

Basic Detail Report



Bracelet Currency (Manilla or Mondua)

Date
19th Century

Primary Maker
Tuareg

Medium
Brass

Description

Manillas are a West African currency known for being used from the end of the 15th century to the mid-20th century, most notably for the Spanish and Portuguese slave trade. The term Manilla comes from the Spanish word for bracelet or the Portuguese word for hand ring. This type of currency derived from metal bracelets or anklets but later forms were made of copper, bronze, or brass penannular rings and were often horse-shoe shaped with enlarged finial terminations. Portuguese traders commissioned large sums of Manillas beginning in the 15th century, dominating the Golden Coast to the lower Niger. The Manillas were made in Europe and would be traded in African countries, such as Nigeria, for trade goods like ivory, spices, palm oil and slaves. By the early 16th century the Portuguese were actively engaged in the slave trade with manilla-type currency being most common payment option. Soon, other western nations joined the trade including the English, French, and Dutch who all possessed labor plantations in the Caribbean and Americas. Manillas were an integral part of the triangle trade that dominated the time. After Portugal lost its monopoly, England became the main export of this currency, sending them to West Africa. From there, slaves were sent to the Americas who would, in exchange, ship cotton to Europe. Manillas could take on multiple forms, quality, and sizes. By 1948 all Manillas had been redeemed and would no longer be in use. The significance of Manillas remains obvious in the cultural heritage of African states and its diffusion throughout West Africa. This particular specimen is a manilla like bracelet structurally similar to the popular currency, however, different in design. This bracelet is most likely the result of diffusion from coastal West Africa where this currency was most used in northern Tuareg. The Tuareg are a nomadic peoples found in Niger and who travel all over the Sahara desert. The Tuareg are primarily herders and traders yet were skilled in craftsmanship, making elegant brass and silver metal bracelets.

Dimensions

4 1/2 x 4 3/4 x 1 3/8 in. (11.4 x 12.1 cm)