



Baton/club

Not on display

Title/Description: Baton/club

Born: 1750 - 1799

Object Type: Club

Materials: Wood

Measurements: l. 546 x w. 50 x d. 75 mm

Accession Number: 129

Historic Period: 18th Century - Late

Production Place: North America, Northwest Coast, The Americas

Cultural Group: Makah, Nuuchah-nulth

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

Two very similar batons, now in the British Museum, were collected in 1778 during Captain Cook's third voyage (King, 1981:67, pls. 5,45). They have the same distinctive terminal, which has a V-shaped notch on either side, and differ only in the carving of the finial. Here a bird, possibly an owl, perches on a quadruped, its talons gripping the animal's eyes. This is an unusual feature which can be found on an early Nootkan mother and child sculpture, where the child has a finger in its mother's eye (*ibid.*: pl. 57).

The precise function of these batons is not known. They may have had some connection with fishing, the bulbous head being used to stun the fish, while the V-shaped lower part may have served as a device for removing a hook from the fish's mouth without endangering the fingers. The form is of some antiquity, for similar objects have been recovered from the Ozette site on the north Washington coast, dating to c. AD 1500 (see Kirk and Daugherty, 1978:57; Daugherty and Friedman, 1983). Whether this club is Nootka or Makah in origin is not clear. The Ozette people were ancestral to the Makah, but the two British Museum examples have 'Nootka Sound' written on them. Tests carried out on them showed the wood to be yew (*Taxus sp.*).

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) pp. 286-287.

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 collection of Lord Lonsdale, Lowther Castle.

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from K. J. Hewett in 1967.

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