

Finch & C^o



A RARE AFRICAN MIDDLE CROSS RIVER SOUTH EAST NIGERIA EJAGHAM PEOPLES SACRED RELIQUARY SKULL

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SKULL

19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 16.5 CM HIGH, 17 CM WIDE, 20 CM DEEP – 6½ INS HIGH, 6¼ INS WIDE, 8 INS DEEP

LITERATURE

THE RELIQUARY IS MADE FROM THE SKULL OF A SPECIES OF WEST AFRICAN BABOON, THE MANDRILL
(PAPIO SPHINX), HUNTED FOR FOOD IN THE CROSS RIVER EQUATORIAL RAIN FOREST.

THE ALL MALE 'NGBE' (MEANING LEOPARD) SOCIETY OF THE EJAGHAM PEOPLE IS THE OLDEST SECRET SOCIETY IN THE
CROSS RIVER REGION. THEIR LODGES ARE USUALLY THE MOST IMPRESSIVE STRUCTURE IN THE COMMUNITY AND HERE
SECRET MEETINGS ARE HELD AND SECRET OBJECTS STORED. ANIMAL SKULLS BOUND OR FRINGED WITH RAFFIA SUCH
AS THIS TOGETHER WITH HORNS, SACRED OBJECTS, DRUMS, ROPES AND STICKS ARE PROMINENTLY DISPLAYED INSIDE
THE LODGE. THE SKULLS ARE THE REMAINS OF ANIMALS EATEN IN RITUALS WITHIN THE LODGE AND ARE HIGHLY
SYMBOLIC.