



Ceremonial bow-stand

On display

Title/Description: Ceremonial bow-stand

Born: 1850 - 1950

Materials: Wood

Measurements: h. 675 x w. 320 x d. 80 mm

Accession Number: 267

Historic Period: 19th Century - Late, 20th Century - Early

Production Place: Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

Among the regalia of the Luba chief were the royal bow and arrows without which he could not validly succeed to his position. As symbols of his authority, they might be placed before him when he was receiving important visitors or sitting in audience and delivering a judgment. The trident support for these is usually borne by a female figure with tribal scarifications on the belly; this is held to represent a female ancestor, if not the actual founding mother of the tribal group. Such figures may refer to the principle of succession through the female line among the Hemba and the symbolic role of women.

The use of ceremonial bow-stands extends beyond Luba-Hemba lands proper into areas of Hemba contact, such as Bemba country in northern Zambia. A delightful bow-stand in the Royal Museum of Scotland of Hemba style, was acquired, doubtless as a diplomatic gift, by a missionary working in LuBemba around the turn of the century. Bow-stands made solely of wrought iron also occur and Senior Chief Mwamba of the Bemba still owned two of these in the 1930s.

This trident bow-stand with its supporting figure would have been fitted to an iron spike some 2-3 feet long to enable it to be planted in the ground before the chief, with the bow, arrows and other chiefly insignia supported upon it.

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. 200.

Provenance

Formerly belonging to Gunther Bloch.

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from K. J. Hewett in 1961.

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

