A000-Afr-Ghana-Akan-Female Head-Terra Cotta-Late 19th c.



**Case No.:**

**Accession No.**

**Formal Label:**

**Display Description:**

Nsodia (meaning ‘thing placed on top’; also called Mma, Nkua or Ohoni Ti) heads are idealized and stylized depictions of deceased Akan royalty, chiefs or priests. Opinions vary about the actual use of the heads. Some sources state that the heads were created to represent deceased chiefs in burial and funerary celebrations while others point to the heads as focal effigies for commemorative rites (representing a vessel which encapsulates the wisdom, knowledge and experience of the deceased leader).

Nsodie heads were believed to have been created by elderly female artists after the death of a prominent leader and placed in asenie (meaning ‘place of pots’) or shrines on the outskirts of towns, locations at which villagers would make offering to the dead through the collection of nsodie heads. Other sources point to the fact that nsodie heads could also have been effigies for deities and divinity (abosom) which served as intermediary communicators between the realm of the living and divinity. What is generally agreed however is that nsodie heads are not exact representations of leaders past but instead depict certain characteristics of the deceased (such as the individuals hairstyle or scarification marks).

**LC Classification:**

**Date or Time Horizon: Late 19th c**

**Geographical Area: northern Ghana**

**Map:**

**GPS coordinates:**

**Cultural Affiliation:**

**Media:**

**Dimensions:**

**Weight:**

**Condition:**

**Provenance:**

**Discussion:**

**References:**

Gilbert, Michelle. 1989. “Akan Terracotta Heads: Gods or Ancestors?” *African Arts* 22(4 Aug.): 34-43+85-86.