



Goldweight representing a drummer

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

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.

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.
