



PAINTED GURO MAMI WATA MASK

\$980

c. 1950 • Ivory Coast • Paint, Wood • Collection #CAA1468

W: 7.5" D: 4.5" H: 18.0"

This brightly-colored painted mask is a dance mask attributed to the Guro peoples of Côte d'Ivoire. The mask depicts Mami Wata, or "Mother of Water," a goddess of water, healing, fertility, and the ocean. A shared deity across north and west Africa, Mami Wata incorporates spiritual practices from Europe and Indian influences and is depicted in a wide range of cultural styles and art forms. A benevolent protector figure, Mami Wata constructs meaning from encounters with overseas strangers and provides a link to neighboring African cultures. Continued...



1740 W. Webster Ave., Chicago, IL 60614 • 773-235-1188 • info@pagodared.com

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This example shows Mami Wata as a small figure atop a central mask, accompanied by two snakes, a common motif in depictions of Mami Wata. Worn over the face of a performer during dance ceremonies, the Mami Wata mask allowed the performer to act as a medium for her spirit. This mask borrows stylistic elements from Guro depictions of Gu, the beautiful wife of the mythical antelope spirit Zamble, such as the red-painted skin and the placement of the small figure.

