Professional Leave Report Cover Sheet

Name: Jill Fields

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○ Spring

○ Academic Year

○ Other

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Fall 2021 Sabbatical Report

Submitted by Jill Fields, Professor of History and Founding Coordinator of Jewish Studies

Project: Fashion in World History, chapter 4, "Robes and Wraps: Kimono and Sari"

Date: January 23, 2022

During the fall semester, I compiled and read an extensive bibliography to prepare to write a chapter for my book in progress, Fashion in World History, a supplemental textbook for second semester World History students contracted for publication by Routledge for their series "Themes in World History." Below is the list of sources I compiled and read to write the chapter. The chapter is now completed and is attached.

I appreciate so much the opportunity the sabbatical provided to allow me to focus on the research and writing of this chapter. As a result of the sabbatical, I have made substantial progress on the completion of this book manuscript, and now have a total of three of six chapters ready for submission to the publisher. Please note I worked on a different chapter than I initially planned because the topic flowed more seamlessly from and built more directly upon the previous chapter I had completed. In addition, I wrote a book review I was recruited to submit for California History, a peer reviewed journal published by the University of California Press. The review is also attached.

Sincerely,

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Review by Jill Fields, History and Jewish Studies, Fresno State for California History

Women's struggles to gain control over what they wear has a long history that parallels and is part of women's rights advocacy in the United States. Einav Rabinovitch-Fox challenges simplistic views that highlight only feminist criticism of fashion by exploring the topic in a more expansive framework. In *Dressed for Freedom: The Fashionable Politics of American Feminism*, Rabinovitch-Fox traces a century of feminist objections to uncomfortable and impractical clothing and, to a greater degree, ways in which feminists utilized dress to effectively broadcast the popularity of their movement and to undermine opposition to feminism based on media-fueled stereotypes of activists as unattractive. She also includes consideration of women who adopted fashionable styles associated with progress and modernity who did not necessarily identify as or with feminists. To do so, Rabinovitch-Fox draws on a wealth of sources ranging from magazine and newspaper accounts to memoirs and organizational records to assay the nineteenth-century emergence of the woman's rights and dress reform movements; turn-of-the-century garment workers, popular culture icons such as the Gibson Girl, and fashion activists; the clothing of suffragists; flapper fashion; mid-century female fashion professionals; and fashion debates and practices that took place amidst the late 1960s and 1970s heyday of the women's liberation movement. The book is further enriched by the attention Rabinovitch-Fox gives throughout the book to Black women's differing fashion needs and aims as they negotiated both denigrating tropes perpetuated by dominant social structures and discrimination within the feminist movement as they asserted their public voice and presence.

Debate about the role of fashion in advancing women's rights quickly followed the mid-nineteenth century call for female suffrage with the launching of the Bloomer Costume, an outfit that did away with the cumbersome layers of petticoats and floor-length hemlines of fashionable attire and maintained modesty by covering the exposed lower limbs with trousers. Though many early woman's rights advocates welcomed this attempt to create more comfortable clothing, the ridicule and negative attention the Bloomer received prompted activists to turn away from linking dress reform with their most important goal, winning women the vote. Nonetheless, for decades the anti-feminist press and male authorities continued to depict suffragists as anti-fashion, unfeminine, and ugly women seeking to usurp men's privileged access to trousers as well as political authority.

According to Rabinovitch-Fox's account, subsequent generations of women responded to disparaging constructions of feminists by self-conscious use of fashion to promote feminist aims and by embracing contemporary styles that provided greater mobility and were associated with progress and a new public presence for women. For example, as the suffrage movement expanded at the turn of the century, the image of the Gibson Girl, dressed in shirtwaist and

skirt, predominated. The separate blouse and skirt ensemble was an innovative cross-class phenomenon worn by striking garment workers, the small but growing number of women attending college, and progressive reformers. As women gained access to bicycles, outfits composed of divided skirts became acceptable, as long as their outward appearance did not betray their bifurcated status. By the 1910s, when suffragists took their cause to the streets by staging parades and marches, they took care to create public events that demonstrated women could be both beautiful and politically responsible. Marchers were asked to wear white dresses accessorized with suffrage sashes in movement colors and participate in parades that were well-organized, orderly processions.

Rabinovitch-Fox challenges notions of the post-suffrage generation as apolitical by emphasizing the freedom that flapper styles provided in raising hemlines and requiring far fewer layers of undergarments. She finds that the freedom ascribed to 1920s fashions made them a "visible symbol" (81) that "conveyed liberating, empowering messages." (115) A central debate in feminist analysis of popular culture and the field of cultural studies generally is whether cultural texts and practices are oppressive and uphold status quo hierarchies or express a form of resistance and offer liberatory potential. Culture can also be assessed in terms of how particular definitions of femininity are constructed within and by discourses and performative displays. Though the concept of empowerment focuses attention more on individuals' sense of self rather than collective struggles for social transformation, changes in fashion such as the less cumbersome clothing of the 1920s and the mid-century rise of sportswear, which Rabinovitch-Fox discusses in her chapter on female fashion designers and other industry professionals, speak to the success of resonant feminist calls for women to have greater comfort, freedom of movement, and choice in their clothing.

Rabinovitch-Fox celebrates the direction of fashion that aligned with feminist aims by asserting that wearing fashionable styles advanced the cause of feminism and made women wearing contemporary clothing feminist advocates whether they knew it or not. More fully addressing the restrictive aspects still required to dress fashionably and the intensive focus on women's bodies as problems that necessitated shaping garments such as girdles, slimming diets, and other beauty regimens including cosmetic surgery to resolve, might have tempered her claims. I would also like to have seen greater critical explication of the concept of "Oriental style" Rabinovitch-Fox employs. In addition, though Rabinovitch-Fox often characterizes fashionable clothing as expressive of freedom and empowerment, if she had included more specific consideration of what is arguably the most fundamental element of feminist agitation, the fight for equality, she might have brought more explicit feminist concerns related to fashion into her analysis. For example, her discussion of the sexual freedom represented by the 1960s mini skirt could have led into consideration of how fashion figured in feminist criticism and activism regarding rape prosecutions in an era when women's clothing played a central role in blaming rape victims for assaults.

In documenting self-identified feminists' use of fashion in the suffrage and women's liberation eras, *Dressed for Freedom* provides new insights about the relationship between feminism and fashionable clothing. The book also exposes the contradictory aspects and shifting meanings of fashion. Feminists understood fashion as an unavoidable focus of women's lives that required critique and thus solutions, but also appreciated how what women wore could contribute to a vision and experience of social transformation. Nonetheless, shared understandings of what specific fashions represented at times remained elusive even among feminists. Black activist Florynce Kennedy, for example, pointed out in 1974 that jeans might be a welcome alternative to the "tailored well-dressed image" for white women but for Black "women who have had to wear 'shapeless hand-me-downs' … indulging in feminine fashions [could be] 'a declaration of independence'" (175). The contradictions Rabinovitch-Fox highlights and the less obvious aspects of the fashion-industrial complex she brings into consideration suggest the potential for *Dressed for Freedom* to spark future studies of the often fraught, yet useful, and certainly multi-dimensional relationship between fashion and feminism that still impacts diverse women across the United States today.

Jill Fields is Professor of History and Founding Coordinator of Jewish Studies at Fresno State, where she teaches courses in women's history, popular culture, and Jewish Studies. She is the author of An Intimate Affair: Women, Lingerie and Sexuality and editor of Entering the Picture: Judy Chicago, the Fresno Feminist Art Program, and the Collective Visions of Women Artists.

Chapter 4: "Robes and Wraps– Kimono and Sari"
Fashion in World History by Jill Fields

The complex history of men's business suits discussed in the previous chapter details the growing acceptance and local adaptation of this popular male outfit throughout the world. Changes in the clothing of women in non-Western countries over the same period are equally complicated. Though responding to the same forces wrought by contact, colonization, and capitalism, transitions in women's clothing differed from men's. Gender distinctions that shaped the lives of women and men -- and their manifestation in dressing practices – impacted the shape of women's fashion in a wide range of national contexts. Generally, the pace of women's adoption of Western styles was slower than men's, and revivals of "traditional" clothing in the post-colonial world typically focused on women's wear rather than men's.

The fashion industry's impulse for innovation has meant the adaptation, absorption and appropriation of "traditional" women's clothing into Western fashions since the mid-nineteenth century. The relationship between the styles discussed in this chapter and Western fashion has been and remains dynamic and synergistic. Furthermore, these garments raise questions about the relationship between the female body and clothing. Some styles are designed to bring attention to body size and shape, especially those associated with women's modern Western fashion, while others are designed like the kimono, which brings greater visual focus on the clothing itself than to the body.

Wearing simply sewn robes or fabric wrapped and fastened around the body and head have at times been the basis for garments used by both men and women. In the twenty-first

century, most clothing constructed on that basis and designed to be worn in public is defined as female. In this chapter, the histories of such garments, specifically the Japanese kimono and Indian sari, explores why that has come to be. These articles of clothing align with a growing focus on women as bearers of tradition and national identity, and culturally specific ideals of femininity. Their presentation as linked to, if not resurrected from the past, often overshadows the modern and post-modern conditions of their production, meaning, and everyday or special occasion use. As historian Eric Hobsbawm has persuasively argued, what we understand as "tradition" is never in fact timeless and always invented in particular historical circumstances.

****Kimono****

For centuries, the front-wrapping jacket and robe were central to Japanese clothing for both men and women. The kimono's origins lie in the eighth century and by the later sixteenth century had evolved into the shape it still has today. As historian Liza Dalby explains, even the collar and straight-seamed attachment of the sleeves remained consistent, though a range of material, fabric pattern and decoration, sleeve size and shape, and varying methods and widths of ties used to secure the robe have been incorporated at different times and locations. Japanese people of different classes and occupations adapted the basic structure of this garment to suit expectations about gender and age, work and leisure in urban or agricultural settings, and elite or commoner status. Its easily reproducible pattern consists of a few pieces of simply cut fabric, and when finished, can fold flat for storage and be taken apart for washing. Wrapped clothing also requires less attention to sizing, as the ties and folds of the fabric can be adjusted for a comfortable fit.

The word kimono literally translates as "a thing to wear." The term came into widespread use in the nineteenth century when in response to the economic pressures of Western countries seeking entree to Japanese markets, resources and strategic Asian Pacific locations, Japanese leaders decided to modernize their country on Western terms in order to meet this challenge on a more equal footing. As discussed in the previous chapter, this modernization effort included the assumption by men of the business suit for wear outside the home. Clothing was divided into two categories, *wafuku* and *yōfuku*, which refer to Japanese dress and Western dress, respectively. Initially however, women continued to wear *wafuku*, especially the kimono, which men might wear only at home. Declining use of indigenous Japanese clothing meant that by the mid-twentieth century, the kimono became the singular national dress of Japan, and an international, recognizable symbol of Japanese national identity. As a result, what constituted or what was thought of as a kimono narrowed to a particular type of robe worn primarily by women and by a diminishing number of female geishas at their workplaces. Men's public use was limited to ceremonial occasions.

The kimono is often described as a T-shaped garment because when laid flat with both sleeves extended it resembles that letter. For centuries before the American Commodore Perry arrived in Japan in 1853 with his fleet, which prompted Japan's fuller engagement with Western nations and global economic pressures to "modernize," Japanese people wore a variety of garments depending upon their class status, work life, and gender. During the early modern Edo era (1603-1868), Japan was headed by an emperor who was largely a figurehead in this period, and Japanese society was stratified into four social classes – samurai, farmers, artisans, and merchants – in descending order of status. Belted robes were widely worn by Japanese men and

women in all these groups. Their specific design, decoration and symbolism varied depending upon the class designation of the wearer. Sumptuary laws issued by ruling elites attempted to control the use of fabrics and especially colors to maintain the visual distinctions and codify the privileges of higher status. Over time, in trends similar to those in Europe, merchants' increasing wealth challenged the ability of elites to enforce such distinctions.

**** From Kosode to Kimono ****

Front-wrapping, belted Japanese robes emerged and became widely worn by men and women over a thousand years ago during eras when Chinese influence on Japanese culture predominated. Beginning in the late ninth century, Japanese clothing developed more distinction from the Chinese. When the shogunate was established in the late twelfth century, elaborate court dress was simplified and women began wearing the *kosode* – a small-sleeved kimono that had previously been used as an undergarment by elite women and as outwear by most others. The elite kosode replaced layers of kimonos with large sleeves known as *osode*. The smaller sleeves of the kosode were narrower and shorter. However the preference for larger sleeves didn't diminish entirely; younger, unmarried women, and women training to be geisha wore kimonos with longer sleeves with enough volume to swing, known as *furisode*.

By the late sixteenth century, although the kosode's shape remained the same, the revival of the weaving and textile industry in a Kyoto district set aside for this purpose by Japan's legendary leader Momoyama, impacted the fabric and decorative aspects of the kosode. They were made with softer fabrics that better draped the body, and their surfaces became a canvas that was painted, dyed or embroidered upon. The visual aesthetic of kimonos, from elegant restraint

to dazzling colors and prints, became a key element that could convey status, taste, and interests. Visual themes included flowers, trees and other aspects of nature, including birds, animals, and insects such as dragonflies, depictions of water and waves, geographic features such as Mt. Fuji, well-known scenes from literature, and calligraphy. Women would often align their choice of kimono with the seasons in terms of the scenes or flora featured.

In the seventeenth century, the increasing wealth of merchants fed their desire for conspicuous display, which included the dress of their wives. Elaborate kosode with padded hems and more elaborate ornamentation, some of which was inspired by theater costumes, evaded restrictions on dress imposed by the ruling samurai. The prevailing sumptuary laws inspired innovations in dyeing techniques such as *shibori*, a type of tie-dye, and *yüzen*, which employed rice paste to create patterns, that could suggest forbidden colors such as red or purple without flagrant violation of the rules. By the mid-eighteenth century, the *obi* – the knotted belt worn to secure the robe – became wider, creating more definition between the upper and lower areas of the kosode where images and artistry could flourish. More elaborate obi knotting techniques and designs around the hem became popular.

These changes took place during the Tokugawa or Edo period, an era of relative peace and nation-building in which Japan's cities became some of the largest in the world. By 1750, the population of Tokyo (Edo) was over 1,000,000. Though most people remained farmers living in rural communities, the growing importance of Japanese urban society engendered two intriguing concepts that challenge notions and definitions of modernity, which is typically conceived of on Western terms. Urban chic was epitomized by the term *iki*, which suggested an elegance based in simplicity that eschewed extravagance while requiring the means and knowledge to pull it off in

sophisticated style and nuanced deportment. The *ukiyo* -- "floating world" – refers to the places and imaginations of urban pleasure seekers and entertainers who reveled in style and extravagance. The floating world developed from sanctioned "red light districts" where conventional rules of dressing and comportment didn't apply. Samurai frequented these urban pleasure zones and as a result underwrote some of the artistic achievements in painting, literature and poetry, and *kabuki* and *bunroku* puppet theater that emerged there. These new activities created segments of society that didn't easily fit within the established hierarchy offered by the four traditional social classes. And, as a site of creativity, floating world fashionistas' innovative kimono stylings sparked broader trends taken up by others. Social changes and pressures were thus afoot by the time Europeans and Americans began to insist upon their right to commercial access to Japanese markets and resources in the nineteenth century.

****Japanese Icon: Kimono as Traditional and Modern****

The encounter with Western powers that intensified when Commodore Perry arrived and secured trade treaties that benefitted the United States more than Japan shook Japanese society to the core. In short order, however, a new regime took hold that sought to engage the West on an equal footing and avoid a fate similar to the dominated China. The Meiji Restoration (1868-1912) formalized the declining power of the shogunate, which had faced economic decline and growing social and military irrelevance, by restoring the emperor to political power. Building upon the unification of Japan accomplished during the previous era, the new government led by a reinvigorated emperor was able to implement modernization policies – dubbed *bunmei kaika*, "civilization and enlightenment" – with stunning swiftness in a range of spheres from politics and

the military to education and industrialization. For example, Japan's first railway line was completed in 1872, and more lines quickly followed linking Japan's bustling proto-capitalist regional economies to spur further market expansion. Tokyo University was founded in1877, offering a range of courses that aided modernization efforts by giving students greater familiarity with Western ways, thought and technology to increasing numbers of Japanese men who could serve national interests in the new or transforming bureaucracies and businesses after graduation.

As discussed in the previous chapter on menswear, embracing modernity and challenging the West included changes in Japanese people's clothing. In 1872 the Meiji emperor appeared in public in Western dress, and proclaimed the importance of male public officials jettisoning what he characterized as "effeminate" attire. He asserted that the old style of official clothing was created under Chinese influence, thereby suggesting that what men had been wearing was not actually Japanese to begin with and thus letting it go of it was not an affront to Japanese sensibilities. In 1876, a further decree called upon businessmen to transform their garb as well. Men's military uniforms were among the first to undergo redesign, followed by instituting Western-style school uniformss we have seen, men's business suits soon replaced traditional Japanese garments for men at work and outside the home. The divide between the two types of fashion systems was clear, as traditional clothing was now referred to as *wafuku* and foreign clothing was identified as *yōfuku*.

By the late 1880s, the empress wore in public and was depicted wearing the latest Parisian fashions. An imperial decree issued in 1887 called upon women to adopt Western clothing. Some women joined men in wearing *yōfuku*, though due to women's lesser status in public life, their assumption of tailored clothing lacked the impetus that compelled men in government and business to change wardrobes virtually overnight. Despite these efforts, around the turn of the

century, dissatisfaction with the casting aside of Japanese ways of daily life began to be voiced, and advocates argued instead that it was possible to be both modern and authentically Japanese. As this cultural movement gained influence, it primarily impacted the dressing practices of women, who largely resumed or maintained wearing what were now referred to as kimonos not only at home or on ceremonial occasions but in public. As in other parts of the world, women's bodies became the bearers of cultural tradition and continuity through their clothing. Though a nascent women's rights movement germinated in Japan, ideologies of female subordination found material form in clothing that identified women with the past. However, as Hobsbawm would remind us, the kimonos of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not – and could not be – purely throwbacks, but instead were, of course, products of their own time. Moreover, the symbolism of the kimono within this context as redolent of a Japanese essence linked to the past does not mean that *yōfuku* for women was any less symbolic of conventional Western femininity or more comfortable to wear.

Twentieth-century kimonos served as iconic conveyers of essential Japanese identity and Japanese femininity conceived as submissive and "traditional," especially in the limited vision of Western eyes. Within Japan, status could still be displayed through quality of fabric and *iki* aesthetics, yet kimonos no longer conveyed status in the same specific ways they had in the past when the four distinct social classes segmented society. Instead, kimonos were divided into those for everyday use and those for special occasions. Most kimonos remained home sewn. Constructed from a single bolt of fabric and composed of just seven pieces put together with straight seams, Meiji-era kimonos were increasingly produced on sewing machines, which were introduced by Singer in Japan in 1###. Women's clothing maintenance duties also including

washing, and kimonos were taken apart for cleaning and then resewn. As the fabric wore out, the pieces could be repurposed for a child's kimono. Kimono maintenance thus provided performative continuity with Japanese women's domestic duties of the past.

Yet even these traditional duties were connected to modern consumer culture. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, kimono fabrics might be colored with chemical dyes imported from Europe. Fabric purchases that had once only taken place in specialized kimono stores or in shops where artisans made kimonos for wealthier clientele were now also occurring in the new urban site of department stores. In a measure of the importance of the kimono to consumer culture and its attendant economics as well as the business savvy of kimono store owners, a number of the major department stores were founded by long-time kimono entrepreneurs. Two well-known examples are Matsuzakaya, founded as a kimono store in 1611 and converted into a department store in 1910 and Daimaru, a family-owned kimono store founded in 1717 that was reestablished as department store in 1908.

Innovative marketing techniques these companies employed to draw customers and increase sales included specialized designs created by in-house artists whose work was featured and popularized in department store publications that functioned as fashion magazines and featured celebrity models. These mass-produced magazines updated the practice begun in the seventeenth century of circulating limited edition kimono pattern books. Department stores also offered ready-to-wear kimonos, often made with *meisen*, a new mass-produced textile produced with lower grade silk that might feature modern abstract designs. Young women known as *mōga*, or modern girls, typically wore *yōfuku*, though they might also pair *meisen* kimonos with a fashionable haircut or other Western accessories. *Mōga*, who had opportunities to became wage

earners as office workers or shop assistants, were integral to urban scenes of fashionable display.

Other changes in Japanese daily life further impacted the look and consumption of kimonos. Regional style variations evolved into brands that were shipped directly to consumers. In addition, sitting in chairs rather than on tatami mats on the floor brought more design attention to the upper portion and shoulders of the kimono. Beginning in the early decades of the twentieth century, these designs might feature Western rather than native flora and by the 1920s references to contemporary life, such as images of cocktails or women dressed in *yōfuku*. Ironically, then, the idealized kimono that emerged in the twentieth century was a thoroughly modern garment that nonetheless evoked a timeless view of women's social role as the bearer of cultural tradition. Western views of the kimono doubled down on that latter perspective.

****Kimono and the Western Gaze****

The Dutch were the only Western trading partners with Japan from the early seventeenth century until the mid-nineteenth century. Some kimonos made their way to Europe as a result. However, the subsequent and broader opening of trade with Japan led to greater fascination with and circulation of Japanese objects among European and American consumers. Small shops selling imported goods and art in Western cultural capitals intrigued artists such as James Whistler, an American painter working in London and Paris, who began painting Western women dressed in kimonos in the 1860s. His images, and those of other well-known artists such as William Merrit Chase, James Tissot, and Pierre-August Renoir often depicted solitary female figures or small groups of women in intimate domestic settings dressed in loose or at times open kimonos worn as dressing gowns for comfortable, yet sensuous and beautiful dressing or lounging

at home. Such artistic renderings of the kimono highlight the exotic element of Japanese women and their sexuality. Westerners perceived kimono-clad Japanese women to be both demure and submissive and also expressive of eroticism. Orientalist perspectives of Asian women generally, and more specific misunderstandings about the behavior of kimono-clad geisha as licentious or prostitutes, contributed to such views.

The interest in Japanese design elements and their appearance in Western paintings became so common, the trend was named *Japonisme* or *Japonaiserie*, Vincent Van Gogh's preferred term. His Impressionist contemporaries were inspired by and felt kinship with the techniques and approaches they observed in Japanese artists' wood block prints, which some like Van Gogh, began to collect. Similarly, English and American Arts and Crafts movement leaders such as William Morris and John Ruskin found affinities with Japanese artisanal production and appreciated kimonos as aligned with the female dress reform concepts they promoted that advocated more flowing and comfortable clothing for women that was in tune with rather than restricting and reshaping with corsetry what they considered the "natural" body.

Increasing tourism to Japan fostered access to information about and images of kimonos. Western tourists frequently purchased kimonos as souvenirs, which sparked the specialized production of kimonos for visitors to take home and their presence in far flung homes that could be shared with friends and relatives. Hence the paintings and photographs of European or American women at home in kimonos reflected reality, however invested the artists and subjects were in fantasies about their meanings. In addition, postcard images of iconic Japanese scenes and people, and the ability to have one's photograph taken in traditional costume at photography studios in Japan, further circulated images of Japanese clothing in Europe and the United States.

Travelers to Japan also penned articles and travel books detailing their experiences and appreciation, if at times misguided, for Japanese material culture. Japanese pavilions at the well-attended world expositions beginning in London in 1862 and subsequent fairs in Paris and other major locations for global exchange such as the 1893 Columbian Exposition held in Chicago were significant locations for familiarizing Europeans and Americans with Japanese culture and goods. In addition, these expositions provided opportunities for Japanese exposure to Occidental textiles, production and dye techniques, and fashions.

Performance arts also integrated Japanese settings and fictional narratives and thus featured performers wearing kimonos on stage. Gilbert and Sullivan's hit comic opera *The Mikado* opened in London in 1885 and traveling companies' productions in the United States of this satire of British politics set in Japan were wildly popular. London's Liberty department store contracted with Japanese kimono makers to supply the initial stage costumes and also for sale to store customers. The 1904 debut of Puccini's opera *Madame Butterfly* further disseminated if not codified a set of tropes that have persisted through today about Japanese women as exotic and sensual yet willing to sacrifice themselves for Western men's love. Puccini's opera was one of several staged in that era that featured Japanese-centered narratives. Like her contemporaries in the art world, modern dancer Ruth St. Denis was impressed and enamored with what she found "subtle and elusive" in Japanese styles and culture and wore kimonos for her dance performances and also off stage from the 1910s onward.

Western performers were undoubtedly influenced by Japanese theater companies that appeared in the West after the Meiji Restoration. Japanese acrobatic and theater companies toured Europe, and Japanese actress Hanako won accolades for her dramatic representations

which brought her to the attention of Rodin, who employed her as a model. Acclaimed actress Sadayakko Kawakami and her husband Otojiro Kawakami's troupe toured cities from Paris to San Francisco performing scenes and dances from traditional *Noh* theater, which included pantomimes that emphasized the fluttering movement of kimono sleeves. After a performance at the 1900 world exposition in Paris, Sadayakko's photograph appeared in women's magazines, Pablo Picasso drew a sketch of her on stage, and a Paris shop promoted the "Kimono Sada Yacco."

Japanese motifs began appearing on clothing designed by Parisian couturiers in the 1890s. Paul Poiret, who was attuned to avant-garde sensibilities and interests, debuted a kimono coat in1903 and a few years later began designing tubular "corsetless" dresses that draped the body instead of emphasizing the corseted waist, perhaps inspired by the soft shapes of the kimono. By 1910, London's Lady Duff Gordon created an evening dress modeled on kimono shape and design. Madeleine Vionnet's bias-draped dresses first presented in the 1920s and popularized in the 1930s have also been analyzed as a response to the kimono silhouette and construction, which she studied in detail.

The impetus for Western women's robes and dresses known as wrappers to be sold using the term kimonos from the turn-of-the-century forward resulted from the multiple sources that brought the Japanese kimono into Western view. An 1893 advertisement in *Harper's Bazaar* promoted a New York company's "Japanese Kimono" for relaxed at-home wear, and in 1896 a magazine for farmers and their wives in Maine published instructions for sewing a kimono. Women's magazines reinforced the idea of kimonos both as a fashionable and comfortable necessity. Kimono robes were sold throughout the U.S. via Sears Roebuck mail order, becoming

widely available and integrated into the middle-class woman's wardrobe. Over one hundred years later, softly draping open jackets meant to be worn as outerwear and robes for home use are still marketed as kimonos in the United States.

****Displaying Nationalism: Kimono and War****

Seeking imperial status in Asia to rival Western nations' imperialist projects and face them as equals, Japan deployed its modernized military in the successful Sino war of 1894-5 followed by the Sino-Russian War of 1904-5. These victories were reflected in kimono textiles that, for example, featured the faces of generals or military scenes. After the 1931 invasion of Manchuria and intensified ramp up leading to Japanese alignment with Nazi Germany and Italy, d These victories furthered the cause of pride in Japanese modes of dressing for women. Though militaristic designs were more commonly featured on boys' kimonos or men's kimonos for home use, celebrations of Japanese nationalism could also be seen, though to a lesser degree, on women's and girl's kimonos. A 1930s girl's kimono design, for example, featured images of girls waiving Japanese flags and a 1939 magazine cover displayed a woman dressed in a kimono made of fabric designed with war planes.

Karshiwagi Hiroshi points out that militaristic images were used to promote or commemorate war. During World War II, the prevalence of these designs increased. Japanese women's clothing was thus incorporated into efforts promoting and naturalizing twentieth-century Japanese nationalism. Despite this utilitarian potential, as the war dragged on and the Japanese economy was stressed, women were exhorted to set aside extravagance in dress, including kimonos, and adopt the *monpe*, a simple outfit that features work trousers for women that they

wore out of necessity or as demonstrations of patriotism. Women were told to make do with their existing wardrobes and to avoid wearing kimonos to work. Nonetheless, Japanese women wore kimonos such as the light-weight *yukata* made of cotton for summertime. A widely circulated photograph taken not long after the atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima in August 1945 depicts a woman from the back with her *yukata* pulled aside to reveal the dark lines of the kimono she was wearing imprinted on her body from the flash of the bomb blast. This striking wartime image conveys the contiguous association of the kimono with the Japanese female body and simultaneously documents the consequences of twentieth-century militarism in personal terms.

****Kimonos Today****

War-time kimonos demonstrate the flexibility of the kimono as a canvas and bearer of multiple meanings. In the post-war era, kimonos stabilized as representative objects of Japanese culture and remain as widely recognized symbols of Japanese womanhood if not Japan as a nation. In twenty-first century Japan, women and men might don kimonos for ceremonial occasions, such as weddings, and are worn by geisha and women performing tea ceremonies. But the preference for *yōfuku* is clear. A 1925 ethnography conducted on the Ginza, Tokyo's well-known shopping area, found 67% of men wearing *yōfuku* and 99% of women wearing *wafuku*. Today, the absence of kimono-clad women in public is underscored by a special event, "Kimono de Ginza" for which a small group of women join together at set times to wear kimonos to stroll on the Ginza. According to Terry Satsuki Milhaupt in her comprehensive history of the kimono, "anyone who enjoys wearing a kimono is welcome to participate." Similar pop up events known as "Kimono de Jack" have been organized on Twitter setting a location and time for kimono-clad

enthusiasts to assemble. The first took place in Kyoto in 2010, and they have also been arranged in England and the United States.

Though robes and open jackets marketed as kimonos remain options for women in the United States today, few have an iconic Japanese kimono in their closets. Nonetheless, vintage kimonos remain objects of fascination and are seen in artistic terms. In a measure of the continuing inspiration of kimonos in the art world, feminist artist Miriam Schapiro painted a monumental work, "Anatomy of a Kimono," in 1976. Moreover, art museums from Los Angeles to London have hosted exhibitions of kimonos from their collections, which were built primarily upon donations from wealthy collectors who began purchasing kimonos in the era when *Japonisme* took hold.

A 2015 exhibit at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts featuring Claude Monet's 1876 painting *La Japonaise*, a depiction of his wife in a red kimono, garnered more attention than expected when a controversy erupted over "Kimono Wednesdays," an interactive element that allowed visitors to try on a red kimono made available next to the painting. The kimono had been sewn in Japan by skilled female artisans for a similar purpose during an exhibition of Monet's painting in that country. Michelle Liu Carriger's nuanced analysis of the small group of primarily non-Japanese or Japanese-American Decolonize Our Museum protestors, and the larger group of Japanese-American counter-protestors who appeared in support of Kimono Wednesdays as cultural appreciation rather than appropriation, points out how both groups shared the view of kimono as expressive of an essential Japaneseness though their conclusions about the effects of trying on the kimono radically differed. The ardent articulation of their conflicting positions demonstrates the powerful symbolism of kimonos into the twenty-first century.

****Sari****

The Indian sari provides an intriguing comparison to the kimono. Like the kimono, women began wearing saris in ancient times. However, the modern history of the sari diverges from the kimono's because, from the late nineteenth century forward, many if not most Indian women continued to wear saris – though their design did not remain static – while Japanese women increasingly wore Western clothing. As the kimono became a less frequently worn and ceremonial garment donned for special occasions, the sari wear persisted for both everyday and special occasions. Yet despite these apparently opposite trajectories, both the kimono and sari share iconic status as instantly recognizable symbols of their nations of origin and those nations' visual representations of womanhood. Nonetheless, though the sari can appear to clothe women in the fabric of continuity and unchanging tradition, particularly of gendered expectations, most saris worn in twenty-first century India differ from those of the past in several ways, such as the fabric itself, the way they are draped or fitted around the body, and their ability to convey identities based in region, marital status, caste and class.

At its most basic definition, the sari is a woven textile of approximately four to nine yards long and up to forty-four inches wide that is draped and secured around the body. The typical sari today is about five to six yards in length and thirty-six inches wide and is worn over a *choli* or form fitting sewn blouse in a matching or contrasting color. Though the sari is unstitched, three basic components are recognized spatial elements: the borders running the length of the fabric on each side, the end piece, and the remaining body. The end piece, commonly known as the pallu, is draped over the shoulder and left hanging in the front or back. It can also be draped over the head. The pallu is often the most embellished component of the sari due to its visual prominence.

In the Nivi style of draping, which originated in western India and became the most popular style nationwide, the sari is wrapped from right to left around the body and tucked into a drawstring petticoat, which extends from the waist to the ankles. As the sari is wrapped, care is taken to keep the hemline even and retain enough freedom of movement. Pleats are created at the navel to personalize the fit and for visual effect. Some women use pins to secure the sari pleats to the petticoat. The remaining length of the sari is draped over the left shoulder. Here too pleats can provide more control over how the pallu hangs, and these pleats can also be secured with a safety pin. The Nivi style provides a foundation for additional variations, which may include a bared midriff, a fashion dating back centuries. Overall, the sari is an asymmetrical garment that is many layered both literally and figuratively. In at least one aspect similar to the Western corset, the sari accentuates female bodily difference and can encompass the performance of both modesty and eroticism depending upon the fabric thickness, whether the sari closely hugs the body, and the deportment of the woman wearing it.

Indian women have been wearing saris for over two thousand years. Ancient paintings, pottery, and sculptures depict women wearing fabric draped in various methods. One terracotta dating from 100 BCE appears to show a woman wearing a sari with the fabric draped between the legs; a female figurine carved approximately two centuries later wears a sari draped in a fashion that looks quite similar to contemporary styles. Indian men also wore draped garments, such as the dupatti, which covers the upper body and the dhoti which covers the lower body. These garments were accompanied at times with stitched garments worn either under or over the draped textile. In some regions women also wore stitched garments. Muslim influence and rule brought tailored and sewn clothing to greater prominence, at first regionally in just the areas they

conquered. Muslim dominance culminated with the establishment of the more unified Mugdal Empire in 1526. Nonetheless, Indian women throughout South Asia continued to wear saris.

In pre-industrial, early modern India, textile production was localized, as weavers and their handlooms were an integral part of village and community life in towns large and small. Withing the context of flourishing and diverse local cultures, there developed hundreds of regional variations of saris based on the type of fabrics woven, typically cotton or silk; fabric texture and weight, for example, from coarse to fine; the designs woven into the fabric and their placement, such as on borders; and how the finished sari was draped. In addition, color preferences and the use of regional-specific dyes meant local cultures were distinctive and material expressions of identity and pride. Within localities, age, marital status, occasion, caste and economic means were all factors that influenced the design and appearance of saris and the particular styles available to women and their families.

****The Impacts of Imperialism:

"The bones of the cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India."****

The arrival of the English East India Company in the seventeenth century and the fuller domination of India by the British Empire underway in the nineteenth century had devastating consequences for local weaving economies and thus impacted sari production, purchase and wear. The English, competing initially with both the Mugdals as well as other European powers for lucrative opportunities in India, sought control over resources, labor, and markets to maximize profits. At first, East India Company agents negotiated with the deteriorating Mugdal power structure to set up trade and infrastructure. Relying on the Company's expansive and well-trained military which in 1805 numbered 155,000, the British subsequently displaced the Mugdals in

developing a colonized economy reconfigured for the benefit of the Company and its charter-granting sponsor, the Crown. For example, Company officers and agents worked with local Indian leaders to institute tax collections at increasing rates, which resulted in the transfer of millions of pounds from India to England. Taxes on land and agricultural production put lives and livelihoods in jeopardy, as impoverishment and large-scale famines resulted in millions of deaths. Local businesses were further impacted as buying power decreased.

In the nineteenth century, British industrialists promoted free market ideology to challenge the Company's singular access to profit-making. Free trade meant heightened exploitation, as tariffs favoring increasing numbers of British enterprises instituted the colonial paradigm of resource extraction from, and then marketing of finished goods to, the colonized, with high tariffs reserved for Indian exports to Britain in order to stifle competition. In other words, in regard to textiles, cotton was exported under duress to Britain and the cloth made from it in Britain was sold back to Indian consumers whose choices had been diminished.

India's textile industry, a key economic sector for local sales and exports, was transformed – as intended -- by these trends. Thriving regional economies based in artisanal production of silk and cotton cloth by weavers on handlooms were undermined by the influx of cheaper goods mass-produced in Britain. The disruption of Indian social structures based in long-standing traditions prompted migrations to pressed-upon rural areas as people sought new means of survival. Some former weavers who stayed put became street vendors or rickshaw drivers. Though in Europe and the United States similar forces were at work, in these Western industrializing nations entrepreneurs and emergent wage workers flocked to new sites of factory production. In India, industrialization was stunted and fewer opportunities ensued. Though concurrent British

development of railroads, communication networks, educational institutions and political infrastructure offered benefits, these modernization efforts were shaped by British goals of domination and self-interest. By the 1850s, when cotton mills were established in Bombay and Ahmedabad, surviving weavers faced further pressure. Silk weavers in Poona, for example, largely disappeared by 1900. Dryly acknowledging the devastating effect of this transformation, Governor-General of India Lord William Bentinick infamously observed as early as 1834, "The bones of the cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India."

Organized resistance to British imperialism took shape in the mid to late nineteenth century, with the 1885 founding of the Indian National Congress a defining moment. A critical element of nationalist advocacy emerged in the early twentieth century that called for both boycotts of British goods and the purchase of *swadeshi*, Indian-made products. The aim was to impact British profitability but also to shore up local producers and encourage national pride. Initially, mass-produced textiles made in Indian factories owned by Indian industrialists were a focus of mobilization. As Mahatma Ghandi became a prominent proponent of swadeshi after his return to India in 1915, he brought more attention to artisanal textile producers, particularly of the cotton hand-loomed fabric known as *khadi*. Ghandi hoped to revive artisanal production generally, a daunting goal shared by arts and crafts advocates in England and the United States who, like Ghandi, emphasized the beauty and affirming personal social relations created by handmade goods. The focus on hand-loomed cotton spoke to the centrality of textiles in Indian society and culture and the important role of the weaver in Indian national identity. A unifying symbol of the nationalist movement, an image of the spinning wheel or charka appeared on the Indian National Flag introduced by Ghandi in 1921. And, in a measure of the lasting centrality of

handloomed goods to the Indian economy and sense of nationhood through the twenty-first century, National Handloom Day was declared beginning August 7, 2015.

****The Handloom Sari in the Twentieth Century****

As British control of the textile industry intensified, handloom production declined and local handmade goods became relatively more expensive. As a result, Indian women increasingly wore mass-produced saris. A government-sponsored study conducted in the 1950s estimated that three million handloom weavers had become unemployed in the previous two decades. Nonetheless, some regional production and regional style variations persisted, as two million handlooms remained, with each loom a source of potential employment for an average of two people. How many of these handlooms were actively engaged in production at mid-century is not clear. Nonetheless, the preferred colors, decorative aspects, embellishments, and draping styles of the many localities and regions of India, particularly those that had been known as textile centers or hubs, remained part of the visual and embodied landscape. The nationalist movement's call for *swadeshi* and handloom production of *khadi* provided some measure of ideological and material support. In a sign of the importance of this aspect of the nationalist framework, after partition and the formation of the post-colonial Indian state, the government funded programs to preserve and revive Indian skilled crafts.

Documentation of techniques and styles was also an important government initiative. Cataloguing regional sari cultures, from weaving to wearing, was undertaken soon after independence. Two recent compendiums expand upon earlier studies in richly illustrated volumes filled with beautiful color photographs of saris as they are wrapped and worn, along with close-

ups depicting local variations along side descriptions of weaving production details related to warp and weft, the traditions of sari wear for special occasions, and regional popularity of particular colors and patterns. These volumes, by Linda Lynton and Rta Kapoor Chishti, seek to preserve information to prevent its disappearance, but also to encourage the revival of textile crafts. Both provide a geographical breakdown of regional and local sari cultures and include the many variations in draping techniques that women in different areas employed. Describing an example from each study provides a sense of the extraordinary variety and multiple meanings of the visual and material cultures of saris throughout India.

Lynton finds the most important aspect of the sari is color. In the western region, specific dyeing techniques such as the centuries-old practices of block printing and tie-dye, create distinctive multi-colored fabrics. Embroidery traditions in this region mix together many hues and make use of metallic thread and reflective ornamentation including mirrors and sequins. Borders and end pieces might feature repeated images of intertwined vines or other floral or plant-based motifs. Even in small communities women wore distinctive saris, some of which conveyed ethnic identity in addition to locality. Traditions also carried forward the practice of wearing certain colors for festivals such as dark blue and pink for Diwali, a festival of lights celebrated in late fall. Nonetheless, broader adoption of traditions that began elsewhere have re-envisioned the boundaries of local cultures. A muslin fabric made with both cotton and silk thread and woven to contend with hot summer temperatures that originated in Kota, Rajasthan is now also made in Uttar Pradesh to the north. However, similar exchanges occurred over time well before colonization and mass production dispersed them widely, as trading routes and other interactions had previously circulated new ideas and influenced local style albeit at a slower pace and lesser

reach.

According to Chishti's government-sponsored study, saris woven in the state of Bihar, for example, exhibit an emphasis on the texture of the cotton and silk fabrics produced there. Weavers create texture by manipulating the interlocking strands of warp and weft to build up density in the fabric in some areas. The basis for transforming thread into fabric, the warp threads are strung tautly on the loom lengthwise; the weft thread is attached to a shuttle, which traditionally might be made of buffalo horn, that carries the weft as it is drawn over and under the warp threads. Foot pedals are utilized to elevate warp threads. Color, design and texture are decided before the weaving process begins. Warps are used to created striping or other patterns; leaving out warps is among many other techniques that results in textured fabric. Clearly, weaving that produces this level of complexity requires a high degree of skill, expertise and aesthetic sensibilities to create anything other than the most simple woven fabrics.

The full range of Bihar saris is not known today, as some have not been produced in over eighty years and had remained worn only locally. Though colored saris were plentiful, plain, undyed fabric played a bigger role here. The natural, unbleached fabric was practical in terms of washing and repeated wear. In some urban areas, the washing process might include application of a non-fast dye, which in one sari would then provide over time a colorful wardrobe from a single garment. Ornamentation was provided by multi-colored embroidery on the blouse worn with the sari. In south-central Bihar, saris for special occasions included embellishments created in the weaving process. *Baavanbuti* saris from this area incorporated ornamentation on the textile borders; these saris were a typical gift for occasions of all kinds through the 1960s.

As is evident from these necessarily abbreviated descriptions of two regional sari cultures,

the adaptability of the sari and the canvas it provides for variation, help explains its longevity in Indian women's wardrobes. Myriad additional examples of weaving and production techniques, draping choices and local color, fabric and embellishment traditions that have been documented tell us much about how the sari is itself woven into the fabric of Indian life and culture.

****The Sari in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction****

There are innumerable decorative motifs reproduced on saris via weaving techniques, dyeing methods, and various forms of ornamentation. Motifs inspired by flowers and plants, repeated abstract shapes, and designs incorporating stripes and geometric forms are present in handloom saris as well as those that are mass-produced. The latter includes the saris made from synthetic fabrics that significantly impacted the marketplace after independence, and which today rival if not overwhelm factory-made cotton and silk saris for prominence. As local traditions diminished in importance, a woman's personal preferences and aesthetic sensibilities, when she has the option to exercise them, became more significant factors in sari selection. Considerations about colors considered flattering and utilitarian aspects of different textiles play a role, in addition to price.

There can also be a social or status component to sari textile choice. In Mukulika Banerjee and Daniel Miller's evocative ethnographic study of saris, which focuses primarily on the experience of wearing saris in the contemporary world, they assert that professional women who are writers, artists or social workers prefer natural fibers and women working in corporate contexts or as government employees prefer synthetics. Nonetheless, some local conventions and family traditions persist regarding the color, design and textile to be worn on special occasions or

at certain ages. Young married women, for example, often wear bright colors, whereas for older women, muted colors are seen as more appropriate. The color of mourning for widows is white. Modern women generally wear a sari draped in the Nivi style, which had been worn primarily in western India, and has come dominate throughout the country. Personalization also takes shape in the choice of style and color of the fitted blouse, and, as in Western fashion, accessories like jewelry, hairstyle and cosmetics.

Women's descriptions of their experiences wearing saris provide surprising insights. Some assert that the pre-modern sari was more comfortable, as it was worn without the petticoat and blouse and therefore more suitable for the Indian climate, and that the longer sari of nine yards worn in the past provided more freedom of movement. Modern saris, force "a continued engagement, a conversation, between the woman and her garment," according to Banerjee and Miller. Desires for elegance, maintaining the sari's pleats, comfort, and protecting modesty are among many, sometimes conflicting goals. Multiple purposes also come into play. The pallu, for example, may be used to cover the face when laughing, soak up tears, cradle a nursing baby, mop the sweat off a child's forehead, clean eyeglasses, or filter smog. As the pallu often slips off the shoulder, its readjustment can be seen – or self-consciously utilized – as an effort to restore modesty or as a provocative act. This is a similar effect when wearing the Western tube top or off shoulder sweater, in which frequently required adjustments draw attention to the female body. The pallu has also been a source of danger; catching fire when cooking is not unheard of.

Beginning to wear a sari is a rite of passage. Girls wear "frocks," knee-length dresses, a fashion that British missionaries introduced in the nineteenth century. Adult women may also wear a "maxi" dress or frock at home. Adolescent girls and increasingly college students and

young, unmarried women may wear a shalwar kamiz, referred to as a "suit" because it is composed of three sewn garments, a tunic, trousers and a scarf. The shalwar kamiz has grown in popularity in the twenty-first century as young women find it more comfortable and easier to wear.

A young woman might first don a sari at her final school event or when meeting prospective in-laws. Learning how to drape the sari in a flattering manner and keep it in place while walking and sitting are part of the rite of passage, as young women seek guidance from their mothers or other women, some of whom are fashion professionals, whose style they admire. Women's shared sari culture also includes comments and criticism of the appearance of one's sari. Those who wear their saris conservatively may be taunted as nuns and those who dress more provocatively may be derided as "filmy." Color choices, draping acumen, and suitability for the occasion are all topics for pointed discussion. This form of disciplining other women suggests the importance of female dressing practices to gendered identity construction and also perhaps points to the limits of women's power in other spheres – in other words what might they be talking about instead. This is a phenomenon shared with Western women's fashion and beauty cultures as well.

Saris have a key role in gift exchange. For those who can afford it, weddings involve the purchase of many saris for the bridal trousseau and for wedding-related events in addition to the ceremony itself. Saris are also given as gifts to the bride, her family, and other close female family members, including those related to the groom's family. The gift exchanges bring the families together – assuming the saris are well-selected – and provide a wardrobe for the bride as she enters married life. The average number of saris purchased for brides alone can range from ten to

forty. Men may also purchase saris for their mothers and female relatives. Sari shopping itself is typically a group affair. As described in the novel The Sari Shop, women enter the store in groups of twos or threes. Shop assistants scramble to locate and display saris that they hope will meet the desired attributes and then refold and reshelf the rejects. In rural areas, sari peddlers still travel with their wares from village to village as friends, neighbors and family members gather around to make purchases.

After independence, the adoption of the sari for uniforms worn by women in the army, police, and for airline workers, as well as the customary though unofficial requirement for teachers and government workers to wear saris created the context for the sari to become more standardized and understood as the national garment for Indian women. Women who work within or outside the home may change their sari multiple times a day. Concerns about dirt, comfort and treatment by others impact their decisions. Banerjee and Miller heard from women who changed their saris upon arriving home, for each meal they prepared, and after going to the toilet. A woman who worked as a cleaner in an office changed her sari five times a day. She wore a sari on the bus to and from work that ensured she would be treated decently in public, changed into an old sari when she arrived at her job to perform her work duties, and changed again once she arrived back home. Many working women prefer synthetic saris because they retain their shape longer and thus require less attention and readjustment, are easier to wear while walking to and riding public transportation, and are less difficult to clean.

****Sari Influencers****

Banerjee and Miller describe how professional women assert personal power by displaying

a sense of ease and control in their saris, as these qualities are then transferred to the individual as someone to be reckoned with. The dynamic nature of the sari adds more opportunities to assert personal agency and dress to impress, such as a nonchalant manner in which a woman tosses the pallu back on her shoulder. During Indira Ghandi's first stint as India's prime minister from 1966 to 1977, for example, her handloom cotton saris drew attention and praise as she conducted the affairs of state at home and abroad with confidence and conveyed effortless sartorial perfection in both sari choice and deportment. Her prominent position enhanced the status of the sari as the national female costume and her decision to rarely wear a particular sari more than once encouraged expansion of sari wardrobes. In addition, Ghandi's purchase and display of regional hand-loomed saris drew attention to and elevated local craftspeople.

Fashionable sari influencers also emerged from popular culture. Film stars, television actresses, women depicted in advertisements and described in literature all became sources of sari discourses and visual examples of what to wear and how to wear it. The urban middle-class that emerged in greater numbers in the 1990s formed the primary audience for these mass cultural texts. Despite a growing presence of Western clothing, the sari prevailed as middle-class women's top fashion choice, particularly after marriage.

Different sectors of the cultural arena offered diverse visions and inspired a range of women's choices. Images from Bollywood, India's thriving film industry, in its initial post-independence decades offered glamorous depictions of lustrous yet modest saris worn by beloved female stars like Rekha throughout her long career that remain widely admired. Though most women could not afford similar silks, in the 1980s Rekha popularized a innovative blouse style she wore with her saris. In that decade, greater exposure of the female body in Bollywood films,

along with the fantastical musical scenes in which numerous costume changes of colorful saris, became part of their dazzling appeal. As in Hollywood, where by the 1920s movie studios and brands understood that cinema can serve as a form of window shopping for movie spectators, in India mass marketing of particular saris utilizing the name of a film and its female star whose saris drew notice became common. Shoppers often request saris that are similar to those worn by film and also television stars and shop assistants can more easily offer them when the packaging identifies them on these terms.

Saris as film costumes offer a means to consider the status of the sari as both a sensual garment and emblematic of the traditional Indian woman. The depiction since the nineteenth century of Hindi goddesses in saris underscores their position as symbolic of idealized womanhood. Scenes in mainstream romantic Hindi films emphasize sensuality and at times overt eroticism. A recurring trope depicts female characters caught in the rain or bathing in their saris. These "wet sari" scenes are analyzed by Rachel Dwyer as drawing upon the historic erotic traditions of India as described in the *Kamasutra*, and also in terms of how love stories typically unfold in relation to weather patterns, with the rainy season typically the backdrop for the couple's separation, and their return to each other keyed to less inclement weather. The form-fitting sari film costume becomes even more body revealing, if not transparent, when soaked. This phenomenon provides a means to depict multiple images of women in saris, from the character who adheres to tradition to the appealing female romantic protagonist.

In Bollywood films, female villains were typically costumed in Western clothing, their corrupting influence thus identified as foreign and associated with colonized subjectivity. In the 1990s that began to shift, though not definitively. The female lead might wear Western clothing

initially, and then don a sari once serious courtship ensues. Nonetheless, a 1996 survey found that film stars overwhelmingly wore Western clothing in magazine photographs, and as did women in advertisements. The women wearing saris in television advertisements were more often portrayed as obedient daughters, nurturing mothers, or girls of ordinary appearance who needs help with their skin or other over-the-counter problems. In this context, several night clubs in the late 1990s refused entrance to women wearing saris, asserting that they and the disco dancers already inside would be made uncomfortable. Yet popular Hindi-language television soap operas still featured women in saris in the early twenty-first century.

Chick-lit, a genre that emerged in India in the twenty-first century, is another discursive arena that explores clothing choices and symbolism. These novels focus on young, single, urban women who live independently yet must navigate the divide between traditional womanhood and contemporary femininity. In typical chick-lit narratives, traditionally-garbed mothers impose saris on their single daughters at weddings or when meeting prospective in-laws to single their willingness to conform to expectations of becoming wives and mothers. The single woman pursues conspicuous consumption of designer Western fashions, and yet also may express ambivalence about truly abandoning Indian forms of dress and self-presentation. Thus despite chick-lit's seemingly happy endings that resolve single-hood with marriage, the conflicting demands of tradition and modernity for women, even if presented as inner conflict related to identity, are explored but not necessarily settled.

****Feminism and the Sari****

Chick-lit is often characterized as "post-feminist," in its apolitical focus on personal

relationships and shopping. Still vibrant today, the organized feminist movement in India has long sought gender equity across all social spheres, including transforming religious traditions that oppress women, ending violence against women, and calling for equal economic and educational opportunities. Though women's clothing has been a feature of feminist criticism in different contexts or locations, feminists in India have not generally condemned the sari as oppressive nor inimical to achieving feminist goals. In fact, early twentieth-century feminists and suffrage advocates wore saris, at times notably, such as when several Indian women joined suffrage parades in Britain in 1910 and 1911. A few decades later, Indian feminists in the mid-twentieth century viewed Indian women as all "sisters under the sari."

These activists were among the female participants in the nationalist movement that sought Indian independence from British rule. Shauna Wilton argues that attitudes toward the sari were shaped by gendered views of Indians promulgated by the British to legitimate their sense of superiority and justify imperialist domination. This means of "othering" was a common feature of colonization around the globe, with some qualities attributed to populations across locations and others more site specific in their objectification of non-Europeans. In the Indian context, the British perceived Indian men as feminized, weak, and incapable of independent action, and Indian women as exotic and sensual. The nationalist movement responding to British power countered these views by valorizing male authority and highlighting qualities of modesty and purity for women. In the face of Victorian dressing practices and moral codes, and seeking legitimacy on the world stage, Indian women's bodies required clothing that covered the body and emphasized gender difference.

Decades later, some individual feminist critiques of the sari opened a space for a full-scale

challenge to these earlier perspectives. Late twentieth-century poems such as "Sari" by Samantha Rajaram and "Burn the Sari" by Jayaprabha Telugu challenge the sari's symbolic and literal limitations imposed on women's bodies without respect to the dichotomy of traditional-modern or Indian-Western clothing. The poem "Sari" plaintively describes the rite of passage of the transition from frock to sari: "[w]hen the girl reaches eighteen she wears a sari." Changing into the sari demarcates the female body as transformed from girl to woman, and one whose sari will drape and pleat "over her body that will one day collapse with child." The evocation of a pregnant body as collapsed rather than the normative "full" with child says much about Rajaram's perspective, as does her line in the next stanza that the midriff will soon "be slackened by childbearing." These descriptions suggest that the imposition of the sari correlates with declining options and agency and a future she does not welcome. Rajaram further evokes the pain of this new status and how it is imprinted on her body by describing how "[t]he petticoat slices into young flesh." She also rejects the seductive appeal of beautiful fabrics, asserting that "[g]ossamer silk, new nylons called chiffon," are "waiting to ensnare her body." Rajaram's articulation of her vulnerability, discomfort, and reluctance to dress in just "nine yards and a safety pin," despite her apparent inability to choose otherwise, provides the first step toward creating alternative possibilities.

Telegu's poem "Burn the Sari" offers a strategy and method to reject the sari and the subjugation of women it symbolizes and enforces. Like Rajaram, she identifies the sari as oppressive, "a log hung from my neck" that "does not let me stand up straight." Its association with chastity and marital fidelity and purported aim to protect modesty instead "teaches me shame." The call to burn the sari as a deliberate act displaces the potential accidental setting of

the sari on fire while at the stove performing gendered household duties. This assertion of female agency also counters the image of sati, the historic Hindi practice of burning a widow on her husband's funeral pyre. Burning the sari as a deliberate act instead rejects the entire structure of women's subordination.

Bonnie Zare and Afsar Mohammed compare "Burn the Sari" to a poem written in response by Jupaka Subadra, "Kongu: No Sentry on my Bosom." Subadra recuperates the sari as a garment of multiple uses and versatility for working-class women. The sari for Subadra can be a source of pleasure. Both the sari and the female body are in motion and each bear the mark of wear on each other. She asserts her sari is "not a sentry on my bosom....not a burden on my heart" and wonders how she could "survive setting it aflame?" because her body is so intertwined with this garment.

Zare and Mohammed note that Rajaram's background is more privileged than Subadra, which raises the question of whether it is more difficult for Subadra to imagine other dressing options. However, these poems in the end do not offer specific alternatives, but instead suggest lingering questions not unlike the dilemmas posed in chick lit narratives. "The problem of what to wear," as Emma Tarlo points out, is imbued with complexities. However, the dilemma of Indian identity as expressed via clothing that a seemingly binary choice between saris and Western fashions presents exists only as a dilemma for Indian women's self-presentation. Indian men's identities and affinities are not in question when they wear their ubiquitous Western trousers and shirts.

Perhaps the growing popularity of the shalwar kameez is providing a third alternative, akin to the pant suits popularized by Hillary Clinton that attempt to transcend fashion and practicality,

and make a statement about women's inclusion. After all, the question of what to wear is challenging for women across the globe. Though that question may be asked millions of times a day by individual women, they do not answer it entirely on their own. Their decisions engage with the many views expressed of what women *ought* to wear. Such directives stem from multiple locations, from feminist critiques to patriarchal norms, religious traditions to fashion industry trends, and fashion innovators to the limitations of what is available and affordable. These dress codes can also be enforced by older female relatives as well as peers.

Conclusion

Clothing that wraps the body and clothing that is formed by draping unstitched lengths of fabric around the body are part of the varied "closet" of garment options that humankind worldwide has created and made integral to a range of cultures. These creative responses to "the problem of what to wear" change over time and within a dynamic of larger social forces and categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, age, region, and nation. Kimonos and saris had been worn for centuries when Japan and India encountered Western economic, political and cultural imperialism. Tracking the changes to the production, design, and meaning of these garments, particularly the impact on women's clothing choices, provides a means to understand both the history of what people wore and how larger social forces impact daily decisions and the visual landscape. Comparing the differing trajectories of the kimono and sari, with the former now restricted primarily to ceremonial status in Japan and the latter still a central feature of Indian women's wardrobes in the twenty-first century, tells us that outcomes and fashion statements are not pre-ordained. Fashion and clothing choices are shaped by and also shape how historical

change unfolds.

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