



Nuo Theater Mask, Hunan (??), China Early 20th Century

600 EUR



Period : 20th century

Condition : Etat d'usage

Material : Solid wood

Width : 13,5 cm

Height : 21 cm

Description

Nuo (?) Theater Mask -- Waizui (??) The Child Who Imitates the Gods Wood, brown patina, signs of wear, small chips on the back Hunan (??), China Early 20th century Dimensions: 21 x 13.5 cm. The Waizui (??)--whose name literally means "crooked mouth"--is a unique character in the repertoire of Hunan's Nuo (?) and Dixi (??) ceremonies. This mask was not worn by a seasoned actor, but by a child--the son or daughter of an actor--who donned it for the first time as a rite of passage. In Nuo acting families, roles were passed down from father to son for generations: learning to wear the mask from childhood meant entering the lineage, inheriting a gesture, a dance, and a stage presence that no formal instruction could replace. The Waizui represents a fantastical deity--both benevolent

Dealer

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and mischievous--whom the child "imitated," mimicking with seriousness, as if to gradually make the character's protective power their own. That wry smile, that slightly twisted mouth, convey not mischief but complicity: that of a child playing at being a god, whom the community watches with tenderness. For in the Nuo tradition, even the process of learning is a ritual act--and the young mask-bearer was already participating, in his own way, in the protection of the village. Reproduced in: Paul Louis Couailhac, *The Dragon's Daughter and Other Characters You Might Encounter in China*, Éditions Couailhac, 2019, p. 75 Provenance: Former Collection of Paul-Louis Couailhac (1945-2025) A French expert in East Asian studies, a graduate of INALCO, and a renowned bibliophile known for having assembled one of the most significant private collections of Chinese ritual Nuo theater masks in Europe. An exhibition showcasing his collection of Nuo masks was dedicated to him in 2026 in Issigeac, organized by the Galerie Ocarina. Sold with a certificate of authenticity from expert S. Reynes and an invoice from the Galerie Ocarina.* Shipping costs via DHL to be quoted upon request.