



Lime spatula

Not on display

Title/Description: Lime spatula

Born: 1800 - 1899

Measurements: l. 555 x w. 18 x d. 21 mm

Inscription: '2038 Admiralty Is. WBSTR 1898.14'

Accession Number: 170

Historic Period: 19th century

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

Lime spatulae were part of the equipment used for 'betel chewing', When powdered lime was chewed with a mixture of crushed areca nuts and the leaves of the Piper betel bush. In the Admiralty Islands lime was kept in gourds decorated with curvilinear designs, and a long spatula was used to extract the powder. This example, of which the finial is shown, terminates in a narrow blade for the purpose.

The finial carving resembles a miniature version of the 'ancestor' figures from this region, which can be up to six feet high and are often incorporated into house architecture (see Badner, 1979). Such figures are often carved in association with crocodiles, as here, where the crocodile appears as though trussed by the legs to a stake, which may be a reference to hunting prowess (see also Nevermann, 1934: fig. 132). The figure has a projection down the centre of the back, flaring at the lower end, which possibly represents a warrior's pendant. The twin projections on top of the head represent men's elaborate wigs.

Steven Hooper, 1997

Entry taken from *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, Vol. 2: Pacific, African and Native North American Art*, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997) p. 62.

Provenance

Acquired by the Sainsbury Family in 1966. Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.

