



## Sword Currency

### Date

19th Century

### Primary Maker

Mongo

### Medium

Iron and copper

### Description

These knives were used in tribal ceremonies, as a symbol of rank, and as a form of currency. The Ekonda (or Konda) of Central D.R. Congo are renowned for crafting the most ornate and extravagant blade designs. Ekonda blades are awesome and ostentatious, and completely unsuited for functional use - they are instead unrestrained symbols of prestige. These swords were displayed in a variety of circumstances, but most notably in parades and for

divination; many were the prerogative of women as well. Berardi calls these knives "the most flamboyant of all African knife forms" (2004). Elaborating, Berardi says, "to create these highly calligraphic blades, whose edges sport an almost endless variety of hooks, arcs, spurs, and horn-like protrusions of various widths, the Ekonda smiths began by hammering the iron into fairly thin sheets. They then work the edges, cutting away metal to form a succession of protruding embellishments that gave the knives their elaborate profiles. Fischer & Zirngibl noted that the plain wood handles on these blades seem "to make a paltry of plain impression when compared with the playful and exuberant design of the blades"

### Dimensions

Overall: 4 1/2 x 22 1/4 in. (11.4 x 56.5 cm)