



Trumpet with double figure

On display

Title/Description: Trumpet with double figure

Object Type: Musical instrument

Materials: Elephant ivory

Measurements: h. 360 x w. 70 x d. 50 mm

Accession Number: 630

Historic Period: Late 19th/20th century

Production Place: Africa, Cameroon, Cameroon Grasslands

Credit Line: Purchased with support from Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1975

In form this trumpet could well be Ejagham (ekoi), where side-blown horns surmounted by human figures occur, but the style does not quite fit, and a provenance further into Cameroon, perhaps among the Bakundu, or in the Bakundu-Balong area, might be more likely. Krieger (1965: I, pls. 141-4; II, pls. 251-3) illustrates several of this type coming from coastal Cameroon east of the Cross River, north of the Duala, which were acquired in the late nineteenth century. Salmons (1985: 59) says that, 'throughout the Cross River region, side-blown horns of elephant ivory were used for mustering warriors and issuing campaign orders ... The Ekoi [Ejagham] ... tend to decorate ivory horns ... with an animal or human head carved in the round at the narrow end ... Today ivory horns are no longer used in warfare and those few examples still existing at the original field locations are important principally as chiefly regalia.'

The vernacular languages of the Cross River area are tonal, lending themselves well to the use of 'talking' instruments, whether clapperless bells, drum or horns; hence their suitability for issuing war commands. Such horns were blown after a warrior's death and burial, though not if he were killed in battle, in which case his spirit might remain hostile to the enemy.

This trumpet is surmounted by a pair of figures with flat mask-like faces standing back to back. The arms of the two figures make a continuous wavy band from the shoulders to the joined hands, spanning both sides. Carved cowrie ornament between the two heads and forming a double band below the figures are a mark of status and suggest that this could be part of a chief's regalia. The deep reddish patina may be due to palm oil. The left leg of the inner figure is broken.

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) pp. 166-167.

Provenance

Purchased by the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia from Merton D. Simpson, New York in 1975 out of funds provided by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury.
