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YORUBA MATERNITY GROUP

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WOOD, POLYCHROME, PIGMENT, SCORCHING

OLD COLLECTION NAME TO BASE: 'SEALY' AND '16.'

NIGERIA

LATE 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 58CM HIGH - 22¾ INS HIGH

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LITERATURE

THE YORUBA LIVE PREDOMINANTLY IN SOUTH WESTERN NIGERIA AND HAVE FOR CENTURIES BEEN THE MOST PROLIFIC ART-PRODUCING PEOPLE OF BLACK AFRICA. THE CULTURE OF YORUBA, WITH ITS COMPLEX RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS INHERITED FROM ANCIENT CITY-STATES, EVOKED THE CREATION OF A RICH VARIETY OF ROYAL AND RELIGIOUS SCULPTURE. THE YORUBA DEVELOPED A UNIQUE STYLE THROUGH WHICH TO INTERPRET THE RITUALS AND PRECEPTS, PASSIONS AND BELIEFS OF THEIR LIVES. HOWEVER, IT IS THE ACTUAL COMMUNITY AND FAMILY IN THE HERE AND NOW THAT FORM THE PIVOT OF YORUBA LIFE. THERE EXISTS NO DESIRE TO WORK TOWARD A BETTER LIFE IN THE HEREAFTER. WHILE THEY DO HOPE TO JOIN THEIR ANCESTORS WHEN THEY DIE, THESE ANCESTORS ARE CONCEIVED AS LIVING A FORMLESS EXISTENCE THAT IS NEVERTHELESS FOCUSED ON THE SURVIVING FAMILY MEMBERS IN WHICH THEY HOPE TO BE REBORN. THE ANCESTORS DO RETURN TO THE COMMUNITY, BUT NOT THROUGH PERSONAL REINCARNATION. THEIR LIFE FORCE REVERTS TO THE COMMUNITY IN THE FORM OF ONE OR MORE CHILDREN.

TO THE YORUBA THE PRIME MANIFESTATION OF THE LIFE FORCE IS FERTILITY AND WOMEN ARE THE STRONGER SEX AS THE LIFE FORCE MANIFESTS ITSELF DIRECTLY IN THEM IN THE FORM OF MENSTRUATION AND CHILDBIRTH. THIS SHRINE FIGURE MAY HAVE FUNCTIONED AS A WATER DEITY, BEING PLACED INTO A LARGE DISH DURING CEREMONIES IN HONOUR OF THE RIVER GODDESS ‘YEMOJA’ AND CARRIED AROUND BY A PRIESTESS IN A TRANCE. YEMOJA IS REVERED AS A DEITY FOR BESTOWING THE GIFT OF CHILDREN.

PROVENANCE

EX ERNEST OHLY COLLECTION

EX BERKELEY GALLERY, LONDON

PURCHASED FROM G BLOCK, 1960’S

EX LONDON ART MARKET

EX PRIVATE COLLECTION