

Basic Detail Report



Shell Trumpet

Date

late 19th to early 20th Century

Medium

Triton shell

Description

Triton shell trumpet collected from the Massim area in the Milne Bay Province of Papua New Guinea. This shell trumpet was stated to have been used on canoe voyages.

In many Melanesian communities, shells were utilized as a form of currency and simultaneously as supplies for high-priced commodities. As a form of currency, shells were used in trades along the coast and nearby islands. The further distance a shell traveled, the higher their value would increase. Therefore, the price and social value of a shell-made object increased depending on the inclusion of a well-traveled shell. A shell will signify important qualities about the wearer their wealth, initiation level within a clan membership, and ideas of ritual practice. As a bride price exchange, the use of particular shell may indicate the bride new family's financial and social influence in the community.

Dimensions

4 3/4 × 13 1/2 × 8 3/8 in. (12.1 × 34.3 × 21.3 cm)