



## Anthropomorphic form (possibly axe)

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**Not on display**

**Title/Description:** Anthropomorphic form (possibly axe)

**Born:** 2500 c. BC - 1500 c. BC

**Measurements:** h. 235 x w. 366 x d. 13 mm

**Accession Number:** 880

**Historic Period:** 3rd millennium BC, 2nd millennium BC

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Although objects like this have been termed "axes" they were for ceremonial purposes only. There is no actual sharpened edge but the ends of the arms and feet are thinner and tapered. The pattern of regular short lines was made by careful hammering. This particular object is not readily recognised as anthropomorphic, but similar objects of this type found in the Ganges Valley have more elongated "legs" and are of a more distinct human shape.

Description taken from the 'Art From The Indian Sub-Continent In The Sainsbury Centre' (Margaret A. Willey 1995 )

TO-BE-REPLACED-WITH-A-GAP

Perhaps the first object we know to have been passionately loved was the axe dreamed of by Gilgamesh, hero of the Mesopotamian epic. The axe treasured by Bob and Lisa Sainsbury was made about the same time in North India. We know that this type was loved by its owners because several survive. A large part of its appeal must have been its evocation of the human form, with each element sharing properties with the part of the body it recalls. The thickness of the top element gives it the hardness of the skull, while the thinness of the arms captures those limbs' slenderness and flexibility. The maker of this object must have loved it too, and we can sense his or her attention in the precisely placed marks left by the punch: points around the head, at an angle as they outline the figure's limbs, firmly vertical on the erect body.

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John Onians, Professor Emeritus, UEA

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## **Provenance**

Acquired 1984

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