Finch & Co



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THE BROWN PATINA TESTIFIES TO THE RITUAL USE AND GREAT AGE OF THIS RARE MASK

WOOD

LOMA / GUERZE-KPELLE, LIBERIA

LATE 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 29CM HIGH - 11½ INS HIGH

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LITERATURE

CALLED 'BAKOROZAI' IN THE VERNACULAR LANGUAGE OF LIBERIA, THE MASK WAS SUED DURING THE INITIATION 'RITE' OF THE 'PORO' WHICH TAKES PLACE EVERY SEVEN OR TEN YEARS. DURING THE INITIATION CEREMONIES YOUNG BOYS LEARN TO BECOME MEN, TAKING PLACE IN THE FOREST 'SACRED WOOD'. IN LIBERIA, THE HIERARCHY OF THE 'PORO' CONSTITUTES A REAL POLITICAL, COMMERCIAL AND MILITARY STRUCTURE. THE MASKS OF THE 'PORO' ARE ENDOWED WITH GREAT POWERS WHICH ENABLE THEM TO WATCH OVER AND PROTECT THE YOUNG INITIATES.

THIS FEMALE 'BAKORORZAI' MASK IS DISTINCT FROM ITS MASCULINE 'BAKOROGUI' COUNTERPART. THE STRETCHED ALMOND SHAPED EYES ARE A SIGN OF BEAUTY AND DISCRETION WHILE THE OPEN MOUTH INDICATES THAT THE MASK CAN 'SPEAK' WHEN IT APPEARS.

PROVENANCE

EX DINTENFASS COLLECTION, USA

EX LUCAS RATTON, PARIS, FRANCE

EX PRIVATE ENGLISH COLLECTION