

Bushido: Way of the Samurai

Noh Costumes



JAPANESE
Noh theatre robe, *Atsuita*
(*Nōshōzoku Atsuita* 能装束厚板)
(late 18th century-early 19th century)
Edo period Japan
silk, gilt-paper, silk thread
H: 142cm
Felton Bequest, 2012
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Noh Theatre robes – teacher's notes

Noh is a type of masked dance-drama in which extreme stylization of the actors' movements, narrative and the music evoke a beautiful and mysterious atmosphere with stories that move between the human and spiritual realms. It is regarded by many as an art form that is one of the foundations of Japanese culture and representative of the unique Japanese aesthetic of *yugen* (mysterious or elusive beauty).

Noh theatre has its origins in *saragaku*, a popular performance staged as a ritual offering at temples and shrines during the Nara Period (710-784) and continued to evolve as dramatic and ritual performances at Shinto and Buddhist religious festivals over the following centuries. Noh, as it is known today, was developed in the Muromachi period (1392-1573) under the patronage of the Ashikaga shogun Yoshimitsu by the actor Kan'ami (1333–1384) and his son Zeami. From this time on it became firmly established under the patronage of shrines and temples and aristocratic households with the great sixteenth century military ruler Toyotomi Hideyoshi being one of its most enthusiastic supporters and an actor of lead roles himself. Noh continued to flourish during the Edo period under the patronage of the *daimyo* (regional lords) and became the favored entertainment of the ruling and military classes. It contrasted greatly to the Kabuki theatre that was considered a vulgar, unrefined form of entertainment for the merchant classes and would never be patronized by the samurai and ruling elite of Japan.

Noh robes became formalized during its great period of development in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and were based on the elegant attire of its practitioners and patrons, the ruling warrior classes. During the Edo period Noh established itself as a form of ceremonial entertainment of the ruling Shogunate with its elaborate robes representing formality from the past and a division between the working classes and the elite. New dyeing techniques, such as *yuzen*, *shibori* and *kasuri* were used for the common production of everyday textiles whereas Noh robes, in contrast, came to represent luxurious attire with unaltered traditional and decorative techniques of the past such as weaving, embroidery or *surihaku* (metallic stencil design).

The robe pictured is in the style of *atsuita*, which along with *kataori*, is one of the most highly admired types of Noh robes. *Kataori* is a term that describes a type of Noh costume as well as a type of fabric. Because of the high level of craft demonstrated in its weaving, this fabric was chosen to create the most gorgeous and elaborate of Noh costumes. Designs are produced on a three harness twill ground by floating a number of coloured threads. These are then fastened down with gold or silver foil threads, forming beautiful patterns on the surface of the fabric. The designs are of such intricacy and delicacy as to seem embroidered. *Kataori* are almost always used as an outer robe in women's roles.

Atsuita, like *karaori* is used today as the name of a type of fabric as well as a type of Noh costume. Originally *atsuita* was used as a type of generic term for thick fabrics. At present, the word is used to describe a plain weave ground in which design weft threads or gold and silver foiled threads are fastened down with the ground threads to create a brocade design. Fabrics used to create *atsuita* Noh costumes are *atsuita* and *karaori* fabrics, and also *nishiki* (brocade), *ayaori* (twill), and *ukiori* (relief brocade). *Atsuita* Noh robes are primarily used for men's roles.

This *atsuita* robe has alternating blocks of crimson, white and light green with design of *sasa* bamboo grass leaves, *kumochoban* cloud shaped gongs and *karabana* flower designs.

Bushido: Way of the Samurai

Noh Mask

DEME Hidemitsu

(Japanese active (17th century-18th century)

Noh mask, Ōbeshimi

(Nōmen Ōbeshimi 能面 大癡見)

(17th century) early Edo period

Japan

pigments, ground shell and animal glue

on Cypress (Hinoki), silk thread cord

22.0 x 15.5 x 11.0 cm

Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers



DEME Mitsunaga

(Japanese active (17th century)

Noh mask, Shakumi

(Nōmen Shakumi 能面 曲見)

(17th century) early Edo period

Japan

pigments, ground shell and animal glue on Cypress (Hinoki)

21.1 x 14.2 x 7.1 cm

Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers



DEME Toshimitsu

(Japanese active (18th century)

Noh mask, Kawazu

(Nōmen Kawazu 能面 蛙)

(18th century) Edo period

Japan

pigments, ground shell and animal glue

on Cypress (Hinoki), gilt-metal

19.5 x 14.8 x 8.5 cm

Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers



JAPANESE

Noh mask, Chūjō

(Nōmen Chūjō 能面 中将)

(17th century-18th century) early Edo period

Japan

pigments, ground shell and animal glue

on Cypress (Hinoki),

silk thread cord

20.0 x 13.2 x 7.0 cm

Purchased with funds donated by Allan Myers AO and Maria Myers



Noh Theatre masks – teacher's notes

Noh is a type of masked dance-drama in which extreme stylization of the actors' movements and the narrative music evoke a beautiful and mysterious atmosphere with stories that move between the human and spiritual realms. The only script of a Noh play is a book called an *utai-bon* with narrative chants and songs sung to the accompaniment of flutes, small and large hand drums and at times a large drum.

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The four masks pictured cover major roles portrayed in the Noh theatre. *Shakumi* & *Chujo* (female and male humans), *Kawazu* (ghosts/spirits) and *Ōbeshimi* (supernatural demons).

a. *Noh mask of Kawazu*

This mask represents an *Onryō*, a Ghost or Spirit who returns to the world of the living driven by their desire for vengeance. *Kawazu* represents a ghost of a man who was drowned and hence its title gives reference to the word 'frog'. His furrowed brow, sunken eyes and hollowed cheeks all impart an exhausted and miserable expression. The wet-looking hair painted on the forehead suggests recent immersion in water and emphasizes the expression of misery and the spirit's former life as a poor peasant.

b. *Noh mask of Shakumi*

This is an *Onna-men* (female human mask), which are the most well known and popular of Noh masks. *Shakumi* is a middle-aged woman whose youthful looks have faded. The loose strands of hair give her the careworn air of one who has suffered and survived trials and tribulations and for this reason she often appears in the role of a mother. The overall expression is one of graceful strength that denotes acceptance of one's fate.

c. *Noh mask of Chujo*

This is an *Otoko-men* (male human mask). *Chujo* takes its name from the talented Heian poet *Ariwara no Narihira* on whom the mask was modelled. *Narihira* is a *chujo* lieutenant-general, born into a family of imperial blood he was reputedly as ardent a lover as a poet and famously had an affair with the emperor's consort. In the play the *Oshio* which revolves around recollections of this love, the mask appears as *Narihira* himself. In other plays such as *Kiyosume* and *Tadanori*, that revolve around the lives of the gallant but ultimately doomed Heike warriors, the mask is also used for the roles of noblemen and, it is believed the lead character of *Murasaki Shikibu's Tale of Genji*.

d. *Noh mask of Ōbeshimi*

Ōbeshimi is used in plays featuring *tengu*, mythical demons or goblins that defy Buddhist law. *Tengu* live deep in the mountains and have red faces, large noses, wings and supernatural powers. The best known *tengu* play in the Noh repertoire is *Kurama Tengu*, the tale of a *tengu* living on Kyoto's Mt Kurama who trains the young Minamoto Yoshitsune with secrets of military strategy.

Kishin (demons), which were developed early in Noh's history are used for portraying demons, goblins or other worldly creatures. The category *kishin* is divided into two main parts, *tobide* (fierce gods or demonic spirits) and *beshimimi* (goblins and other creatures) of which *Ōbeshimi* is one.

Middle years activity

のうめん のうしょうぞく

能面と能装束 Noh Mask and Noh Theatre Robe

1 Label the parts of the face in Japanese

みみ 耳
め 目
ひげ



くち 口
まゆげ
はな

2 Write a sentence to describe the face in Japanese.

3 Find the following information about this artwork.

1 なにで できていますか。

2 いつつくられましたか。

3 だれが 作りましたか。

4 Noh masks are designed for certain characters.

Match the following masks with the character that they might have had in a Noh play.

			
1 てんぐ ⁴	2 おんなの ^{ひと} 人	3 ゆうれい ⁵	4 ぶし ⁶

5 Design a mask for a demon's character and describe the face in Japanese.

- 1 is made of
- 2 when
- 3 who
- 4 goblin
- 5 ghost
- 6 Samurai

Middle years activity

6 Label the colours in Japanese.

びんく ピンク
みどり
むらさき
しろ



きんいろ
みずいろ
あか
おれんじ オレンジ

7 Write the meaning of the following images in Japanese.







くも (cloud)

はな (flower)

ささ (bamboo grass)

8 Choose the correct word to complete the following sentences.

1  これは _____ です。

2  これは _____ です。

ろっかくけい 六角形	しかくけい 四角形
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9 Find the following information about this artwork.

いつ つくられましたか。

なにで できています¹か。

10 Choose the correct word to complete the following information about Noh.

Noh is a traditional Japanese musical drama performed since the (14せいき² 19せいき).

Only (おんなの人³ おとこの人⁴) performed Noh, sometimes with a mask.

Atsuta robes were used for (おんなの人 おとこの人)'s roles.

Noh became popular among (さむらい おんなの人) during the Edo period.

The karaori robe has pictures of (はな⁵ どうぶつ⁶).

1 is made of
2 century
3 woman/women
4 man/men
5 flowers
6 animals

Junior years activity

のうめん Noh Mask

1 Label the parts of the face in Japanese

みみ
め
ひげ



くち
まゆげ
はな

2 Circle the adjectives to describe the face.

かわいい 怖い きれい カッコいい つよい よわい

3 Practise writing the following words in *hiragana*.

read		trace		write		write	
く	ち	く	ち				
は	な	は	な				
ひ	げ	ひ	げ				

4 Draw your own Noh mask and label the parts of the face in Japanese.

