

Basic Detail Report



Sago Ladle

Date

mid 20th Century

Medium

Wood and pigment

Description

In the Huon Gulf region, the inhabitants of the Tami Islands are known for their distinctive style of wood carving, often referred to as the Tami style. This unique art style is distinguished by the use of a carving method known as high-relief carving—in which designs are carved into the wood and protrude from the background. This method of carving requires meticulous planning beforehand and great skill tool manipulation to achieve desired effect. Sago scoops were used during funeral feasts as part of the sago preparation process. These large ladles were typically handled by two people who would stir the food up and down in a ritualized manner that would create a performance. Ladles were originally made with seed or shell attachments on the handles, but it is now quite rare to find a completely intact example. The openwork carvings featured above the paddle and atop of the handle are indicative of Tami style carvings. The designs found on the backside of the paddle are coiled and geometrically shaped—similar to many boarder designs found on other Tami crafts. The Tami are brilliant seamen, which allows them to extensively trade their craft goods with the neighboring islands—such as New Guinea, Rook, and Siassi. It is no surprise to find Tami style goods spread over large areas through trade. Due to social restrictions, the distinctive carving style of the Tami remains confined to their community of wood carvers. If any individuals outside the community used a style other than their own the act would constitute as a severe offence.

Dimensions

26 1/2 × 2 3/4 × 1 5/8 in. (67.3 × 7 × 4.1 cm)