



Hieratic Three-headed Reliquary Fang Biery Wooden Carved Statue , Gabon, Mid-20th Cty



1 100 EUR

Signature : Culture FANG BIERY, Gabon (ou Cameroun)

Period : 20th century

Condition : Etat d'usage

Material : Solid wood

Width : 22cm

Height : 63cm

Depth : 15cm

Description

PRIMITIVE ART

Superb and hieratic three-headed wooden carved African sculpture representing a guardian of an ancestor reliquary, FANG BIERY culture, Gabon (or Cameroon)

The dark patina shows wear and abrasion, especially on the protruding parts (arms and faces) and mainly on the base. The tenon used for the "stool" statue is for example missing, linked to significant wood-boring damage (the condition is now stabilized!)

These statues with a strong presence were intended to symbolically close the reliquary boxes often made of bark and containing the relics of Ancients: skulls, femurs, sometimes

Dealer

Siegfried Fabien

C ramique anciennes, Hte Epoque, Art islamique et indien,
Curiosa

Tel : 06 82 45 46 13

Le-Petit-Pressigny 37350

smaller bones or teeth...

The strength of the guardian is magnified by his 3 faces with underlined features. Its haughty posture and its stylized and closed eyes give this statue all the authority of its function.

"Among Fang society, each family has a Biery or reliquary box containing the bones where ancestors' bones. These boxes were kept by the Esa (the oldest man in the family). The Fang statues are mostly linked to the cult of Biery. Fang Biery statues usually depict seated men, with bent legs and an elongated and straight or bulging torso, clasped hands holding a cup, and head with stylized features. The reliquary boxes were surmounted by a statue or a head; who acted as the guardian of the Biery boxes. These were kept in a dark corner of the hut, and were intended to divert evil influences to someone else. These sculptures that topped the reliquaries could be paraded through the village to honor their ancestors. They were also used during initiation ceremonies for people connected with the SO society. To participate in these ritual wanderings and festivals, the statues were dismantled from their support, separated from their support and carried on parade."

"The guardians of the eyema-byeri reliquary are most often represented in full-length and very rarely in the form of a bust or in the form of a head. They are placed above reliquary baskets containing the remains of the most important ancestors of the lineage. The reliquary keepers were the subject of regular offerings in order to promote communication with the ancestors."

* "Reliquary Keeper Biery - Fang / Ngoumba - Cameroon

The figures of the Byeri reliquaries are certainly the most mysterious and emblematic of African art.

The cult of Byeri (ancestor worship) was

practiced in all Fang villages, both in the south of Cameroon and in Gabon and Rio Muni.

Among the Fang, the Byeri is linked to the cult of ancestors and more precisely to the reliquaries dedicated to them. Byeri designating both the cult and the objects connected with it.

According to Perrois, it was behind the bed of the family chief that reliquaries, wooden effigies and personal relics were discreetly installed.

These reliquaries are made up of two parts:

- the bark chest box that will contain bone relics, which the Fang call nsekh o byeri, the belly,
- and the perpendicular figure that surmounts the box: eyema o byeri which means the head.

Concerning the contents of the boxes, Perrois tells us that the Fang relics consisted of skulls, long bones, even simple fragments of bones and teeth.

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Based on the book "Fang" writtended by Perrois, published by 5 Continents."

* <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Byeri>

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Sizes

63cm high

22cm large

15cm depth

Bibliography:

*Collectif, Fang, Éditions Dapper, 1999, 324 p.
(ISBN 978-2906067363)

*Louis Perrois, Byéri fang: sculptures d'ancêtres en Afrique, Paris, Réunion des Musées Nationaux (RMN), 1992, (ISBN 978-2711826599)

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