



Comb (Faa)

Date

mid 19th - early 20th Century

Primary Maker

Kwaio

Medium

Wood, orchid fiber and coconut fiber

Description

Faa were not used practically, but rather as an adornment and status item for men. The delicate structure of the comb, particularly the coconut fiber wrap that serves as a spacer for the comb's tines, is not strong enough to withstand combing through hair. Combs could be worn on a daily basis as well as part of festive dress for special occasions. Feathers or fiber streamers could be attached to combs for such occasions. The red fibers used here are made from the skin of the coconut palm. The red color is a stain made from scraping and heating the palm's roots. The yellow fibers are from the orchid vine. This color is natural but only appears on one side of the fiber. As such, great skill was required to ensure that only the colored side was visible. While these combs are said to be

characteristic of Malatia Island, they were also traded to various other islands.

Dimensions

6 3/4 × 1 3/4 × 1/4 in. (17.1 × 4.4 × 0.6 cm)