

GALERIE LAMY
CHABOLLE



An Indian bronze 'body mask' worn
during the *bhûta* ceremonies

Bronze

Karnataka (West India)

18th or 19th century

42 x 31 cm (16.5 x 21.6 in.)



A 18th century bronze ceremonial bronze bhûta chestplate or 'body mask', used during the ceremony of Dharmanema in the coastal region of Karnataka in West India.

These 'body masks' were worn — mostly with proper masks or helmets — by mediums embodying the female bhûta spirits they wished to invoke, allowing these spirits to express themselves through the medium during his trance. In an all-night festival, sponsored by the families seeking guidance, a male medium would don the mask, inviting the bhuta to possess him. He then sings, dances, tells stories, offers advice for daily life, helps resolve conflicts, and shares myths associated with these spirits through narration or song.

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