

Finch & C^o



WEST AFRICAN NIGERIA SOUTH WESTERN REGION IGBO MASQUERADE DANCE MASK

A FINE WEST AFRICAN NIGERIA SOUTH WESTERN REGION IGBO MASQUERADE DANCE MASK 'AGIRIGA' CARVED OF LIGHT FINELY GRAINED WOOD WITH AN ELONGATED FACE TRIANGULAR SHAPED NOSE HIGH ARCHED EYEBROWS ABOVE SMALL EYES ACCENTUATED WITH SCARIFICATION ROUNDELS THE OPEN HEART SHAPED MOUTH DISPLAYING TWO ROWS OF TEETH THE WHOLE SURMOUNTED WITH A CENTRAL TWO PRONGED CREST
OLD DRY SMOOTH PATINA, EXTENSIVE TRACES OF WHITE BROWN AND BLACK PIGMENT
PAINTED WHITE INVENTORY NO. 210 TO REVERSE
EARLY 20TH CENTURY
SIZE: 34CM HIGH, 15.5CM WIDE, 9.5CM DEEP – 13½ INS HIGH, 6 INS WIDE, 3¾ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

THE IGBO LIVE PRIMARILY FROM FARMING IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THE NIGER RIVER DELTA IN AN AREA OF FORESTS AND SWAMPS. THIS MASK WAS USED BY A MALE DANCER AND MASKER WHO ARE CALLED 'OKOROSHI' AND EMBODIES THE CHARACTER OF 'AGIRIGA'. THESE ENTERTAINING MASQUERADES WERE COSMOLOGICALLY DETERMINED TO COINCIDE WITH PROPITIOUS PERIODS IN THE AGRICULTURAL CALENDAR AND OCCURRED IN YEARLY CYCLES STRETCHING BACK TO ANCIENT ORIGINS. IGBO ARTS MERGE THE PRACTICAL WITH THE IDEOLOGICAL, EVERYDAY LIFE WITH COSMOLOGY AND LARGE MASQUERADES PROVIDE A MEANS OF COPING WITH THE PROBLEMS AND AMBIGUITIES OF REAL LIFE IN AN OFTEN HARSH WORLD. FESTIVALS ARE THE FULLEST EXPRESSIONS OF IGBO AESTHETIC VALUES AND THE ARTS ACT AS OUTLETS FOR PEOPLES TENSION, COMPETITION AND CREATIVE PASSION SERVING TO ORDER SPACE AND HUMAN CONDUCT. THIS MASK IS USED DURING THE PEAK OF THE RAINY SEASON IN A FESTIVAL MASQUERADE THAT HERALDS THE EATING OF THE 'NEW YAM'. YAMS BEING THE MOST CELEBRATED AND PRESTIGIOUS OF IGBO FOODS.