

Basic Detail Report



Hatchet

Date

20th Century

Medium

Wood, turtle bone, and metal

Description

On Wuvulu, blades from green and hawksbill turtle bone were socketed into wooden hafts to create a variety of

traditional weapons and tools. Though the design of this hatchet is indicative of Western influence, tools with larger bone blades were traditionally used as breadfruit splitters on the island. The metal nails securing the blades of both the club and the hatchet would have been acquired through trade with Europeans. Island Oceania is divided into Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, but trade and migration have created a great deal of commonality among these cultural and geographic subregions. Despite being only 100 miles away from the coast of New Guinea, the center of Melanesian culture, most individuals on the island of Wuvulu are of Micronesian descent. Some of the earliest theories about the island’s connection to Micronesia were surmised from the use of similar shark tooth weapons to those used in the Gilbert Islands. To this day the unique functional and decorative objects produced on Wuvulu show influences from both Melanesia and Micronesia.

Dimensions

15 7/8 × 6 3/16 × 7/8 in. (40.3 × 15.7 × 2.2 cm)