

Nom : Reliquary guardian head

Description : Reliquary guardian head, Fang peoples, Gabon, Late 19th to early 20th century
Wood, metal, oil patina

The Fang byeri cult existed to honor a family's ancestors and ask for their help. This was done by remembering names and deeds and by keeping physical relics in a barkwood box guarded by an attached, carved wooden head or figure.

This head was not an individual portrait but an idealized representation with a prominent forehead, open relentless gaze, small mouth and older style hairdo or wig. The characteristic shine results from frequent rubbing with tree oil.

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Source : Musée national d'art africain