



Goldweight as a seated man

On display

Title/Description: Goldweight as a seated man

Born: 1600 - 1899

Object Type: measure

Materials: Brass

Measurements: h. 72 x w. 18 x d. 28 mm

Accession Number: 224

Historic Period: 17th century, 19th century

Production Place: Africa, Ghana

Cultural Group: Akan

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

The subject matter of this goldweight presents some difficulties of interpretation. The round stool-like object on which the man is sitting is a form that does not normally occur in the Akan countries. However, the travellers Azambuja (1481) and Towrson (1555) mention round stools in the coastal parts of the Gold Coast ; the form may well survive in a ritual context in southern Ghana, as Roy Sieber (1980 : 159, 161) describes, with the suggestion that it is a pre-Asante form, and thus before the early eighteenth century.

The gourd-like object is also a puzzle: gourd rattles are normally used by women and drinking gourds are usually round. There is always the possibility that obsolete customs and artefacts will be depicted in a goldweight of this age. Since the Baule have figurative goldweights, their development among the Asante and other Akan-speaking peoples may well predate the mid eighteenth century, when some groups moved to the Ivory Coast.

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

Gift from K. J. Hewett to Robert and Lisa Sainsbury in 1971.

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