



Bugaku mask, smiling old man - possibly

winebearer (heishitori)

Not on display

Title/Description: Bugaku mask, smiling old man - possibly winebearer (heishitori)

Object Type: Mask

Materials: Lacquer, Linen, Wood

Measurements: h. 220 x w. 115 x d. 140 mm

Accession Number: 988

Historic Period: Kamakura period (AD 1185-1333)

Production Place: Asia, East Asia, Japan

Bugaku is a style of dance established and performed in Korea, China, India and other East Asia countries. In the 9th century, the reformation of the dance led to *bugaku* becoming a national ceremonial dance at the Japanese imperial court, accompanied by *gagaku*, court ceremonial music. During the civil war in the 16th century, the style was in decline, threatening to disappear completely, but it was recovered in the early modern period and continues to be performed by imperial court musicians today.

Bugaku performance is characterised by two groups called *samai* (left dance) and *umai* (right dance), in which performers assemble symmetrically left and right. Each group performs separately, and their performing styles and music are different. This symmetric formation was produced based on the yin-yang principle, oriented left and right respectively.

During the Kamakura period (1185-1333), *bugaku* performance spread throughout local regions in Japan. Around 800 *bugaku* masks have been found throughout the archipelago, from Aomori in the north to Miyazaki in the south. In earlier periods, masks were made by professional court artists, but when the performance was disseminated widely to local areas, sculptors of Buddha statues began the production of local masks.

This mask can possibly be identified as *heishitori* (wine bottle bearer), a character used as part of a comical 'drunk' performance. A *heishitori* actor comes to the stage with the sake bottle and pours sake for other performers, who are playing as guests. When everyone is drunk, *heishitori* secretly also drinks sake and gets heavily drunk. The mask always shows a smiling expression with teeth showing. The style of this mask shows that it was possibly made for a local theatre around the Kamakura period, when *bugaku* performances were at their most popular.

Further Reading

Atsumi Seitarō, *Nihon engeki jiten* (Shintaishūsha, 1944), pp. 557-558.

Nakai Kōjirō, *Minzokugeinō jien* (Tokyodōshuppan, 1981), pp. 564-565.

Nihon bijutsushi jiten, ed. by Ishida Hisatoyo (Heibonsha, 1987), pp. 792-794.
