



PROANTIC

LE PLUS BEAU CATALOGUE D'ANTIQUITES

Nuo Theater Mask, Hunan, South-central China, Late 19th-early 20th Century



950 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Etat d'usage

Material : Painted wood

Width : 15 cm

Height : 24,5 cm

Description

This mask depicts: Bao Xi (??) -- The Bringer of Good News. Stuccoed and polychrome-painted wood, with an aged patina and signs of internal wear. Hunan, south-central China. Late 19th - early 20th century. Dimensions: 24.5 x 15 cm. "Bao xi" literally means 'to announce good news.' In Nuo ritual theater, this joyful character appears as the messenger of favorable events, particularly success in exams--a decisive moment for a family's honor and a community's prosperity. The mask expresses this role with radiant candor: a wide, open smile, crinkled eyes, and red cheeks bearing auspicious characters. The headdress, adorned with a radiating spiral pattern, reinforces the idea of news spreading like a wave of joy throughout the village. Found in several regions of China, Baoxi serves as a reminder that Nuo

Dealer

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theater was not only an art of exorcism and protection, but also a theater of wishes, good fortune, and collective celebration. Provenance: Former Paul-Louis Couailhac Collection (1945-2025) A French expert in Oriental studies, a graduate of INALCO (National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations), and a great bibliophile recognized for having assembled one of the most significant private collections of Chinese ritual masks from Nuo theater in Europe. He devoted his life to the study of Chinese folk traditions. An exhibition featuring his collection of Nuo masks was held in his honor in 2026 in Issigeac at the Galerie Ocarina. This mask is reproduced in: Paul-Louis Couailhac, **La Fille du Dragon et autres personnages susceptibles de croiser votre chemin en Chine**, Éditions Couailhac, 2019, p. 18 Sold with a certificate of authenticity from expert S. Reynes and an invoice from Galerie Ocarina. * Shipping costs via DHL to be quoted upon request.