Finch & Co



**WEST AFRICAN IVORY COAST BAULE MALE FIGURE 'ASIE USU'**

A WEST AFRICAN IVORY COAST BAULE MALE FIGURE 'ASIE USU' STANDING WITH HIS ARMS IN RELIEF A FINELY INCISED ELABORATE COIFFURE AND PLAITED BEARD SCARIFICATION TO ABDOMEN GLASS BEADS AND BRASS ORNAMENTS AROUND THE ANKLES

DARK ENCRUSTED PATINA WITH PATCHES OF SMOOTH SILKY BROWN PATINATION FROM HANDLING

19TH – EARLY 20TH CENTURY

SIZE: 38CM HIGH - 15 INS HIGH / 41CM HIGH - 16¼ INS HIGH (WITH BASE)

**LITERATURE**

THE BAULE PEOPLE CALL THEIR STANDING FIGURES 'WAKA SRAN' (VOGEL 1997:295) MEANING 'PEOPLE IN WOOD'. THEY ARE DIVIDED BY THEM INTO TWO CATEGORIES; THE 'ASIE USU' WHO ARE NATURE SPIRITS LIVING IN THE BUSH WHO, IF NOT PLACATED WITH RITUALS AND VOTIVE OFFERINGS, BECAME DANGEROUS AND THE 'BLOLO BIA, BLOLO BIA FEM', THE OTHER WORLD MAN AND WOMAN WHO ARE THE SPIRITS OF THE SPOUSES EACH PERSON HAS IN THE OTHER WORLD AND WHO CAN BECOME EXTREMELY JEALOUS IF IGNORED.

THIS FIGURE WAS CARVED ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM A DIVINER TO FUNCTION AS AN INTERLOCUTOR FOR AN UNSEEN BUSH SPIRIT AND SCULPTED TO CONFORM TO BAULE NOTIONS OF BEAUTY AND ATTRACTIVENESS. THE DOWNWARD SERENE GAZE, THE LONG ELEGANT NECK, THE SYMMETRY OF THE FACIAL FEATURES AND THE DEPICTION OF SCARIFICATION ARE ALL REGARDED BY THE BAULE AS POINTS OF BEAUTY.

THE CARVINGS ARE TREATED DIFFERENTLY ACCORDING TO THEIR USE, THE 'ASIE USU' ARE COVERED IN AN CRUSTY PATINA, WHILST THE 'BLOLO BIA' ACQUIRE A SMOOTH POLISHED SURFACE FROM BEING HANDLED FREQUENTLY AND FED WITH OILS. THIS FIGURE IS RARE IN RETAINING ITS CRUSTY SURFACE AS WHEN ACQUIRED BY DEALERS IN THE WEST THE 'ASIE USU' WOULD OFTEN BE CLEANED AND POLISHED AS A SMOOTH SHINY PATINA WAS PREFERRED.