Mitsukoshi produced a poster from this painting in color lithography in 1909.<sup>2</sup> Following the success of the poster, Mitsukoshi held prize contests for posters of images of women in kimono. In addition to clothiers, breweries and liquor companies also sought to appeal to male customers by commissioning artists to paint images of beautiful women dressed in kimonos for reproduction as posters. These images became popular icons of Japanese urban life.

Okada produced another example of a 'kimono beauty' in lithograph titled *Yubiwa* (*Ring*, fig.4)<sup>3</sup> for the supplement of the new year's issue of newspaper, *Jiji Shimpō* in 1908, which was to advertise the first beauty contest in Japan (Inoue 1997, 8-74, Satō 2005). Okada painted a young woman in gorgeous kimono wearing a large diamond ring with a gold band as a reference to the contest's first-prize winner. Just in the study of *Genroku no Omokage*, the girl in Okada's

lithography looked out at viewers with large eyes, and cocked her head slightly in a coquettish fashion. The model was not the actual winner of the contest, but Okada provided an example of an ideal image of modern beauty for the young bourgeois woman.

The Ministry of Culture established an annual exhibition of painting and sculpture in 1907 called the *Bunten* (an abbreviation for *Monbushō Bijutsu Tenrankai*, literally Art Exhibition of the Ministry of Culture). This large exhibition attracted huge audiences of various classes and social backgrounds. Images of beautiful women in elaborately depicted kimono by Okada and Wada must have had a significant impact on contemporary artists including nihonga painters as well as other oil painters. The painters, Ikeda Shōen and her husband Ikeda Terukata, for example, represented women with big dreamy-eyes wearing finely detailed kimono which resembled to Genroku style and made success in the *Bunten*. It has been pointed out that images of Okada had an impact on illustrations by Takehisa Yumeji, who won great popularity in the 1910s and 1920s (Kuwahara 2001, 256-7).

As the *Bunten* exhibitions gained in popularity, increasing numbers of artists painted images of young woman. The organizer of the 9th *Bunten* of 1915 installed a whole gallery with Japanese-style *bijinga* (paintings of beautiful women) which was christened the “*Bijinga Room*” by journalists. Some of the paintings were criticized as too sensual, but the room attracted many viewers.

## 5. ‘Kimono Beauty’ Imperialism

The nationalist content of images of women in kimono may be exposed by contrasting them with images of women dressed in East Asian fashion. The colonization of Korea in 1910 marked a major expansion of Japanese imperialism in Asia. Fujishima Takeji, a professor of the Tokyo Fine Arts School, was sent to Korea in 1911 by the government. He wrote that he was impressed with the beauty of female dress in Korea and painted pictures of Korean women. Their costume reminded him of Japanese picture scrolls of the Heian period (794-1191) (Fujishima 1914). Kuraya Mika has argued that Fujishima’s impression was not unusual among Japanese who traveled to Korea under the Japanese occupation. She pointed out that their inclination to compare Korea to ancient Japan was a reflection of Japanese imperialism (Kuraya 1998). In 1922, the *Chōsen Bijutsu Tenrankai* (Korean Art Exhibition) was established under Japanese colonial administration. Korean artists could submit their works to these exhibitions as could Japanese artists, but Kim Hyeschin has pointed out that Korean artists were encouraged to express a weak and submissive image of Korea in their paintings (Kim 2003).

At the 9th *Bunten* in 1915, Fujishima exhibited a painting titled *Nioi* (*Perfume*, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, fig.5) which depicted a woman in Manchurian court dress sitting near flowers and a small bottle of snuff. It was an early example of an image of a woman in

Chinese dress painted by a Japanese painter. Such images became quite popular in the *Teiten* (Art Exhibition of the Imperial Academy), the new form of the Bunten after 1919. The 1911 Republican Revolution in China forced many Qing Dynasty elites to flee from China to Japan with their possessions. This stimulated a new vogue for Chinese culture in Japan. Though images of beautiful woman in Chinese dress were quite popular in Japanese paintings already, they had previously been dressed in Han-Chinese style dresses whereas the new images of Chinese women were dressed in Manchurian court dress. (Kojima 2002). Whereas images of women in Han-Chinese style dresses in pre-modern Japanese paintings reflected the long Japanese admiration for Chinese culture, women in Chinese dress in modern paintings may be associated with nostalgia for the deposed Qing Dynasty. Since the Qing dynasty was now associated with the decline of China, this imagery seems to reflect the growing Japanese domination over China.

Differences in fashion depicted in images of women helped visualize and articulate otherness. Tsuchida Bakusen, a leading Japanese-style painter in Kyoto, frequently painted *maiko* girls (a type of geisha in Kyoto) throughout his career. After returning from a stay in Europe from 1921 to 1923, he was impressed anew by the beauty of Japanese women and the Japanese landscape as if he were a foreigner beholding an exotic spectacle (Bakusen 1923). His 1924 painting of “*Bugi Rinsen*” (*Maiko in a Garden*, fig.6) depicts her sitting in a Japanese garden in gorgeous kimono. The large format of painting based on intensive studies shows artist’s learning of European paintings. Bakusen traveled to Korea in 1933 and painted two Korean courtesans in a painting titled *Heishō* (Korean Bench) that was shown at the 14th *Teiten* exhibition (fig.7). This work was painted mostly in white with simple contour lines and the figures of the Korean girls look faint and humble. In a correspondence, Bakusen acknowledged that he was less interested in Korean models than *maiko* of Japan because their clothes were not as beautiful those worn by *maiko* (The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo 1997, 182). Bakusen, it seems, discovered his identity as a Japanese painter by painting the beauty of kimono.

Kikuchi Keigetsu, another leading Japanese-style painter in Kyoto, was also quite conscious of the role of fashion in paintings of women. In 1928, he depicted women living in an isolated island of the southern archipelago of Okinawa (fig.8). He showed the women in ethnic clothes sitting in southern landscapes with vivid color. His emphasis on contrast of perspective and delicate description in landscape may be a reflection of his study of fifteenth-century Italian paintings during a trip to Europe in 1922-23. Kikuchi’s images of women in primitive fashion represented the Japanese borderlands as an uncivilized utopia in sharp contrast to his paintings of urban women fashionably dressed in kimono.

One may wonder what sort of images of women in kimono were painted by a painter from a Japanese colony. The Japanese-style painter Chen Jin (1907-1998) was the most successful female artist in Taiwan under the Japanese occupation. She was born in a wealthy family in Hsinchu



and studied at The Third High School for Women. There, Chen Jin showed talent in Japanese-style painting and continued her study in Tokyo at the *Joshi Bijutsu Gakkō* (Women's Art College). She painted women in kimono with realistic expression in early works shown at the Taiwan Fine Arts Exhibition such as *Mikan* (*A Mandarin Orange*) of 1928 (Fig.9), which depicts an elegant woman wearing a fine kimono. The woman in the picture sits properly in Japanese manner. Since the Taiwan Fine Arts Exhibition was operated in conformity with the Japanese colonial policy of encouraging assimilation to Japanese culture, paintings such as Chen's *Mikan* would have been regarded as exemplary illustrations of Taiwanese assimilation to Japanese culture.

However, in later works, Chen Jin turned to the expression of 'local color.' For example, in 1934 she exhibited *Gassō* (Ensemble) at the 15th Teiten (fig.10), her first participation in the *Teiten*. This work depicts two women in modern Chinese dress sitting on Taiwanese furniture playing the Chinese flute and the Chinese guitar. For the *Teiten* in Tokyo, she painted 'local' themes, but she selected 'Japanese' motifs for exhibition in Taiwan. Perhaps Chen turned to the expression of Taiwanese identity by depicting modern Taiwanese women. However, when the Japanese audience looked at Chen's *Gassō* in Tokyo, they could easily recognize a kind of exoticism in the images of women in Chinese dress playing Chinese instruments. Photographs of Chen Jin show that she herself dressed in kimono in those days. Though she wore kimono and perfectly mastered Japanese lifestyles, she had an ambivalent identity as an elite individual from a colony.

## 6. Beauties in Kimono in the age of Modernism

In the mid-1920s increasing numbers of short-haired young women wearing Western clothes appeared in central districts of Tokyo. They were referred to as *moga*, an abbreviation of *modan gāru* (modern girl). However, such young women who wore Western clothes remained in the minority. According to an investigation by Kon Wajirō at Ginza, which was the most fashionable spot in Tokyo at that time, in 1925 the ratio of woman wearing Western-style clothes to those wearing kimono was 1 to 99, while fully 67 percent of men were wearing Western-style clothes at this time (Kon 1971, 84-5). Avant-garde artists tended to use the images of such *moga* in their works, and some nihonga painters were also interested in depicting *moga*. However, painters more often expressed modernity with images of kimono-clad women placed in urban settings. For example, Nakamura Daizaburō depicted a woman dressed in a luxurious kimono playing the piano in a work titled *Piano* of 1926 (Kyoto Municipal Museum of Modern Art, fig.11). *Hana no kage* (*Beside a Flower Vase*, Kabukiza-theater, Tokyo) of 1932 by Hayami Gyoshū shows a woman wearing a striped kimono sitting in a geometrically patterned modern interior. Ota Chōu's *Hoshi o miru hito* (*Women looking at the stars*, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo) of 1936 represents young women dressed in an elegant kimono with an astronomical telescope.

While kimono became a modern fashion, antique women's kimonos came to be regarded

as treasured museum artifacts. Okada Saburōsuke, an oil painter mentioned previously, was a well-known textile collector in his later years. His collection ranged widely with items from all over the world. Though he kept working on female nudes, he refined his interest in female dress by collecting textiles. Terry S. Milhaupt proved that some fragments of highly valued *Tsujigahana* in collections of textile lovers such as Okada and Yasuda Yukihiro, a nihonga painter, were a part of the same kimono made in the sixteenth century (Milhaupt 2004, 47-56).<sup>4</sup> Kimono of *Tsujigahana* was removed from its history related to female bodies and made into artifacts purchased by male collectors in the modern age.

As the poster by Okada for a beauty contest in 1908 was influential in popularizing images of 'kimono beauty,' another image on the occasion of a beauty contest held in 1931 serves as a good example to end our discussion. This contest was organized by *Shūkan Asahi* (*Asahi Weekly Magazine*) to select the *Misu Nippon* (Miss Nippon).<sup>5</sup> Kanokogi Takeshirō painted a portrait of Miss Kita, who was among the second-prize winners, which he showed at the fourteenth *Teiten* under the title of *Madomowazeru Kita* (*Mademoiselle Kita*, location unknown, fig. 12). The portrait showed the profile of a modern beauty with a permed hair against a gold screen of the kind known as *Tagasode Byōbu* (A Screen Showing Someone's Kimono) that were made around the seventeenth century. These screens show kimono hung on racks as a kind of *tromp-l'oeuil* against gold background. This painting showed clearly the dual significance of the kimono, both as a sign of Japanese tradition and of modernity.

## Conclusion

In the age of Japanese modernization and Westernization, male artists who studied in Europe learned Westerners' gaze on images of Japanese woman in kimono, and tried to put themselves in the same position as male Europeans. Rapid expansion of Japanese territory caused serious problems related to confusion over Japanese identity. Japanese artists needed to convince themselves of their identity by creating images of women in kimono. Female fashion played an essential role in visualizing Japanese nationalism and colonialism.

## NOTES

1 Exceptionally, four foreign female students were allowed to study at the school before 1946.

2 The original oil painting is titled *Fujinzō* (*A Portrait of a Woman*, Bridgeston Museum of Art, the Ishibashi Foundation.)

3 The original oil painting is titled *Daiyamond no On'na* (*A Woman with a Diamond*, collection of Fukutomi Tarō.)

4 *Tsujigahana* was made with a mixture of various techniques of dying and embroidery and have been highly valued among the textile collectors.

5 The announcement for the contest was issued in *Shūkan Asahi*, 20 January 1931, pp. 2-3, and pp. 30-31.

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Fig.1 An official photograph of the Meiji Empress taken by Suzuki Shinichi and Maruki Riyō in 1889. Copied from exhibition catalogue titled “Empress Shōken: The Exquisite Empress of the Meiji Era”, Meiji Jingu Treasure Museum Annex, Tokyo, 2004.



Fig.2 Wada Eisaku “Shikyō” (Homesickness), 1902, oil on canvas, The University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts, 95.7×66.9cm.



Fig.3 Okada, Saburōsuke, a study for “Genroku no Omokage” (Reminiscence of the Genroku Era), 1904, oil on canvas, location unknown. Copied from an illustration in *Myōjō*, November, 1904, Tokyo: Shinshisha. Copied from: Kaburaki, Kiyokata. ed., *Gendai Sakka Bijinga Zenshū: Yōga-hen, Jō* (The Complete Series of Paintings of Beauties by Contemporary Artists: The volume of Oil Paintings, 1), Tokyo: Shinchōsha, 1931.



Fig.4 Okada, Saburōsuke “Yubiwa” (Ring), 1908, colour lithograph, 46.9×33.8cm (image size), author’s collection.



Fig.5 Fujishima Takeji "Nioi" (Perfume), 1915, oil on canvas, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.



Fig.6 Tsuchida, Bakusen "Bugi Rinsen" (Maiko in a Garden), 1924, color on silk, 217.7x102.0cm, The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.



Fig.8 Kikuchi, Keigetsu "Haiha Teroma" (The *Hateruma* Island) 1928, color on silk, 224.0x176.0cm, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art.



Fig.7 Tsuchida, Bakusen "Heishō" (Korean Bench) 1933, color on silk 153.0x209.0cm, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art.

Fig.9 Chen Jin, *Mikan (A Mandarin Orange)*, 1928, colour on silk, location unknown.

Fig.10 Chen Jin, *Gassō (Ensemble)*, 1934, color on silk, 177.0×200.0cm, private collection.



Fig.11 Nakamura, Daizaburō “Piano” (Piano), 1926, color on silk, 164.5×302.0cm, Kyoto Municipal Museum of Modern Art.



Fig.12 Kanokogi, Takeshirō “Madomowazeru Kita” (Mademoiselle Kita) 1940, oil on canvas, location unknown. Copied from Kaburaki, Kiyokata. ed., *Gendai Sakka Bijinga Zenshū: Yōga-hen, Jō*, (*The Complete Series of Paintings of Beauties by Contemporary Artists: The volume of Oil Paintings, 1*), Tokyo: Shinchōsha,1931.