Finch & Co



A RARE YAKA / ZOMBO FIGURATIVE HEADREST

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WOOD

SOUTHWEST CONGO / ANGOLA

19TH / EARLY 20TH CENTURY

SIZE: 15CM HIGH, 12.5CM WIDE, 10CM DEEP - 6 INS HIGH, 5 INS WIDE, 4 INS DEEP

LITERATURE

YAKA HEADRESTS WERE BOTH FUNCTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL OBJECTS, PRIMARILY USED BY CHIEFS AND DIGNITARIES TO PRESERVE THEIR INTRICATE HAIRSTYLES DURING SLEEP.

BOTH 'MBWOOLO' SCULPTURES AND A TYPE OF CARVED SLIT DRUM KNOWN AS A 'MUKOKU' ARE USED BY RITUAL 'PRACTITIONERS'. 'MUKOKU' HELP IN THE DIVINATION PROCESS, AND 'MBWOOLO' ARE USED TO EMBODY PROTECTIVE MEDICINES. THE YAKA ALSO CARVE NUMEROUS MASKS AND HEAD-GEAR FOR USE IN INITIATION AS WORN BY THE TRADITIONAL LEADERS. THE YAKA, ALONG WITH THE SUKU, WERE PART OF AN INVASION AGAINST THE KONGO KINGDOM THAT CAME FROM THE LUNDA PLATEAU IN THE 16TH CENTURY. PRIOR TO THAT, THE YAKA CULTURE WAS ENVELOPED IN KONGO LANGUAGE AND AGRICULTURE. LUNDA EXPANSION AND CREATION OF THE INBANGALA (MBANGALA) KINGDOM IN 1620 GREATLY AFFECTED THE OCCUPANTS OF THE KWANGO RIVER AREA, WHICH INCLUDED THE YAKA AND THE SUKU.

IN AN EFFORT TO EXPAND TO THE NORTHWEST AND EAST, YAKA CHIEFS WEAKENED, THEIR KINGDOM'S STRENGTH AND WERE FORCED TO BECOME SUBSERVIENT TO THE LUNDA. THE LUNDA-CHOKWE EMPIRE COLLAPSED IN THE 19TH CENTURY ALLOWING THE YAKA TO REGAIN SOME INDEPENDENCE.

PROVENANCE

EX ROBERT VERVOORDT, BRUSSELS, 2011

EX PRIVATE COLLECTION

EXHIBITED:

'LA TÊTE DANS LES ÉTOILES' BRUNEAF EXHIBITION CATALOGUE, 2012, LOAN

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