

Explanation of each Noh Mask in English

1-1 翁／Okina

Also known as Hakushiki-jō, it is used in divine-themed plays. Within its gentle, smiling expression, it skillfully conveys a divine character. Features include a split jaw, bushy eyebrows, downward-curved (‘^’-shaped) eyes, and distinctive wrinkles.

1-2 三番叟／Sanbaso

Also known as Kokushiki-jō, it follows the same format as the Okina mask. It is smaller in size, black in color, and features roughly planted bushy eyebrows. The mask conveys the rustic strength of a commoner engaged in farming. In Kyogen, it is worn during the performance of Suzu no Dan.

1-3 父尉／Chichi-no-jo

The father of Okina; elderly deity who is symbol of the prosperity of household estates and future generations. The chin and eyebrows are the same as those of an old man (Okina), but its distinctive feature is the slanted, upturned eyes, and there is no planted hair on the lower jaw.

1-4 延命冠者／Enmei-kaja

Youthful deity promised a long life. The eyes are carved in the shape of the character ‘^,’ and the face carries a gentle smile, embodying the virtues of longevity. It retains traces of the Heian and Kamakura period aesthetic.

2-1 小尉／Ko-jo

Mask of a gentle and refined old man. “Koushi” name, adding the first character from the name of the mask maker Koushi. “With only upper teeth and a beard planted solely on the chin, the face is moderately thin and depicts a gentle, kind-eyed elderly man. Among the Jo masks, it is the most elegant and dignified, used as a divine embodiment in Noh plays like ‘Takasago,’ where the later shite transforms into a god.

2-2 三光尉／Sanko-jo

It was created by Sankōbō. The cheeks and forehead have thick and numerous wrinkles, portraying a simple, rustic, and approachable elderly man, though slightly lacking in dignity. It is used in the mae-shite roles of Noh plays featuring warriors or supernatural elements by the Konparu, Kongō, and Kita schools, while the Kanze and Hōshō schools use ‘Asakura Jo’ instead.”

2-3 阿古父尉／Akobu-jo

The head and cheeks feature rounded, lump-like contours. Its shape resembles ‘Kojo,’ but it is slightly less dignified. It has only upper teeth, with hair implanted solely on the chin, and the beard above and below the lips is depicted with painted lines. It is used for the mae-shite roles of elderly characters in plays such as ‘Tokusa’ and ‘Tenko,’ which include the performance of the ‘Jo-no-Mai’ dance.”

2-4 皺耐/Shiwa-jo

An elderly man with distinctive wrinkles on his cheeks. The beard above and below the mouth is painted, giving an impression of warmth and elegance, representing a refined elder gracefully dancing. It is primarily used in the later shite roles of plays such as 'Oimatsu' and 'Saigyō Zakura,' which involve dancing, particularly in the Kanze school.

2-5 舞耐/Mai-jo

A mask of an elder who dances, unique to the Hōshō school. It has few wrinkles and a gentle, calm expression. The eyes have a kind look, and only the cheeks are adorned with implanted hair, while the rest features refined painted details. The mouth, with both upper and lower teeth, holds a subtle smile.

2-6 石王耐/Ishiō-jo

A mask of an elderly deity created by Ishiō Hyōe, designed for dancing. The sunken eye sockets feature downward-tilted eyes shaped like sword beans (natamame), giving a slightly downward gaze. The lips and teeth are pulled back, contributing to the bitter, rugged expression. This mask is used for later acts (nochishite) in the Kanze, Kongō, and Kita schools.

3-1 大飛出/Ohtobide

A celestial deity with a grand and powerful presence, gazing down upon the earthly realm. Its eyes protrude, eyebrows are raised, and its mouth is wide open, revealing a red tongue. In ancient times, it was referred to as 'Hiten' (Flying Heavenly Being). It is also described as 'the face of Sugawara no Michizane, who, as a vengeful spirit, spits pomegranates.' This mask is used in 'Kamo' and 'Arashiyama'

3-2 小飛出/Kotobide

A mask with metal fittings in the eyes, surrounded by vermilion, and revealing a red tongue. It has a deep reddish-brown color. While it lacks the divine presence of celestial deities, it exudes a sharp and spirited vigor. It represents a deity swiftly and nimbly traversing the earth. This mask is used in performances such as 'Kokaji' and 'Sesshō seki.' In ancient times, it was also referred to as the mask of the Dragon God.

3-3 黒髭/Kurohige

A mask of the Dragon God, featuring upward-slanted eyes made with metal fittings. The lower jaw is elongated vertically and protrudes forward, giving it a jutting appearance. It conveys the expression of emerging from the dark depths of the sea. This mask is used in later acts (nochishite) of performances such as 'Chikubushima,' 'Wakashu,' and 'Kasuga Ryūjin.'

3-4 大癡見/Ohbeshimi

A mask of Tengu, featuring a 'beshimi' mouth—lips tightly pressed together without revealing the teeth, creating a strained expression. As a countereffect, the eyes are opened wide. Its creation dates back to ancient times and has been used as a mask of demon gods since the era of Zeami.

3-5 小癪見／Kobeshimi

The eyes are small and sharp, the nose displays intense strain, and the corners of the mouth are turned down, creating a tightly drawn and fearsome expression, befitting a demon god. It exudes a tense atmosphere and embodies the 'Un' aspect of the A-un duality. This mask is used for demon gods of the underworld in plays such as 'Nomori' and 'Ukai'.

3-6 牙癪見／Kibabeshimi

Larger than the Ōbeshimi, it emphasizes an even greater intensity. Named for the two fangs protruding from the upper jaw, it features boldly painted black hairlines that exude strength. However, the mask leans more toward comical charm than fear. It embodies the appearance of an aged and experienced Tengu leader.

3-7 癪見悪尉／Beshimi-akujo

A malicious elder with Beshimi-like characteristics. It is distinguished by a closed mouth surrounded by three layers of implanted hair. This mask, derived from the Ōbeshimi, is used to represent an even more aged and experienced Tengu leader.

3-8 重荷悪尉／Omoni-akujo

A mask exclusively used for the later act (nochishite) of the Noh play Koi-Omoi (Love's Heavy Burden). It is a fitting mask for a play that depicts the relentless passion of an elderly man's forbidden love.

3-9 茗荷悪尉／Myouga-akujo

A malicious elder mask featuring eyes shaped like myōga (Japanese ginger), with raised inner corners, a broad central section, and drooping outer corners. The raised inner corners give the nose a longer and somewhat detached appearance. This mask is used for roles portraying a human-like deity or in the later act (nochishite) of 'Chōryō,' where it depicts a foolish-looking Chinese character.

3-10 鼻瘤悪尉／Hanakobu-akujo

A Great Evil Elder mask with a nose bearing a bump, evoking the appearance of a Western-style face. It represents the figure of a fearsome divine spirit. The term 'evil' signifies strength. The eyes are crafted with metal fittings, surrounded by vermillion. The wide-open mouth, upper and lower teeth, and red tongue further emphasize its power. This mask is used in plays such as 'Shirahige' and 'Domyōji.'

3-11 長霊癪見／Chourei-beshimi

A mask created by Chorei, specifically used for Nagahiro in the play Kumasaka. It depicts the thief Nagahiro, who attacked Ushiwakamaru but was ultimately defeated. The mask features perfectly round eyes, exaggerating its comical nature.

3-12 天神／Tenjin

A mask of the heavenly deity, used to represent various gods, including Amatsu gods and Buddhist guardian deities. The Tenjin mask is also said to portray Sugawara no Michizane before he was enshrined as a deity and is used in the earlier act (maeshite) of 'Raiden.' It is employed for prominent, high-ranking divine roles, such as Izanagi-no-Mikoto in 'Awaji' or the later act (nochishite) of 'Taizan Fukujun.

3-13 小天神／Kotenjin

Similar to Tenjin, the Small Tenjin mask represents a heavenly deity. However, it is used for gods of lower status, such as Idate and Taishakuten.

3-14 顰／Shikami

A male demon mask from the Kanze school. It depicts an extremely angry face with all the facial muscles tightly clenched. The eyebrow muscles droop, and the mouth is pulled up to the cheeks, resembling a lion biting down with its upper and lower teeth. This mask is said to be the origin of the term 'scowling face' (shikametsura). It is used in plays such as 'Rash ō mon,' 'Momijigari,' and 'Tsuchigumo.

3-15 野干／Yakan

A mythical beast from China, resembling a fox but adept at climbing trees. Its voice is similar to that of a wolf. In Japan, it is considered another name for the fox and is also referred to as 'wild fox' (nogitsune). Its mouth is sharply slanted upward on both sides, evoking the image of a fox. It is characterized by short horns on its head. This mask is exclusively used in 'Sessh ō seki.

3-16 獅子口／Shishiguchi

The lion is an imaginary creature that was introduced from China around the 6th century, originally serving the role of warding off demons. However, in Noh, it is regarded as a more fairy-like being. It features sharp eyes and a wide, fiercely open mouth, conveying a strong expression. The vivid crimson of its mouth and its entire surface adorned with gold paint emphasize its majestic dignity and strength. This mask is exclusively used in 'Shakky ō.'

3-17 小獅子／Kojishi

The companion role (tsure) in Shakky ō, representing a child lion. The parent and child lions perform a dynamic and powerful dance across the stage, adorned with fully blooming peonies. The main role (shite) of the parent lion wears a white-maned shishi-guchi mask, while the tsure child lion wears a red-maned mask. This performance strongly emphasizes their fairy-like nature.

4-1 瘦男／Yase-Otoko

A mask representing the ghost of a fisherman who fell to hell for the sin of killing and returns from the afterlife. The cheeks and forehead appear devoid of muscle, with sunken eye sockets and skin barely clinging to the bones. It conveys the coldness of death, marked by the suffering of hell, exhaustion, and pitiful frailty. This mask is used in plays such as 'Yach ō,' 'Akochi,' and 'Fujito.

4-2 蛙／Kawazu

A mask with a ghastly expression, featuring deeply sunken eye sockets and small, downcast eyes set far apart, emphasizing a sense of weakness. It is said to resemble the face of a drowned person, making it a fitting mask for 'Fujito.' It is also written as 'Kawazu,' 'Kawaji,' or 'Kawatsu.'

4-3 橋姫／Hashihimi

A mask born from the legend of Hashihime, who transformed into a demon while still alive due to jealousy. It features a golden ring with three legs mounted on the head, each holding a burning torch, representing the ushi no toki mairi (midnight visit to Kifune Shrine). The face is fiercely red, with a terrifying expression, and the forehead shines white. This mask is used in the later act (nochishite) of 'Kanawa.

4-4 白般若／Shiro-Hannya

A female demon mask, expressing a woman consumed by jealousy, suffering, sorrow, and anger, ultimately transforming into a vengeful spirit seeking retribution. The mouth is widely torn open in anger, while the eyes convey sorrow, reflecting a complex mix of emotions. The Hannya mask varies in use: the white Hannya retains elements of beauty and elegance and is used for a court lady in 'Aoi no Ue,' while the black Hannya is used for the demoness in 'Kurozuka,' among other roles.

4-5 赤般若／Aka-Hannya

A female demon mask, slightly less refined than the white Hannya. It is used in the later act (nochishite) of plays such as 'Dōjōji,' where a shirabyōshi dancer transforms. The Hannya mask is said to be the most artistic representation of the enmity of a woman seeking revenge driven by resentment.

4-6 蛇／Jya

A mask that takes the expression of a Hannya driven mad by jealousy to an even greater extreme, transforming into the serpentine form of an animal. It no longer retains any elements or characteristics of a woman. The mouth is deeply carved, and scales are etched around it. This mask is used in Dōjōji.

4-7 真蛇／Shin-jya

"The most serpent-like among serpent masks, featuring an even more ferocious expression. The forehead is painted white, the cheeks and nose are flesh-colored, and the area below the mouth is shaded in a darker flesh tone. This mask is often used during special performances of Dōjōji.

4-8 泥蛇／Dei-jya

A snake adorned with gold mud, a renowned mask of the Kanze school. This mask has sustained damage, losing its horns, and its expression closely resembles that of a Hannya. There are lines on the temples, and the eyebrows are decorated with a unique coloring. It is used for the special performance of "Dōjōji."

4-9 生成／Namanari

Records describe it as 'a mask that is slightly short of becoming a Hannya, with short horns, thus named Namari.' It represents a form preceding the full transformation into a Hannya. The red tongue is visible, the nasal bridge is flat, and the solid, heavy mouth creates a fearsome expression. Disheveled hair is painted extending to the cheeks, making it a mask of an intense vengeful spirit.

4-10 山姥／Yamanba

A mask exclusively used for 'Yamanba.' Yamanba is a demoness or celestial being who lives in the mountains, cherishing people and admiring the seasonal landscapes as she roams the hills. The mask exudes an aura of strength, grandeur, and spiritual energy.

4-11 泥眼／Deigan

A mask used in plays where the later act (nochishite) portrays a dragon maiden or bodhisattva. It represents the face of a woman who attains enlightenment and becomes a bodhisattva. The gold in the eyes symbolizes a transcendent being, and gold paint is also applied to the teeth. The face has an austere and eerie quality, yet it retains beauty and elegance. It is also used for the earlier act (maeshite) of 'Aoi no Ue.

4-12 神体／Shintai

A divine mask used for young male deities in Japan, as seen in plays like 'Takasago.' The eyes are fitted with metal fittings, but unlike the Kaishi mask, they lack the surrounding vermilion. It portrays a god not as a spiritual being, but with a simple and refreshing elegance.

4-13 怪士／Ayakashi

Also written as 'Kai' or 'Reishin,' this mask was used similarly to the 'Taka' mask until the late Muromachi period. Nowadays, it is used for vengeful spirits of warriors in plays such as 'Funabenkei' and 'Ikari-dokoro.

4-14 鷹／Taka

Also written as 'Taga' or 'S ū jin,' this is a divine mask. The center of the eyelids is raised, evoking the image of a hawk. Unlike the Mikazuki, it has large ears. It is used to create an even more powerful portrayal of the Kaishi.

4-15 不動／Fudo

A mask of Fud ō My ō ō. The Noh mask of Fud ō features a blue-colored face, yellow hair, wide-open eyes, and a large open mouth revealing a red tongue behind two pairs of fangs. Its expression differs from that of Fud ō in Esoteric Buddhism. This mask is used in the later act (nochishite) of Ch ō buku Soga.

4-16 釈迦/Shaka

A mask exclusively used in Daikai. A tengu disguises itself as Shakyamuni, holding a sutra scroll and displaying an appearance of Shakyamuni-like dignity. However, its magic is broken by Taishakuten, revealing its true tengu form. The performer wears the Ōbeshimi mask underneath and the Shakyamuni mask on top. As two masks are worn, it is made larger in size.

4-17 一角仙人/Ikkaku-sennin

A hermit living in the country of Varanasi in India. Possessing divine powers, he contests with the dragon deity for supremacy and seals the dragon deity in a cavern. However, he loses his divine powers when tempted by a beautiful woman. The mask, exclusive to 'Ikkaku Sennin,' depicts a face brimming with spiritual energy.

4-18 龍女/Ryujo

The bright reddish face conveys a distinctly spiritual impression. The wrinkles on the forehead and the hollows above the eyebrows, combined with gold-painted eyes, enhance the sense of severity. The disheveled hair depicted with brushstrokes further expresses the characteristics of a dragon maiden lurking underwater. This mask is used in plays such as Sessh ō seki.

5-1 小面/Koomote

The most elegant and radiant of all Noh masks, exuding refined beauty and brightness. The term 'Koomote' (small face) symbolizes charm and delicacy. Its eyes, nose, and mouth are closely positioned at the center of the face, resembling the features of a child. The cheeks are full, and the elongated eyes add to its allure. It is the youngest among female masks (representing ages 16–17) and is a signature female mask of the Konparu and Kita schools.

5-2 孫次郎/Magojirou

A representative mask of a young woman in the Kong ō school, said to have been created by Kong ō Sonjir ō in memory of his wife's image. Compared to the Koomote mask, the eyes are positioned higher, and the cheeks are more refined, exuding an air of mature sensuality. It conveys the glamorous charm of a newlywed.

5-3 節木増/Fushiki-zo

A representative mask of the H ō sh ō school. It is a female mask with a gentle and elegant demeanor, named for the resin seeping from a knot beside the nose. Created by Z ō ami, its expression is almost identical to that of the Wakaonna mask. It has a refined and intellectual look, embodying a pure and graceful appearance.

5-4 若女/Waka-onna

A representative female mask of the Kanze school. Compared to the Koomote mask, it has a larger forehead, a shorter chin, and the eyes, nose, and mouth are positioned lower on the face. The cheeks are more defined, giving the mask a sense of mature elegance. Among the various female masks, it was the last to be completed, crafted by Kawachi Iee during the late Muromachi period.

5-5 近江女／Ohmi-onna

A slightly older-looking female mask that conveys deep emotion and a sense of sensuality, with an expressive and down-to-earth quality. Compared to the Koomote mask, its cheeks are slimmer, the eyes are rounder, the corners of the eyes droop, and the lower lip features visible teeth—its defining characteristics. It is used in the earlier act (maeshite) of Dōjōji. This mask is said to have originated from the female masks used in Ōmi Sarugaku.

5-6 増女／Zo-onna

“A female mask that lacks brightness or charm but exudes purity, grace, and refined elegance. It has an elongated face, with firm and defined cheeks, almond-shaped eyes with slightly drooping corners, and slightly parted lips. The mask conveys both allure and intensity. It is used for celestial maidens and goddesses. Because it is fitted with a celestial crown, it is also known as 'Tenkan-shita.

5-7 泣増／Naki-zo

“Compared to the Zōonna mask, this mask has narrower eyes and a slimmer, more refined nose bridge, giving it an elegant appearance. It seems almost as if it is crying, with a melancholy expression, hence its name. It embodies the dignity and solemnity of a goddess, further emphasizing the characteristics of Zōonna. This is the Zōonna of the Hōshō school.

5-8 増髪／Masukami

Also written as 'Jussun-gami,' its defining features include wrinkles at the base of the eyebrows, hollows above them, and dimples on the cheeks. The hollow on the forehead, the slightly upturned lower eyelids, and the disheveled hair strokes depict a figure lost in an ecstatic frenzy. It is used for shrine maidens possessed by divine spirits in plays such as Ema and Makiginu.”

5-9 逆髪／Sakagami

A mask similar to Masukami and closely related to Zōonna. It possesses a noble air while concealing a fairy-like mystique, making it suitable for plays with a sense of mystery. It is an appropriate mask for the shite role in Semimaru, characterized by a frenzied beauty. Sakagami is the name of Semimaru's elder sister.

5-10 深井／Fukai

A mask depicting a middle-aged woman, with sagging cheek flesh and shallow dimples that resemble wrinkles. The eyes tend to be downcast. It is used to portray a mother searching for her missing child or a wife lost in thought. The mask not only conveys a sense of advanced age but also reflects the depth of life experience and inner complexity.

5-11 曲見／Shakumi

“The mask is named for its deeply sagging, dimple-like cheeks, along with a protruding jaw that gives the face a jutting appearance. It represents someone slightly older than Fukai. The lower eyelids are curved, the eyes are downcast, and the rounded pupils give a tearful and sorrowful expression. The hairlines are painted off-center from the parting.

5-12 姥/Uba

A divine incarnation in the form of an elegant elderly woman, portrayed as the old woman in Takasago. Her cheeks are withered, wrinkles run deep, and her eyes are sunken. Three wrinkles are etched across her forehead. The brushwork depicts white hair, and the sagging upper eyelid muscles are represented. Like blind masks, the eyes are hollowed out.

5-13 老女/Roujo

A mask portraying Ono no Komachi at the age of one hundred. While traces of her former intellect and beauty remain, it depicts the sorrowful face of an aged Komachi, living off the charity of passersby. Her cheeks are completely emaciated, and the brushwork of her hair appears disheveled.

6-1 中将/Chuujo

Named after the face of Ariwara no Narihira, a Heian-period poet and courtier. The mask features painted eyebrows and an elegant visage characteristic of aristocracy during the imperial court era. Its expression is dominated by melancholy. Wrinkles at the base of the eyebrows are a notable feature, evoking a sense of sorrow. This mask is also used in plays such as Tadanori and Kiyotsune, which depict warriors of the Heike clan.

6-2 平太/Heita

The face of Heita Tanechō of Egarata, a samurai from the Kamakura period, known for adorning his quiver (ebira) with plum blossoms during the Battle of Ikuta no Mori in Kobe. There are two variations based on coloration: Aka-Heita (Red Heita) and Shiro-Heita (White Heita). This mask, Aka-Heita, represents the strength of Genji warriors who emerge victorious in battle.

6-3 邯鄲男/Kantan-otoko

A mask of a young deity, aptly named for its role in Kantan. It represents a young man who, while cooking millet, dreams of ascending to the throne and comes to understand the fleeting nature of life. The mask embodies two expressions: one of doubt and one of enlightenment. Its ambiguous eyes and mouth, wrinkles above the eyebrows, and dimples on the cheeks create a dynamic and shifting expression.

6-4 十六/Jyuuroku

A mask depicting Taira no Atsumori, a 16-year-old Heike warrior who vanished at Suma no Ura. It represents a handsome young man with a ruddy complexion and is primarily used in plays such as Atsumori and Ikuta Atsumori.

6-5 童子/Douji

A fairy disguised as an innocent young boy. The disheveled hair falling over the forehead, the beautifully upturned eyes at the corners, and the finely detailed, unique eyebrows create a delicate yet mysteriously otherworldly presence. This mask is used in the maeshite (first act) of plays like Tamura and Ōeyama.

6-6 慈童/Jidou

Not an ordinary boy, but an incarnation of an immortal spirit symbolizing eternal youth. It exudes an air of subtle elegance and an enchanting, fairy-like mystique. Compared to Dōji, the facial features are more concentrated toward the center, with the lower eyelids further upturned, enhancing its ethereal, fairy-like appearance.

6-7 喝食/Kasshiki

A boy serving in the dining hall of a Zen temple. Still in a semi-monk, semi-layman state, he wears thick, ginkgo-shaped bangs on his forehead. Skilled in the performing arts, he would adorn makeup and elegant attire, displaying a somewhat androgynous personality. This mask is used in plays such as Shizen Kōji and Kagetsu.

6-8 蟬丸/Semimaru

Used for the companion (tsure) role in Semimaru. It represents a prince who became blind at a young age, embodying a dignified and noble boy. The eyes of the blind mask are completely hollowed out, allowing better visibility compared to other masks when worn.

6-9 猩々/Shoujo

A mask exclusively used in the celebratory play Shōjō. It depicts a fairy who bestows a mysterious jar of endless sake as a reward for a filial person's virtue. Fond of alcohol, the fairy dances joyfully in intoxication. The face is red, with dimples on the cheeks, and both the eyes and mouth convey a smile. This mask is unique among Noh masks for its rare expression of laughter.

6-10 景清/Kagekiyo

The face of the Heike samurai general, Akushichibyoue Kagekiyo. After becoming a fugitive, he gouged out his own eyes to avoid witnessing the Genji-dominated world and lived as a beggar, embodying a pitiful figure. The expression varies by school, with some masks emphasizing his sorrow. However, this particular mask, known as Hige Kagekiyo, features implanted facial hair, preserving the resolute spirit of a samurai.

6-11 俊寛/Shunkan

The face of Shunkan Sōzu, who was exiled to Kikaigashima for his involvement in the conspiracy to overthrow Taira no Kiyomori. Even after a general amnesty, he was not pardoned and died alone on the island. The portrayal varies by school, with some emphasizing an aged and powerful appearance, while others depict the youthful features of his 37 years at the time of his death.

7-1 乙/Oto

Oto of Otome signifies youthfulness or charm. In Kyogen, beautiful women do not appear. While the face is amusing, it is not unpleasant or unclean. Instead, it portrays the expression of a kind and wholesome woman full of a sense of everyday life. In Kyogen, there are no depictions of the deep sorrow, jealousy, or obsessive dread often associated with women.

7-2 空吹／Usobuki

A truly comical face, associated with the term usobuku, which colloquially refers to bluffing or feigning ignorance, though its original meaning is to sigh in vain. In Kyogen, it is primarily used to depict weak spirits, such as ants or mosquitoes.

7-3 賢徳／Kentoku

Personifications of animals such as dogs, horses, oxen, and crabs, characterized by exaggerated skeletal and muscular features that strip away realism. The overall expression is vague, evoking a sense of irony, as though mocking and laughing scornfully at people.

7-4 登髭／Noborihige

Used for superhuman roles such as gods and spirits. While it symbolizes the face of an old man, the stylized depiction of muscles evokes laughter. A distinctive feature is the upward-planted whiskers on the cheeks.

7-5 祖父／Ohji

In the form of a hundred-year-old elderly man, the face shows the contortions of age. Its features are severely distorted with asymmetry, and the open mouth reveals two or three visible teeth.

7-6 蛭子／Ebisu

One of the Seven Gods of Fortune, revered by merchants as a deity of prosperity. This mask, exclusively for Ebisu (also written as 恵比寿), depicts him holding a fishing rod and a sea bream. It carries a smile that reflects both warmth and the dignity of a divine being.

7-7 大黒／Daikoku

One of the Seven Gods of Fortune and a well-known deity, originally the ancient Indian god of wrath and war. In Kyogen, this deity is often portrayed as the guardian deity of the Tendai sect on Mount Hiei. The facial features are all exaggerated, with a wide, open-mouthed smile and large, drooping earlobes, presenting a calm and gentle expression.

7-8 狐／Kitsune

A dedicated mask used for the shite role in the latter part of the Kyogen play Tsurukitsune (The Fox Trap). There are various types, including those with movable jaws and those without. The shite role in the first part, Hakuzōsu, depicts a fox disguised as a monk. This mask realistically portrays the fox's return to its original form after a struggle between reason and instinct, where instinct ultimately triumphs over reason.

7-9 小猿／Kozaru

A young monkey appearing in plays such as Muko-zaru and Saru Zato, embodying a charming and adorable presence. This role is performed by the kokata (child actor). Other types of monkey masks include Muko-zaru (Groom Monkey) and Shūto-zaru (Father-in-law Monkey), among various others.

7-10 姫猿／Himesaru

Used in plays such as Saru Muko, where the Groom Monkey (Muko-zaru) arrives at Arashiyama with a large group of friends to marry the Bride Monkey (Muko-zaru). The lively banquet featuring numerous monkeys in chaotic revelry showcases the vibrant charm unique to Kyogen.

7-11 福の神／Fukuno-kami

A mask specifically created for Fuku no Kami (God of Fortune). The deity provides various teachings to worshippers at Izumo Taisha Shrine, appearing with laughter and ending the play with laughter. The mask radiates a bright smile that seems to emanate from deep within.

7-12 好兵衛武悪／Sukibei-Buaku

There are various theories about the origins of the Buaru mask, including connections to Gigaku masks, depictions of leprosy patients, Indian faces, and Daihannya. This particular mask was used in the Kyogen play Setsubun, where a man falls in love with a married woman, only to have his treasure stolen by her. It was created based on the work of Sank ō b ō.

7-13 毘沙門／Bishamon

Referring to Tamonten, the deity who guards the northern direction and protects Buddhist law. With a strikingly martial appearance and holding a halberd, this mask is used in Kyogen plays such as Bishamon Renga, Ebisubishamon, and Ishigami. Unlike the Bishamon statues, many of these masks incorporate elements of the Noh mask Hannya. It was created based on the work of Shakutsuru.

7-14 通円／Tsuen

Used in the Kyogen play Tsuen, a parody of the Noh play Yorimasa, which tells the story of Minamoto no Yorimasa, who participated in a coup to overthrow the Heike clan and took his own life at Byodoin, and his retainer Tsuen Masahisa, who became the proprietor of Tsuen Tea House. While it generally resembles the Noh mask Yorimasa, it was created based on a mask closer to Ko-j ō.

7-15 万歳楽／Manzairaku

A replica of the Banzeiraku mask, which preserves the traditions of medieval Dengaku and Okina Sarugaku festivals and performing arts. It is still used today at the Kamogawa Sumiyoshi Shrine. Unlike the split-jaw design, this mask features a black usobuki style with a distorted shape, where the mouth protrudes diagonally upward from the lower jaw. It is considered an ancient form of the black Okina mask.

7-16 鼻曲り三番叟／Hanamagari-sanbaso

The Sanbas ō mask of Hakusan Shrine (Gifu Prefecture). At Hakusan, simple folk performing arts, closely tied to religious faith, have been preserved. This mask predates Noh theater, with exaggerated asymmetry in the eyes, nose, mouth, and cheeks. The contrasting sides emphasize the difference between yin and yang. It is characterized by its dynamic and expressive features.