



Food Pounder

Date

mid 20th Century

Medium

Wood

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. Pounders or pestles—an object used opposite to mortars in much of the world to pulverize food, pigments, and more—were a mainstay in the Tami carving region. In the Siassi Islands, this object would have been used to pulverize the otherwise unwieldy taro root, a staple food for these islanders. An openwork carving of a smiling humanoid face sits atop of this

particular pounder. Not much information could be found on the significance of this specific motif. 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

28 × 2 3/4 × 2 1/4 in. (71.1 × 7 × 5.7 cm)