



Set Of Two Antique Wayang Kulit Puppets, Late 19th Century

350 EUR



Period : 19th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Other

Length : 50 - 47 cm

Description

Java or Bali, Indonesia -- Late 19th Century
Hand-carved leather, natural pigments, gilding, horn and wood rods
Height: 50 - 47 cm (without rods)
Description
A superb set of two traditional Indonesian Wayang Kulit puppets dating from the late 19th century, derived from Javanese or Balinese shadow theater. Each piece is meticulously cut and punched from buffalo leather, hand-painted with natural pigments and touches of gold leaf, then mounted on wooden or horn rods allowing their manipulation on stage.
The set includes:
1. Noble Demon or King (Probably Ravana / Rahwana)
An imposing figure with bright red skin, a color often associated with divine power or warrior nobility. He wears an intricate royal headdress and richly decorated clothing. Its majestic posture and the fine

Dealer

Art Classique

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Mobile : 0032-475272534

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perforations in its costume suggest that it is a high-ranking figure, such as Rahwana, the demon king of the Ramayana.² Monkey Warrior (Probably Hanuman) This puppet most likely represents Hanuman, the loyal and heroic monkey general of the Ramayana. Gray-white body, ape-like face, fierce expression, and ornate red and gold costume. Its arms are articulated for theatrical manipulation, and its back features fine openwork details.

Provenance & Condition Dating to the late 19th century, these puppets demonstrate traditional craftsmanship. Patina of use, superficial wear to the paint, slight discoloration, and natural oxidation of the rods are present, confirming their authenticity. The joints are still movable. No modern restoration is visible.

Cultural Significance Wayang Kulit is a sacred art form blending mythological storytelling, music, and spiritual symbolism. These puppets were used during religious rituals or village ceremonies, accompanied by gamelan music and directed by a dalang (puppeteer and priest). Each character embodies a cosmic function: loyalty, chaos, divine authority.