



Tripod Ointment Pot With Bronze Crocodile, Dogon Ethnic Group



2 200 EUR

Period : 19th century

Condition : Très bon état

Material : Bronze

Diameter : 22.5

Height : 34

Description

Tripod ritual ointment pot with crocodile motif -
Cultural area: Dogon sphere / Sahelian
metallurgical traditions - Provenance: Bandiagara
Plateau region, border area of Mali and Burkina
Faso - Dating: late 19th - early 20th century (circa
1880-1910) - Material: copper alloy (bronze) -
Technique: lost-wax casting. Dimensions: Height:
34 cm Maximum diameter: 22.5 cm Weight: 3.8
kg. This globular bronze ritual vessel rests on
three radially arranged anthropomorphic figures,
forming a tripod base. The stylized figures have
slender proportions, globular heads with
schematic features, and necks adorned with
ornaments or necklaces. The iconography
identifies two female figures and one male figure,
positioned symmetrically around the base and
appearing to support the body of the vessel. The

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slightly bulging body is structured by several horizontal registers decorated with molded and incised geometric friezes, composed notably of arcs, wavy lines, and beaded bands. This decorative vocabulary belongs to the formal repertoire characteristic of ritual bronzes produced in the Sahel region. The vessel is closed by a domed lid surmounted by a figurative sculptural group representing an anthropomorphic spirit riding a stylized crocodile. The figure is depicted seated astride the animal and holding an elongated object that can be interpreted as a pipe. The crocodile, represented with an elongated body and a stretched snout, is an important symbolic motif in West African cosmologies, often associated with aquatic forces, fertility, and the mediating powers between the visible and spiritual worlds. Bronze ointment jars of this type were used to store oils, powders, and medicinal or magico-religious preparations used in healing, protection, or divination practices. These containers generally belonged to diviners, healers, or ritual specialists and could be kept on domestic or communal altars. Made using the traditional lost-wax casting technique, this object testifies to the expertise of Sahelian metalworkers active in the region between Mali and Burkina Faso. Although these containers are frequently associated with the Dogon people in literature and on the art market, their production more broadly reflects a regional metallurgical tradition shared by several cultural groups. The stylistic characteristics--anthropomorphic tripod base, slender figures wearing neck ornaments, concentric geometric decoration, and a figurative group at the top--illustrate this artisanal and symbolic tradition specific to the western Sahel. Condition: Good overall condition. Dark brown patina with chromatic variations and wear consistent with age and traditional casting techniques. Typology: ritual vessel intended to hold medicinal or magico-religious substances. Special features: anthropomorphic tripod base (two women and a man) and a figurative group at

the top representing a spirit riding a crocodile.