



Kneeling figure

On display

Title/Description: Kneeling figure

Born: 1800 - 1899

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Elephant ivory

Measurements: h. 163 x w. 40 x d. 45 mm

Accession Number: 252

Historic Period: 19th century

Production Place: Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo

Cultural Group: Kongo

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

The figure, apparently female, is shown kneeling in an attitude of prayer foreign to African art, though often found in that of Europe. It seems probable that here, as in sixteenth-century crucifixes of the old kingdom of Kongo, we have a true example of culture contact. Kneeling women appear often in African art, but very seldom with hand joined in prayer. The teeth are filed in the Kongo fashion, the cap is the type worn by chiefs in the Kongo-Yombe area (see UEA 253). Perhaps one may read the figure as invoking divine support for the chief in his dispensing of justice.

Margret 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. 186.

Provenance

Note in the Sainsbury Centre archives suggesting the object belonged to Ary Leblond (brother of the Governor of Brazzaville, French Equatorial Africa), later Director of the Musée des Colonies, Paris, who brought it from the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1905.

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from H. Reisser in 1963.

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