



SALAMPASU MASK

\$980

c. 1950 • Democratic Republic of Congo • Wood, Bamboo • Collection #CAA0960

W: 10.0" D: 5.25" H: 19.5"

This ceremonial African mask is linked to the Salampasu people of the Bantu ethnic group located primarily in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Salampasu masks were an integral part of the men's warrior society whose primary duty was to protect against invasions by outside kingdoms. Young boys would be initiated into the warriors' society and could then rise through its ranks by acquiring a hierarchy of masks. Earning the right to wear a mask involved performing specific deeds and providing large payments of livestock and other material goods. Continued...



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The more masks a warrior owned, the more esoteric knowledge was passed on, a sign of power and authority for the Salampasu people.

This Salampasu mask is characterized by a bulging forehead, slanted eyes, triangular flared nose and a rectangular mouth displaying an intimidating set of filed teeth. The textured hair of the wearer is represented by a number of rolled up hollow spheres of split bamboo. A beard is made of one of these spheres attached to the chin by plaited fiber cords. The mask is made of wood but was originally covered with strips of local copper, a precious substance called Mukinka worn only by the highest rank of the warrior's society. With gracefully sloping features and a smoothed surface, this Salampasu mask now lives on as a storied work of sculpture.

