

Finch & C^o



JAPANESE RED LACQUER AND GILDED CYPRESS WOOD NÔ MASK

A JAPANESE RED LACQUER AND GILDED CYPRESS WOOD NÔ MASK DEPICTING 'TENJU' THE HEAVENLY DOG

AN INK INSCRIPTION TO REVERSE

OLD SMOOTH PATINA WITH SIGNS OF USE AS A DANCE MASK

EDO PERIOD - MID 19TH CENTURY

Â€"SIZE: 26CM HIGH, 19CM WIDE, 16.5CM DEEP - 10¼ INS HIGH, 7½ INS WIDE, 6½ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

IN JAPAN TENJU WERE ONCE THOUGHT TO BE DISRUPTIVE DEMONS AND HARBINGERS OF WAR, THEY ARE NOW CONSIDERED TO BE PROTECTIVE, ALTHOUGH STILL DANGEROUS, SPIRITS OF THE MOUNTAINS AND FORESTS. THE EARLIEST TENJU WERE DEPICTED WITH BEAKS AS THEY WERE THOUGHT TO TAKE THE FORMS OF BIRDS OF PREY, BUT OVER TIME THIS HAS BECOME AN UNNATURALLY LONG PHALLIC HUMAN NOSE WHICH IS NOW TENJU'S DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC.

THE ELEGANT AND ELABORATE JAPANESE NÔ DANCE-DRAMA DEVELOPED IN THE 14TH CENTURY FROM A NUMBER OF EARLIER FORMS AND HAS RETAINED ITS POPULARITY. THE BOLDLY DYNAMIC, GROTESQUE OR SUBTLY ELOQUENT DANCE MASKS ARE WORN BY THE PRINCIPAL PERFORMERS TO SYMBOLICALLY REPRESENT EVERY CONCEIVABLE MOOD OR EMOTION. AS NÔ MASKS ARE WORN FOR A LONG TIME THROUGHOUT THE COMPLEX PLOT THEY ARE CARVED FROM A LIGHTER WOOD THAN MANY OF THE EARLIER FORMS. AT FIRST THEIR MANUFACTURE WAS A SIDE LINE OF THE TEMPLE SHRINE IMAGE MAKERS, BUT THE CRAFT EVENTUALLY BECAME THE SPECIALISED TRADE OF CERTAIN FAMILIES, SOME OF WHOM CLAIMED THEIR WORK WAS 'TENKA ICHI', THAT IS, 'UNSURPASSED UNDER HEAVEN'.