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Under the Kimono's Textiles: the Construction of Japanese Woman Identity through Performativity of Narrative on Geisha's body

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ABSTRACT

Mineko Iwasaki is a real-life retired Japanese geisha. Her autobiographical memoirs, *Geisha, a Life*, has been significantly launched after the popularity of Arthur Golden worldwide bestseller novel, *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Her memoirs narrates about her life as from her childhood to her successful life as a high-rank "female artist" in geisha community until the living after retirement from her geisha-dom. Politically, Iwasaki's memoirs is aiming at reconstructing the representations of Japanese geisha from the voice of 'cultural agency' against the distortions and misconceptions of stereotypical formation discursively on Japanese geisha as sexual objects for male desires in prostitutions.

By emphasizing on the narrative on the body, as this paper is attempting to explore, the representations of geisha's body in *Geisha of Gion* was implemented with the redemption of narrative voices as/of cultural 'authenticity' and as the site or the marker of resistance. As the reaction to *Memoirs of a Geisha*, her narrative redefined constructively (the author's) geisha body to be the 'essence' of artistic and aesthetics of 'Japanese-ness.' Ethnographical accounts on geisha body are reconstructed, *en details*, in connection with Japanese artistic subtlety, Japanese way of living, and Japanese cultural sophistication to refashioning her identity in the narrative not only as a Japanese geisha but also as a Japanese self-made working woman. The geisha's body is represented integrally as the body of a professional performing artist, the body of preservation of living Japanese culture, the physical materials of achieving artistic talents

Keywords: Narrative, self, cultural identity, body, Geisha, Japanese culture, Japanese woman

Introduction

Arthur Golden, an American writer published his fictional novel, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, in October 1997. Within months, *Memoirs of a Geisha* had become a sensational hit. The book became a staple of reading and literary circles across the country, and was picked up by Steven Spielberg for a Hollywood film. (Allison, 2001: 381.) The novel depicts secret life of geisha with exotic cultural accounts, preceded in popular romantic fiction Cinderella "rags-to riches" narrative formula that makes ethnographical knowledge about geisha intermingled with dramatic love story. The book – at that time – had yet to be translated into Japanese. The west, meanwhile, had been swept by geisha fervor. Inspired by Golden's protagonist, Chiyo/Sayuri, the fashion world rediscovered the allure of femininity. (Downer, 2000: 4.)

Arthur Golden mentioned in his *Memoirs*' acknowledgment, after her retirement, Mineko Iwasaki was introduced through a family friend, spoke to Golden intimate details of geisha life. (Golden, 1997: 433.) The real-life native who lent her experiences to Golden for writing his fiction has claimed that her privacy was exposed and the author's portrayal of geisha inaccurate. She was shocked that Golden would not only use her picture and history (particularly details of the deflowering ceremony '*mizuage*') in promoting his book, but also print her name in the book. In Mineko's view: "*Golden's portrayal of a geisha world is totally different from the one she gave him. In his hands, it is more tawdry and smutty than cultured and refined; the book is a "potboiler" where geisha appear as prostitutes – more fantasy of Western men than an accurate representation of Japanese Geisha*" (Allison, 2002: 389-391; see also Kattoulas, 2000: 65, 67.) For Mineko Iwasaki, the breaking point was Golden's claim at 1999 reading in Providence Rhode Island, that she had told him that her *mizuage* price was about \$850,000. Mineko Iwasaki decided to come forward in public to speak out the story which no woman in the 300-years history of Gion Kobu's '*karyukai*' has ever do because of the constraint of unwritten rules 'not to do so,' by the robes of tradition and by the exclusive calling. (Iwasaki, 2003: vi) She vehemently denied the statement, launched the suit, and published her own memoir. In order to publish the book world-widely, Mineko's counter memoirs is translated into English as *Geisha, a Life* (printed in US) or *Geisha of Gion* (printed in UK), collaborated with a Western professional ghost-writer Rande Brown, the book insists on the geisha's dignity as a skilled performing artist and values the whole flower-and-willow world as unique cultural treasure. The metropolitan locations of the major publishing houses (London and New York, for example) lend strength to this view, as does the increasing number of foreign-language texts from the 'non-West' available in translation. (Huggan, 2001: 4) Interestingly, unlike Arthur Golden's *Memoirs*, in which the life of geisha 'Sayuri' was preceded under the depression of pre-war and the between-war period of WWII Japan, Mineko elaborated her geisha's life-cultural-narrative in post-war or around 1960-1970 era. Hence, this is to claim here that Mineko's memoir is a life narrative of 'real-life' flesh-and-blood experiences in the changing world either inside or outside her traditional community. Henceforth, interestingly, the act of telling story here is not only as a national cultural inheritor, but also as a Modern self-made Japanese woman.

And regarding to constructionist perspective as '*there's nothing outside the text,*' the self-fashioning in such text never proceed without political or any other commercial purpose. Therefore, above all, the purpose of this article is not to prove or to seek out how 'real' or 'true' of the representations in which memoirs. But, rather, to read Mineko Iwasaki's narrative in terms of 'writing back' or counter discursive formation, through body representation, based on the life-cultural narrative constructed from her life-experiences.

Title

Under the Kimono's Textiles: the Construction of Japanese Woman Identity through Performativity of Narrative on Geisha's Body

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Body Representations: performativity, narratives and its discontent dynamism

Outwardly, Mineko Iwasaki introduces in the very first part of her book about the allegorically dualistic character of geisha that, "*Karyukai means 'the flower and willow world'. Each geisha is like a flower, beautiful in her own way, and like a willow tree, flexible and strong.*" (Iwasaki, 2002: vi) This statement provokes the audience-reader's thought with focusing on geisha in the dimension of body, and understands the ambiguous quality to be a geisha in double contrast entity, graceful but the same time strong and tough. A body of/as a geisha in this narrative is brought to reflect, seemingly, such prestigious existence. In addition, with the clinging between her body of life narrative and her own body representation, Mineko narrates her compelling life-experiences as a Japanese woman intertwining with her geisha's life particularly as an *atotori*, a successor of one of the 'greatest' *okiya* in Gion Kobu, as she claimed.

With *textual analysis* methodology especially in 'Postcolonial exotic' concepts, the purpose of the this article is an attempt to recapture the constructive performativity – of identity formation – and the self-fashioning functionality as a Japanese geisha and as a Japanese woman. The main prospect is to read focusingly on 'body' representations in auto-ethnographical narrative Mineko Iwasaki's *Geisha of Gion* (2003). The issues are elaborate with the premises on body representations in reciprocal findings **(1) Body Rewriting body: the re-presentations of geisha's body in relations to costuming as identity performativity.** Following with **(2) Body as the pedagogical tools to artistic-aesthetic mastery, emphasizing on how body utilized as an 'apparatus' to performed an identity as an artistic perfection of Japanese-ness.**

In such premises, see body representations as the objects and the tools of self-fashion. The notion of the body and its embodiment which avoids both the dissolving of material body associated with social constructionist concepts, and a return to biological essentialism. The body offers potential boundaries to the self and presents both uniqueness of each individual and a site for making difference. Common sense might suggest that the body which each of us occupies offers some certainty in the search for an understanding of identity. There is a tendency for the body to be seen as a project which should be worked at and accomplished as part of both of an individual and societal self-identity. The body was decorated and altered in premodern societies. It is reflexive, and bound up with inherited models of bodies shaped through rituals in communal ceremonies. (Woodward, 2002: 66-69.)

Peter Brooks stated in his book entitled *The Body: Objects of Desires in Modern Narrative* on the notions of body within textualized narratives in multi-dimensions, either physically, epistemologically or substantially, as well as the function of narrative or literary text that illustrate the body that "*The body is always the subject of curiosity, or an ever-renewed project of knowing (...) The body, or a part of the body, becomes a place for the inscription of message preeminently through scenarios of desire, which endow bodily parts with an erotic history and thus with narrative possibilities.*" (Brooks, 1993: 47.) Yet, as representations, to construct body is to find elaborated rhetorical from in description, the attempt to render the appearances of the visible world in writing. (Ibid: 1-3.) Similarly to Erving Goffman's arguments on body features, in his view, the bodies have their dual location as the property of individuals but also as categorized by society. The body mediates the relationship between people's self-identity and their social identity. (Cited in Woodward: 80.)

In terms of the concept of 'performativity', it bring us to remind about the revision of discursive practice, argued by Judith Butler. For Butler, the critical framework on 'Performativity' (s)he argues that performativity is (in itself) distinguished from performance. The latter presumes a subject, but the former contests the very notion of the subject. It means

the Foucauldian premise that power works in part through discourse and it works in part through discourse and it works in part to produce and destabilise subjects: *"But when one starts to think to think carefully about how discourse might be said to produce a subject, it's clear that one's already talking about a certain figure or trope of production. It is at this point that it's useful to turn to the notion of performativity, and performative speech act in particular – understood as those speech acts that bring into being that which they name. This is moment in which discourse becomes productive in fairly specific way (so what I am trying to do is) to think about performativity as that aspect of discourse that has the capacity to produce what it names. (...) Performativity is the discursive mode by which ontological effects are installed."* (Butler, 1994; cited in Woodward: 235-238)

Such installment of speech act is related to the practice as stereotypical formation of 'the Others' in Orientalist discourse and its discontents. In term of "knowledge" formation in related polemic against "Orientalism" Edward Said (1978) identifies persistence tropes by which European and Americans have visualizes Eastern (and Arab) cultures. The 'Orient' is constructed as representations, partially in the shadow of mystique allure – the exotic-erotic entity – outside the west. It functions as theatre, a stage on which a performance is repeated, to be seen from a privileged standpoint. For Said, the 'Orient' is "textualized"; its multiple divergent stories and essential predicaments are coherently woven as body of signs susceptible virtuoso reading. 'The Orient,' occulted and fragile, is brought lovingly to light, salvaged in the work of outsider scholar. The effect of domination in such spatial/temporal deployments (no limited, of course, to Orientalism proper) is that they confer on the other a discrete identity, while providing the knowing observer with a standpoint from which to see without being seen, to read without interruption. (Said, 1978; cited in Clifford and Marcus, 1986: 12.)

Existing under some parts of Orientalist project on Japanese things, probably, geisha is one of the most popular/iconic images of 'Japaneseness' and Japanese cultures and this type of myth has been lasting for long time. There are plenty of literatures on Japanese culture whether traditional or contemporary. But, amongst them, from the first stirring of *Japonisme* in the nineteenth century, Western artists and writers have been drawn to the image of the geisha in a whole range of ways. The geisha as a pliable fantasy plaything for men: the geisha is seen as tragic heroine or as an emissary of 'the Orient', replete with mysterious knowledge, cultural and sexual. (Gallagher, 2003: 23.) John Doughill stated that, representations of the geisha have taken many and various forms: down-trodden victim; paragon of the arts; symbol of beauty; sex object; champion of Japaneseness. *"For some, the geisha is a fetishized male fantasy, for others the ultimate expression of the feminine."* (Doughill, 2005: 191.) The idea of sexually available geisha was perpetuated by Hollywood in films such *The Teahouse of August Moon* (1956), memorable for Marlon Brando playing a Japanese character, and *The Barbarian and the Geisha* (1958), in which miscast John Wayne portrays Townsend Harris, America's first consul, who in 1850s presented with a geisha for his comfort. The geisha as a vague composite of Madame Butterfly and Gilbert and Sullivan, prostitute and heroine, lives on in the English-speaking world, inspiring myriad pop reinterpretations. (Ibid.)

Until present days, the representations is examined recently in the article entitle *"Memoirs of the Orient"* by Anne Allison (2001). She analyzed the phenomenon of mass popularity of Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* in USA with 'Orientalist' discourse analysis perspectives. She found out that the book has been widely read and the escapist depiction in it (either the story type or the exotic-erotic representation of Japanese geisha) titillates their imagination yet make them feel familiar with it. Allison mentioned about what Malek Alloula refers to as an "ethnographic alibi" that is at work in popular phenomenon of *Memoirs*: the

insistence of so many fans that the story spun by Golden reflects a world that is historically real. (Allison, 2001: 388)

The representations of geisha images under the crafting technique in Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* that drives aggravatedly the 'writing back' of the "cultural native" in Mineko Iwasaki's version. This phenomenon mutually illuminates the critique of *Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, pointed out by James Clifford and George E. Marcus. In their book, *Writing Culture*, they argue about the limits and ability to represent other societies which ones are explaining about: "*it is impossible to know anything certain about other people (...) Ethnographical truths are inherently partial – committed and incomplete.*" (7.) Up to this light, it is proved that the writing and reading of ethnography are over-determined by forces ultimately beyond the control of either an author or an interpretive community. These contingencies – language, rhetoric, power history – must now be openly confronted in process of writing. (Ibid: 25) Up to this point, the limitations of representing 'Others' through the eyes and the discursive practice brings us to a genre of writing as 'counter-narrative' genre, called 'auto-ethnography.' In the same stream, adapted perspective from Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin's framework so-called '*abrogation & appropriation*', the abrogation or denial of the privilege of Western 'knowledge as power' involves a rejection over the means of stereotypical formation of 'Others' and communication. Abrogation is a refusal of the categories of the illusory standard or normative 'correct' usage, and its assumption of a traditional and fixed meaning 'inscribed' in the words. And the appropriation is the reconstruction of language of the centre, the process of capturing and remoulding the language to new uses, marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege. Appropriation is the process by which the language is made to 'bear the burden' of one own cultural experience to convey in the strategies that one's own the spirit that is one own. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 2002: 37-38.)

Correspondingly, the act of writing back has been on demand through Pocolonialist perspective. Marie Louise Pratt argues that indigenous or oppressed subjects, in taking up writing, may both collaborate with and appropriate a dominant culture's discursive methods, thereby "transculturating" them into indigenous idioms and producing hybrid forms of collectivized life narrative. Autobiography emphasizes "how subjects are constituted in and their relations to each other" in "the contact zone" of cultural encounter (Pratt, 7.), and how the identity of the dominant and subordinated subjects interlock and interact despite histories of radically uneven power relations. (Smith & Watson, 2001: 186.) In other words, as Graham Huggan (2001) illustrates about his concepts on the 'exotic poscoloniality' issues on demand in global industrial market. Postcoloniality, as well as 'the Orient', is a value-regulating mechanism within the global late-capitalist system of commodity exchange. Value is constructed through global market operations involving the exchange of cultural commodities and, particularly, culturally 'othered' goods. Postcoloniality's regime of value is implicitly assimilative and marketdriven: it regulates the value-equivalence of putatively marginal products in the global marketplace. Postcolonialism, by contrast, implies a politics of value that stands in obvious opposition to global processes of commodification. (Huggan, 2001: 6.)

In brief conclusion here, compatible with subjectivity and power relations, the discursive practices in construction of knowledge are executed in form of language, or in narratives on the 'Other.' On one hand, by the condition of writing collaboration, the competence to 'perform' identity though narratives in English language may reveal the inability of cultural native to represent about oneself. But, on the other hand, this limitation will be, reversely, become the site of resistance and rejection accuracies of Western knowledge. It implies the existences of 'silence' in the narrated voices that is not penetrated

with and by outsider's observation and knowledge, but it is sharing internally, in form of 'unwritten rules' collectively within the sanctified community, and at the same time positioning those 'outsiders' to sit and attend the show, performed by the authentic native to reconstruct his/her/their self and cultural identity, precisely with body representations.

Rewriting body: the re-presentations of geisha's body in relations to costuming as identity performativity

As Allison points out in her study that; in elaboration of geisha cultural representation, focusing on the physicality of geisha's body, the laced texture of geisha culture that is as intriguing as it is sensuous, Golden crafts his text so visually, and the geisha world itself is so visual, that readers feel they are not merely reading about this world but actually seeing it, living it, even embodying it. (Allison, 2002: 393.) The body of a geisha under Arthur Golden's crafts, with the technique of 'pseudo- autoethnobiographical narrative, was produced through the looking of Western 'male Gaze' and observation. The knowledge of ethnographical accounts was conducted so visually with Chiyo (the young age Sayuri, the *Memoirs*' pseudo-geisha protagonist) apprehensive observation or 'gaze' and listening. It can be noticed here that kimono costuming and makeup process are brought into play with ethnographical knowledge as well as exotic cultural artifacts, but the overall picture of geisha appearances was rarely apart from sexual and pornographic details.

Regarding to Peter Brooks, the pieces of clothing are, so to speak, literalized metonymized, metonymical objects, which gave a particularly vivid presence to the bodily parts they do not name but reveals, as reveal, as that which they normally cover, and which – by the fact that they are not now on the body – they now uncover. (Brooks, 1993: 44.) Herein this looking glass, to illustrate geisha's body in *Memoirs of a Geisha*, the main narrator, Chiyo was assigned to observe and learn about geisha body as object of/for male (customer's) sexual desire and for voyeuristic pleasures such as the design at the back of a geisha ceremonial makeup, so called *sanbon-achi* "three legs", that makes the dramatic picture, for the voyeur to feel as if one is "*looking at the bare skin of the neck through little tapering points of a white fence.*" (Golden, 1997: 72.) It causes "*erotic effects it has on men. (...) When a man sits beside her and sees her makeup like a mask he becomes much more aware of the bare skin beneath*" (Ibid.) In the same token, the maiko, apprentice geisha, in her early days in profession called 'split-peach' hairstyle was explained provocatively with sexual implication. It was explained with the knot behind a maiko's head. The hairstyle would be inserted with red fabric at the inside. The knot – so called the '*pincushion*' – *is formed by wrapping the hair around a piece of fabric.* In back where the knot is split, the fabric is left invisible; it might be any design or color, but in case of an apprentice geisha (who is still supposed to be 'virgin') – *after a certain point in her life, at least, – it's always red silk. "Most of these innocent girls have no idea how provocative the 'split peach' hairstyle really is!"* (Golden, 2001: 190.) Not yet including the practices of the art of seduction, mentioned as compulsory skill which one must be trained, it renders the geisha profession and her body is reluctant to be classified outside the realm of red light district, more like a prostitute, even though the text mentioned about her as an art person.

Instead of explaining about the body of the geisha, in Mineko Iwasaki's autobiography, she is intentionally focusing on kimono. In Mineko's point of view, the kimono is the prestige and glamorous costume of her profession, the identity that she is proudly presenting. Each of them is made of the finest silk particularly by handmade and costs extremely expensive. The explication is moved to elaborate about the kimono as if kimono and the geisha's body are united concordantly and even inseparably from each other, to express pride and dignity. It is not only the object that impress onto the body of the geisha,

but the soul and spirit of her as well as the way of geisha's pride. She tells, by listening to Madame of Oima's, the Iwasaki okiya head, story during the WWII undergoing, Madame Oima had said *"The Iwasaki okiya didn't own any kimono made from indigo dyed cloth (like that worn by labourers) so they made work cloths out of their geiko costumes. They must look strange to the people from outside the karyukai. (...) As Auntie Oima told me years later, 'Even though it was a wartime, those of us who lived in Gion Kobu competed with each other over who had the most beautiful silk work clothed. We attached collars to our necklines, and braided our hair neatly in two long braids, and wore sharp white headbands. We still wanted to feel feminine. We became famous for lining up, heads high, to go to work in factory.'"* (Iwasaki: 64-65.) Narratives on kimono in terms of community signification. Emphasizing on kimono, for Mineko, it seems quite a very special object with that she has always been obsessed since she was child, in relations to her artistic veteran father. *"I was fascinated by the variety of richness of the kimono and obi, and could see clearly and in spite of my age, that my father's kimono were the most beautiful."* (Iwasaki: 28.)

Back in her childhood, Mineko tells the reader that she has been grown up from the family that contains a strong linkage of artistic and intellectual wisdom of Japanese culture. The environments around her body and soul were containing ample of honored sophistication, with considerable details not only during she was with her real family but also during she was chosen to be subjected as successor, the atotori, of Iwasaki okiya. Until she becomes a maiko, kimono is still the marker of her dignity and serenity. However, the point is, even though she has been really living in such surroundings, she is still not being able to explain about these things, with inner affection in some ways, quite clearly: *"It's **difficult for me to adequately express the importance of kimono** in a geiko's life (...) Kimono, the costume of our profession, are **sacred** us. They are the emblems of our calling. Made from some of the finest and most expensive textiles in the world, kimono embodies beauty as **we** understand it. Each kimono is one-of-a-kind work of art that its owner has an active role in creating. (...) The kimono that a maiko wears is called hikirizuri. It **differs from an ordinary kimono** in that it has long sleeves and wide train, and is worn slung low on the back of the neck. The hem of the train is weighted and fans out behind in lovely arc. The hikizuri is secured with a **particularly** long obi (over twenty feet in length) that is tied at the back with both ends dangling down."* (Iwasaki: 73, 159.) (emphasizing here is mine) Accordingly, as we could see that (and frankly that, approached as an audience-reader, we are classified as the 'outsider'), by indicating specificity and particularity up here reflex the implication of subtlety of cultural dimension it contains multi-layers of details in which the 'outsider' never be definitely accurate by researching or studying but 'living; with it. In this light, the epistemological concerns are catalyzed on the 'knowledge' of the Western's others are suddenly questioned. And, yet, at the same time, it is obvious that this implication is explicated in a way that the audience-reader is driven by their own curiosity, with lack of knowledge.

Furthermore, according to Mineko's narrative, body of a geisha was illustrated as ideal and iconic beauty that has subsumed its prestige for a long history. For this reason, body of a geisha is containing the cultural value uniqueness which is heritage with subtle code of traditions. *"A maiko in full costume closely approximates the Japanese ideal of feminine beauty. **She** has the classic looks of a Heian princess, as though she might be stepped out of an eleventh-century scroll painting. **Her** face is a perfect oval. **Her** skin is white and flawless, **her** hair black as a raven's wings. **Her** brow are half moons, **her** mouth a delicate rosebud, **her** neck is long and sensuous, **her** figure gently rounded."* (Iwasaki: 157.) (Emphasizing here is mine)

It was so obvious that the 'textual performativity' as a tool of self-realization was reciprocal inseparably with construction of identity. Remarkably, the body of a maiko as mentioned above was elaborated with the 3rd personal pronoun 'she' or 'her' that makes it exist as an ideal protocol of exotic-aesthetic female body. The explanation of the ideal beautified body, clinging to integrity that intertwined herself with Japanese historical and cultural repertoire, brought her body transformed into another status. In addition, mentioning about Heian or Heian-kyo, the Ancient Capital which golden age of Japan cultural heritage which had been the heart of Japanese empire, the centre of political, intellectual, artistic and ecclesiastical heritage of a great civilization as well as court culture is an attempt to attach such integrity in more concrete relation.

In the same token, Mineko takes a chance to 'correct' the information about Japanese geisha culture, especially imprinted in Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha*, as we can see here that she replaced the sexualized implication about the cultural context of geisha makeup with 'the distinctive white make-up, with historical imperial culture "*Originally, it was worn by my aristocrats when they had an audience with the emperor. In pre-modern times, considered a sacred presence, received his subjects while hidden from their sight by a thin scrim. The audience chamber was lit by candle light. The white make-up reflected whatever light there was, making it easier for the Emperor to distinguish who was who. Dancers and actors later took up the practice. Not only does the white make-up look good on stage, but it also echoes the value placed on light skin.*" (Iwasaki: 158-159)

Likewise, for the geisha costuming, Mineko describes significantly about the subtlety of kimono habiliment the 'insightful' details when she have to be in Miyako Odori Dance Rehearsal and her profession debut day in *Misedashi*. The information about the procedure of maiko costuming step-by-step is elaborated here, en détails: "*I went to the hairdresser and had my hair done up in wareshinobu style, the first hair style a maiko wears. The hair is swept up and sculpted into a mass on the top of the head that is secured by red silk bands (kanoko) front and back and decorated with kanezashi, the stick-pin ornaments so distinctive of the karyukai look. It is said that this is simple, elegant style showcases the curve of the young girl's neck and the freshness of her features to the best advantage. I wore two hair pins tipped with silk plum blossoms (because it was February) on the sides of the back of the bun, a pair of silver flutters (bira) on the side in front, and orange blossom pin (tachibana) on top, and a long pin tipped with balls of red coral (akadama) and jade, inserted horizontally through the base.*" (...) *First, she [Mather Sakaguchi] prepared my throat, neck, upper back and face by painting them with binsuke oil paste, a kind of promade that acts as a foundation. Then she covered the area with white make-up, leaving three vertical stripes on the back on the back of my neck unpainted to accentuate its length and fragility. Maiko and geiko are given two lines on the neck when wearing 'ordinary' costumes and three lines when wearing formal costumes Then she put my hair ornaments. I had a red silk band called arimachikanoko in my chignon. And at the crown, a kanokodome band and pins made from coral, jade and silver two silver flutters in front that had the family crest of the okiya worked into the design, and the tortoiseshell ornaments called chirika. The latter are very special. They are only worn once in maiko's lifetime, during the first three days of her debut. Next I was dressed in the standard undergarments. The first two are rectangles of bleached white cotton, one worn tight around the hips and the other around the chest. This latter flattens and smoothed the line of the kimono. Next comes a long cotton hip wrap, like a half-slip, then a pair of long bloomers to preserve modesty should the front fold of kimono open. Next comes the hadajuban, a loose, blouse-like garment that follows the lines of the kimono. A maiko's hadajuban has red collar. Over this I wore the full-length under the robe,*

the najajuban. Mine was made from tie-dyed silk figured with a fan-shape pattern and embroidered with assortment of flower." (Iwasaki: 158, 171.)

Apparently, it seems that each of elements of in geisha costume is not only has its own specific terms but also specific story. It could be sensed here that, by positioning herself as the real life – authentic –cultural owner and all of the traditional accounts is told her from her 'real-life' experience. The body of knowledge on geisha body, in terms of ethnographical accounts, is elaborated in very deep details in relation to high and with finest status of art or even classical literature: "*The first collar, the one I wore on my misedashi, was decorated with a Prince of Genji's Carriage' motif done in silver and gold thread.*" (Iwasaki: 173) The overwhelming amount of congenitally cultural strangeness in wording preservations causes exoticism effects. Henceforth, notably, the utterance of cultural accounts was preceded with indigenous 'technical terms' more vibrant in intellectual elaboration but more elegant in uttering manner. As plenty of (untranslatable) technical terms were brought into involvement with this body transformation performance, it does not only specify Japanese geisha culture, but at the same time problematize the existing knowledge, in terms of discourse construction, onto geisha stereotypes along with geisha body. The explanation for the cultural accounts incessantly insert in the text. The more we read only in the text about the costuming, the more we are confused within the plethora of information and are driven to see the picture of the things mentioned rather than plunging into over-exoticizing details that are difficult to understand at the position as an outsider. Henceforth, it can be claimed here that the more layers are attached onto Mineko's body; it explicitly connotes the subtleties, delicacies and miscellaneous sophistication of Japanese geisha culture.

Thereore, upon this stage, the act of utterance, explicating about geisha costuming, the narrative itself redefine the meaning of her own body and transform it to be geisha body, change the status as a girl to be a geisha in idealistic appearance. And each of elements contains ample of stories, for this reason, the narrative functions as the transformation of her body was replaces with the curtains of tradition. Mineko in full-fledge geisha body, in a sense, transformed to be the aesthetic cultural body that is the most appropriate for the word that defines geisha, as an art person. The elaboration of the kimono wearing process on her body, Mineko textualized her body to become or to '*be subjected*' to those idealistic cultural artifacts into herself. The narrative construction of complicate and delicate process of kimono wearing is, in a way, the transformation of Mineko herself to become a geisha which she absorbs the sense of self-construction through the procedure of fusion of costume and her body while being remembering the process. Generations-by-generations, her body becomes a cultural community of Japanese identity as she often mentioned about other people who were imparted of her kimono dressing as well as facial makeup and hairdressing, there are so many people existing behind her beatified appearance as a maiko, an apprentice geisha.

Body as the pedagogical tools to artistic-aesthetic mastery

By the related token, besides cultural and artistic costuming repertory sophistication, the performativity of geisha was also brought into identity construction as an art person. More specially, it was narrated that geisha in Gion Kobu were quite distinguish from geisha in other areas, especially for the dancing. Mineko said "*In Gion Kobu we don't refer to ourselves as geisha (meaning artist) but the use the more specific term geiko, 'woman of art'. One type of geiko, famed throughout the world as the symbol of Kyoto, is the young dancer known as maiko, or 'a woman of dance.'*" (Iwasaki, 2002: vi-viii)

As the body of a geisha was described with insertion of counter-discursive gaze, by 'imitating' or 'mimicking' the function of 'gaze' as an ideological tools to represent body, Mineko appropriates correctively the "gaze" or "observation" as pedagogical tools in

dancing. This is preceded far beyond the construction of cultural information by observation, but she also narrates the details of the training practicum from her own experiences, from the way of acculturated living, not from academic research conduction. At this lightspot, she mentioned about her experiences on astutely diligent dancing practice. Mineko describes the details of training not only with researchable knowledge but also more thoroughly as practitioner's personal experience. It was a perfect chance to watch her giving lessons, uninterrupted, for long stretches of time. (Iwasaki: 112.)

Abrogating sexual voyeuristic visionary by male desire but appropriating visual observation with curiosity, Mineko alternates 'scopophilia looking-ness' (Mulvey, 1999: 835.) to be one of the methods of dancing pedagogy. As a result, it can be claimed that the narrative redefined discursively the body of a geisha as an *artistic-aesthetic* self assets rather than *exotic-erotic* object for sexual pleasure. At the same time, the gaze that constructs knowledge under the condition of discursive practice has been appropriated and re-propriated my redemption in to the realm of knowledge on geisha culture by the real-life experience that had been authentically. Then she continues to inform about the Art of Japanese Dancing "There are two words that mean dance in Japanese. One is *mai* and the other is *odori*. *Mai* is considered sanctioned movements, and is derived from the sacred dances of Shrine maidens that have been performed since ancient times as offerings to the gods. It can only performed by people who are specially trained and **authorized** to do so." (Iwasaki: 113.) (Emphasizing here is mine)

Moreover, being in the position as an *atotori*, the Okiya successor, she was in a remarkably privileged. Mineko said that loved to observe the Big Mistress giving lessons to the students and to observe accomplished dancers, such as Han Takehara "It was a perfect chance to watch her [The Big Mistress] giving lessons, uninterrupted, for long stretches of time. (...) From the time I was little I loved to observe accomplished dancers and sought the opportunity to study with them whenever possible." (Iwasaki: 111, 112.)

In addition, the way of training in dance is not functioned merely in dancing but in almost of the living manner even in minuscule actions. For this reason, it makes social contact and societal living is the Gion Kobu community with all respects. People are living amongst others regarding to seniority, with respectful ethos. In illustrating this part of inner information, it was authority of the cultural possessor. Descriptions on the body significance are revealed even the minute details. It connotes honorific disciplines, appropriateness, as well as decorum of subtlety and sophistication. Then, the training to be geisha is including honorific manner as whole entity, civilizing body with pride and dignity. All of apprentice must practice themselves as well as adjusting manner to be qualified standardization. Remarkably such information of geisha training cannot be found in Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* or in other words, the none-authenticity who never been training in such prefect profession: "This is how we are taught to open a (Japanese sliding) door and enter the room. Sit down in front of the door resting buttocks on heels; bring the right hand up chest high and place the fingertips of your open palm on the edge of the door frame or in the hollow, if there is one. Push the door open in few inches, being careful not to let the hand cross the middle of the body. Bring the left hand from the thigh and place it in front of the right. Continuing to rest the right hand lightly on the back of the left wrist, slide the door across the body, creating an opening just wide enough to pass through. Stand up and enter the room. Pivot and sit down facing the open door. Use the right fingertips to close the door to just left of midline, then, using the left hand supported by the right, close all the way." (Iwasaki: 93.)

In addition, body is capitalized in creation of bond between dancing master and the maiko student. Relationship between the dancing teacher, as a training master, and the students the bond with body contact, like blood in vein, the spirit within. "Stand up, pivot,

and go sit before the teacher. Take the mioghi (dancing fan) out of your obi with your right hand and place it horizontally on the floor and box. Placing the maiohgi between oneself and the teacher is a highly ritualistic act, indicating that one is leaving the ordinary world behind and is ready to enter the realm of the teacher expertise. By bowing, we declared that we are prepared to receive what the teacher is about to impart.” (Iwasaki: 93.) Not only, ceremonial performing with the body and the soul within. Transformation and transition of status with acceptance into community of expertise. Since the body is a pinpoint of imprinted narrative and inversely narrative provides identity for the body owner, either physically or culturally. In this light, body is not limited just merely as cultural artifact but, meanwhile, it is deployed as the linkage with the consciousness of group and community and to be or not to be in the any groups is preceded with self-identification(s).

Davies & Ikeno (2002) point out in their books about one of aspects Japanese culture called ‘Shūdan Ishiki (集団意識)’ or the group consciousness that Japanese culture, in a sense, is a group-oriented society and give more priority to group harmony than to individuals. It makes Japanese people consider it as an important virtue to adhere to the values of the groups to which they belong. This loyalty to the group produces a feeling of solidarity, and underlying concept of group consciousness is seen in diverse aspects of Japanese life. Group consciousness has become the foundation of Japanese Society. (Davies and Ikeno, 2002: 195-199.) For this reason, the body is performed itself as an apparatus for absorption of the entity of Japanese pride spirit succession. The passing of spirit is preceded specifically on the condition household or clan of from generation to generation. *“Knowledge passes from dance teacher into the student through the process of mane. This word is often translated as ‘imitation, but learning is more a process of total identification than one of simply copying. We repeat movements of our teacher until we can duplicate them exactly – until, in a sense, we have absorbed the teacher’s mastery into ourselves. Artistic technique must be fully integrated into the cells of our bodies as if we are to use it to express what is in our hearts, and this takes many years in practice. (...) I did it precisely as I had been taught. By now the mechanical movements had become second nature they felt liquid and graceful.* (emphasizing here is mine) (Iwasaki: 94, 144.)

Comparing to Arthur Golden’s *Memoirs of a Geisha*, the success of a maiko, in a step, was evaluated with deflowering ceremony, called *mizuage*, the competitive auction of young maiko virginity. In the novel, dancing was rarely pointed out as the required qualifications of a well trained maiko, it was mentioned shortly that geisha is called as an ‘art person’. But artistic talents, neither dancing nor playing music instruments are integrated to qualify the characteristics as a geisha. For this reason, according Allison’s exploration, some audience-reader reluctantly feels about geisha no different from prostitute. But for Mineko, by genius and indefatigability of training, she could be successful not only as a geisha who had been earn great amounts of income. But, with her dancing outstanding talent, she could be accredited (*natori*) in the highest examination in level of master dancer. Even the Big Mistress, the head of Inoue School praise Mineko for her exceptional transcendent quality : *“[The] accreditation (natori) from Inoue School, naming me a master dancer. The main advantage in becoming a natori is that one allowed to learn and perform certain roles that are reserved for the master dances. (...) She [The Big Mistress] leaned over and whispered in my ears, ‘All I am able to do is teach you the form. The dance you dance on stage is yours alone.’ The transmission was done. I was free. The dance was mine”* (Iwasaki: 296-297.) Then, as a deduction, the body, the dancing form, the Japanese inheriting spirit and herself are integrated, fusing altogether, in unification at the highest talent achievement.

Henceforth, in Mineko’s memoirs, as maiko in literal meaning defines by the talents of dancing, the literal meaning of and as a maiko as well as a geisha was revised and redeemed

as an artistic person, as being trained specifically in the ways that was particularly existing in-between the traditional repertoire and the present day that the world is progressing along the stream of Modernity.

Conclusion

From the overall of popular images of geisha in the West, sparked with media hegemony, until the launching of *Memoirs of a Geisha*, both in the novel and movie version, it upholds and reiterates stereotypes of geisha even to be more craze, especially in relations to the exoticism and sexually availability. The act of the first stepping out from a cultural code of keeping silence, is used to be a kind of resistance, becomes a new marker of Japanese woman to declare in public about her life as a woman as well as a geisha. As a type of life-experience-cultural-writing, the body of the narrator as the cultural possessor is brought into elaboration of construction of Japanese woman and geisha identity. As an aspect of self-cultural identity formation The utterance about the knowledge on geisha culture is neatly selected to be performed in correction and replacements the existing 'misconceptions.' Mineko's narrative, through her body and spiritual entity, it is obvious that body representations is illustrated with her 'self' contact in relation with the group, highlighted with Mineko consanguine family, related with bloodline and her geisha Iwasaki clan affinity.

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