



Wave Splitter Finial (Munkuris)

Date

20th Century

Primary Maker

Massim

Medium

Wood and paint

Description

This wave splitter (canoe prow) finial, the vernacular name for which is munkuris, was collected from the Massim culture residing on Iwa Island, part of the Marshall Bennett Islands group of Papua New Guinea's Milne Bay Province. Munkuris are tied atop a wave splitter, known colloquially as a tabuya, which is located on both the prow and the stern of a canoe. Birds are commonly carved at each side of the finial, representing magic that protects the canoe and its passengers from various difficulties during their voyage. Canoes are the primary language of

trade along the Kula ring, a ceremonial trade route in Papua New Guinea's Milne Bay Province. Decorated canoe parts, such as wave splitters (canoe prows), their finials, and splashboards which are transversely socketed into the ends of canoes, signal the arrival of a trader and identify the community they are associated with. Their carvings, black, white, and red palette, and beautiful shell adornments are designed by Massim craftsmen to magically influence one's trade partners into making disadvantageous exchanges. The patterns of carving and painting on these pieces are unique to the various communities that trade around the Kula ring, making fleets easy to identify. However, some motifs like the rolling forms of waves, coiled serpents, and key navigational stars are universal within Massim groups.

Dimensions

24 7/8 × 15 9/16 × 7/8 in. (63.2 × 39.5 × 2.2 cm)