



Of Jackets and Brushes: How Cross-Dressing Women Disrupted the Status and Gender Order of Eighteenth- And Nineteenth-Century Japan

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Abstract

Between the 1730s and 1840s, in Edo (modern-day Tokyo), Osaka, and Kyoto groups of women who belonged to different social classes, including entertainers and women of commoner and warrior status, donned the *haori* jacket, a garment usually worn by men. In the 1740s and 1840s, legislators enacted specific sumptuary laws to forbid this practice for encouraging the mixing of women from dissimilar social backgrounds. However, in the legal texts the lawmakers did not explain the complex ideological, social, political, and cultural reasons why such mixing brought about by urban women's (mis)use of the *haori* was considered problematic. To fully understand this aspect of the phenomenon, it is therefore crucial to study supplementary sources which offer a more comprehensive overview of the issues linked with the custom. Examining "miscellanies" (*zuihitsu*, literally "following the brush") written by intellectuals of the time, this paper suggests that urban women's donning of the *haori* destabilised the very foundations of contemporary society: early modern Japan and in particular its major cities were in fact structured as a garrison state wherein each individual occupied a precise "status" (*mibun*), which was visually signaled by his or her clothes. Furthermore, attire also optically denoted a person's gender. By serving as visible indicators of one's status and gender, dresses functioned as what Herman Ooms has termed "social tattoos." This paper argues that by wearing the *haori* urban women altered their markers of status and gender, thus shaking the ideological, social, political, and cultural organisation of the state at its core.

Keywords: cultural construction of clothing; early modern Japanese *mibun* status system; law and literature; social attitudes towards gender-nonconformism; urban culture

1. Introduction

Around the mid-eighteenth century, a group of entertainers known as *onna geisha*, "female artists," adopted the *haori*, a sleeved jacket that had been in use since the late sixteenth century for men of warrior status, in imitation of male entertainers and storytellers from Kyoto. Soon afterwards, some women of Edo, modern-day Tokyo, wore the *haori*, too, setting a trend which included women of different social classes, from women of commoner to women of warrior status. Around the mid-nineteenth century, some women from Kyoto and Osaka, the other two biggest urban conglomerates of the time besides Edo, adopted the *haori* as well.

Contemporary society did not take kindly to women wearing a man's garment. In 1748 the magistracy of Edo enforced a sumptuary law prohibiting women from using the *haori*, but apparently with little success. In 1841, the Edo magistracy reinstated the ban and in 1842 the magistracies of Kyoto and Osaka followed suit by issuing an analogous decree. At the current state of research, expert Nagashima Atsuko has carefully analysed the sumptuary laws to understand the reasons why legislators forbade the custom. According to Nagashima's reading, lawmakers banned women's use of the *haori* for two reasons:

- firstly, the practice emerged among people of low social status and then spread to women of higher social classes;
- secondly, women's use of a man's garb was considered an oddity which transgressed the current social customs.

While in the law texts, the legislators did give important material on why they prohibited the practice, they did not explain the complex ideological, social, political, and cultural reasons why the mixing of urban women of dissimilar social backgrounds and women's wearing of a man's cloth were deemed problematic. To fully understand these aspects of the phenomenon, it is therefore crucial to study supplementary sources which offer a more comprehensive overview of the issues linked with the custom.

This paper turns to a different genre of writing, *zuihitsu* or "miscellany," as a supplementary source of information to better comprehend the reasons why contemporary society decried women's use of the *haori*. By closely reading a selection of relevant *zuihitsu* pieces, the paper will identify three reasons why the testimonies did not accept the donning of *haori* by women:

- Subversion of the status system hierarchy and erosion of the differences between status groups: the *haori* was a cloth whose use socio-cultural habits restricted to men of the warrior class, a prominent status group, but was adopted by entertainers, artists, and actors, people at the bottom of the social ladder, and this practice further spread to women of the commoner and warrior class; in this way, the *haori* erased the differences in status between several segments of the female urban population;
- Erasure of the visual, behavioral, and moral characteristics of women vis-à-vis men: by wearing a man's garb, witnesses feared women might look and behave, both in bearing and moral conduct, like men, abolishing one more point of difference in the organisation of the people; this and the previous motivation elaborate on the reasons at which the lawmakers alluded in the legal texts, but besides them a *zuihitsu* author, Kanzawa Tokō, criticised women's use of the *haori* for a third, significant reason:
- Diffusion of the merchant mentality from Kyoto to Edo: Kanzawa saw Edo as the capital of the warrior, the cradle of men who, unaffected by the logics of profit, could self-regulate their moral conduct and their expenses; on the contrary, he deemed Kyoto as the capital of the merchant and dreaded that if this mentality spread to Edo the population might become morally lax and economically bankrupt.

2. Problem statement

The groundwork for the academic study of women's wearing of the *haori* in the Tokugawa or Edo (1603-1868) period has been laid in the 1970s by Kishii Yoshie and Hayashi Yoshikazu. In her pioneering work *Onna geisha, no jidai (The Era of the Female Geisha)*, first published in 1974, Kishii has analysed the *haori* as part of the fashionable attire of *onna geisha*. In *Jidai fūzoku kōshō jiten (Historical Dictionary on Customs Past)*, first released in 1977, Hayashi has proposed that *onna geisha* donned the *haori*, a man's garment, in imitation of other categories of workers from the demimonde who incorporated elements of cross-dressing in their attire and

presentation. Furthermore, he has shown that this custom was then adopted by urban women of other social groups. In this manner, Hayashi has seen women's use of the *haori* as cross-dressing and has broadened the discussion to include not only brothel workers but also women from different classes.

Since the works of Kishii and Hayashi, academic research on women's wearing of the *haori* during the Edo period has tendentially followed the two main directions of enquiry laid out by the two pioneers:

- The *haori* as fashion: in this line of research developed by Cecilia Segawa Seigle (1993), Joshua S. Mostow (2008, 2016), Tanaka Yūko (2016), and Akasaka Chiseki (2023), the *haori* is studied in the context of fashion and in conjunction with the figure of the *onna geisha*;
- The *haori* as cross-dressing: in this stream of research, Mitsuhashi Junko (2022) has examined several cases of *geisha* who by adopting the *haori* and/or other items of clothing and hairstyle generally reserved to men broke an anti-cross-dressing law which was enacted by the Meiji government in 1872. In this way, Mitsuhashi has shifted the attention to the ways society and the authorities perceived and obstructed women's use of the *haori*. Mitsuhashi's focus has been greatly expanded on by Nagashima Atsuko who in her comprehensive study (2023) on cross-dressing in the Edo and Meiji (1868-1912) periods has examined the 1748, 1841, and 1842 sumptuary laws. Nagashima has analysed the decrees pursuing the following goals:
 - As important antecedents to the 1872 Meiji decree;
 - As valuable sources of information on what categories of women sported the *haori*, in what times, and for what purposes;
 - To understand the reasons why the Tokugawa legislators prohibited the custom.

On this last point, Nagashima has highlighted the concepts the authorities expressed on the decrees, i.e. that women's donning of the *haori* was "bizarre" (*iyō*), probably because the *haori* was a garb originally worn by men, it "transgressed the social customs" (*fūzoku ni kakawari*), and that such practice first emerged among people at the bottom of the social hierarchy and then was diffused among women of higher statuses. With her analysis, Nagashima has demonstrated that, to the legislators at least, women's use of the *haori* was problematic enough to warrant repeated prohibitions. However, while the decrees did offer the lawmakers' opinion on the practice, the notions to which the legislators referred are also very vague.

The paper aims at filling this knowledge gap by trying to understand more clearly the complex reasons why Edo-period society might have seen women's donning of the *haori* an issue to be corrected. To reach this objective, the paper examines the testimonies of authors of *zuihitsu*. *Zuihitsu*, literally meaning "following the brush," was a literary genre of miscellanies in which writers recorded and commented on contemporary practices and customs, including women's wearing of the *haori*. It is not easy to say whether the opinions the authors of *zuihitsu* left can be deemed as representative of the magistrates or the average person of the time. On the one hand, it can be tempting to claim their views were representative as *zuihitsu* authors were, generally speaking, men with a background in Neo-Confucian studies, a system of thought with which legislators, usually men of the warrior class, were deeply conversant. Furthermore, the selection of primary sources the paper utilises does present a direct connection with the Tokugawa magistracies in the case of Kanzawa Tokō, the author of *Okinagusa*, who worked in the mid-eighteenth century for the Kyoto magistracy, and in the case of the anonymous writer of *Kanpō Kyōhō Kōfu fūzokushi*, who may have worked for the government (Kitagawa and Mori, 1982, pp. 3-4). On the other hand, it cannot be proven that a common background in Neo-Confucianism might have shaped the legislators' opinion on women's use of the *haori* to

align with the views expressed by *zuihitsu* authors. Consequently, it is safer to consider the opinions of *zuihitsu* authors as their own. Although their representativeness cannot be proven, their words are still precious to shed light on how women's donning of the *haori* was considered by a segment of contemporary society.

The paper uses as primary sources the following pieces of *zuihitsu* literature:

- For opinions on women's wearing of the *haori*:
 - *Mukashi mukashi monogatari* (*Tales of long, long ago*), composed in the first half of the eighteenth century by Shinmi Masatomo (1651-1742); more particularly, the paper refers to the note on the entry about recent changes in women's fashion left by Ogura Takemasa (1703-1758), an editor of the original text;
 - *Okinagusa* (*An Old Man's Words*), composed between 1772 and 1792 by Kanzawa Tokō (1710-1795) after he had retired from service as a functionary for the magistracy of Kyoto;
 - *Kanpō Kyōhō Kōfu fūzokushi* (*The Customs in Kōfu during the Kanpō and Kyōhō eras*), composed in the late eighteenth century by an anonymous writer, maybe a functionary of the military government;
- For additional information on women's adoption of men's hairstyles and garbs other than the *haori*:
 - *Dokugo* (*Monologue*), composed in the 1730s by Dazai Shundai (1680-1747);
 - For information on the periodisation and diffusion of women's use of the *haori*:
 - *Fujiokaya nikki* (*Fujiokaya's Diary*), composed between 1804 and 1868 by Sudō Yoshizō (born 1793);
 - *Morisada mankō* (*Morisada's Jottings*), composed between 1837 and 1867 by Kitagawa Morisada (born 1810).

3. History of Women's Use of the Haori Among geisha and Urban Women

The *haori* is an article of clothing that came into use during the Shokuhō era (1568-1600). It consists of a sleeved jacket with a collar, an open front from which the garb is worn, two sleeves, and a back. The length of the jacket is variable: there are short versions that only cover the upper part of the body and long versions which are above the feet. The *haori* is usually donned on top of other clothes as if to wrap around the wearer's body; in fact, *haori* is the noun form of the verb *haoru*, "to wrap around." For this peculiarity, in early modern Japan the *haori* was most frequently used in winter to protect from the cold. From the late sixteenth to the first half of the eighteenth century, the *haori* was adopted only by men of the warrior class and constituted part of their formal and everyday attire: usually worn on top of a *kosode*, a "narrow-sleeved" garment and *hakama* trousers, it formed an ensemble called *haori-hakama* (Masuda, 2010, pp. 227-229, 232).

Although originally meant to be used by men, women, too, wore the *haori* starting from the mid-eighteenth century, when some members of a group of female entertainers known as *onna geisha* adopted it as part of their work attire. *Onna geisha* is a phrase that can be translated as "female artists" and indicates a group of entertainers proficient in playing music, chanting, and narrating stories who worked in pleasure quarters to cheer banquets and accompany the customers' meeting with friends, colleagues, courtesans, and prostitutes. *Onna geisha* first appeared in the unlicensed bordello of Fukagawa, an area near Edo, between the Kyōhō (1716-1736) and Genbun (1736-1741) eras (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 152-153). *Onna geisha* were originally dancers who learned to play music and sing from a group of male entertainers known

as *otoko geisha* or “male artists,” who specialised in playing the drum and narrating stories and buffooneries. *Otoko geisha* mainly worked in brothels where customers could hire them to cheer banquets and encounters with friends, colleagues, courtesans, and prostitutes. *Otoko geisha* first appeared in Kyoto and Osaka around the Manji (1658-1661) era (Hayashi, 2025, pp. 466-468).

When *onna geisha* learned the trade from their male counterparts, some of them also assumed parts of a male persona and aspects of a man’s appearance: for example, they assumed nicknames ending in –ji or –yoshi, suffixes often found in men’s names, and shaved bigger or smaller patches of hair in imitation of the shaven pate sported by adult men (Hayashi, 2025, p. 468; Akasaka, 2023, pp. 43-44). In this context, some *onna geisha* adopted the *haori* in imitation of *jōruri* chanters from Kyoto (*jōruri* is a performative art in which a narrator tells a story on the accompaniment of music) between the Genbun and Enkyō (1744-1748) eras (Akasaka, 2023, pp. 108-110; Kitagawa and Mori, 1982, p. 11). Wearing the *haori* thus constituted for some *onna geisha* part of the manly attire they acquired to signal their association with *otoko geisha* and chanters and to indicate their artistic proficiency.

Once the *haori* became part of the iconic apparel of some *onna geisha*, the jacket was also adopted by some women in Edo. According to Ogura and the author of *Kanpō Kyōhō Kōfu fūzokushi*, Edo women wore the *haori* already during the Genbun and Enkyō eras in imitation of the *onna geisha* from Fukagawa. According to Ogura, when crowds gathered, he could see two or three women of different social classes, from commoners to women of the warrior class, sporting the *haori* (Groemer, 2019a, p. 83; Asakura and Kashikawa, 1992a, p. 212; Kitagawa and Mori, 1982, pp. 10-11).

In 1748, the magistracy of Edo enacted a sumptuary law to prohibit women from wearing the jacket. In the opening, the text stated that in recent years before the decree’s promulgation some Edo women had donned the *haori*, thus confirming the observations of Ogura and the author of *Kanpō Kyōhō Kōfu fūzokushi* on the matter. Furthermore, the law recorded that women had used the *haori* not only for fashion but also as protection from the cold, and in the latter case women, especially those of humble status, were allowed to wear it. However, the decree prohibited women from donning the *haori* to suit their own “extravagant tastes” (*monozuki*; Iwai, 1978, p. 358).

In his note, Ogura reported that the law was respected and, at the time he was writing, no more women were seen with the jacket (Groemer, 2019a, p. 83; Asakura and Kashikawa, 1992a, p. 212). However, it is plausible the decree exerted only a temporary effect, as women continued to don the *haori* well after the issuance of the law text. In fact, as Sudō wrote, Edo women wore the *haori* well into the Bunsei (1818-1830) era (Koike and Suzuki, 1987, p. 397). Moreover, as Kitagawa added, the custom spread from Edo to Kyoto and Osaka during the Bunsei and Tenpō (1830-1844) eras (Asakura and Kashikawa, 1992a, p. 211; Asakura and Kashikawa, 1992b, p. 51).

The magistracies of the three cities soon intervened to ban women from using the *haori*. In 1841, the magistracy of Edo enforced a second sumptuary law that forbade women from wearing the jacket. In the following year, the magistracy of Kyoto promulgated a decree that analogously prohibited women from donning the garment and in the same year the magistracy of Osaka adopted Kyoto’s law text (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 146-151; Kyoto machibure kenkyūkai, 1986, p. 199). While the Kyoto and Osaka decree succinctly stated that women were not permitted to use the garb anymore, the Edo sumptuary law is much more informative. In the opening, the text quoted almost verbatim the previous 1748 law to reiterate that women could borrow a *haori* from their husbands to protect themselves from the cold and this custom

was forbidden only if it was a fashion choice. The text then introduced new paragraphs, the ones discussed by Nagashima, condemning women's wearing of the *haori* as "bizarre" (*iyō*), as "transgressive to customs" (*fūzoku no kakawari*), and because such practice emerged among people of low social standing. For these reasons, the law concluded, women's donning of the *haori* was again banned in order to restore the social customs (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 143-144).

4. Women's Use of the *Haori* as Seen by *Zuihitsu* Authors

4.1 Subversion of the Status System Hierarchy and Erosion of the Differences between Status Groups

In *Mukashi mukashi monogatari* and *Kanpō Kyōhō Kōfu fūzokushi*, Ogura and the anonymous author described women's wearing of the *haori* with evident disdain for its association with the *onna geisha* and other figures from the demimonde. Despite writing separately, the two eighteenth-century men similarly labelled workers of the demimonde as "*iyashiki*," a term which indicated people at the bottom of the social hierarchy with a negative connotation (Masui, 2012, p. 87; Tsukishima, 2011, p. 248). Furthermore, the authors reported that such custom, which emerged among people of low status, spread to urban women of different classes, including women of commoner and warrior households. On this point, the 1841 Edo sumptuary law, too, recorded that the *haori* was donned by women of commoner and warrior status (Nagashima, 2023, pp. 143-144). By his tone, Ogura seemed shocked when he saw, in "places where crowds gathered" (*gunshū no tokoro*), women of different classes wearing the same garb (Groemer, 2019a, p. 83; Asakura and Kashikawa, 1992a, p. 212; Kitagawa and Mori, 1982, pp. 10-11). These testimonies thus despised women's donning of the *haori* for its connection with the low-status people of the demimonde and its diffusion among women of higher classes.

Onna geisha and women of commoner and warrior households belonged to different groups according to the "status system" (*mibunsei*) existing in Tokugawa Japan. The *mibunsei* was an institutional structure which included people in different categories based on their occupation. Of the status groups relevant to the paper, it is worth describing the following ones:

- The "warrior" (*bushi/buke*) class;
- The commoner class, whose members living in cities were called "townspeople" (*chōnin*);
- The so-called "riverside dwellers" (*kawaramono*), a group which incorporated those who worked in theaters and pleasure quarters.

The *mibunsei* emerged in the late sixteenth century when Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) and the first Tokugawa shoguns gave order and structure to the Japanese provinces which had been until then the stage of a century-long civil war. Under the *bushi* leaders of the Warring States period (1467-1600), soldiers were organised according to rank and duties. Under Toyotomi and the first Tokugawa shoguns, this technique of army mobilisation was extended to civil society, whose members were now inserted in varying status groups depending on the formal duties they performed for the sake of the country (Ehlers, 2024, pp. 571-572, 576-578; Teraki *et al.*, 2019, pp. 66-67, 99; Geiger, 2011, p. 17; Howell, 2005, pp. 21, 28-29, 32-33, 36; Ooms, 1998, pp. 25-27; Ohnuki-Tierney, 1987, pp. 82, 88-89). In the sense that the Tokugawa government mobilised all elements of society, Takagi Shōsaku (2007, p. 123) has called Tokugawa Japan a "garrison state."

The *mibunsei* linked each individual, through the household to which they belonged, with one or more specific tasks. Of the categories relevant for the paper, the *buke* class carried out both military and bureaucratic functions and commoners overruled production and circulation of

essential and luxury goods, while *kawaramono* were historically associated with leather tanning, hunting, and killing, occupations deemed ritually polluting (Ehlers, 2024, pp. 571-572; Teraki *et al.*, 2019, pp. 27-30, 36; Howell, 2005, pp. 21, 28-29, 34). Based on the relevance of their respective duties, these categories formed a vertical hierarchy wherein warriors occupied a high position, commoners a median position, and *kawaramono* a base position.

Membership in a given status group was visually indicated by clothing. In the Warring States period, for example, the Go Hōjō house issued a regulation establishing that retainers decorate their weapons with gold and silver and while on marches dress in white and maintain a dignified appearance. By the importance placed on “adding gaiety to the parade” (*gyōsō no kira wo kazaru*), the Go Hōjō showed to be aware of the psychological and political effect garments and accessories had to stir up the fighting spirit of one’s forces, intimidate the adversaries, and win over the people (Takagi, 2007, pp. 129, 132). Under his rule, Hideyoshi applied these strategies to other categories of civil society by decreeing, for instance, that only warriors could have garbs lined with silk, whose use was instead forbidden to commoners (Berry, 1982, pp. 108-109). In this way, clothes became visual indicators of one’s status, or, to borrow Herman Ooms’s (1998, p. 25) expression, “social tattoos.”

It was in the context of the correlation between status and clothing that the testimonies of Ogura, of the author of *Kanpō Kyōhō Kōfu fūzokushi*, and of the 1841 Edo sumptuary decree made sense. The witnesses found scandalous that the *haori*, a garb originally worn by warriors, i.e. members of one of the most exalted status groups, was adopted by *kawaramono*, people at the foot of the social ladder, and then this custom spread to women of the commoner and warrior classes, abolishing the sartorial differences which should have made their membership to a specific status group explicit. In the eyes of Ogura and the anonymous authors of the later *zuihitsu* and the 1841 sumptuary law, this practice constituted a subversion of the *mibunsei* and the concomitant erosion of the important differences between classes.

The individual’s membership in a given status group was made visible in Tokugawa Japan not only by the clothes she or he wore, but also in urban conglomerates such as Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka by the spatial area in which the person was housed and carried out his or her occupation. Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka were “castle towns” (*jōkamachi*), i.e. cities built around a castle which acted both as the private residence of the military ruler and as the center of administration and was defended by a fortified perimeter. Warriors were domiciled in neighbourhoods that occupied the space between the castle and the fortifications, forming the town’s central community. Instead, commoner settlements were built outside the city’s defences, whereas theaters and pleasure quarters were confined to the literal and figural margins of the city (Gaubatz, 2024, pp. 630-632; Stavros, 2014, pp. 151-152; McClain and Wakita, 1999, pp. 12-15; Satoh, 1998, pp. 217-218; Hall, 1955, pp. 38, 46, 51). As a result, the castle town’s topography was organised according to the *mibunsei* and its vertical hierarchy, with vicinity to the castle as a geographical indicator of the centrality or marginality of a given class. This spatial arrangement reinforced the idea that warriors occupied one of the top positions of the social hierarchy, the commoners the middle, and the *kawaramono* the bottom.

It was against this background that Ogura’s indignation at seeing crowds of women of different classes wearing the *haori* acquired sense. Just like clothing indicated status, living in a specific sector of Edo was analogously tied to the *mibunsei*: women from warrior households should have restricted their movements to their dedicated neighbourhoods and commoner women to their settlements. On the contrary, in “places where crowds gathered,” to quote Ogura, presumably intersections between the neighbourhoods of different classes, women stopped by, possibly chatting and attending the performances of the many street artists that moved across Edo. According to Ogura, these women violated the rules of decorum related to the space

allocated to each status group. Moreover, by donning the *haori* regardless of their class, they furtherly transgressed the status norms.

4.2 Erasure of the Visual, Behavioral, and Moral Characteristics of Women Vis-à-Vis Men

In *Okinagusa*, Kanzawa discussed women's use of the *haori* as a gender issue. The ex-functionary of the Kyoto magistracy lamented witnessing a "gradual loosening of men and women's customs" (*danjo no fūzoku dandan ni yasashiku nari*; Asakura *et al.*, 1984, p. 58) brought about by the women who donned the *haori*. As a result of women wearing a man's garb, he could not, he wrote, see any differences between women and men, a fact he decried as "perverse" (*hentai*; Asakura *et al.*, 1984, p. 59). In this manner, Kanzawa implicitly considered clothes as visual indicators of gender and, according to him, by donning a garment originally meant for men women abolished an important visual difference between them and men (Asakura *et al.*, 1984, pp. 58-59). To make things worse, Kanzawa added that "women exclusively performed men's arts" (*onna wa moppara danshi no sunaru gei wo tashimi*; Asakura *et al.*, 1984, p. 58), presumably referring to *onna geisha* learning their trade from their male counterparts and *jōruri* chanters. In this way, by wearing the *haori* women also carried out activities that were once the purview of men.

It is interesting to note that in this entry Kanzawa reported not only on the *haori* but also on other sartorial and tonsorial items that women adopted from men and vice versa. In particular, Kanzawa wrote that the recent trend for women to shave or cut their hair short, a custom introduced between the Enkyō and Kansei (1789-1801) eras in imitation of the shaven pate adult men wore, contributed to the erasure of the visual differences between women and men (Asakura *et al.*, 1984, pp. 58-59). In *Dokugo*, Dazai expressed the same thought (Groemer, 2019b, p. 168; *Nihon zuihitsu taisei henshūbu*, 1976, pp. 285, 287-288). Moreover, Kanzawa recorded that women no longer hid their faces outside, a custom which was instead picked up by men who wore a hood known as *zukin* (Asakura *et al.*, 1984, p. 58). In Dazai's text, men who hid their faces were said to resemble women, whereas women who revealed their faces were said to compromise their female modesty (Groemer, 2019b, pp. 164-165; *Nihon zuihitsu taisei henshūbu*, 1976, p. 286). In this way, in Kanzawa and Dazai's opinion, women's wearing of men's garments and hairstyles caused concerning changes in women's appearance, behaviour, and morality.

4.3 Diffusion of the Merchant Mentality

In *Okinagusa*, Kanzawa deemed women's donning of the *haori* a threat to the social customs for its point of origin. As Kanzawa reported, women's use of the jacket originated in Kyoto, as the *onna geisha* from Fukagawa wore the apparel in imitation of *jōruri* chanters active in the capital. In Kanzawa's opinion, Kyoto was the city of the merchant, a town where inhabitants led an expensive and dissolute lifestyle (Asakura *et al.*, 1984, p. 59). Kanzawa's view on the matter was shared by Dazai, who, writing about women's shaved and short hair and their immodestly showing their faces, contrasted Kyoto to Edo, the capital of the warriors, men able to regulate their behaviour and their expenses (Groemer, 2019b, pp. 164-165, 168; *Nihon zuihitsu taisei henshūbu*, 1976, p. 287). By witnessing the diffusion of Kyoto's customs to Edo, Kanzawa and Dazai voiced their concern that the spirit of the Edo warrior might weaken and Edoites might adopt Kyoto's manners, bringing forth economical bankruptcy and moral lassitude.

5. Conclusion

In summary, authors of *zuihitsu* attacked women's use of the *haori* for three reasons:

- The custom eliminated the carefully constructed differences in status as revealed by clothing, threatening the symbolic stability of the *mibunsei*;
- The practice erased another important point of differentiation upon which Tokugawa society stood, i.e. the differences women had vis-a-vis men in regard to visual indicators, behaviours, and morality;
- The custom facilitated the diffusion of the merchant mentality of Kyoto, which could have brought about moral laxity and financial collapse.

As is often remarked in the study of the history of fashion and gender, clothes are not simply fabric that covers and protects the wearer's body: clothes also function as bearers of signification in larger semiotic systems wherein they carry social, cultural, political, moral, and economic meanings. As such, authorities often try to regulate them, but when subjects disregard the rules, they are accused of bringing about the disruption of the established order.

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