

AFRICAN CARVINGS

OVERVIEW OF THE OBJECT

Repository: Crandall Public Library.
Folklife Center
Glens Falls, NY.

Creator: unknown African carvers

Title: African Carvings

Dates: unknown

Quantity: 3 carvings

Identification: Folk Art

INDEX TERMS

Topics: Wood carving
African carving
Food preparation

Places: Central? Africa

Form/Genre: Wood Carving

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation: African Carvings
Folklife Center
Crandall Public Library, Glens Falls, NY.

Accession Information: Donated by Donald E. Sevits
11 Woodland Court
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866
2017

Processing Information: Arranged and described by Erica Wolfe Burke, April 2018

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE OBJECTS

1. Woman pounding grain in a large mortar:

This statuette stands 10 ½ inches high, about 3 inches back to front and 2 inches from side to side.

It portrays a woman pounding grain, or other food stuffs (cassava leaves, tomatoes, or any of many sorts of food which are processed by pounding). She holds a long stick which projects from a mortar which would be about knee-high. She wears a simple dress which falls from above her breasts to below her knees. Her feet are bare. Her head and face are large in proportion to her body, but very narrow. She has a prominent nose and ears. Her hair is styled with a center part and projects out from the nape of her neck. She stands on a small base, about 1 inch high.

The entire piece is carved from a heavy dark wood.

Condition: both arms have cracks at the wrist, the right arm also below the elbow. The left arm has a chip out below the elbow and also a crack running down toward the wrist.

2.-3. Wooden knife and fork:

The pieces are about 13 ½ inches long. The knife blade is 7 ¼ inches, with a collar of ¾ of an inch. The fork is 8 inches. The top 5+ inches on each is carved with an identical figure of a kneeling woman. She is sitting back on her heels, with her hands crossed below her waist. She wears a high collar of silver (colored) wire around her neck. She has a towering hair-do, or, more likely, headdress, with a pointed, diamond-shaped finial.

The utensils are carved of a wood that appears to have been stained dark brown. The back of the fork, in fact, is of a lighter color, suggesting that the wood is stained, rather than a naturally dark color.

The only tribe currently identified as wearing neck rings of the type suggested on these figures is the Ndebele of South Africa. Of the baskets acquired from the same donor, 4 are from the Lozi people of Zambia, and the fifth from the Lubumbashi (formerly Elisabetheville) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is a "peninsula" extending into Zambia. It is not known whether these carved items were purchased by the donor at the same time (ca. 1965) as the baskets.

It is possible that these items were produced in some quantity, as I have found images on Pinterest of nearly identical fork-spoon-knife sets. Unfortunately I was unable to find any information on the origin of those pieces.

See also: African Baskets from the same donor