



### DESCRIPTION

The Songye – as well as other peoples in the Southern Savannah region of Africa – used minkishi (singular nkishi) to capture spiritual power for the benefit of the tribe, such as protecting the village from illness or outside aggression.

To make a nkishi, an artist first carved the wooden exterior form into poses meant to appear threatening or aggressive to malevolent spirits. The sculptor then turned it over to a nganga, or ritual specialist, who adorned it with decorative objects made of natural minerals and animal or vegetable parts. Finally, to formulate its powers, the nganga concealed bishima, or spiritually meaningful ingredients, somewhere inside the figure – usually in the stomach or a horn affixed to the figure’s head. The decorative objects on the exterior are practical rather than aesthetic. For example, the nails piercing many minkishi represent and extend their magical forces. Smaller minkishi typically belonged to individual households for private use, while larger ones usually protected the community as a whole. The community usually kept the latter hidden from view, allowing only Songye priestesses to access them. The protective power emitted by these figures represent both the safety and the benevolent protection of Songye society.

### DETAILS

- Culture: Songye People
- Geography: Congo
- Circa: 19th-20th Century
- Size: 5.5”W x 13.5”H x 5”D
- Weight: 1LB
- Materials: Wood, Beads, Shells, Cloth, Metal,

### LIST PRICING

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