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**Cover:** Illustration of cherry blossom viewing from *Kunijo Kabuki Ekotoba (An Illustrated Manuscript of Okuni’s Kabuki)*, held by the Kyoto University Library

*Kunijo Kabuki Ekotoba (An Illustrated Manuscript of Kuni’s Kabuki)* has long been valued by the academic community as an important document. The manuscript is an example of *Naraehon* — illustrated manuscripts that were produced from the late Muromachi period to the early Edo period.

The story in the manuscript describes how Kuni, the daughter of a Shinto priest of the Izumo Taisha Shrine, learned kabuki dance, and then went to dance under the cherry-blossoms at the Kitano Shrine in Kyoto. As she performs her first dance, the *Nembutsu odori*, reciting a Buddhist chant, she summons a ghost, who then recites the chant with her to express remorse over his early death.

The story portrays Kuni as a deity of the Izumo Taisha Shrine, who performs her dance to exorcise evil from all sentient beings. It also provides a glimpse of the kabuki dance’s transformation into its dramatic form that we are familiar with today.