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# PAGODA RED

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## BEADED NDEBELE CEREMONIAL DOLL

**\$248**

Mid-20th Century • Cotton, Bead, Wood, Fabric • Collection #CFC554A

W: 6.5" D: 4.25" H: 16.75"

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 ceremonial doll of the Ndebele people of South Africa. These dolls are made with tall, cylindrical wooden bodies, wrapped in cotton and highly decorated with metal rings and dense beadwork. Continued...



1740 W. Webster Ave., Chicago, IL 60614 • 773-235-1188 • [info@pagodared.com](mailto:info@pagodared.com)

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One of several dolls used in Ndebele culture to commemorate transitional phases of life, a ceremonial doll such as this is used as part of courtship traditions. To indicate that he's ready for marriage, a young man will place the doll on his partner's doorstep. If she accepts his proposal, she'll return the doll to his home. Stylistically similar to the smaller dolls used as child's toys, ceremonial dolls represent a brief moment in the woman's life when she is still a girl, yet about to be married.

From the collection of Frances and Gary Comer.

