



Standing female figure

Not on display

Title/Description: Standing female figure

Born: 1800 c. - 1950 c.

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Wood

Measurements: h. 584 x w. 140 x d. 160 mm

Accession Number: 529

Historic Period: 19th century, 20th century

Production Place: Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo

Cultural Group: Tetela

While in many ways this figure shows all the hallmarks of a female ancestor, the bun-shaped lump of 'medicine' secured on top of her head with wooden pins and with a hole as if for a small horn links it to power figures (*bwanga*) such as occur among the Songye.

In the present state of knowledge of Zairean art styles it is difficult to locate this carving with any degree of confidence. The hair is a little reminiscent of the 'cascade' coiffure of the Luba-Shankadi; some Songye figures are carved with heavy buttocks and short legs; the abdominal scarification incision can be paralleled in eastern Zaire and western Zambia. If a balance were to be struck among all these, an origin among the Tetela, who are known for masks rather than figures, is a possibility.

Something about the carving suggests that it was made by an individual, perhaps self-taught, who developed his own style; this could account for the difficulty of placing it within a cultural context.

Margaret Carey, 1997

Entry taken from *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, Vol. 2: Pacific, African and Native North American Art*, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997) p. 208.

Provenance

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from K. J. Hewett in 1973.

Accessioned into the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia circa 1989.
