Waist ornament (benyop or bayop) - Waist ornament (benyop or bayop)

Object: Waist ornament (benyop or bayop)

Place of origin: Arunachal Pradesh (made)

Date: 19th century (before 1879) (made)

Materials and Techniques: Cast discs of copper alloy with tin, cast. The alloy is overwhelming copper, with probably at least 10% tin, as suggested by X.R.F. spectroscopy.

Museum number: 04962(IS)

Gallery location: In Storage

Public access description
This waist ornament would have been worn by a woman of the Adi-Minyong tribe of Arunachal Pradesh, a hilly state in India's north-east. Composed of boldly patterned copper alloy discs strung on cord, it is an example of the rich jewellery traditions of some of India's adivasi or 'tribal' communities, who inhabit some of her more remote regions. It also exemplifies the way in which traditional jewellery in much of South Asia was closely tied to life-cycle rites, for a simple waistband worn by young girls of this community was replaced with a more elaborate one after a puberty ritual, to be removed on the birth of her first child. These traditions have been described by A.K. Das and O. Untracht (see References). There are many other examples of jewellery being used to mark age, status or prowess, especially among the adivasi communities.

Descriptive line
Waist ornament worn by Adi Minyong women, Arunachal Pradesh, India, 19th century.

Physical description
A waist ornament (benyop or bayop) worn by Adi Minyong women in Arunachal Pradesh. It consists of five discs of cast copper alloy. The discs are of graduated size with the largest in the centre and are strung together on rope. Each disc has a pattern of spiral wire crossed by two or, in the case of the two smallest discs, three lines, and has a metal hoop attaching it to the rope.

Dimensions
Height: 12 cm Of largest pendant, Width: 9.6 cm Of largest pendant, Weight: 469 g

Museum number
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Object history note
Transferred to the South Kensington Museum (now V&A) from the India Museum in 1879.

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O182697/waist-ornament-benyop-or-bayop-waist-ornament-benyop/