



Ancestor Figure (Tau Tau)

Date

late 19th to 20th Century

Medium

Jackfruit wood, shell, and pigment

Description

A tau tau is an effigy of an important person of the Toraja community carved upon his or her death. The sculptures played a central role in funerary rites and were receptacles of the soul before the transition to the spirit world. Ultimately, the sculptures were placed among other effigies in a rock balcony or cave dwelling to oversee the well-being of the villages. This male is extraordinary in that he is depicted with full body tattoos—an indication of royal status. He was collected from the Sa'dan River area, possibly from the royal village at Tandon near Marante, Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Dimensions

62 × 11 × 15 in. (157.5 × 27.9 × 38.1 cm)