



Goldweight representing human couple

On display

Title/Description: Goldweight representing human couple

Born: 1700 - 1899

Object Type: measure

Materials: Brass

Measurements: h. 78 x w. 46 x d. 27 mm

Accession Number: 222

Historic Period: 18th century, 19th century

Production Place: Africa, Ghana

Cultural Group: Akan

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

Goldweights were used by the Akan-speaking peoples of Ghana and the Ivory Coast to weigh gold dust and small ingots. These were used as currency before British and French colonial administration took over and imposed their own (see Garrard, 1980). Gold weights, which were cast in brass by the lost-wax (*cire perdue*) process, sometimes document Akan life and custom. Representation of human intercourse, as shown here, is an uncommon subject, perhaps from a feeling that pollution might ensue.

The characteristics of this and the following two goldweights (UEA 223 and 224) - large size, ringleted hair, tattoo markings and carefully modelled heads and faces — suggest that they may have originated among the Baule section of the Akan-speaking peoples, and were made for the use of a chief.

Margaret Carey, 1997

Entry taken from *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, Vol. 2: Pacific, African and Native North American Art*, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997) p. 136.

Provenance

Formerly in the collection of Madeleine Rousseau, Paris.

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from K. J. Hewett in 1972.

Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
