

Basic Detail Report



Cup or Ash Tray

Date

20th Century

Primary Maker

Paiwan

Medium

Wood

Description

Woodcarving held an important role in the Paiwan indigenous society of southern Taiwan. Generally, only a tribe's chief or nobility could afford to have carved goods. Rather uniquely within Paiwan examples, this object blends the 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional styles of the Paiwan with a man resting on the lip. But the shallow motifs etched into this object are all prominently featured in Paiwan woodcarving. The most common of these are people, either disembodied or whole. Depending on their surrounding designs, disembodied heads could indicate a connection to the Paiwan's practice of headhunting. More often though, solitary heads and full figures were depictions of ancestors. As the Paiwan believed the viper to be an ancestor spirit, the snake motif repeated on the cup seems to indicate that the motifs all are representative of ancestors.

Dimensions

4 × 4 1/2 × 5 in. (10.2 × 11.4 × 12.7 cm)