



Beshimi Mask For The Kagura Ritual



Description

A carved wooden beshimi (??) mask, intended for kagura (??) theater and finished in glossy black lacquer. The term "beshimi" derives from the verb "heshimu," which means to close one's mouth or press one's lips together. This example displays the typical characteristics of the type: a deeply furrowed brow, bulging golden eyes, pursed lips, and an elongated nose of imposing proportions. The fierce face, with its tight-lipped mouth and scowling expression, embodies the central supernatural forces of the Shinto kagura drama. Of particular note are the strands of hair embedded in the eyebrows and mustache--a refined detail that would have enhanced the mask's theatrical impact during performances. The mask (?) retains its original black polychrome and gold details, reflecting the natural patina

1 400 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Etat d'usage

Material : Painted wood

Dealer

Galerie Cécile Kerner
tribal art japanese art, curiosities
Tel : 0032475830042

19 rue des minimes
Bruxelles 1000

resulting from its ritual use. Kagura represents Japan's oldest form of theatrical performance, originating as sacred Shinto ritual dance performed specifically to entertain and honor kami (Shinto deities). The word Kagura derives from "kami no kura" (???), meaning "seat of god," indicating the divine presence invoked through performance. Unlike secular entertainment, Kagura serves specific religious functions: purification (chinkon), divine communication, agricultural blessing, and spiritual protection for communities. Kagura's origin story comes from Japan's foundational mythology recorded in the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki (8th century). When Amaterasu Omikami, the sun goddess, hid in the Amano-Iwato (heavenly rock cave) to escape her brother Susanoo's violent behavior, the world plunged into eternal darkness and cold. The crisis threatened all life on Earth. To lure Amaterasu from her cave, the goddess Ame-no-Uzume no Mikoto performed an ecstatic, provocative dance outside the cave entrance. Her wild, rhythmic movements - accompanied by the laughter and cheering of 8 million other kami - created such curiosity that Amaterasu peeked out to see the commotion. This divine performance successfully restored light to the world, establishing dance as a sacred medium capable of moving gods and changing cosmic order. This mythological foundation explains Kagura's spiritual power: just as Ame-no-Uzume's dance saved the world, Kagura performances can invoke divine intervention, ensure agricultural fertility, protect communities from disasters, and maintain harmony between human and divine realms.