

【Noh Costume】

The intricate, finely crafted costumes worn by Noh performers are broadly called *shōzoku*, though a single costume may contain elements from up to seven different categories, including wigs, caps, and various types of kimono. *Shōzoku* was adopted during the fifteenth century, when wealthy patrons (including the shogun himself) began frequenting Noh performances and donating fine silk clothes to their favorite performers. By wearing the garments onstage, Noh actors could show off their popularity with high society. Over time, this extravagant costume became the norm, and even the most menial characters, such as a humble fisherwoman, are portrayed wearing elegant finery.

Shōzoku can be largely divided into two categories: Japanese-patterned (*wayō*) and Chinese-patterned (*karayō*). The former is characterized by subdued patterns, often with floral or seasonal themes. The latter is characterized by bold patterns that may feature stylized animals such as lions or dragons.

Traditionally, performers choose their own costumes, but in much the same way that certain masks came to be associated with and finally embodied certain characters, elements of the *shōzoku* can indicate a character's age, wealth, and social status purely through color and style. For example, male characters who wear the long, flowing robes and pointed black hats of the Heian court period are invariably important to the story, but lined robes indicate more imposing, dignified roles, while an unlined robe suggests a statesman's son or a god disguised as an old man. If a female character's costume contains red, it is an indication of the character's youth, but a costume without red indicates an older female character or someone with a stately presence.

The museum collection spans all genres of Noh and includes primarily costumes commissioned or collected in the early decades of the twentieth century by the fifteenth head of the Ii family, Ii Naotada (1881–1947).