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Transnational Experience in New York: Takarazuka Female Performers' American Tour in 1939

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the interwar American tour of the all-female Takarazuka Revue (called Takarazuka), one of the most renowned theatrical revue companies in Japan. While the anti-Japanese movement was spreading in the US, Takarazuka female performers (called *Takarasienne*) got an opportunity to explore America in 1939. In tracing the transnational experiences of these female subjects, I approach them as active agents in control of adapting their image as Japanese women in response to hegemonic structures underlying the expectations of Japanese and American audiences. Moreover, I argue that these women used the American tour to reshape and redefine their own identities, particularly through the modern dilemma of negotiating national boundaries. In turn, I hope to show how their transnational perspectives helped to clarify an emerging possibility of a cosmopolitanism that could likewise serve the imperial and nationalistic interests of Japan.

Key words

Transnational History, Cultural History, US-Japan Relations, Interwar Period, Takarazuka Revue

Introduction

On April 5th 1939, forty performers of Takarazuka, an all-female theatrical company, embarked from the port of Kobe on their very first tour of America.[1] It was to be a three month-long tour traversing the US from coast to coast. To showcase Japan's civilized status among nations, the Japanese Foreign Ministry chose the Takarazuka performers, or *Takarasienne*, as cultural ambassadors and assigned them to perform at the international exposition held in New York 1939. A *Takarasienne* named Sabo Mihoko posted a message in the magazine *Kageki* stating, "I have seen America in films and theater productions. Now I can go there for myself. It seems just like a dream!"[2] Her reaction expressed a mix of high expectations, pleasure, and excitement about traveling to America. Meanwhile, another performer named Tamaba Teruko emphasized the importance of the identity she would be performing, writing, "I will do my best to maintain the dignity and pride of a Japanese woman."[3] Taken together, these voices reveal that while Takarazuka female performers enjoyed their American tour, they did not act merely as free-floating cosmopolitans. Rather, this paper argues that they adopted and performed images of an "ideal"

Japanese womanhood caught between the competing powers of imperial Japanese ideology and its American reception.

Among the relatively few historical studies focused on Takarazuka, Jennifer Robertson examines the theme of Takarazuka and state power in the 1930s in her article, "Mon Japon: The Revue Theater as a Technology of Japanese Imperialism." In it, Robertson explains how male Takarazuka executives deployed *Takarasienne* to bolster colonialism, nationalism, and militarism as Japanese imperialist aggression towards the rest of Asia intensified. Taking up *Takarasienne*'s flexibility in acting as both male and female, Japanese and non-Japanese, and colonizer and colonized, Robertson points out that *Takarasienne*'s ambiguity was effective in justifying the contradictions of Japanese imperialism and its transpacific expansion.[4]

Takarasienne's ambiguous but expansive mode of womanhood also helped to showcase a "New Japan" not only within Japan itself but also to Europe and North America. In her book, *Teikoku to Sengo no Bunka Seisaku*, Baku Sonmi uses Takarazuka's 1939 America tour to examine Japanese cultural diplomacy.[5] Like Robertson, Baku depicts the significance of *Takarasienne* as a symbol of Japanese civilization within the context of global diplomacy in the late 1930s. By investigating various voices extending from within the government to those working at non-governmental institutions, Baku highlights various perspectives on Takarazuka performance and *Takarasienne*. This work lends new insight to Japanese women's studies more broadly, especially given the relative lack of scholarship on Japanese women outside of Japan, or on the role of Japanese women on the part of cultural diplomacy during the war years.

Both Robertson and Baku consider Takarazuka from multiple perspectives, including male Takarazuka executives, government officials, non-governmental cultural institutions, and American audiences, in order to understand how and why Takarazuka females were regarded as an appropriate symbol of Japan. However, each study significantly leaves out the voices and actions of the Takarazuka performers themselves. As mentioned, Sabo and Tamaba made clear in their reflections on the American tour that they were thrilled to go to America, yet still proud to represent a nation hoping to break from the West and become a leader in Asia.

In his article, "Transnational Perspectives on United States History," David Thelen explains that an exclusive focus on nation-state borders and inter-state relations only illuminates the power relations between powerful nations and state actors. This, however, overlooks the complexity of the multi-layered historical interactions between Japan and the US. As a result, Thelen proposes the concept of "transnational history" because it allows us to focus more on actors who challenged, reinforced, and

negotiated the constructions and unmakings of nation-states.[6] By thus considering the transnational experiences of *Takarasienne*, I approach them as active agents in control of adapting their image as Japanese women in response to hegemonic structures underlying the expectations of Japanese and American audiences. In this paper, besides the directives of government officials and their reception among US audiences, I focus on the voices of *Takarasienne*. I argue that they used the tour in America to shape and redefine their own identities, particularly through their modern navigation of existing nation-state boundaries. In turn, I hope to show how their transnational perspectives helped to clarify an emerging possibility of a cosmopolitanism that could likewise serve the imperial and nationalistic interests of Japan. In short, I propose that the tours helped *Takarasienne* envision a transnational modern womanhood, though one that did not require them to abandon Japanese identity.

Since *Takarasienne* were of a select few Japanese women sent to America by the Foreign Ministry during the wartime period, following their footsteps allows us to see a wider range of Japanese womanhood representing Japan for American audiences. However, while they traveled through Honolulu, San Francisco, Sacramento, Los Angeles, New York, Portland, and Seattle, in this paper I focus on their participation in the New York Exposition 1939. At the exposition, in the complete absence of any male figure, Japanese women were solely responsible for portraying both "ancient" and "modern" womanhood. This allows us, therefore, to explore why *Takarasienne* became a symbol of Japan in America the late 1930s.

In addition to official Foreign Ministry reports about its cultural diplomacy, I rely on Japanese-language magazines like *Kageki* and *Takarazuka Grafu*, both published by the Takarazuka Company, as well as the diaries written by Takarazuka directors and *Takarasienne*. These rich resources allow us direct access to the voices of the Takarazuka women. I also introduce multiple Japanese and American newspapers and magazines featuring theaters and films for this study. In this paper, Japanese names are written with the family name first followed by the first name. Translations into English are my own unless otherwise noted.

Historical Background of Cultural Diplomacy and Takarazuka Tours in the 1930s

After the Manchurian incident in 1931 and its withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933, Japan was expanding its territory in Asia and representing itself as a leader of Asia with no less power than its Euro-American counterparts.[7] As anti-Japanese movements spread around the world, Japan established various government-run cultural institutions in order to promote the worth of Japanese culture and soothe its militaristic and imperialist image abroad. For example, in 1934, KBS (The Center for International Cultural Relations) became one of the biggest state-sponsored cultural institutions to promote Japanese culture in other powerful countries.[8] In so doing, the government's financial assistance increased "from

200,000 yen in 1934 to 340,000 yen in 1937; 500,000 yen in 1939; and 700,000 yen in 1940" under the economic restrictions.[9]

After the Sino-Japanese War and the Nanjing Massacre in 1937, the anti-Japanese movement escalated dramatically in the US. In order to maintain legitimate relationships with the country's allies and justify their dominance of the rest of Asia, Japanese civil and military officials planned a celebration of the first anniversary of the Anti-Comintern Pact among the allied countries of the Tripartite Pact (Italy, Germany and Japan). Under such political conditions, the Japanese government decided to send *Takarasienne* as cultural ambassadors to the ceremony.[10] Takarazuka willingly accepted the opportunity and selected thirty girls to undertake a European tour from November 1938 to January 1939. Although Takarazuka did not make a remarkable profit by touring Europe, various Japanese newspapers reported the success of Takarazuka's tour very positively and celebrated the performers as "*Tōa no Furisode Shisetsu*" (*Furisode* delegation of East Asia).[11]

Following the "success" of the European tour, the Foreign Ministry, the *Kokusai Kankōkyoku* (The International Tourism Bureau), and KBS decided to dispatch *Takarasienne* to the US to let them participate in New York exposition later that year.[12] Although a US tour seemed more challenging than Europe because of the increasingly anti-Japanese atmosphere, Japanese officials hoped that sending the young and beautiful girls would improve their chances for success. According to a letter from Sakai Yoneo, a correspondent for the Asahi Shinbun in New York,

> The anti-Japanese movement in the US is very serious. If America finds that something closely related to the Japanese government comes to the US, they would be wary of us… Yet, if we Japanese take young and beautiful Japanese women and make them perform a show that Americans have never seen, it would be great, and Americans would surely be pleased. It will be crucial in weakening the anti-Japanese movement in the US…[13]

Similar to the case of Europe tour, the main purpose of sending *Takarasienne* to the US was to change the image of "imperial Japan" for the better. Moreover, Japanese officials felt that using beautiful Japanese women such as *Takarasienne* as cultural ambassadors would help to ambiguate the image of colonial Japan. Another reason of choosing Takarazuka was its Western-inspired repertoire and its distinctive use of females in male roles. At that time, the representation of a civilized and modern female was one means of measuring the level of a nation's enlightenment and therefore strength. As such, the sight of *Takarasienne* performing Westernized male roles could be taken as an appropriate representation of Japanese modernization.[14] Simultaneously, however, the state portrayed *Takarasienne* as immature by emphasizing their femininity and orientalism. In her book, *Becoming Modern Women*, Suzuki Michiko

notes that females in the 1930s were regarded as "flexible" symbols juxtaposing conflicting ideas.[15] For example, females could represent not only "modern" values and technologies, but also "pre-modern" innocence and nostalgia.[16] This combination was taken in turn to represent the flexibility and harmonious creativity of Japanese culture, and *Takarasienne* were thus suitable to justify Japan as a peaceful yet progressive country.[17]

On April 5th 1939, forty *Takarasienne,* along with Takarazuka's male staff, embarked on their US tour from the port of Kobe. In his diary, *Takarazuka tobeiki*, Shibusawa Hideo, the general manager of the tour, stated projecting the bright future and bridge of US-Japan friendship that *Takarasienne* would form by touring the US. Although Shibusawa was aware of the limited influence of Japanese culture in America, he joined Japanese officials in striving through the *Takarasienne* tour for a stronger bond between both countries. Shibusawa added that, "Beautiful Takarazuka *otome* girls' gentle smiles have more 'power' to move Americans than discussions between Spokesmen."[18] Moreover, he also regarded *Takarasienne*'s femininity, gentility, and dignity as a suitable means of promoting good relations between Japan and the US.

The *Takarasienne* on the American tour also expressed their enthusiasm in *Kageki*. As seen in the introduction, most of them related excitements and admiration towards America. For example, Asagumo Teruyo mentions that, "I was chosen as a member of the American tour… When I told my mother about my trip to the US, she looked so happy… We were holding hands with each other. I was crying with joy and could not move for a while."[19] Asagumo's words suggest that she and even her mother were looking forward to the tour and held America in high regard. Even with severe restrictions against things "American" in Japan, her words clearly tell us that some Japanese women still continued to admire America. Yet while the majority of *Takarasienne* showed their appreciation for going to the US, they also insisted upon their identities as Japanese women in other interviews. For example, Hibiki Chisuzu declared that she would realize the "real beauty" of Japan after coming back from America.[20] Hibiki continued, "Like a cherry blossom woman born in 'a land of the rising sun,' I will perform for audiences living faraway from here. Having the heart of a *yamato otome* (*yamato* means Japan and *otome* is maidens), I will definitely do my best."[21] Hibiki was attentive to American audiences and showed her willingness to perform in front of Americans. Furthermore, by calling herself "*yamato otome*," she perceived her own oriental Japanese beauty. On the other hand, another *Takarasienne*, Yume Tazuru noted, "Just as with male soldiers risking their lives at the front lines, we will take up the charge of our nation."[22] Yume's voice finds her positioning herself as the same as a male soldier, assuming a high degree of responsibility and even masculinity in shouldering the mission of imperial Japan. These various statements of *Takarasienne* reveal their multiple identifications as representatives of Japan,

through which we find a complex array of interpretations and negotiations involved in showcasing themselves for the reception of both Japanese officials and American audiences.

New York

Japanese officials sent Takarazuka to New York specifically because they regarded New York as a hub of global culture and thus the most authoritative place to show Japanese culture to other great nations. Following the example of Germany, Italy, France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union, in 1938 KBS established a cultural center called the Japan Institute at Rockefeller Center in New York. Its responsibility was to promote Japan's image and cultural diplomacy in the US.

The New York World's Fair of 1939 was conceived to showcase the accomplishments and future of women in the world, thus making women's participation central in the planning of the fair.[23] With such background in mind, KBS's decision to dispatch *Takarasienne* as cultural ambassadors to the exposition suggests that the government and KBS assumed that they had the potential to symbolize a civilized Japan on par with the world's great nations. Meanwhile, the fair itself, lasting for 185 days, was the largest of its kind prior to WW Ⅱ. In addition to its emphasis on women, the fair also ran under the banner of "Building the World of Tomorrow."[24] As such, the participant countries aimed to showcase the future roles of women in their pavilions. In the Japanese pavilion, there were arts, photos, and films introducing a complex representation of Japanese womanhood: feminine, masculine, pre-modern and modern. In the pavilion's "silk room," for instance, Japanese women wearing kimono called "silk girls" performed the task of silk weaving to the delight of American audiences. The "silk room" was indeed quite famous among American attendees, and was always crowded with those hoping for a glimpse of real Japanese girls wearing traditional kimono.[25]

At the exposition, *Takarasienne* performed a "Cherry Blossom Ballet" at the Hall of Music. The program was mostly based on traditional Japanese themed repertoires. They also used words frequently associated with Japan, entitling performances "Ukiyoe," "Geisha," "Tokyo," and "Kyoto." But while most of their repertoire was Japanese-inspired, for some parts, Takarazuka included Western-inspired elements such as tap dance while wearing ornate, western-inspired costumes. Furthermore, the *otokoyaku Takarasienne* performed male roles such as those of *samurai*. In this way, the Takarazuka performances displayed a range of styles in which Japanese women appeared as both oriental and occidental, female and male.[26]

The New York Times featured Takarazuka as early as in 1936, well before the Japanese government had decided to dispatch *Takarasienne* on their US tour. In an article explaining the modern theater of Japan, it introduces the history of Takarazuka, its unique repertoire, male roles, and Japanese fans.[27] This shows an American interest in Takarazuka as a form of Japanese modern theater even before the international fair.

Three years later in 1939, the *Times* once again featured Takarazuka on occasion of their visit to New York as cultural ambassadors. They described the "Cherry Blossom Ballet" revue and its repertoire as combining "both the old and the new theater of Japan."[28] Even before the *Takarasienne*'s performance, however, the *Times* emphasized Takarazuka's traditional elements by saying, "It embraces virtually all phases of Nipponese artistry, including ancient religious dances, music of temple and tea house, folk songs, virtuoso ballet performances and pantomimes representative of racial ceremonies and traditions."[29] Furthermore, according to the *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun*, the *New York Herald Tribune* ran an illustrated advertisement for the "Cherry Blossom Ballet" with a picture of four Japanese women dancing in *furisode*.[30] Even though one of the main themes of the New York World's Fair was showcasing the broader possibilities of women, these representations of *Takarasienne* reveal a high expectation among Americans for traditional and oriental "Nipponese" females.

On May 19th, 1939, the *Takarasienne* arrived at Grand Central Station in New York. They screamed with excitement to have arrived. One exclaimed, "I am so glad to be here in New York. What should I do?"[31] Two days later, they performed at the Radio City Music Hall, one of New York's more famous and authoritative theaters. The hall seated 2,400, with 70% occupied by a majority white audience.[32] After the first performance, Shibusawa noted in his diary that it was the best performance of the tour. A *Takarasienne*, Egawa Suzuyo also said of the performance that, "We all feel very good now after such excitement."[33] However, the very next day, a number of American theatrical critics commented negatively on Takarazuka performance. Leon Leonidov, the stage director of New York's Radio City Music Hall, spoke about the Takarazuka stage show with the Foreign Correspondent of *Asahi Shinbun*, stating, "It was very gorgeous, but did not taste anything. It was just like a Japanese cuisine. They look gorgeous and delicious but they don't taste much."[34] Furthermore, Leonidov continued, since Takarazuka was composed of only young females, the force of the show was less powerful than that of American stage performances. Following that, Leonidov mentioned the lack of sex appeal to the audience. [35] He concluded that since immature Japanese girls were playing male roles, they were not as attractive as American female performers. Furthermore, John Martin, a critic of New York Times, commented on Takarazuka as follows:

> It is a girl show, frankly billed as such, and whether in Nipponese or any other language, the aroma of honky-tonk is virtually the same world over. The company consists of some thirty or forty charming looking girls who wear a succession of gorgeous kimonos, changing them at times to appear in travesty as samurais, lovers, comedy servants or to become bare-legged tap dancers. Occasionally they present brief bits of traditional native movements, but more frequently they are imitating their sisters of the West strutting like Broadway chorus girls, lining up like precision troupes, waving fans with American flags on their reverse sides, and

once going into an ordinary tap routine. The music is written in the Western harmonic manner and is played by an orchestra of Western instruments. Two hours of it in last night's especially extended performance… seemed virtually endless and made one want to rush home and browse in Zoe Kincaid's book on Kabuki or read one or two of Arthur Waley's Noh translations to remind one's self of some of the true glories of Japan's theatre and dance arts…"[36]

Martin clearly had a negative impression of Takarazuka's combination of traditional and modern repertoires. He especially criticized Takarazuka's imitations of American-inspired styles. For example, he illustrated the derivative nature of the choreography and music to that of American performance styles. Furthermore, by comparing Takarazuka, Kabuki and Noh, he demonstrated that the Takarazuka performance was not one of "the true glories of Japan's theater and dance arts." From this, we can glimpse the oriental and traditional modes of performance that constituted for Marin an "authentic" Nipponese repertoire. Moreover, through Martin's gaze, the *Takarasienne* are depicted as, "charming looking," but ultimately immature and powerless girls.

Responding to these critical opinions of Takarazuka, in *Kageki*, Kobayashi Ichizō, a founder of Takarazuka Revue company, explained why *Takarasienne* looked less professional or mature than Leonidov and Martin would have hoped. He said, "The majority of Takarazuka girls do not have any dreams to be professionals, because their future dream is to become a 'good wife.' Therefore, it was natural that such American critics might condemn Takarazuka girls."[37] Although Kobayashi seemed to look for excuses to protect the girls, he nonetheless revealed the male-dominated and paternalistic system of Takarazuka. Although he supported them and gave them special opportunities, even Kobayashi agreed with the adolescent view of *Takarasienne*. Moreover, his attitude towards *Takarasienne* reflected the expectation of fulfilling the trope of the "good wife and wise mother" among Japanese women in the 1930s. On the other hand, as for the combination of Japanese and Euro-American styles, Kobayashi clearly mentioned that, "I will never be disappointed by criticism of the Euro-American inspired repertories because we are still on our way to examining and arranging these styles."[38] His words therefore impart a persistent hope of Takarazuka's overseas expansion. In addition to the critical comments on the blending of the traditional and modern, the distant location from the pavilion and the high price of the tickets also made it harder for the Takarazuka repertoire to succeed. Furthermore, few Americans knew about Takarazuka in New York, and audience numbers steadily decreased. Takarazuka had no choice but to end their performance earlier than they had planned.

In spite of the "failure" of the performance, however, *Takarasienne* still needed to perform at the Expo on June 2nd 1939, which had been called "Japan day." The *New York Times* described "Japan day" as a

special day where people could see Japanese "geisha" women on "Shinto floats" parading along Fifth Avenue.[39] For the event, the *Takarasienne* joined various Japanese women in symbolizing the government's desired image of Japan. The common feature among these women was that they embodied a modern or Western background. For example, Eiko Tsukimoto, the first "Miss Japan," handed the torch representing the friendship of Japan and America to the Fair's president, Grover A. Whalen.[40] Tsukimoto was a Christian born in Vancouver who lived in Washington as an elementary school student. In an interview posted in the *Asahi Shinbun*, Tsukimoto regarded herself as more mixed American and Japanese than just Japanese.[41] Her hybrid background as a cosmopolitan Japanese woman was very useful for the Japanese government in showcasing the "safe" modernization of Japan to the US.

Meanwhile, other Japanese women like Mizunoe Takiko, an actress in Shōchiku Kagekidan (Shōchiku Revue) called *dansô no reijin* (a beautiful male-role woman), were invited to "Japan Day." Mizunoe was famous as one of the first women in Japan to cut her hair short in a "male" fashion. Her masculine character was also very useful in presenting the image of a "New Woman" alongside a new and modernized Japan. Furthermore, Yoshioka Yayoi, a female doctor and a founder of *Tokyo Joshi Gakkou* (Tokyo Women's Medical School), the first medical school for female students, was sent to America by the government. Alongside the *Takarasienne*, all the females attending to the "Japan Day" were regarded as "flexible" symbols juxtaposing conflicting ideas of both "modern" values and technologies, as well as "pre-modern" innocence and nostalgia.[42] Tsukimoto was often taken up in newspapers by American media. For example, the *New York Times* posted a series called "Flame of Friendship" that featured Tsukimoto for three days in a row. Although Tsukimoto was a bilingual woman identifying herself not as Japanese but as mixed Japanese and American, every American media emphasized Tsukimoto's kimono and her oriental beauty.[43] They did not mention Japanese women's "modern" elements but rather amplified the femininity of "geisha" Japanese women. Taking the representations of Japanese women who participated in "Japan day" into consideration, we can see clear gaps in expectation between the Japanese government and American audiences. Although the Japanese state regarded these Japanese women as "New Women," within the American racial and cultural hierarchy, these Japanese women were just the same as pre-modern and traditional Japanese "geisha" wearing kimono.

Takarasienne in New York

Even though Takarazuka's performance in New York ended in failure and deficit, with Americans expecting more feminine "geisha" presentations, *Takarasienne*'s curiosity towards America grew throughout the national tour. They were pleased with the chance to enjoy their stay in New York, which was indeed a rare opportunity afforded by the Japanese government. In interviews, *Takarasienne* talked about their daily experiences in New York more than about their performances at the Expo. In particular, they enjoyed absorbing American fashions by observing what American women were wearing in New

York. For example, Kasugano Yachiyo said, “Our pocket money was limited to 380 dollars, but as soon as I arrived in New York, I borrowed some money from Shibusawa-sensei and went to buy clothes and bags.”[44] Another *Takarasienne*, Sabo Mihoko, talked about New Yorkers’ fashion in an interview, stating, “I was not really sure about the class hierarchy in New York, yet I found that the majority of women in New York were wearing black and white outfits.” [45] She continued that, “In this summer, the Mexican hat would become a fashion trend in New York. By imitating American women, I also bought it.” She continued, “Although women staying in New York were called New York girls, their hair was mostly black and they were not so tall and skinny. They just looked like us!"[46] Here, her statement implies an assumption that even *Takarasienne* could be New Yorkers without paying attention to the racial issues that Japanese faced in the US.

The edited volume, *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity and Globalization,* offers a nuanced analysis of how global commodity and cultural flows have shaped “modern femininity” across the globe.[47] Furthermore, its contributors observe that consumption allows females to be “creative actors, meaningfully presenting and defining themselves through purchase and use.”[48] Borrowing the narrative of women’s consumption from this volume, *Takarasienne*’s consumption patterns in the US allow us to see their own self-representation and participation in an American culture of consumption. In addition, by fashioning themselves with American clothes, they re-identified themselves as modern women. Ultimately, then, by consuming fashion, *Takarasienne* like Kasugano and Sabo challenged existing nation-state boundaries and built a transnational space that women all around the world could share.

While *Takarasienne* were enjoying New York fashion, Americans also looked at *Takarasienne* with curiosity. In New York, most of *Takarasienne* were wearing kimono. Sabo said that, while wearing kimono, Americans approached them with a range of questions. For example, when she attended a party, an American identified her *obi* as a cushion to sit on the chair comfortably. Another American called her *tabi* a stocking and tried to roll up the hem of her kimono.[49] In an interview, Kasugano talked about the influence that *Takarasienne* had upon American fashion. “I heard that the very famous fashion magazine *Vogue* posted some fashion styles inspired by *Takarasienne*’s *furisode*.”[50] While *Takarasienne* admired New York fashions, then, Americans also approved of Japanese girls’ outfits, and we can clearly see transnational connections forming between *Takarasienne* and American females.

Although the Japanese government and American audiences alike forced *Takarasienne* to represent their own respective ideal images of Japanese womanhood, *Takarasienne* did not simply follow these demands passively. Rather, they actively chose their own modes of showcasing themselves based on what people around them wanted to see. According to Shibusawa, a *Takarasienne* named Miura Tokiko sought to exploit the interest in kimono among Americans and came up with the idea to advertise

Takarazuka performances with the traditional dress. Before they performed at the theater, all forty *Takarasienne* set out to stroll the exposition grounds in kimono. Finally, some Americans followed *Takarasienne* and bought tickets for the shows.[51] With this in mind, *Takarasienne* understood the Americans' high demand for an image of "oriental" and "geisha" Japanese girls in kimono and sometimes manipulated them accordingly. As such, while the Japanese government and American audiences alike forced *Takarasienne* to represent their own respective ideal images of Japanese womanhood, *Takarasienne* did not simply follow these demands passively. Rather, they actively chose their own modes of showcasing themselves based on what people around them wanted to see.

In addition to fashion, *Takarasienne* in New York had a number of opportunities to go to theaters and night clubs. They enjoyed not only watching the performances but also learning new styles and technical skills from Americans directly by visiting the theaters. In the interview, Sayo Fukuko cited the titles of the movies and repertoires she watched in New York, such as "Snow White," "Hot Mikado," and "Love Fair." She praised performers' technical skills and the music they used in the shows. Sayo also described the experience of having Leonidov, the director of Radio City, taking *Takarasienne* backstage at the hall. She noted that the stage equipment in New York was far more advanced than that of Japan. As mentioned above, although Laonidov criticized the Takarazuka performance, *Takarasienne* interacted with him directly and got an opportunity to visit and learn about American theaters. Such opportunities would have been unimaginable to most Japanese women of the era.

While *Takarasienne* cultivated the cosmopolitan identity in New York, they also clarified their identity as exponents of Japanese imperialism through the tour. For example, Sakuramachi Kimiko related a particular experience, stating, "When I entered a shop in New York, Americans always said 'beautiful' to us. But in the end, some asked us 'Are you Chinese?' I was furious about that and said 'NO' loudly."[52] Her words imply the sense of Japanese racial superiority. While they enjoyed experiencing the American fashions, they certainly defined their home country, Japan, as an imperial leader of Asia.

Moreover, another *Takarasienne* also implied the racial superiority of the Japanese while they interacted with African Americans. In one interview, Amagi Tsukie talked about going to the night club called the "French Casino" and watching African Americans perform. Although she did not mention the details, by calling these African American performers "*kuronbo*" (nigger), she showed a certain racial prejudice towards African Americans and implied her superiority as a civilized Japanese. That shows how the racial and cultural hierarchies of the Japanese empire carry over even in New York, and even translate into the context of American race relations. At the same time, however, she also mentioned that she was very moved by listening to their "authentic" skillful and beautiful songs. Another *Takarasienne*, Miura Tokiko also praised African Americans songs and dances, calling them "authentic art" in the interview.[53]

Even though both the *Takarasienne* and African American performers were subject to white American expectations of “authenticity,” rather than identifying this problem as a mutual one, the *Takarasienne* seem to identify more with White American subjectivity than with African American subjectivity. One crucial reason for this is “aspiration” towards White Americans. As stated, the point of the Takarazuka tour was aspirational, both in the imperialist sense, as well as in the cosmopolitan sense. In both, the “aspiration” seems to be to become equal to White subjects, and shed the image of racialized inferiority and difference of African Americans. In the end, it seems like the closest that the *Takarasienne* come to this aspirational goal is the ability to transfer that expectation downward to African American performers. Although I need to expand my analysis in this section more for the future research, I argue that the result clearly illustrates a complex picture of transnational culture, gender, and race.

Conclusion

The Japanese Foreign Ministry sent *Takarasienne* to America as representatives of a civilized Japan in order to justify the nation's imperialism and territorial expansion. On the other hand, their American reception revealed an expectation that they act as icons of oriental beauty and immaturity. Between the state government and the expectations of the American audiences, *Takarasienne* adopted and shaped their own understandings of what it meant to be Japanese women and thus performed Japanese womanhood differently depending on the situation. While they claimed nationalistic dignity and pride as members of the Japanese empire, however, their rich experience of American music and fashion, along with direct communication with Americans, allowed them to develop transnational identities as part of a global culture. By taking a look at Takarazuka female performers who actively manipulated their positions as performers to take on a wider range of femininities, this paper introduces a new figure of wartime Japanese womanhood. For Takrazuka female performers, that is, the American tour constituted a turning point in rethinking America and also their own identities as Japanese women.

However, upon their return to Japan, they were soon involved in the war effort. Since some of them continued to fashion themselves as American-inspired modern women, the Japanese media started criticizing *Takarasienne* and forced certain members to depart the troupe.[54] When WW Ⅱ broke out in 1941, the Japanese government strictly cracked down on Takarazuka and female performers.[55] Many *Takarasienne*, however, talked about their continuous admiration towards America even during the war. That is, although America had become an “enemy” and they had lost the chance to be on the stage, their aspirations for the transnational identity that they had constructed through the American tour of 1939 had barely changed.

Notes

[1] Takarazuka Revue is an all-female theatrical company in Kobe, Japan, established in 1913. Although "all-female" entertainment was only one of many projects the Takarazuka company pursued, it quickly became an iconic part of Japanese popular culture, and Takarazuka became one of the nation's most famous theatrical companies among the middle class. In Takarazuka, some female performers play the roles of men, called *otokoyaku*, and others play *musumeyaku*, performing the roles of women. Furthermore, their productions have included Japanese and Euro-American inspired performances, and on the stage, *otokoyaku* and *musumeyaku* generally play romantic stories.

[2] *Kageki* was one of the magazines published by the Takarazuka Company for its Japanese fans. Of the many official Takarazuka publications, it also contains the greatest number of articles, comments and photographs.

Sabo, Mihoko, "*Tobei wo saisite minasama wo okuru*," *Kageki,* no.229 (1939):114.

[3] Tamaba Teruko, ibid.

[4] Jennifer Robertson. "Mon Japon: the Theater as a Technology of Japanese Imperialism," *American Ethnologist*, vol22, no.4 (1995):970-996.

[5] Baku Sonmi, *Teikoku to Sengo no Bunkaseisaku* (Iwanami shoten, 2017).

[6] David Thelen, "Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History," *The Journal of American Histor*y, Vol.86, No.3*, A Special Issue* (1999): 968.

Besides Thelen, there were numerous scholars defining the "transnational framework"; Pierre Yves-Saunier, *Transnational History* (New York: Palgrave, 2013); Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective since 1789* (New York: Palgrave, 2007); Janet Hoskins and Viet Thanh Nguyen eds., *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014).

[7] Baku 15-18.

[8] Kokusaibunka Fukkokai, *KBS sanjūnen no Ayumi*, (1964), 1-14.

The contents of KBS's activities were, 1. Translation and publishing, 2. Dispatching and communications among the lecturers, 3. Organizing the Exhibition and Performance, 4. Exchanging the documents, 5, Inviting Bunka jin (cultural people) from abroad, 6. Assisting Oriental Studies in abroad, 7. Establishing the system of exchange program, 8. Helping the communications among cultural institutions and people, 9. Supporting the productions of films, 10. Management and establishment of the libraries and research institutions.

[9] Baku,20

[10] Ibid.,24.

[11] Ibid., 30.

[12] Ibid., 31.

[13] "Bungaku, Bijutsu oyobi Engeki kankeizattken 32 Tōhō Kagekidan no Hakurankai Kankei," Gaikō Shiryō Kan (I-0411).

[14] Sydney L.Gulick, *Evolution of the Japanese: Social and Psychic* (New York, Chicago, Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1903). In his book, Gulick, an American missionary highlights the Japanese women and associates them with the advanced blight future of Japan. Japanese females have been symbolized "New Women" and "New Japan" towards outside Japan by the Foreign Ministry. Simultaneously, Japanese females were not always the symbols of "strong" Japan.

[15] Suzuki, Michiko, *Becoming Modern Women*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 4.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Baku, 25.

[18] Shibusawa Eiichi, *Takarazuka Tobeiki*. (Shunyōdōkan, 1939), 33.

During the tour, Shibusawa kept a diary every day and detailed the American tour of Takarazuka.

[19] Asagumo Teruyo, *Kageki,* no.229(1939):120.

[20] Hibiki Chisuzu, ibid., 118.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Yume Tazuru, ibid.

[23] David Gelernter, *1939: The Lost World of the Fair* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 129.

[24] Ibid.

[25] "Nūyōku banpaku no Nihonkan Kidome no seikyō," *Tokyo Asahi*, 2 May 1939.

[26] Shibusawa, 50.
Programs were divided into five, and the lineup of the program was below,
Dance Takarazuka "Takarazuka-Ondo" (Cherry Dance), Prelude (Three Celebrants), At the Riverside (Stage Reproduction Of Ukiyoe), Puppet Show When my Ship comes Home (Fishermen's Festival), Kabuki "Soga" (Showing The Elegance of Kabuki Play), Nikko (At The Most Famous Temple Of Japan), Ancient Martial Frolic (Comic Dance), Miss Tokyo (Osayo: Depicting The Sentiment Of Old Edo), Harvest Dance, Spring Twilight (Ballet), Miss Osaka (Osome: Dance with Rich Local Colour), Chanson Nippon (Japanese Folk-Songs), Dance Snow Flakes, (Wandering Musician With Popular Japanese Instrument), Kyoto (Sword man And "Geisha": Meiji Restoration Era), Battledore & Shuttlecock (New Year's Recreation), Finale (Cherry Festival).　/<Intermission>/2. Demon and Knight/ 3. They Fooled the Boss/ 4. Ukiyoe ("Hikone Byobu")/ 5. Musume DŌZYŌZI (Five maidens at the Dōzyōzi Temple).

[27] "On the Modern Theatre of Japan," *The New York Times*, 1 November, 1936.

[28] "Ballet from Japan To Appear at Fair Cherry Blossom Organization to Start Next Sunday," *The New York Times*, 15 May, 1939.

[29] Ibid.

[30] "Nūyōku iri no Takarazuka ni kappatsu na senden hajimaru," *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun*, 17 May, 1939.

[31] Shibusawa, 79.

[32] Ibid., 82-84.

[33] Ibid., 85.

[34] Kobayashi Ichizō, "Nūyōku iki ze ka inaka," *Kageki,* no.232 (1939):44-45.

[35] "Takarrazuka Furisodeshisetsu no Kouseki," *Osaka Asahi Shinbun*, 8 June, 1939.

[36] John Martin, "The Dance: Cherry Blossom Ballet," *The New York Times*, 22 May, 1939.

[37] Kobayashi, 44-45.

[38] Ibid.

[39] "45 Experts Named to Fair's Art Body," *The New York Times*, 14 March, 1939.

[40] "Miss Japan To Arrive: Due at World's Fair Today with," *The New York Times,* 1 June, 1939.

[41] "Gakuseidaihyō Tsukimoto Eiko Jō Ki (1)-(4)," *Asahi Shinbun*, 11-14 September, 1935.

[42] Suzuki, 4.　Barrowing Suzuki's analysis of the representation of Japanese women in 1930s.

[43] "Japan Dedicates Pavilion with 1,500 year old 'Flame of Friendship," *The New York Times*, 3 June 1939.

[44]Tokai Jiro, "Furisode Tobei gumi ni kiita omiyage banashi," *Raito Magazine*, 6 August, 1939.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid.

[47] The Modern Girl Around the World Research Group. *The Modern Girl Around the World*, (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008), 5.

[48] Ibid, 20.

[49] "*Nyū Yōku de,*" *Osaka Mainichi*, 13 June 1939.

[50] Kasugano Yachiyo,"Amerika de nani wo mitaka," *Takarazuka graph*, no.41 (1939): no page.

[51] Shibusawa, 91.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Miura Tokiko, "Amerika no Tabi," *Kageki*, no.233 (1939):59.
[54] "Zuka Musumeyo Denaose," *Osaka Asahi*, 30 July, 1939.
[55] Shiro Okamoto, *The Man Who Saved Kabuki*: *Faubion Bowers and Theatre Censorship in Occupied Japan*, trans. and adapted by Samuel L. Leiter, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 135.

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