



Sceptre

Not on display

Title/Description: Sceptre

Born: 1850 - 1950

Object Type: sceptre

Materials: Wood

Measurements: h. 426 x w. 83 x d. 60 mm

Accession Number: 272

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

Production Place: Africa, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo

Cultural Group: Jokwe

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

The Jokwe, a numerous cultural group, inhabit much of Angola and southern Zaire eastwards to western Zambia. They are a vigorous people, great hunters and former slave-raiders who in the nineteenth century even overcame the powerful Lunda kingdom in eastern Zaire.

This sceptre is surmounted by a head wearing a chiefly coiffure reminiscent of the mask *mukishi wa cikungu* which can only be worn by a chief or his heir, a sororal nephew, since it represents *mwanagana*, the chief's ancestors; the sceptre itself, therefore, is that of a chief (Bastin, 1961: II: 301, pls. 77-8).

Jokwe love of surface decoration is clearly shown in the fine incised patterns on the front and back of the rectangular panel below the head. Each pattern has a name. On the front, from top to bottom they are *manda a mbaci*, the scales on a tortoise shell; *liso*, eye; and *mahenga*, wavy lines. On the back, from top to bottom, are two rows of hatched triangles *mapende*, the Gaboon viper; in the middle is *cisonge cayishi*, a fish's backbone; then at the bottom the interlacing lines represent either *ukulungu*, the loops on the end of a copper wire ear pendant, or *cijingo*, a spiralled bracelet which can also symbolise an instrument of divination and could be appropriate to a chief's sceptre (Bastin, 1961:1: passim). The wood is almost certainly *mulima*, and it is polished with oil.

The rear curves of the coiffure are 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) p. 193.

Provenance

Purchased by Loed Van Bussel in Grantham and sold to Ralph Nash.

Acquired by K. J. Hewett from Ralph Nash.

Purchased by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury from K. J. Hewett in 1971.

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