



# An Empirical Study on Career Development and Systems in the Traditional Culture Industry : Training of Geiko/Maiko and the Systems of “hanamachi” in Kyoto

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# An Empirical Study on Career Development and Systems in the Traditional Culture Industry

- Training of *Geiko* / *Maiko* and the Systems of “*hanamachi*” in Kyoto -

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## 1. Subject matters

Commonly known as *geisha*, *geiko* (Kyoto dialect for *geisha*) and *maiko* (*geisha* in training) in *hanamachi* (the Kyoto term for *geisha* district) areas within Kyoto are world-famous icons of Japanese culture<sup>1</sup>. In fact, *geiko* and *maiko* as occupations date back to over 350 years ago<sup>2</sup>. A school system for the professional training of *geiko* and *maiko* has a long history in Kyoto, in the form of *nyokoba* (vocational schools) which were established some 130 years ago for these traditional artist-entertainers in the five *hanamachi* areas in the city that remain to this day. In these areas of Kyoto, there are businesses known as *ochaya*, strictly regulated member-exclusive tea houses that accept new members only through an introduction from a regular customer, and it is this kind of establishment that arranges banquets in a manner that best satisfies customers. Taking into consideration such criteria as the purpose of the banquet, guest list, and season in which the banquet is given, the *ochaya* orders dishes appropriate for the occasion from a *shidashiya* (caterer) or *ryoriya* (Japanese-style restaurant) and contacts the *okiya* (*geisha* house) for the services of *geiko* and *maiko* that they believe will meet the tastes of customers.

This study is intended as a social scientific investigation as to why in Kyoto<sup>3</sup> alone *hanamachi* areas have maintained their traditions and survived to this day, when

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<sup>1</sup> Recent publications overseas concerning *geiko* and *maiko* in Kyoto include a commentary (Aihara, 2000), novel (Arthur, 1997), and autobiography (Iwasaki, 2002). Arthur's story was adapted for a Hollywood film "Memoirs of a Geisha," which premiered simultaneously in Japan and the US in December 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Akita (1994) maintains *geiko* and *maiko* in Kyoto were established as an occupation during the Edo period (1603 – 1867).

<sup>3</sup> Gion-kobu, Gion-higashi, Ponto-cho, Miyagawa-cho, and Kamishichiken. *Maiko* can be found only in these five *nahamachii* areas.

most other *hanamachi* areas around the country lost their competitiveness as an industry and went downhill, with a focus on the two unique features mentioned above. During this process, special note was taken of *geiko* and *maiko* as a skilled workforce, as well as *ochaya* and other systems in *hanamachi* areas, most notably the policy “refusing of service to customers without an introduction.”

With a view towards examining more heuristic facts on the basis of data, the following three subject matters were selected:

1. In terms of what transactional relationships are the careers of *geiko* or *maiko* developed in the *hanamachi* community?<sup>4</sup>
2. Who are the members of Kyoto’s *hanamachi* communities? How does the system of dealings between those members function?
3. How does this system of dealings in Kyoto’s *hanamachi* communities relate to the career development of *geiko* and *maiko*?

Before going any further, one of the authors would like to state briefly how she became interested in this research subject. She came from a merchant family<sup>5</sup> lasting over five generations, located within thirty to forty minutes’ walk from four of the five *hanamachi* areas in Kyoto. Because of her family business, she often caught glimpses of *geiko* and *maiko* at Japanese-style restaurants that were hosting banquets. Also, because she had lived with her grandmother (born in the more traditional Meiji-era society) from her childhood up until immediately before the age of twenty, she understands the traditional customs in Kyoto and is capable of speaking Kyoto dialect and discerning even slight differences in meaning. Furthermore, having had several years of experience in classical Japanese dance during her childhood,<sup>6</sup> she was given the opportunity to learn about the relationships between master and apprentice, and those among apprentices in the world of traditional performing arts. These personal experiences led the author to develop her interest in this subject.

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<sup>4</sup> Here, the local practice of training *geiko* and *maiko* may possibly lead to a global practice of forming *hanamachi* communities. (Wenger, 1998)

<sup>5</sup> This family has been a time-honored rice dealer in Shimogyo-ku, Kyoto since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, selling rice to *ryoriya* and *shidashiya* in the Kiya-machi and Shijo, areas connected with the *hanamachi* community.

<sup>6</sup> In Kyoto, tradition holds that you make rapid progress if you start learning the performing arts on June 6, at the age of six, by the old Japanese system. Following this legend, one of the authors started to take lessons in traditional Japanese dance from a master teacher.

## 2. Methodology

*Ochaya* in *hanamachi* areas of Kyoto refuse service to customers without an introduction, creating a considerable barrier for first-time customers. Since *geiko*, *maiko* and the people within the *hanamachi* community are prohibited from revealing secrets made known to them during the course of performing their business<sup>7</sup>, one of the authors took advantage of the connections she had established when she associated with *geiko* and *maiko* at a certain *ochaya* on several occasions.<sup>8</sup> The author asked this *ochaya* to introduce her to *geiko* and *maiko* who could help her with this research, and also interviewed former *maiko*, as well as people in related businesses.

One of the authors also conducted participatory fieldwork on occasions such as a party to celebrate the *misedashi* (debut as a *maiko*) of a *maiko* (planned and organized by a support group of *ochaya*) in November 2004, and a party in celebration of *erigae*<sup>9</sup> (a *maiko*'s promotion to *geiko*, a turning point in the career of *geiko* and *maiko*) in June 2005. Participatory fieldwork records were compiled by referring to the authors own experiences, memos, and photos from these occasions, as well as videotapes filmed by other participants of those parties where the she were also present. Between April and November 2005, one of the authors visited a classical Japanese dance performance held at each *hanamachi* area<sup>10</sup>, in order to compare their programs, costumes, and responses from the audience.

There were seventeen major informants, who were interviewed more than once and shared their comments repeatedly with one of the authors during the participatory fieldworks.

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<sup>7</sup> The fundamental rule is that one must not reveal what one has seen or heard in the banquet room, which is one of the reasons why *ochaya* are chosen venues for entertaining customers and holding private talks. In order to conceal a guest's identity, they may also address their guests by the first letter of their last name.

<sup>8</sup> For the past few years one of the authors has visited this *ochaya* with friends and acquaintances once or twice per year. Initially allowed in only by referral from an acquaintance, she was allowed to visit the place alone the following time. Now she qualifies as a regular customer, who can in turn introduce new first-time customers.

<sup>9</sup> So called because *maiko* wear a red neckbands with embroidery, whereas *geiko* wear white neckbands (the standard neckband of Japanese clothes). When promoted to *geiko*, *maiko* undergo major changes in their appearance: they use wigs instead of their own hair, and they wear a short-sleeved kimono rather than a long-sleeved one. But it is not just different appearances, but a higher level of skills that are required. For instance, unlike *maiko*, a *geiko* is supposed to be capable of entertaining guests with an exchange of clever repartee and showing an advanced level of accomplishments.

<sup>10</sup> The Miyako Odori (Gionkoku), Kyo Odori (Miyagawa-cho), and Kitano Odori (Kamishichiken) dances are held in April, the Kamogawa Odori (Ponto-cho) in May, and the Gion Odori (Gion-higashi) in November.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, meaning that although a list of questions was prepared beforehand, spontaneous questions were also asked in keeping with informants' speech styles as was considered appropriate. Before the interviews, the informants were notified both in writing and orally that any recorded data would not be used for purposes other than this research, and that a pseudonym would be used to remove any risk of them being identified. With permission from the informants, the interviews were recorded onto an audiotape, which was then converted into text format. In cases where interviewees refused to be recorded, data were compiled based on one of the authors' memos. To analyze the data of such interviews, information from the memos taken from these informants were first sorted out in accordance with the questions on the list, and then later made note of. The records of the interview data and those of the participatory fieldwork were then analyzed in terms of their respective subject matters.

Chart 1 shows the number of *geiko*, *maiko*, and *ochaya* that form a part of the *hanamachi* communities in Kyoto as of March 31, 2005. The number of *geiko* and *maiko* has remained relatively unchanged over the last decade.

Chart 1 the number of geiko, maiko, and ochaya in Kyoto

hanamachi	geiko	maiko	ochaya
Gion-kobu	85	28	74
Miyagawa-cho	40	29	38
Pont-cho	43	4	32
Kamisichiken	16	9	11
Gion-higashi	11	5	11
total	195	75	166

### **3. Analytical findings concerning career development**

#### **3.1 Career path of *geiko* and *maiko***

Both *geiko* and *maiko* are registration-based occupations valid only in *hanamachi*

areas. As such, their career path is clearly defined. To cite a typical case, a girl who comes to a *hanamachi* area upon graduation from junior high debuts as a *maiko* at the age of 15-16, and is promoted to *geiko* when she is over the age of twenty. After her term of service<sup>11</sup> is up, she may decide to quit her job as a *geiko* whenever she chooses to. There is no mandatory retirement age for *geiko*. When they decide to discontinue their career as *geiko* or *maiko*, they hand out *hiki'iwai*<sup>12</sup> to those within the *hanamachi* community to clearly announce how they will continue relations between themselves and the *hanamachi* community. Reasons for discontinuation can be roughly divided into marriage or change of occupation. After their retirement, many pursue new careers as business managers in *hanamachi* areas (*ochaya*, *okiya*, bars, etc.) or outside of them (food services, etc.), or tap into their past careers as *geiko* or *maiko* to engage in the service business. The following career path can be considered typical for a girl who enters the geisha world directly out of middle school.

*Shikomi* (probationary period) → *Minarai* (apprenticeship) →  
(1 year) (1 month)

*Misedashi* (debut as a *maiko*) → *Maiko* →  
(4~5 years)

*Erigae* (preparatory stage for becoming a *geiko*) → *Geiko* →  
(total of 6~7 years, including time as *maiko*)

Completion of required term of service → Selection of future career

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<sup>11</sup> The term of service is between five and six years. This is intended to be a period of apprenticeship, and they receive no salaries but live and work on the *okiya* premises. They have two regular holidays per month.

<sup>12</sup> Handing out *shiomushi* (plain steamed glutinous rice) as *hiki'iwai* is a declaration of their intent to never return to the *hanamachi* community again. On the other hand, sending *shiomushi* that contains some sweet red bean rice or *azuki* beans indicates that they may return to the *hanamachi* community again.

### 3.2 Pseudo parent-child / sister relationships

To be *geiko* or *maiko*, they require an *onesan*, or an elder sister, with whom they pledge sisterhood over a cup of sake, and who exercises the greatest influence on new *geiko* and *maiko* when they debut on the *hanamachi* scene. Another requirement is that candidates for *geiko* and *maiko* must belong to an *okiya*, and they also need to establish a pseudo parent-child relationship with the *okasan* (manager of their *okiya*). Shown in Figure 1 are the pseudo parent-child and sisterhood relationships.

The *onesan* also serves as a foster mother for their “younger sister,”<sup>13</sup> and this pseudo relationship lasts for as long as they are in the business. Taking constant care of their younger sisters at *ozashiki* banquets and in the *hanamachi* community, they are absolute authority figures for the younger sisters. An elder sister has to take responsibility for whatever her younger sister does<sup>14</sup>, which can be a considerable burden. All the more because of this, the “elder sister” figure is important when a junior works in the *hanamachi* community: a younger sister can seek her elder sister’s advice anytime and, if anything should happen, they may consult with their elder sister concerning the process of growing up as a full-fledged member of the *hanamachi* community. Although *geiko* and *maiko* who debuted at the same time share a similar consciousness of their lateral relationship, the sisterhood relationship forms part of the hierarchy of the world of *geiko* and *maiko*, namely that the earlier the debut is, the higher in the hierarchy they are placed. Accordingly, anyone who has become *geiko* or *maiko* earlier than oneself is regarded as one’s *onesan*. By becoming a part of the family relationships of the *hanamachi* community, consisting of pseudo sisterhood and parent-child relationships, fledgling *geiko* and *maiko* may develop their careers further.

Figure 1 shows the pseudo parent-child and sisterhood relationships in *hanamachi* community.

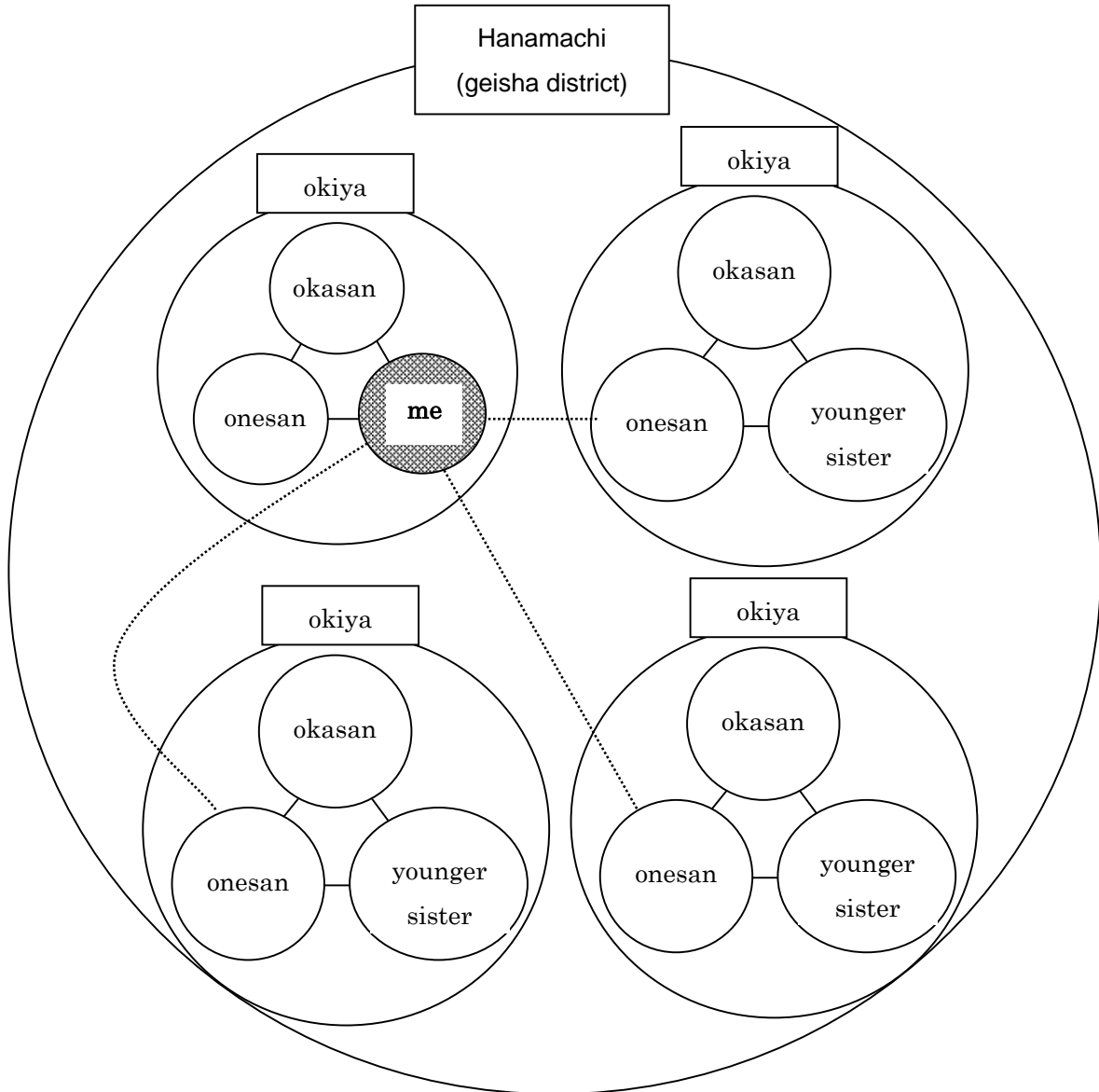
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<sup>13</sup> When one of the authors attended an *misedashi* party, the author frequently witnessed the *onesan* tidying her younger sister’s kimono and taking care of her diligently.

<sup>14</sup> For instance, if a younger sister drops a fan while dancing at a performance in a *hanamachi*, she visits her senior *onesan* and *ochaya* to make an apology on the following day, accompanied by her personal *onesan*.



Figure 1 The pseudo parent-child and sisterhood relationships



For "me"(new comer), all the persons that became a *geiko* or a *maiko* early at least one day are *onesan* (elder sisters), so I am called an *imout* (younger sister) by them in *hanamachi* geisha district. The *onesan* who pours each other's cup (Japanese traditional ceremony for making a special human relationship, for example wedding ceremony) and connects sister relations when coming out as a *geiko* or a *maiko* is the highest-impact.

The *onesan* of this cup is not necessarily in the same *okiya*. When those who get used to *onesan* are not in *okiya*, other sister relations with a senior geisha of *okiya* are connected. Moreover, with the *okasan* (manager) of an *okiya* who belongs, since it lived in, it becomes a pseudo parent-child relationship.

### 3.3 Relationship with customers

Customers are people outside of the *hanamachi* community, but they continuously participate in the community as users of the *ochaya*'s services. They take the opportunity of an *ozashiki* banquet to personally receive services from *geiko* and *maiko*. As they continuously become involved in the community, they may have *geiko* and *maiko* whom they favor or patronize. On the relationship between customers and *geiko* or *maiko*, one informant commented that customers also play the role of "spoiling" them and treating them tenderly, taking them away from their seniors such as *okasan* and *onesan*. One *okasan* of an *okiya*-cum-*ochaya*, who was an experienced *geiko* and *maiko* herself, told about the joy she experienced when someone praised her for the improvement of her skills. For customers, *geiko* and *maiko* are not simply objects of their sexual affection<sup>15</sup>, about which some curious people often gossip, but of their fatherly affection to protect and nurture them, exercising a positive impact on their career development. In explaining the emotional support that customers offer to young *geiko* and *maiko*, one customer said, "I personally endorse fledgling *maiko*, but don't hold any amorous feelings for them. Some I have known since they started their apprenticeships, and they are like my granddaughters. I sometimes take them to noted places in Kyoto, if they have come from other parts of the country and have never been there. This is because they might become embarrassed if they cannot give the names of those places when a customer asks them at an *ozashiki* banquet."

As stated above, their relationship with customers also plays a role in shaping the career of *geiko* and *maiko*.

### 3.4 Brief summary

The following are heuristic facts concerning the career development of *geiko* and

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<sup>15</sup> One may associate being a customer with becoming a *danna* (patron), but it is hard for him to be a *danna* if he only has amorous feelings towards *geiko* or *maiko* but doesn't know much about their performing arts and customs in *hanamachi* areas. This is because of a belief in the *hanamachi* community that becoming a *danna* is virtually a synonym for unsparing support for their devotion to the performing arts. Several interviewees shared an opinion that the number of *danna* is on the decline because the financial support for *geiko* and *maiko* that covers kimono and performing arts lessons can be astronomical, and because tax authorities no longer allow them to pay for entertaining costs spent in the *hanamachi* areas out of an expense account.

*maiko*:

1. *Geiko* and *maiko* build their careers while being assisted by many different parties that assume various roles in the development process. The span of time that they are involved in the process, their intimacy with the *geiko* and *maiko*, and the significance of their roles differ among the various parties.
2. Skills that *geiko* and *maiko* are expected to be adept in can be divided into: fundamental skills, or the mastery of the traditional performing arts essential for their business; the art of impromptu conversation suitable for different places and customers, a must for a professional in customer relations; and the norms of *hanamachi* communities, which enable *geiko* and *maiko* to express their stylish femininity, an epitome of the traditional culture of Japan.
3. Skills of *geiko* and *maiko* in a narrow sense of the word include the basic skills and the art of impromptu conversation, which they can be aware of, and those in a broader sense of the word, including the norms in *hanamachi* areas as well.

#### **4. Systems in *hanamachi* communities of Kyoto**

##### **4.1 Business relations with customers**

It is often said that the system of “turning away first-timers” survives in *hanamachi* communities of Kyoto because it allows *ochaya* to customize their services (what dishes to use, which *geiko* and *maiko* to call, the furnishings of the *zashiki* room) to individual customers who use these services regularly over a long period. One owner of an *ochaya-cum-okiya* said that it is for security reasons – namely that they live in a house that also serves as a place of work, and only women live there, so they do not want to allow strangers in. Another customer said that he wants an *ochaya* to be closed to the outside world, becoming a place where he expects to see only trustworthy people and is thus able to truly relax.

In terms of *ochaya*'s transaction system, since these establishments do not expressly state their service fees, there is the possibility that the amount billed may change depending on their relationship with individual customers. To describe in more detail, the *ochaya* pays on the customer's behalf all of the costs that include food and

drink at the *ochaya*, fees and gratuity to the *geiko* and *maiko*, and, if they visit a second party as part of the *ochaya*'s arrangement, transportation to the second venue and the costs incurred there. The *ochaya* then claims payment of these costs from the customer at a later date. The customers have no need to bring a wallet, but rather they can simply enjoy the pleasures of the *ochaya*. However, they will not know how much they spent there until they receive the bill later.

Although nowadays bills are normally sent one or two months after the customer has used the *ochaya*'s service, there have long been practices of long-term credit payment of seasonal (*sekki-barai*) and semiannual payments in *hanamachi* areas, indicating that the service fees might be different somewhat depending on the length of the transactional relationship with individual customers. In other words, *ochaya* maintain favorable, stable relationships with customers as they take into account the depth of relationships with individual customers, including the length of the relationship and personal chemistry between them, when they determine how much they charge.

#### **4.2 Transactional relationships with other members of the *hanamachi* community**

The *hanamachi* community in Kyoto comprises in a narrow sense the group of people involved in the career development of *geiko* and *maiko*, including the owners of *ochaya* and *okiya*, their staff, and the *geiko* and *maiko* themselves, as well as a group of outsiders who continuously participate in this community, including customers and instructors of the performing arts. These members are deeply involved in the skills which *geiko* and *maiko* offer in *hanamachi* areas. Many cases were heard in the interviewees' accounts, describing their relationships with *geiko* and *maiko* during the process of developing their skills.

To carry out the kinds of services unique to *hanamachi* areas, it takes others in related businesses that make up a part of the *hanamachi* community in a broader sense. One of the authors' interviews and participatory fieldwork helped identify these members: *shidashiya* and *ryoriya* who cater to *ochaya*; a group of businesses who supply the furnishings of *ochaya*, including flower shops, electrical engineers, *tatami* mat makers, and carpenters; kimono fabric and notion dealers for women in *hanamachi* areas; and *otokoshi*, who dress *geiko* and *maiko*, along with their cosmetics artists. The

members of this broad *hanamachi* community can be divided roughly into those who provide parts of the services that *ochaya* offer<sup>16</sup> and those which add value to human resources in *hanamachi* areas<sup>17</sup>. They both continuously carry out monetary transactions in *hanamachi* areas.

It is the manager of the *ochaya* (called *okasan*) who plays a pivotal role in these commercial transactions. Making contact with customers, the *okasan* organizes the entirety of services they offer, according to which she decides on who offers the most appropriate service amongst the businesses with which they have continuous transactions, and purchase their services. From the point of view of *ochaya*, *geiko* and *maiko*, and the *okiya* to which they belong, are another group of related businesses to choose from and so are in the same position as other businesses in this respect.

### 4.3 System of transactions with *ochaya*

Although the *ochaya* maintains a long-term credit payment system with customers, the two interviewees from related businesses both said that they settle business related bills on a monthly basis, and that payment is mostly made in cash. Although the *ochaya* tends to have a long-term relationship with related businesses as they do with their customers, their terms of payment with those businesses is short, contrary to their collection terms vis-à-vis their customers.

The same applies to the relationship between *ochaya* and *geiko*, *maiko*, and *okiya*. The *hanadai* (flower fees) for *geiko* and *maiko* are placed in the charge of the *kenban* union office of the *hanamachi* area every day, and direct transactions between *geiko* and *maiko* and customers, and between *geiko* and *maiko* and *ochaya*, are strictly prohibited. Early in the New Year, the rankings of the *ochaya*'s revenues and *geiko*'s and *maiko*'s flower fees for the past year are announced, based upon which *geiko* and *maiko* are commended<sup>18</sup>. The business data is announced throughout the *hanamachi* area, thus

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<sup>16</sup> *Ryoriya*, *shidashiya*, flower shops, *tatami* mat makers, carpenters, electrical engineers, *okiya* (including *geiko* and *maiko*), etc.

<sup>17</sup> Kimono fabric dealers, notion dealers, *clog* dealers, *otokoshi*, makeup artists, hairdressers, instructors of performing arts.

<sup>18</sup> At the opening ceremony of a vocational school in each *hanamachi* area in January, *ochaya*, *geiko* and *maiko*, whose revenues have ranked high in the past year, are given an encouragement award. In some *hanamachi* areas, a ranking table is distributed, displaying each *ochaya*'s total revenues (in terms of the total

guaranteeing transparency of business.

Although *ochaya* maintain long-term business relationships with both customers and related businesses, they make it a rule to make quick payments for the services they have procured in order to provide their own unique services, so that they can determine the value they provide for the prices they charge for each transaction. The *ochaya* acts as a connoisseur of the services needed, selects skilled providers, and purchases the necessary services from them. Their relationship with these related businesses tends to be long and secure. In *hanamachi* areas, *ochaya*'s *okasan* customarily deal with businesses that they believe meet their aesthetic sense and the level of services which they hope to offer, and they do not easily switch from one business to another simply because of prices. That being said, the long-term relationship may be discontinued at any time if they fail to meet *okasan*'s expectations. Presumably they wish to be sure that accounts are always settled completely so that they can switch to alternative services if they are unsatisfied with the current ones, regardless of the common practice of long-term relationships.

Sometimes *okasan* tell their related businesses explicitly the desired level of services, but in most cases those providers are strongly encouraged to perceive this from the circumstances. Even if one has skills, if they fail to demonstrate these skills in a manner suitable to the specific situation, *okasan* may decide not to purchase services from them.

#### 4.4 Discussions

One fact discovered from this research is that the *ochaya* plays the pivotal role in the transaction system of *hanamachi* communities, and its owner – *okasan* – holds the key. When looking at a *hanamachi* community in a broad sense, including related businesses, one can see that *okasan* at *ochaya* purchase services from related businesses in the community, using their own sensitivity to coordinate the services in a way that suits the *ochaya* setting, in order to offer the most appropriate hospitality to their customers. The freedom of coordinating services is ensured by the long-term relationships with customers and related businesses, and by the fact that they employ different terms of

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number of flowers) for the past year. For the commendation of *geiko* and *maiko*, they are not separated but rated equally for ranking within the *hanamachi* area they belong to.

payment (collection) for different parties. Confident in their ability, *okasan* at *ochaya* have built up a relationship of trust, where they play a central role in the social infrastructure that enables them to offer optimal services.

How exactly do *okasan* at *ochaya* hone their abilities? The important thing to be noted here is the relationship between the *ochaya* and their customers. Expecting customized services at *ochaya*, customers visit them on a regular basis. It is therefore necessary for the *okasan* to judge whether the services they provide meet or surpass customers' expectations by measuring their response. It is speculated that in order for them to do so, they have long followed a long-term practice of credit payment, so as not to discontinue the relationship with customers.

Another consideration is that the customer demographic in *hanamachi* areas of Kyoto is somewhat different from that at other similar areas. Some customers are in the traditional textile industry in Muromachi or Nishijin, an essential industry for all women in *hanamachi* areas, while others are employed in the traditional cultural industries, such as tea ceremony and flower arrangement. Certain customers may also have profound knowledge of temples and shrines, and still others come from the entertainment businesses, including *kabuki* and movie actors. In order to not only meet these discerning customers' demands, but also amuse them by offering something that surpasses their expectations, *okasan* at *ochaya* observe reactions from customers over a long period of time.

In so doing, *okasan* at *ochaya* are able to determine their ability and the quality of services that they can offer based on these abilities, assess the value of their ability in their own *hanamachi* area, and then put prices to their services. This is also relevant to other members of the *hanamachi* community, including *geiko* and *maiko*<sup>19</sup>, *ryoriya*, *shidashiya*, flower shops, notions dealers, and kimono fabrics dealers. In other words, members of the *hanamachi* community in Kyoto can be divided into *ochaya*, which specialize in the evaluation of skills, and others who are expected to hone their own skills. These *hanamachi* areas enjoy the reputation of representing the essence of Kyoto, as each

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<sup>19</sup> *Maiko*'s dresses are special in that they can only be seen in *hanamachi* areas of Kyoto. They are little different from those seen in pictures taken from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is presumably because a system has been established where new apprentices of *maiko* are most conspicuous, wearing the most expensive, flamboyant dresses so that they always draw attention in the *hanamachi* areas and are encouraged to hone their skills.

member improves their specialist skills, which are reconfigured in the setting of an *ochaya* in such a way as to suit individual customers' preferences. Led by the *ochaya*, *hanamachi* areas in Kyoto have cherished a unique sense of values that are shared in those areas, including the beauty and skills of *maiko* and *geiko*, and the aesthetic sense required from related businesses, and have put them to good use towards human resources (*geiko* and *maiko*), dishes, and furnishings. This enables the community to provide an atmosphere unique to these areas in Kyoto, and despite occasional changes in the demographic and development processes of *geiko* and *maiko*, to continuously produce these talented women who are by far the most recognizable symbols of the *hanamachi* aesthetic.

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