



Necklace Currency

Date
mid 20th Century

Medium
Cowrie shell and fibers

Description

This is a shell necklace collected from the island country of Palau and dates back to the 20th century. In many cultures, shell necklaces play a crucial role in status ornamentation and currency exchange. Individual’s statuses could be determined by the quality and quantity of jewelry pieces they wear. Cowrie shell necklaces are particularly effective at elevating the wearer’s status. Aside from their aesthetic usage, necklaces that feature cowrie shells are utilized as currency for exchanged goods. Necklaces and strands of cowrie shells are known to have been used for purchasing highly priced items; such as pigs or dog.

Dimensions
5/8 × 32 1/2 in. (1.6 × 82.6 cm)