



Armband Currency ('Abagwaro)

Date
unknown

Primary Maker
Kwara'ae

Medium
Shell beads, seed beads and twine

Description

'Abagwaro shell Armlets are a valuable men's adornment. Men would typically wear these bands around the tops of their arms while women would only wear them on the occasion of their marriage. The value of these items depended on the craftsmanship with which the item was made. Armbands would be presented in order to unify two families through marriage, to resolve disputes, or to make agreements official. The bands are constructed with a stick loom that holds two warp threads that form the long side of the strap. Other warps hang loose as each bead is threaded on a warp and weft thread. The beads lay diagonal to the ends of where the threads cross. This process lends itself to zigzag and lozenge shaped patterns. The designs on these bands are symbolic of where they were created. For example, this particular example can be attributed to the Kwara'ae people of the northern area of Malaita Island because of the two sets of horizontal black arrows present on each side of the band, what is referred to as a central red fish shape, and the red triangle or diamond shapes at the end of each end of the design. Also, bands from this area are narrower than those made in other parts of Malaita Island. Sometimes, bands are remade with new pieces of twine or other additions.

Dimensions

2 1/8 × 22 × 1/8 in. (5.4 × 55.9 × 0.3 cm)