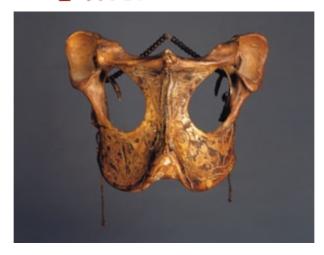
Finch & Co



A RARE AND UNUSUAL DECORATED CEREMONIAL MASK FROM THE BURMESE HILL TRIBE OF THE CHIN

A RARE AND UNUSUAL DECORATED CEREMONIAL MASK FROM THE BURMESE HILL TRIBE OF THE CHIN .

WILD GAYAL OX BONE , DOGS TEETH , WOODEN BEADS AND FIBRE

19 TH - EARLY 20 TH CENTURY

SIZE: 21 CM HIGH, 25.5 CM WIDE, 13 CM DEEP - 81/4 INS HIGH, 10 INS WIDE, 51/4 INS DEEP

LITERATURE

THE KUKI PEOPLES LIVE SOUTHWEST OF THE NAGA AND ARE COMPRISED OF THE CHIN AND LUSHAI TRIBES. THEY ARE RELATED TO THE KACHIN OF THE NAGA HILL AREAS, BUT THEY CLAIM TO BE THE ELDER BRANCH OF THE BURMESE FAMILY OF HILL TRIBES.

THIS MASK WAS IDENTIFIED BY THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM IN LONDON AS BEING MADE FROM THE PELVIS OF A NOW ENDANGERED SPECIES OF WILD OX CALLED THE GAYAL WHICH IS A NEAR RELATIVE TO THE MITHAN OX REVERED BY THE NAGA. ONCE FOUND EXTENSIVELY ACROSS SOUTH EASTERN ASIA AND INDIA THE GAYAL IS NOW RESTRICTED TO A SMALL RANGE IN THE FORESTED HILLS OF NORTHERN BURMA.

THE GAYAL WAS A SACRIFICIAL ANIMAL TO THE CHIN AND WAS A POWERFUL SYMBOL OF THEIR BELIEF IN FERTILITY. THEY BELIEVE WELL BEING IS ACHIEVED BY HUMANS BEING 'IN CONTROL' OF THE NATURAL PROCESS OF FERTILITY; MISFORTUNE IS THE RESULT OF BEING 'OUT OF CONTROL'. ACCIDENTAL DEATHS SUCH AS BEING KILLED BY A WILD BEAST OR FALLING FROM A TREE ARE A RITUAL AND SOCIAL CALAMITY, THE RESULT OF BEING 'OUT OF CONTROL'. THE MASK WAS WORN DURING CEREMONIES TO ATTAIN OR REGAIN 'CONTROL' OF THE FERTILITY PROCESS.