



Steering Paddle

Date

mid 19th - early 20th Century

Primary Maker

Massim

Medium

Wood

Description

Among the many islands off the coast of New Guinea, sea-worthy canoes (and their apparatus) are decorated to ensure success and protection during extensive trading voyages. In the Trobriand Islands, two men steer the outrigger canoes that carry shells, personal adornments, food and other goods for barter and exchange. A smaller paddle with a leaf-shaped blade such as this example is placed through the canoe's slats at the stern to help guide the craft. The paddle is masterfully fashioned, thin and light in weight and features the swirling designs typical of the Massim area.

Dimensions

78 5/16 × 11 7/16 × 1 5/8 in. (198.9 × 29 × 4.1 cm)