



Karasu Tengu Menpo, Edo, Japan



12 000 EUR

Period : 18th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Wrought iron

Description

Karasu Tengu Menpo, Mid-Edo Period Rare mustache and beard with silver dots A karasu menpo (???) is a traditional Japanese face mask worn by samurai. Its shape resembles a crow's beak and is inspired by the mythical Karasu Tengu. Design and History Meaning: Karasu means "crow," and menpo refers to a samurai half-mask covering the face from the eyes down to the eyelids. Symbolism: Featuring a prominent and exaggerated beak, these masks were worn during the Edo period (and earlier) to strike terror into enemies. They symbolized vigilance, aggression, and the supernatural power of mountain spirits. The striking appearance of the karasu menpo is deeply rooted in Japanese folklore. It directly personifies the Karasu Tengu (???), ancient winged spirits of the mountains,

Dealer

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masters of martial arts and swordsmanship.

Mythical Origins: The Karasu Tengu The

striking appearance of the karasu menpo

is deeply rooted in Japanese folklore. It directly

personifies the Karasu Tengu (???), ancient

winged spirits of the mountains, masters of martial

arts and swordsmanship. The Bird-Like Form:

While traditional Daitengu are depicted with

long, red nose, similar to that of a human, the

Karasu Tengu are lower-ranking, more predatory

spirits, endowed with a head and a sharp beak of a

bird of prey (often a raven or a crow). Protectors

of War: According to mythology, these creatures

inhabited the deep forests and trained legendary

warriors in secret combat techniques. Wearing

their mask allowed a samurai to channel the divine

protection, agility, and absolute ferocity of a

woodland deity. Psychological Warfare: Beyond

the spiritual dimension, the bird's beak

created a monstrous and intimidating silhouette on

the battlefield, intended to completely unsettle

opponents. Evolution during the Edo period: From

the battlefield to a symbol of social

status During the peaceful Edo period

(1603-1867), samurai armor underwent a major

cultural transformation. As pitched battles

became rare, armorers (katchushi) moved away

from purely functional protection in favor of

creating highly decorative ceremonial pieces.

Art in Peacetime: Armor was rarely worn during

armed conflicts. Instead, it was commissioned for

ceremonial processions, palace guards, and as

family heirlooms. This allowed artisans to

experiment with elaborate, highly stylized, and

avant-garde masks, such as the karasu

menpo. The Rise of the Mengu: Face protection

(mengu) diversified into several highly specialized

categories. While half-masks such as the

menpo (covering from the nose to the chin) were

common, this period also saw the rise of the

somen, iron face masks covering the entire face, :

high-ranking samurai used these exotic masks to

reflect their clan's prestige, their personal tastes,

and their respect for traditional martial arts.

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