



Hair Pin Currency (Noveapu or Nbabma)

Date

20th Century

Medium

Black palm wood, feather and resin

Description

This object is one of a pair of feathered sticks in the shape of hair pins, which among other feathered items like giant coiled rolls, were exchanged as a form of money in the Solomon Islands. Feathered money was more highly valued if it had been recently made, since it retained the brilliance of the feathers' color. In addition to their use as currency, feathered hair sticks such as these are worn by men for traditional dances, and they are also sometimes given as gifts to visitors. All the red-feathered currency pieces from the Solomon Islands are made from a species of red-feathered honeyeater bird (*Myzomela cardinalis*).

The birds are hunted by coating branches in either a nut

paste or sap adhesive similar to bird-lime. A lure, baited with a living or dead decoy bird, was then placed nearby. When the birds land on the coated branches they are trapped, and men collect their bright red feathers and then release them back into the wild.

Dimensions

12 1/4 × 1/4 × 1/4 in. (31.1 × 0.6 × 0.6 cm)