



Plaque (Barava)

Date

mid to late 20th Century

Medium

Giant clam shell

Description

This is a barava, an ornamental plaque that serves as a symbol of wealth and prestige in life and the afterlife. On some occasions, it acts as a deed of land. The chief owns it and can claim title to the land of the village. However, if stolen by an opposing tribe the transfer does not constitute a transfer of title. Generally, barava are not exchanged. They are either kept at home where they are a family heirloom, worn as an amulet, or placed in a skull hut or grave. To be created, a tridacna shell is cut into a smaller section. Then holes are drilled through and widened with vines and a mixture of coarse sand and

water. It is a tedious process and can take about six years. The craft has been mostly forgotten in recent years due to its precise and time consuming nature.

Dimensions

11 1/2 × 5 3/8 × 5/8 in. (29.2 × 13.7 × 1.6 cm)