

Nom : Hemba male figure

Description : Male figure, Hemba peoples, Niembo chiefdom, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Late 19th to early 20th century, Wood, plant fiber, glass beads

Among the Hemba peoples, carved wooden figures represent male ancestors who were venerated and linked to ownership of the land and to clan and lineage authority. They convey notions of ideal physical and moral qualities. Although these are said to depict particular ancestors, the figures are portrayed with generalized traits rather than individual, distinguishing characteristics. Both figures have well-balanced forms, refined and serene facial features and markers of gender, status and achievement. Each has an elaborate cruciform coiffure and a carefully rendered beard. One carries a warrior's lance and an adze and wears a narrow bracelet of authority. Both are meant to recall the political and military roles filled in the past by great men.

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Source : Musée national d'art africain