

**How to Look Like a ‘Haafu’:
Consumption of the Image of ‘Part-White’ Women in
Contemporary Japan**

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Abstract

This paper examines the consumption of whiteness through a study of make-up style in contemporary Japan. Since the late 2000s, ‘*haafu gao* make-up’ has become a fashion trend amongst young women; it has been featured in women’s magazines, beauty salons, and cosmetic stores. *Haafu gao* refers to a distinctive make-up style which looks supposedly ‘part-white’ (*haafu/hafu*). Through an analysis of women’s magazines, I will describe how and why this make-up style has become so popular through its featuring of ‘*haafu*’ women as ‘models’ to fill the gap between ideal and reality for women in Japan.

Key Words: whiteness, consumption, representation, performance, *haafu(hafu)*, ‘part-white’

1. Introduction

Studies of whiteness have been limited to the experiences of the U.S. and other (Western and non-Western) societies where 'whiteness' has been dominant. In Western societies, 'white' people are those who are unmarked racially, ethnically or nationally. But in non-Western country such as in Japan, 'whiteness' becomes an identity for such people, because they are marked racially or ethnically. In global market, typically in the cosmetic industry, advertising models are 'white.' Through this marketing, images of 'whiteness' are reconstructed and become objects of desire and consumption. But in Japan, the object of desire for and consumption of 'whiteness' is 'part-white' people, primarily woman.

Since the late 2000s, '*haafu gao* make-up' has become a fashion trend amongst young women; it has been featured in women's magazines, beauty salons, and cosmetic stores. *Haafu gao* refers to a distinctive make-up style which looks supposedly 'part-white' (*haafu/hafu*)¹. *Haafu* is way of cognizing 'part-white' people. While the word itself comes from the English words 'half-caste' or 'half-blood', the negative meanings associated with them were not carried over into the word *haafu*². It was first used by Toma Kitabayashi in the 1930 novel *Machi no*

¹ *Hafu* is another notation of the word *haafu* that is used in the 2013 movie *Hafu* [<http://hafufilm.com/>] directed by Megumi Nishikura and Lara Perez Takagi.

² Some people who know English dislike *haafu* because of the negative connotation of 'half'. Some parents are opposed to this word and have proposed to adopt the label 'double' instead.

Kokusai Musume [The International Girls in the Cities] (Okamura 2013) and became popular starting in the 1970's when the four-woman singer and dancer group *Gouruden Haafu* [Golden Half] debuted (Murphy-Shigematsu 1994). Since then *haafu* became one form of cognizing 'part-white' people, and some individuals identify themselves using this label. Needless to say, glamorization in show business does not equal full acceptance in the society.

2. A Short History of Images of Westerners and 'Part-white' People

The change in the image of 'part-white' people from 'half-caste/blood' to *haafu* was not one-directional. It started in the middle of 16th century, when the Portuguese first came to the islands now called Japan. They landed on the southern island Tanegashima and introduced gun power. Since the Portuguese and Spanish came from the southern seas, people called them *nanban-jin* [southern barbarians]³. However, in the mid-17th century, Portuguese and Spaniards were prohibited from coming to Japan because they were propagating Christianity. The closed-door-policy of the Tokugawa *Shogunate* only permitted trade with the Netherlands and China. For almost 200 years, Nagasaki was the only door to the world.

³ The concept of *nanban* was adopted from ancient Chinese view of the world. In this Sinocentrism, people around China were seen as 'inferior savages' and named using directions: north was *hoku-teki* [běi-dí], west was *sei-jyuu* [xi-róng], east was *tou-i* [dong-yí] and south was *nan-ban* [nán-mán].

In the middle of 19th century when Commodore Perry of the U.S. Navy came to Japan, the Tokugawa *Shogunate* decided to open the land. Since then, many Westerners come to Japan for trading, as Japanese government employees, or to carry out missionary work. In this era, people paid attention not to the colour of their skin but of their hair. When the Tokugawa *Shogunate* was in power, Dutch were called '*koumou-jin*' [red-haired people] (Wagatsuma 1967:442), and this continued in the Meiji era, with the similar word *ketou* also coming into use. However, at this time, words that did not focus on hair colour, such as *i-jin* [stranger], *gaikoku-jin* [foreigner] / *gai-jin* (a shortened form of *gaikoku-jin* that has been used for long time to refer to physically different 'white' people), and *seiyou-jin* [westerner], appeared. Amidst the negative images present during the last days of Tokugawa *Shogunate*, some westerners were assassinated by Japanese conservative samurai for political reasons ⁴. Such samurai saw westerners as enemies, however normal people in small fishing villages and so on were just afraid of them. The story of *Okichi*, who was housekeeper of the Council of the USA Townsend Harris and encountered tragedy because she was too close to *ketou*, was presented in the novel *Toujin Okichi*.

However, some Japanese began to admire or accept 'whiteness' due to the influence of social Darwinism. But image of 'whiteness' became significantly more positive when Hollywood films spread in the 1920's and some urban people

⁴ This was intended to seriously harm the Japanese government, because it would have to pay compensation to the countries the Europeans were from.

became fascinated with movie stars. Through those movies, Japanese people saw modern Western – mostly American – life. For example, the famous novel written by Junichiro Tanizaki, *Chijin no Ai* [lit., The Love of an Idiot; English translation entitled *Naomi*], describes a man who was crazy about a ‘white’ woman. In other novels as well, Tanizaki includes characters who love ‘white’ woman. However, since they cannot marry them, they choose a Japanese girl who looks ‘white’ or is ‘part-white’. In Tanizaki’s novel, the image of ‘white’ woman was the image of Hollywood stars (Nakamura 1954:144). This was also the case in Toma Kitabahshi’s 1930 novel *Machi no Kokusai Musume*, and Kitabayashi appears to have been also influenced by westerners living in Yokohama as well. In the 1920s and 30s, an era of *kokusaika* [internationalization] for the people living in Yokohama, westerners were not enemies or barbarians.

When WWII began, the image of white people grew worse. Throughout the war, the Japanese government used the propaganda slogan ‘*kichiku bei ei*’ [American and British people are brutal]. In this slogan, not only American or British people but also German or other people who look ‘white’ were seen as the enemy. ‘White’ people were the enemy of all ‘coloured’ people, including Japanese. After 1945, when Japan lost and the Allied Powers occupied the country, Japanese people still held this image. Often Japanese people who lived in cities bombed by the US Air Force hated US serviceman more than people in other areas of the country. After WWII, ‘white’ came to be equated with Americans and images of ‘whiteness’ featured US serviceman and Hollywood stars. Again, images of ‘whiteness’ were provided by movies.

3. Appearance of the Concept of 'Haafu' and 'Haafu Gao'

In 1986, a woman fashion magazine, *an-an*, featured *haafu gao*. The article wrote that recently young woman look more 'like *haafu*' because they were becoming taller and thinner than their former generation. With this change, the reporter writes that their figure has become more like 'part-white' woman. The image of 'part-white' emerged in the 1960s.

In the 1960s and 70's, 'GI babies' became teenagers and entered their early twenties⁵. There were many 'part-white' young women featured in media. In 1964, when Tokyo Olympics games were held, and in 1970, when the Osaka Exportation was held, the mind of Japanese people was opened and new form of *kokusaika* began. In this period, Japanese media re-evaluated 'whiteness' and used many 'part-white' people, mostly women. The most famous person was the actor Haruko Wanibuchi, who was born to a German mother and Japanese father. She belonged to Shochiku film studio and acted as the heroin in the 1960 film *Izu no Odoriko* [Dancer of Izu]. The novel it was based on was written in 1926 by Yasunari Kawabata, who won the 1968 Nobel Prize in Literature. This film has

⁵ Before the 1970's, about 60% Japanese couples' first dates were *omiai* (Takeshita 2002:112). *Omiai* is meeting with prospective marriage partners through the arrangement of elder people such as aunts. Marriage with military service men during the occupied era was an exception, and the birth of 'GI babies' were seen as a tragedy or shame of the Japanese nation, particularly when the child was 'part-black'.

been redone six times since then with popular actors appearing as the heroin. The next popular ‘part-white’ woman during this time was Bibari Maeda. She was a poster model of the cosmetic series, *Shiseido Beauty Cake*. The series’ posters amazed Japanese people. The next was Miki Irie, whose father was Russian (‘white émigré’) and whose mother was Japanese. She was selected as best model in 1964 at the International Fashion Festival held in Las Vegas ⁶.

In 1967, *Kindai Eiga* reported that a *konketsu-tarento buumu* [boom] ⁷ was coming in Japanese show business. It featured eight women. Six of them (Rinda Yamamoto, Bibari Maeda, Miki Obata, Tomoko Kei, Emily Takahashi, and June Adams) had American (‘white’) fathers. One (Meri Tokunaga) had a German mother, and another (Rena Takami) had a part-Russian (white émigré) mother. People were fascinated with their body forms and ‘exotic’ face. In this period, there were also other non-white mixed individuals who became popular, such as

⁶ Asahi Shimbun (1 June 1964) reported about the prize.

⁷ ‘*Konketsu -tarento*’ means star or celebrity of ‘mixed-blood’ [*konketsu*]. This term included not only ‘part-white’ but also ‘part-black’ people such as Michi Aoyama and Mary Jackson. 10 magazines reported about this trend: *Shuukan Heibon* (September 1964), *Shuukan Manga Times* (1 October 1966), *Shuukan Heibon* (October 1966), *Ieno Hikari* (June 1967), *Weekly Prei Boui* (27 June 1967), *Heibon* (23 September 1967), *Weekly Heibon Panchi* (8 January 1968), *Amai Shashin* (November 1968), *Shuukan Shounen Sandei* (12 July 1970), and *Weekly Prei Boui* (12 November 1975).

Mari Anne, whose father came from India and mother was Japanese. But for creation of an image of *haafu*, in 1980's, was Agnes Lum. She came from Hawaii, and her father was Chinese and mother was a Filipina of European descent. Lum came to Japan in late 1970's and worked for only few years. However, in an *an-an* (June 1986) issue, she offered women a model for displaying in an attractive fashion their bodies in bikinis, thereby changing young Japanese people's sense of beauty.

In 1980's, there were not many more young 'part-white' models than before ⁸. The targets of fashion magazines were mostly people under twenty-five years old, so the models had to be part of the same generation. However, there was a short supply of beautiful 'part-white' young woman, and this led to *haafu gao*. 'Looking *haafu*' meant not only 'white' looks, but also a certain lifestyle or behaviour. *an-an* wrote that young woman of the 1980's had lost their 'Japanese virtue' and became more western, particularly American. However, this was meant positively, because it was thought women would thereby become more active and attractive. To look *haafu* meant becoming modern: *haafu* was a symbol of modernism and westernization.

⁸ After 1952, when Japan recovered its independence, four big military bases remained around Tokyo: Yokota Air Base (Tokyo), the naval air facility Atsugi (Kanagawa), Camp Zama (Kanagawa), and Yokosuka naval base (Kanagawa). However, from this time onwards there were fewer couples involving service members at these bases than before.

4. The Emergence of the ‘*Haafu Gao* Make-up’ Trend

From March 2009, the convenience store company Seven Eleven Japan released a new cosmetic series named *Para Do*. This series consisted of eye shadow, blush and lip gloss. It was said that these could create a *haafu gao*. While promoting cosmetics by using the concept *haafu gao* was not new, a cosmetic series that used the concept was. *Haafu gao* was a concept the company thought they could use for business⁹.

The trend of '*haafu gao* make up' begun in May 2007, when the woman fashion magazine *ViVi* featured make-up called '*gaikokujin gao* eye make-up'. This was linked to the 2007 launch of the magazine *GOSSIPS PRESS* that featured Hollywood celebrity gossip. In the *ViVi* article, eight Hollywood celebrities appeared: Lindsay Lohan, Mary-Kate Olsen, Ashley Olsen, Jessica Alba, Nicole Richie, Mischa Barton, Paris Hilton, and Rachel Bilson. In this context *gaikoku-jin* did not mean 'foreigner' but 'white'. This make-up style was new, but it did not become popular.

The next year in January 2008 Nikkei *Entateinmento* [Entertainment], a magazine published by a group company of *Nikkei* [Japanese Financial

⁹ In September 2013, *KOSE*, a cosmetics company, released new cosmetic series for *haafu gao* named *Visée*. The model of *Para Do*, Suzannu (Sae Yamamoto), was not a 'part-white' woman; her parents are 'Japanese.' In *Visée*, the model is Rola, whose father is Pakistani. The models of *haafu gao* is are not always 'part-white' people.

Newspaper], wrote looking back at the previous year that one of nine trends of the year 2007 was *haafu gao*. The article introduced sixteen 'part-white' women, born in late 70's to 80's, such as Christel Takigawa, who was one of the presenters for the Japanese government at 125th IOC session¹⁰. In 2008 four woman fashion magazines featured 'haafu gao' make-up: *BLENDA* (March and June), *MAQUIA* (February), *non-no* (November) and *S cawaii* (November). In *MAQUIA*, one of the *haafu gao* models was Christel Takigawa.

After 2008, some women's fashion magazines featured 'haafu gao make-up': *bea's UP* (December 2009), *Happie nuts* (June 2011), *Nickey* (March 2011) and *Pop Sister* (March 2011), *Seventeen* (March and December 2012), *S cawaii* (April and December 2013) and *CanCam* (March 2014). These magazines have a similar target age of 16 to 30 years old. In Japan, there are more than twenty woman fashion magazines for this age group. The magazines that featured *haafu gao* make-up are not mainstream. However, the present trend of young woman's make-up style is similar *haafu gao*, although it might not be called by that name.

5. From Body Form and Behaviour to Face: Tentative Conclusion

In 1960s and 70s when many 'part-white' women appeared in media for the first time, they fascinated the public with their body-form. But in the late 2000s, part-white woman fascinated people with their faces, and people invented the word

¹⁰ It was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from 7 September to 10 September 2013.

haafu gao. In the former period, being glamorous or having body valance called *hachi toushin* (originally from the German anthropologist Stratz's thesis of '8 Kopfhöhen' [eight head-heights]¹¹), was considered attractive. From the late 2000s, not body but face form was the focus. For a long time, Eurocentric social Darwinist knowledge influenced beauty standards, but when the trend of thinness emerged, people began to pay less attention to the body forms of westerners.

Fascination with westerners' behaviour and lifestyle started in early 20th century. For example, in Tanizaki's novel written in 1920s, he features 'white' people (usually Americans). In the novel, he describe a man who meets a girl whose body form is similar to 'white' people and wants to educate the girl to become more 'white' or western-looking. Tanizaki's novel was fiction, but a similar fascination with body form, behaviour, and lifestyle could be found in the woman's magazine *an-an* in 1986. In the articles, reporters paid attention to mainly the body form, but also to lifestyle and behaviour.

However after 2007, people came to see only face form and hair / eye colour, and women's fashion magazines instructed their readers how to apply make-up to create a *haafu gao*. While the influence of global marketing of cosmetic brands creates images of 'white' people in Japan, 'white' women can't be make-up

¹¹ In the book *Die Rassenschönheit des Weibes* [The Racial Beauty of Women] (1922), Stratz wroteite that 'white' is the most beautiful 'race' and that other races became more beautiful when they develop.

models because people cannot relate to them. The *haafu gao* serves as a look that is closer to the ideal 'Japanese' face.

Celebrity *haafu* are not new; the phenomenon's origins can be found in Tanizaki and Kitabayashi's novels. The 20th century admiration of *haafu* (mostly woman) was the result of 'white' or westerner worship. But in the 2000s, for young woman, Hollywood stars and *haafu* celebrities were models for performance, or cosplay. '*Haafu gao* make-up' is a fluctuating trend. Image of whiteness are consumed in this way by young Japanese women.

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