



Baule

Visions of Africa

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- A fascinating and essential overview of the Baule people and their art through fifty exemplary pieces
- Based on field research and written by a leading expert in the field; each book in the series is edited by Anne-Marie Bouttiaux, Chief Curator of the Ethnography Department at the Musée Royal de l'Afrique centrale in Belgium

The Baule descend from the Akan peoples who inhabit Ghana and the Ivory Coast. Three hundred years ago the Baule people migrated westward from Ghana when the Asante rose to power. The Baule now reside at the centre of the Ivory Coast and possess one of the most diversified of arts. They employ different media, including wooden sculpture, gold and brass casting similar to their Asante ancestors, and mask and figure carvings. An art that is so varied that one might imagine some works to originate from different cultures: what is there in common between a flat mask-disc and an idealised face mask which nevertheless come from a single ceremony? Or between a glazed statuette of a man or woman, and a monkey figure with the head of a dog, coated in coagulated blood? Their art encompasses every form of creation: not only masks and statuettes, but also sculpted doors, decorated divination boxes, gold jewels. Often the works that appear to be the most humble reveal themselves to be the most forceful aesthetically.

Alain-Michel Boyer, professor of African art, became a member of the Conseil National des Universités in Paris after teaching at a number of American universities. He lived in a Baule village for three years and spends several months a year in Africa. He is the author of several books including *Les Arts d'Afrique* (Hazan, 2006).

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