PAGODA RED

BEADED NDEBELE FERTILITY DOLL

$980

Mid-20th Century • Cotton, Bead, Wood • Collection #CFC556A

W: 3.5″ D: 3.5″ H: 10.75″

A rare imported commodity, glass beads have been a symbol of wealth and importance in south African cultures for centuries, and were exclusively distributed by the region's oba (king). As beads become gradually more accessible throughout the 19th century, they began to displace the organic materials used in traditional art and attire.

This colorful example of African beadwork is a fertility doll of the Ndebele people of South Africa. These traditional dolls are made with cylindrical wooden bodies, wrapped in cotton and highly decorated with metal rings, natural materials, and dense beadwork. Continued...

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One of several dolls used in Ndebele culture to commemorate transitional phases of life, a fertility doll is given to a new bride after her wedding ceremony to encourage fertility and signify her new social status as a married woman. Cared for and cherished until her first child, the doll prepares the young woman for parenthood and is thought to bring good luck.

From the collection of Frances and Gary Comer.