



Central Nigeria Unmasked: Arts of the Benue River Valley

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Winner of the Arnold Rubin Outstanding Publication Award from the Arts Council of the African Studies Association

The Benue River Valley is the source of some of the most abstract, dramatic, and inventive sculpture in sub-Saharan Africa. A vast region, the Valley extends from the heart of present-day Nigeria eastward to its border with Cameroon, and is home to a large number of ethnic and linguistic groups, all of whom have produced sculptures that are remarkable for their variety.

This book brings together figurative wood sculptures and ceramic vessels, masks, and elaborate bronze and iron regalia drawn from public and private collections in Europe and the United States, selected to exemplify important typologies within the region, along with many historical photographs. The 18 contributors demonstrate that the stylistic tendencies were constantly evolving due to cultural exchanges, mutual influences, and other points of contact in an area that like the Benue River itself was historically in a state of flux. These objects speak to us not only through their superb formal qualities but also through the circumstances of their being rooted in a turbulent past, situated between war and colonization.

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