

Kimonos as Formal Wear and Buying Clothes, Part 2

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From the latter half of the 1970s to the 1980s, as the number of kimonos produced decreased, there was an increase in sales in terms of value per unit of kimono fabric sold. Underpinning this trend is a market for high-end kimonos, including those made by people designated as Living National Treasures or possessing skills designated as important intangible cultural properties, those made by famous designers or sold under prestigious brand names, and reproductions of kimonos from the collections of museums or art galleries. These are examples of a phenomenon whereby kimonos are appreciated as works of art after being upgraded to a more luxurious status than they enjoyed in the past.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the image of kimonos within Japanese society transformed from that of kimono as formal wear to kimono as work of art. However, people connected to both of these images by buying and owning kimonos. For many people, being able to buy a kimono was considered a blessing, while being unable to buy one was considered a sign of misfortune. Moreover, people spoke about experiences involving kimonos not just in terms of the individual who owned or wore the garment, but as memories involving others and kimonos that they remembered. Purchasing and owning-- these were the actions that have formed the fundamental relationship between kimonos and people in this era.