



## Who are *Kabuki-mono*?

While genre paintings generally depict people of all walks of life, especially noteworthy in early Edo period works was the presence of men who were called *kabuki-mono*. The word *kabuki* originates from the verb *kabuku*, which implies deviating from the norm in terms of appearance as well as having an unorthodox and heretical spirit. Gangs of *kabuki-mono*, mainly formed by men of the samurai class who were either in the service of feudal lords or were masterless samurai, such as *waka-tō* or *chūgen* (lower-class samurai attendants) often stalked the streets of Kyoto, going by names such as the *Ibara-gumi* ("band of thorns") or *Kawabakama-gumi* ("leather skirt gang"), displaying their resistances against the social order through their unconventional appearance.

As described in the book *Sunpu-ki* (Records of Sunpu), many were said to have long sideburns, to dye their clothes with "crazy" crests and to carve nonsensical words on the sheaths of their long swords. While the townspeople usually frowned on them, the splendor of their leading-edge fashions as well as their freewheeling postures of indifference to social constraints were often seen with envious eyes. Thus *kabuki-mono* were depicted in paintings as representing the mode of their day.

# Fashions depicted in the folding screens “Festival of the Hōkoku Shrine”

“Crazy”  
crests



“Crazy” crests, expressing the outlaw spirit as well as the sentiment of resistance against the oppressive and stifling mood of the time

→ [“Don’t care”]

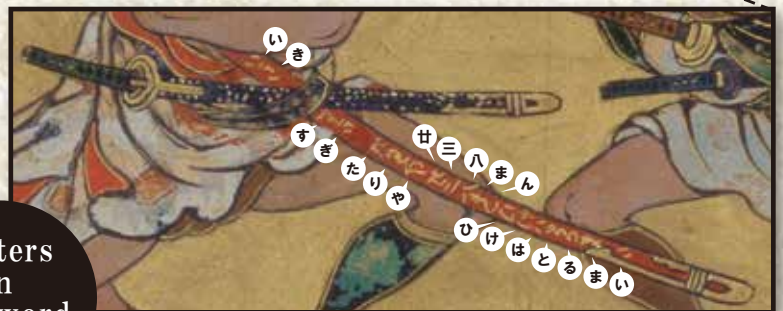
→ [“No way out”]



[“Have I lived too long?”]

Letters on red sword sheath held by a kabuki-mono  
“Have I lived too long at 23?”  
Wishing, in despair, they had been born in the time of upheaval before the Tokugawa era.

Letters  
on  
red sword  
sheath



# “Kabuki Handscrolls”

Examples of kabuki-mono fashion worn by Uneme (girl performing the role of a kabuki-mono, depicted in the “Kabuki Handscrolls” )

Gorgeous short sword with golden shark skin sheath

Necklace with rosary and gold reliquary

Gourd, *inrō* (pill box), or gold dust pouch hanging from the waist

Sword sheath decorated with twisted gold and silver on black ground

Nagoya-style belt made of silk ropes



Various *kabuki-mono* fashion points  
seen in early Edo genre paintings



Tea  
whisk-  
shaped  
topknot



Flashy  
long  
sword



*Shamisen*  
(three-  
stringed  
instrument)



Long  
smoking  
pipe

Ruffled  
collar

*Karusan*  
(pantaloons-  
style  
*hakama*)



Long  
sideburns