

Report: Shall we watch a sketch comedy in Kyoto?

~Senbon Enma-do Dai Nenbutsu Kyogen

This time, we will go to Kyoto. One of the most popular cities in Japan. The No.1 sightseeing place that most tourists from other countries want to go to. I guess Kyoto is a kind of symbol of old traditional Japan. There are many tourist spots, temples, shrines, castles and old streets. Today we'll talk about another special sight. This sight introduces traditional folk performing arts with masked characters.

There are three sketch comedies with masked characters, named "Nenbutsu Kyogen". "Mibu Kyogen", "Saga Nebutsu Kyogen" and "Senbon Enma-do Nenbutsu Kyogen". "Kyogen" is performed in the intermission of Noh performances. In contrast to Noh, they tend to be comedic. It means just a play, too. And "Nenbutsu" is a Buddhist invocation. So, "Nenbutsu Kyogen" is a play in which stories are based on the daily lives of average people to propagate Buddhism. Two of these, "Mibu Kyogen" and "Saga Kyogen" are pantomime, but only "Senbon Enma-do Kyogen" has dialogue.

*Reference

Mibu Kyogen

Date: 3rd February, 29th April~5th May, 3 days around 10th October

Location: Mibudera-temple

refer→<https://www.discoverkyoto.com/event-calendar/may/mibu-kyogen-mibu-dera/> discover Kyoto

Saga nenbutsu Kyogen

Date: 1st Sunday & 2nd Saturday & Sunday April, The Sunday nearest 26th October

Location: Seiryoji-temple

refer→<http://www.greentour-kyoto.net/events/saga-kyogen/> green tour Kyoto

Senbon Enma-do Kyogen 千本えんまどう狂言

Date: 3rd February & 1st~4th May

Location: Senbon Enma-do (another name, Injoji-temple)

refer→<https://kansaifinder.com/event/senbon-enma-do-nenbutsu-kyogen/> Kansai Finder

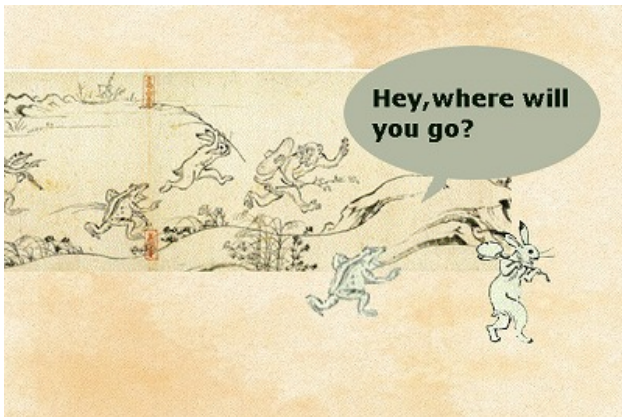
First, let to introduce today's guide

Now, I'll call today's guides. They are the most popular characters in Japanese National artwork treasures.



a part of National treasure “Chojyu-jinbutsu-giga”

They seem to have come.



Hi, I'm a rabbit.

And I'm a frog. But, why have we come here today?

To guide “Senbon Enma-do kyogen”.

Why?

Because we are born in Kyoto. Oh, we should introduce

ourselves before we guide people. We are characters appearing in “Choju-jinbutsu-giga”. “Choju” means birds and animals. “Jinbutsu” means people. And “Giga” means “caricature” in Japanese. It has nothing to do with the capacity of a hard disk, “gigabyte”.

I didn't know that at all.

Didn't you know even though you are the important character? Oh,well. Anyway I'll teach you, listen to me carefully. This is a picture roll which was painted only Sumi (Chinese calligraphy ink) without colors. It is said that this roll was painted about 800 years ago and the painter was Toba-sojo”. But that hasn't been investigated in detail. The contents are caricatures. Especially, in the first volume, many animals are active like humans. People say this is the beginning of Japanese cartoons (Manga). So, this roll is the most popular in Japanese National art treasures. The Kozanji-temple in Kyoto stores it. So, we know most about Kyoto's history from 800 years ago. Now, let's go to Senbon Enma-do.

□□Now, let's go to the venue

*This article is written based on writer's experience at 4th, May, in 2018 and a booklet.



the Kamo river



the center of Kyoto city

There is the Kamo river. It always makes me feel good.

The center of the city is always crowded lately. Especially this week (from the end of April to the first of May) has consecutive holidays in Japan. There are many Japanese in addition many tourists from other countries. Hurry up. I can't stand here.

Won't you go to any sightseeing places? Kinkakuji-temple, Kiyomizu-temple, or Fushimi Inari shrine.

Where have you been? Are you a tourist? We have lived in this city for 800 years.

I think this is some nice occasion...



the entrance of the temple



the venue

This is the Injoji-temple, and another name is Senbon Enma-do.

What are we going to do? We have no money.

Don't worry. It's free.

Free? Sounds good. A little boy and a little girl are walking around people. What are they doing?

They are selling a description booklet for \ 500 (as of 2018).

I want one.

I'll buy you one.

Oh, why do you have money? Why did you pay \1,000?

The reason why I payed more than \ 500 is to make a donation. I want to support them. Oh, it's six pm. The first program will begin tonight.

This booklet has a description in English, too.

“Dojoji-temple”



I am a monk of this temple. I shall hold a memorial service with a bell. So, I tell my apprentice monks to carry a bell here. Ichiro-bo and Dabutsu-bo, come here. Are you here?

Here we are.

Here we are. This bell is too heavy.

I'm pleased that you came so quickly. I have not held a memorial service with a bell for long time. So, I want to hold the ceremony. Then, there is something important I have to tell you. Women can't come here. Do you understand?

Yes, my master.



Dabutsu-bo



Ichiro-bo

Why did the master tell us that we must never invite any women?

I don't know. But we must be obedient to my master.



silence



Shirabyoshi (dancer)

Is anyone home?





Hey, Dabutsu-bo, get up. This is no time for sleeping. There is someone behind the door. Go check quickly.

Who will come at such a time? May I ask your name?

Sorry for contacting you at this late hour. I am a shirabyoshi dancer and I live near. I have heard a memorial service with a bell. I was wondering if it would be possible for you to dance for a bell?





Oh, what should I do? Hey, dear Ichiro-bo.

You are noisy. What happened?

There is a shiradofu at the door!

Shiradoufu? What?

Do you happen to know shiradofu? It's a dancer.

Stupid. If you said that, it would be a shrabyoshi.

Oh, my mistake. That is shrabyoshi. She is there.

No. We can't invite any women.

But have you met a living Amida?*(like an angel in a sense)

Mmm...If you insist. It would be fine if dancing was all, but we have to return her as soon as possible after dancing.



She began to dance



and beautiful sounds





Oh, my gosh! What happened?

Oh, no. The bell has fallen down. Where has she gone? We have a situation! Go for Shisho-bo.



I thought so. The reason why I told you not to invite any women is that this bell is cursed by an ogre. Probably, The woman is an incarnation of an ogre. I shall break the spell.



Wow! An ogre really has appeared.

Help me Buddha!

An ogre! Drive it away!



Oh,no! An ogre has come here. Help me!



Help me!

Go away! Namu, Buddha.

Please Buddha! Namu Buddha! Namu ami dabutsu...

I won't let you go. Yarumaizo! Yarumaizo!

“Botan-jishi” (Peony Lion)



I am a Daimyo (Lord) living around here. Recently, I am in trouble because a Shishi (Chinese lion) has damaged the peonies in my garden. So, I will call my retainer, Taro-kaja and make him crush the Shishi. Are you here?

I am here.

I'm pleased that you came so quickly. Look at this garden.

How beautiful the peonies are.

Yes. But a Shishi came here and damaged the peonies. Catch the lion.

Yes, my lord.



This is difficult. I have to be patient.



It is stronger than I thought.



Yes. I'll try to catch the lion with this device. Oh, it is stronger than I thought. I'm no match for a Shishi.





Well, I wonder what am I going to do now? OK, I'll try to imitate the Shishi.



I wonder if he can catch the Shishi. How did it go, Taro-kaja?
What are you doing? Why are you imitating the Shishi? Oh, no!
Stop, this is me!

I won't let you go. Yarumaizo! Yarumaizo!

Intermission



It has gotten quite dark. It still gets chilly at night
although it is May.

How about the play?

Although the characters say lines, it is easy to get the basic
idea. It is the same as a pantomime. But what does "Yarumaizo"
mean?

This words mean “I won’t let you go” or “Anyone can catch him.”. It is set phrase in a Kyogen play.

“Kanzaki watashi” (Kanzaki river ferry)



I am a tea house owner living around here. Would you like a cup of tea?

I would like to have a cup of tea. Anyway, is this the right way to go to Sakai?

Yes. You should take a boat on the Kanzaki river just ahead.

I have little money. How can I escape from here?



Hey! Where will you go? Wait! Yarumaizo!

I'm sorry. Please forgive me...

Do you have enough money? How will you cross the river?

I will walk around or swim across the river.

No. That river is not easy to swim across and it is very deep.
OK. I'll teach you how to ride on the boat for free. The
boatman loves cleverness and Waka (Japanese poems). So, you
may say to the boatman that so and so....OK?



That's good to know. Huh? Oh no! I have forgotten the words.
Things will work out. Hey, may I ride on the boat please.

I can't give a ride to such a poor monk.

I am with 3,000 people. Let's go! Thank you.

Are you alone? Where are the rest of the 3,000 people?

I told you that I am with 3,000 people, it means I'll pay for
3,000 people. Right?

I see. All right.

Then, Mr. boatman. What do I see over there?

Ah, those are the human bones of people who didn't pay for the

boat ride.

I got myself into a mess...

What will happen to the little monk?

It's going to be a surprise. Please watch and see for yourself. The next program is the last.

“Sennin-giri” (Saving a Thousand souls)



The last program is the conclusion. This is the end of this four day program.

□□Well, let's start getting ready

to go home

It was interesting. It's already half past eight. Shall we stay in the city?

No. Don't you know how much it costs to stay in a hotel in Kyoto city this week? The capsule hotel usually costs about \ 3,000, but it costs over \ 7,000 this week.

What is a capsule hotel?

It is a kind of the lodging facility. It called a capsule hotel because the rooms are very small like capsules. Usually 2 capsule bed are loaded vertically and many of them are placed in a row. Only curtains or blinds separate the rooms from the corridor. It's a simple hotel just for sleeping.

I didn't know. Where do guests put their bags?

In the corridor in front of their bed.

Aren't their bags stolen?

No. If you worry about this, you should not stay there. Bedclothes, a light, alarm clock and radio are supplied in each capsule and the shower room is in another place, too. Anyway, if possible, I recommend you should stay in Nara city. Nara is within one hour by train from Kyoto, the accommodation cost doesn't change even in this week.

Nara! Sounds good. It's an older city than Kyoto. I want to go to Nara.

You're stupid. We live quite near. Let's go home quickly.

I think this is some nice occasion....Arrogant. Just you wait.



a part of “Choju-Jinbutsu-Giga”

Two guys!

We’re looking forward to you being our guide again if we have a chance. See you next time, bye!

☐☐*Refer

Kozanji-temple

You can see the scroll “Choju-Jinbutsu-giga” (Unfortunately, it is a replica, though. The original is stored in Tokyo and the Kyoto National museum.) and you can get many copies of these paintings. And, this temple is famous for its beautiful autumn leaves.

Access: It takes about 50 minutes from the center of Kyoto by bus, and 15 minutes on foot from the bus stop.