



Hoe Currency (Bandaka)

Date
19th Century

Primary Maker
Hausa

Medium
Iron

Description

The Bandaka was a hoe currency used in Nigeria. Post-Colonial iron imports helped shape the economy of African society with the newly available abundance of the material. The smelting of iron and its use in agriculture became an integral part of African currency, as seen in hoe culture. Hoe- money consisted of currency being forged from a heavy iron sheet and shaped into varying forms. Shapes of the hoes included hearts, spades, paddles, teardrops, trowels, anchors or even blades. Hoes were a useful exchange object as the material could also be reformed into other shapes or implements as needed. Hoe money was also used for the payments of bride wealth. With iron material becoming more available, and as cultural ritual of exchange of objects developed, the use and shape of hoes changed. The utilitarian function of the objects diminished as exchange hoes became morphologically unusable for agriculture. However, this was not the case for the Bandaka, a hoe currency from central Africa found in Nigeria and Mambila, Chanba and possibly from the Hausa tribe. The Bandaka was a semi-circular sheet divided into two disproportionate sections. The trunk was sometimes wrapped up by a thin blade or by a leather cladding. The sizes of the Bandaka included medium and giant. The forged iron of the Bandaka was meant to resemble a stylized profile of a person: some Bandaka show a slightly jutting nose, a pony tail tied up in a bun behind the neck, a stylized body which ends in a j-shaped handle which can be finished off with some ringlets that would fit in a wooden stick. These rings allowed for the further use of the Bandaka as an agricultural instrument, conserving its functional capabilities.

Dimensions

14 1/4 × 6 3/4 × 1/2 in. (36.2 × 17.1 × 1.3 cm)