

M0002725: A Baluba effigy from the Congo, West Africa

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A Baluba Fetish.

FIG. 32.

THIS figure may serve to illustrate the characteristic ways of introducing "Medicine" or special virtue or power into the image. The medicine consists in this instance of a human tooth in the abdomen, a smaller one on the receding forehead and another in the left shoulder. Power also resides in the point of an antelope horn inserted in the crown of the head and filled with some magic substance. The hairy skin of some animal about the body and neck also contributes its measure of virtue. The rag wrapped around the lower part of the body represents the kilt of a chieftain. The modeling of the figure is worthy of study. The head and face especially show both skill and imagination. The treatment of the eyebrows and the hair is a clever bit of technique that, together with the spirited freedom of the features, gives character and expression to this interesting figure.