



Fine Japanese Art (JAP0522)

Fri, 27th May 2022

Lot 76

Starting price: €15000

Estimate: €30000

AN IMPORTANT AND VERY LARGE HEIAN PERIOD WOOD STATUE OF SHUKONGOJIN

Japan, 10th-12th century, Heian period (794-1192)

The thunderbolt deity carved in single-block technique (ichibokuzukuri) standing on a rockwork plinth with one foot elevated on the base, the muscular legs well-defined and with bangles carved around the ankles. The guardian deity wears a superbly detailed loincloth carved in relief with stylized archaic key fret and clouds designs, the upper body is bare showing an immensely powerful chest, rib cage, and slightly distended stomach. The muscular arms are superbly carved, one arm is sharply pointing downwards in a swift, dynamic motion, the fist clenched, and the other raised triumphantly, holding a vajra (partially lost) that symbolizes the power of wisdom to penetrate ignorance and destroy evil. The face is expressively carved as well, framed by pendulous earlobes, the mouth is wide open showing the tongue and large fangs which curve outwards, the prominent nose is surmounted by arched brows and large eyes, and the hair is wild and flaming. Two further bangles are carved around the wrists and a large ornamental necklace with three jeweled pendants is hung from the deity's neck.

HEIGHT 113 cm

Condition: Very good condition, particularly when considering the age of around 1,000 years. Several age cracks, splits, some small losses, the vajra held in the right hand partially lost. The patina and deposits inside the crevices are consistent with Heian period sculpture. There are no restorations or changes to the surface composition. Provenance: From a French estate.

Shukongo-jin belongs to the same category of gods as the paired guardians (nio) often placed on either side of the gateways to Buddhist temples.

Auction comparison:

Compare to a related wood figure of a Bodhisatva, dated 10th century, Heian period, and of similar size (119.3 cm), sold at Christie's, Japanese & Korean Art, 11 September 2012, New York, lot 47 (**sold for 40,000 USD**).

Museum comparison:

Compare to a related wood figure of Shukongojin, of later date (Kamakura period, 12th/14th century), in the Art Institute of Chicago, accession no. 1958.120. Also compare to a figure of a guardian, dated to the Heian period (12th century), in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, accession no. 1975.268.164.