



5 Continents Editions srl  
Piazza Caiazzo, 1  
20124 Milan  
T. +39 02 33603276  
[info@fivecontinentseditions.com](mailto:info@fivecontinentseditions.com)



16.5 x 24 cm, 160 pp.  
64 colour and 15 b/w illustrations  
softcover  
English edition  
ISBN 978-88-7439-573-6  
French edition  
ISBN 978-88-7439-572-9  
€ 35.00

## BAMUM

Christraud M. Geary

This volume explores the artistic traditions of the Bamum kingdom, the largest and most powerful state in the Cameroon Grassfields.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Bamum court arts flourished when artists working exclusively for the palace created elaborate bead-covered thrones and stools, wooden sculptures, masks in human and animal form, architectural carvings, and fine objects in bronze, ivory, and clay. These vibrant works came to the attention of European museums and collectors after members of a German expedition reached the kingdom in the then German colony Kamerun in 1902 and encountered its youthful king Ibrahim Njoya (ruled 1886/7 to 1931). The book focuses on the history, iconography, and meaning of Bamum royal arts and introduces some of the lesser known art forms that thrived in the kingdom's villages. It also traces the activities of collectors of various backgrounds who were fascinated by the splendor of the royal court. Visual and written sources—including testimony by King Njoya and his courtiers, and extensive records in archives and museums—cast light on the strategies of the monarch who deployed these arts to enhance the kingdom's reputation in distant Europe. With his permission, visitors could acquire many extraordinary objects. The history of Bamum arts thus offers unique perspectives on African creativity and ingenuity, and European ways of collecting.

**Christraud M. Geary** is Teel Senior Curator of African and Oceanic Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. She first visited Bamum in 1969 and since then has been pursuing studies in the Cameroon Grassfields. She has written extensively about the artistic traditions of this region, in particular about the arts and photography in Bamum.