



Counterweight

Date
20th Century

Primary Maker
Dong

Medium
Silver

Description

This counterweight is part of a Dong or Miao woman’s daily wear. It would be hung from the back to counterbalance an apron or used to help balance the weight of a child worn on the back in a baby carrier. In addition to serving as ornamentation, silver adornments were talismans of good fortune. Counterweights are predominantly used by the Dong, but Miao villages in the region also use these weights. Silversmithing is exclusively performed by men and taught from father to son. The spiral motif, seen here in the conical section of this counterweight, dates to Neolithic Chinese pottery. Though now they are mostly employed as aesthetic motifs, they originally symbolized the never-ending cycle of life.

Dimensions

2 1/8 × 3 × 2 3/8 in. (5.4 × 7.6 × 6 cm)