The book offers a unique perspective on world/global city studies, which has been rarely mentioned before. Sixteen authors from various fields such as geography, cultural studies, sociology, and fashion studies contribute to this volume, covering 10 or more cities including Paris, London, New York, Tokyo, Milan, Shanghai, Moscow, Mumbai, Dakar, San Francisco, and Los Angeles in their case studies. These cities are almost the same ones that frequently appear in discussions of world city studies.

The first section of the book addresses the broad concept of the fashion city and its obligation to the complex historical phenomenon of modernity. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the interrelationship between contemporary fashion streams and the world cities. Through an analysis of fashion, the nature of urban modernity is sketched out in Chapter 2.

The second section comprises four chapters that consider the manners in which key fashion cities have been constituted visually and through processes of design and stylization. Chapter 3 illustrates the process of the symbolic production of fashion. The trend of Paris becoming a fashion capital is analyzed in the print media of the fashion industry. Recently Tokyo has become famous for its high-end street fashion and attracts many people including fashion designers and foreign tourists. Chapter 4 explains that with the emergence of world-ranked Japanese designers during the 1970s and the 1980s Tokyo emerged as an important center on fashion maps. New York is also famous for its fashion designers known for their simple and minimalistic styles. In Chapter 5, the author argues that a general shift towards ready-to-wear fashions converged with an increasing demand for more of an “American sensibility” in high-end fashion, thereby increasing New York’s importance as a center of design. The role of the American film industry in producing the fashion image cannot be ignored and Chapter 6 deals with films shot in Hollywood starring Audrey Hepburn to illustrate how such movies contributed to promoting the particular city’s image as a fashion center.

Four chapters, constituting the third section, consider examples of economic, cultural, and physical changes in some cities that have undergone transformations led by new concepts of fashion. Chapter 7 returns to New York and considers the rise of the city in the early twentieth century as a world city of fashion and an economic superpower. In this case, the author argues that the occurrence of World War II is the critical event that leads to New York overtaking the apparel production of Paris. In contrast, Milan is a world fashion city that has not necessarily been linked to its economic ranking. Chapter 8 clarifies that the rapid rise of Milan as a world fashion city is parallel to a broader change in fashion. In other words, the population for ready-to-wear fashion promoted Milan to become a fashion capital after the 1970s. Chapter 9 highlights Moscow as the capital of one of the emerging BRICs countries. In Moscow, affluent money backed by natural resources supports the conspicuous consumption of luxury goods, producing an agglomeration of high-brand retail shops there. Those built up environments sometimes play a vital role in producing the fashion culture that characterizes the city. Chapter 10 presents a case study on the West End of London in the post World War II period.

The four chapters in the third section focus on interrelationships among the cities and emphasize the nexus between the cities in terms of trade, colonialism, and immigrants. Dakar, the capital city of Senegal is sometimes called the “Paris of Africa.” In Chapter 11, however, this phrase is given a dual meaning. While on one hand, it represents Dakar as a modern cultural center; on the other hand, it implies the construction of Africa as a culturally regressive place that required the “progressive” influence of French high fashion. Chapter 12 regards London as a capital city that has a long tradition as the center of the British Empire. From this viewpoint, it is clear that London’s so-called cosmopolitan fashions of the 1960s showed strong links with earlier forms of imperial orientalism. Chapter 13 involves two
case studies of transnational retailers. The two studies suggest that transnational fashion culture must be understood through, not only the material geographies of transnational flows of labor or goods, but also the symbolic and imaginative geographies that accompany these productions. Immigrant labor plays an important role in world city studies, as explained in Chapter 14. It describes the history and the current situation of immigrants involved in the apparel industry in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

World city studies have, hitherto, mainly focused on the financial industry and producer services of global cities. Fashion businesses, however, are often used as tools for improving a city’s image and boosting its growth. In this context, this book is especially worth reading and provides ideas for future research fields and research methods. In particular, the colonialism and the discourse analyses are rarely seen in world city studies. These analyses are very effective in outlining the transactions of the image flows between world cities. Finally, the rise of China as a world manufacturer in the early 21st century has deeply impacted the fashion industry and the network of the world fashion cities. This volume has not fully covered those impacts; thus, it would be an important agenda for future research.

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