

# Basic Detail Report

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## Mortar

**Date**

20th Century

**Medium**

Stone

**Description**

Experts believe that undecorated Papuan mortars developed concurrent with agriculture around 8,000 years

ago and were used to pound taro into pudding. Mortars such as this are thought to have been used ceremonially rather than as tools for food preparation. Similar examples are still being produced today. Stone objects date back to the earliest inhabitants of Melanesia, growing in specialization over time with the evolution of practices like agriculture and hunting. Mortars, pestles, and ceremonial objects that might be hundreds or thousands of years old are rediscovered with some frequency, especially during construction or from tilling soil, and are used or instilled with a newfound spiritual significance. Utilitarian stone tools tend to be undecorated, but pieces created for ceremonial purposes are highly refined—painstakingly pecked and ground to create figurative or abstract geometric forms.

**Dimensions**

6 5/8 × 19 × 15 in. (16.8 × 48.3 × 38.1 cm)