



# Goldweight representing a drummer

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## On display

**Title/Description:** Goldweight representing a drummer

**Born:** 1700 - 1899

**Object Type:** measure

**Materials:** Brass

**Measurements:** h. 74 x w. 20 x d. 24 mm

**Accession Number:** 223

**Historic Period:** 18th century, 19th century

**Production Place:** Africa, Ghana

**Cultural Group:** Akan

**Credit Line:** Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

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If this goldweight was intended as a drummer with talking drums (*ntumpane*), he would be standing behind a pair of tall drums propped up away from him at an angle of 450, which he would beat with two elbow-headed drumsticks. Akan languages have tonal speech patterns which lend themselves to being transmitted in the form of drum phrases; messages can be sent rapidly by this means, and 'talking drums' were an important part of a chief's establishment. There is a proverb referring to the skill and wisdom of such a drummer: 'If the drummer Nyanno is skilful in drumming he drums for the Asantehene, not for ordinary people' (Cole and Ross, 1977: 80).

Despite the absence of the drums, the treatment of the head shows that the modelling was done by a fine craftsman. Some goldweight mutilations arose out of the need to change a Portuguese weight to an Islamic one; the Portuguese scale of weights operated from the mid fifteenth to the mid seventeenth century.

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. 137.

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## **Provenance**

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.

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