



Canoe (Taratara)

Date

20th Century

Primary Maker

Yami

Medium

Wood, paint, and feather

Description

This is a 20th century balangay style fishing canoe (known in the Yami/Tao language as taratara) from Orchid Island, also called Lanyu Island, Taiwan. It was made and used by the Yami branch of the Gaoshan nationality, in the 20th century. These canoes are intended as fishing boats and can hold up to twelve people; fishing is the Yami's main livelihood. Balangays are a style of boat created using the 'lashed lug' technique and only wood from living trees is used; the use of dead wood is considered taboo. Intricate carvings were added using axes and small knives and pigmented with three pigments: red made from iron-rich soil, black made from soot, and white from lime. Despite having a very practical purpose, taratara also represent the history of the Yami via their decorative carvings that are specific clan designs. The decoration on the canoe depicts and honors the Yami's ancestral hero, Magamaog, and can be seen spanning the entire length of the vessel both depicted with stylized representations of feathers coming from his head and without. The prow and stern elements are also representations of the same, though given that these are carved in three dimensions rather than two, these are adorned with actual feathers. The two large sets of concentric circles at the prow and stern of the canoe represent the eyes of the vessel.

Dimensions

81 × 204 × 36 in. (205.7 × 518.2 × 91.4 cm)