



## Dance Axe (Pem)

### Date

early 20th Century

### Primary Maker

Tolai

### Medium

Wood and paint

### Description

The pem of the Tolai people are a part of a group of sacred objects known as pokopoko. Wooden pokopoko were typically made out of rosewood (ruga) or other hardwood bearing trees. The pem was used ritually in a ceremony associated with mourning a high-ranking deceased member of the community. This ceremony is referred to as tubuan i takin, tubuan in search of deceased spirit. A tubuan is a mask representing an older woman within the tubuan secret society. It is worn by a man. In the tubuan i takin, the pem is used by a tubuan to

destroy the deceased's house and property in order to search for his or her spirit. Pem are typically ornately decorated and are also seen as chiefly objects of status. While they were used ceremonially, they have also been used as exchange items. The pem plays an integral role in the tubuan i takin mourning ceremony amongst the Tolai. In English, this ceremony is translated as, "tubuan in search of deceased spirit." The ceremony is performed when a high-ranking member of society has died.

### Dimensions

37 1/2 × 4 1/2 × 1 in. (95.3 × 11.4 × 2.5 cm)