



Line Marker (Mò Dǒu)

Date

19th Century

Primary Maker

Miao

Medium

Wood, metal, cotton, and deer horn

Description

This is wooden line marker or mò dǒu used by the Miao and other cultures of China. This small wooden tool is used in carpentry and construction to create long, straight lines between two points. Line is wrapped around a reel and strung through the small, open receptacle with a weight tied to the other end, in this case a deer horn. The receptacle would be filled with ink-soaked cotton so that when the string was run through the bowl it would itself become covered with ink. When carefully set against a piece of wood the ink-covered string would leave a mark, usually to indicate where wood needed to be cut. Ink lines like this are used throughout East Asia and tend to be highly decorated with motifs like the dragon we see here. Most apprentice woodcarvers make tools that they use throughout their career, with the mò dǒu being an important part of their kit.

Dimensions

2 7/8 × 9 × 3 5/8 in. (7.3 × 22.9 × 9.2 cm)