



## Bamana

Visions of Africa

*Jean-Paul Colleyn*

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- An engaging survey that explores religious art in Mali through visually stunning masterpieces crafted by the Bamana
- Written by an eminent expert and edited by Anne-Marie Bouttiaux, Chief Curator of the Ethnography Department at the Musée Royal de l'Afrique centrale in Belgium

**The Bamana** (or Bambara) are members of the Mande culture, a large and powerful group of peoples in western Africa. The artistic tradition of the Bamana is rich, filled with pottery, sculptures, beautiful bokolanfini cloth, and wrought iron figures fashioned by blacksmiths. They also have extensive masking traditions, which are used as a form of social control and community education.

This volume focuses on the aesthetic qualities of the masterpieces of Bamana religious art in Mali and resituates them in their social, aesthetic and cultural context. The emphasis is on pieces used in rites of passage (Ntomo, funerals), or by agricultural cooperatives (ton, démè), and initiation societies (Korè, Jo, Komo, Kono, Tyiwara, Namakoro). The pieces that are sublime to Western eyes are just as marvellous in the field, precisely because they stand at the crossroads of religion, aesthetics and politics.

*Visions of Africa* is a series devoted to the arts of Africa grouped according to the different populations. Each volume follows two main guidelines: one, visual and aesthetic, offers a selection of photographs of masterpieces while the other, theoretic and contextual, explores, for a broad public, the significance of these items within the population that created them. The series presents a set of introductory books for readers wishing to discover the arts of the different populations and of reference books for those who intend to learn more about them.

**Jean-Paul Colleyn**, anthropologist and documentary filmmaker, is Head of Studies at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, and has taught at New York University. He is the author and director of thirty documentary films, several books and many articles on anthropological subjects in Mali, where he has been doing fieldwork since 1972.

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