

Finch & C^o



TWO FINE LWENA, ANGOLA / DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, MALE AND FEMALE FIGURES

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FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

SIZE: 38 CM HIGH – 15 INS HIGH

28 CM HIGH – 11 INS HIGH

LITERATURE

THE FIGURES SIMPLE, BUT ELEGANT HAIRSTYLES AND THE SUBTLE AND REFINED TREATMENT OF THEIR FACES SUGGEST THE STYLE OF LWENA CARVING. BOTH THE LWENA AND CHOKWE PEOPLES CREATE ART FORMS AND PRESTIGE ITEMS THAT RELATE TO THE CONCEPTS OF BEAUTY, DRESS AND WELL BEING, AS WELL AS TO THE ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIFE. MOST OF THESE WORKS OF ART INCORPORATE IMAGES OF TUTELARY ANCESTRAL SPIRITS THAT SYMBOLICALLY SUPPORT CONCEPTS OF WEALTH, FERTILITY AND SOCIAL STATUS.

IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THESE FIGURES ARE ASSOCIATED WITH INITIATION CEREMONIES. THE HAIRSTYLE, GENERAL APPEARANCE AND SMALL BREASTS SUGGEST THAT THE FEMALE FIGURE IS A YOUNG GIRL READY FOR INITIATION WHICH WOULD TRANSFER HER AFFILIATION FROM HER PARENTS TO HER HUSBAND. HER HEAD WOULD HAVE BEEN SHAVED AND THE REMAINING HAIR PLAITED, HER BODY AND HAIR OILED AND COLOURED WITH RED CLAY. HER IMPORTANT STATUS IS SHOWN BY HER SITTING ON A CHAIR.

DURING THE 17TH CENTURY CONTACT WITH PORTUGUESE AND EUROPEAN PRODUCTS INSPIRED THE NEW CENTRAL AFRICAN ART FORM OF THE CHAIR OR THRONE. CARVED FOR CHIEFLY AUTHORITY, THEIR IMPORTANCE IN TERMS OF PRESTIGE AND STATUS DEVELOPING PARTLY BECAUSE OF THE ASSOCIATION WITH FOREIGN HOLDERS OF POWER.