



Amulet, bound captive

Not on display

Title/Description: Amulet, bound captive

Born: 1800 c. - 1899 c.

Measurements: h. 32 x w. 25 x d. 25 mm

Accession Number: 501

Historic Period: 19th century

The image of the bound captive appears on a variety of Tlingit sculptures (Harner and Elsasser, 1965:92; Collins *et al.*, 1973:269-70,277; Jonaitis, 1986: plates 51, 60), and is usually interpreted as the figure of a witch. More properly, the term should be sorcerer, the distinction being that a witch has intrinsic evil powers, whereas a sorcerer uses certain materials and rituals to bring about evil or illness. Swanton (1908:467) and de Laguna (1972:736) discuss 'witches' and the procedure by which a shaman first identified a witch by divination, and then forced a confession by binding and torture.

This compact stone sculpture, in which the captive's long hair is twisted into a cord that binds the wrists, vividly expresses the anguish of the victim. Witch imagery is usually associated with shaman's equipment, and this carving was possibly a charm used in the diagnosis of sorcery. The figure has no labret and so probably represents a man.

Steven Hooper, 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. 269.

Exhibitions

'Empowering Art: Indigenous Creativity and Activism from North America's Northwest Coast',
Sainsbury Centre, Norwich, 12/3/23 - 30/7/23

Provenance

Formerly in the William Oldham collection.

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from K. J. Hewett in 1973.

Accessioned into the Sainsbury Centre, Univeristy of East Anglia circa 1994.
