

Basic Detail Report



Leg Band Currency (Konga or Likonga)

Date

19th Century to early 20th Century

Primary Maker

Mongo

Medium

Bronze

Description

The Mongo people were composed of several sub- ethnic groups living in the equatorial forests south of the main Congo River bend. The Mongo followed a patrilineal descent that pointed to a shared ancestor between all the peoples. The Mongo, though diverse, shared similar beliefs, social structure, and language. Akela and Wangata were two peoples of the Mongo who used African bronze bracelets or anklets as their main form of currency in the early 20th century. These bronze adornments were characterized by having horizontal raised ridges throughout the piece and having a wide opening in the back. To the Akela, the anklets or bracelets were called Konga. To the Wangata, however, the pieces were called Likonga or plural would be Makonga. The Kutu smiths, living near the Akela territories, produced this currency in large quantities. Like other African blacksmiths and artisans, the Kuntu smiths used metallurgy to show off their fine craft of creating raw materials into refined pieces. The more elaborate, the pieces the higher the worth. The ridges on these pieces reflect the design conceptions of these master smiths. Currency within the Congo in the 18th and 19th centuries was evolving into stores of wealth that would not degrade, as seen in cattle, vegetation, or textiles. Useful tools such as hoes, bells, and knives became so intricate in their make that they lost their use as tools but gained their worth as currency. Jewelry, on the other hand, such as the Likonga, could be worn to reflect the social status of the person wearing the piece. If needed, they could also be melted down to become a new tool.

Dimensions

Overall: 2 1/8 x 3 1/2 in. (5.4 x 8.9 cm)