

Basic Detail Report



Adze Head Currency

Date

early to mid 20th Century

Medium

Stone

Description

This adze head was collected on New Ireland in the New Ireland Province of Papua New Guinea and dates back from early to mid-20th Century. In many Melanesian

cultures, adzes were viewed as currency and were commonly used for the purposes of barter and trade. During trade expeditions, adze heads were kept attached or bounded to carved wooden presentation axes. An adze mounted on a ceremonial handle could be valued as an equivalent for a young pig or dog. Ceremonial adzes were predominantly reserved for the custom of ritual dancing or warfare. A larger and slimmer adze axe may have been used as a bride price. In some areas, the payment for a bride comprised mostly of axes with three or four being bride price axes. Bride price adze axes were mainly used for the display of the family's wealth and status and never for the intended practice of cutting. Unfortunately, there is not much research on the intended purposes of adzes or adze heads from the New Ireland.

Dimensions

5 1/2 × 1 7/8 × 1 in. (14 × 4.8 × 2.5 cm)