



GOBAELA TURTLE SHELL LIME SPATULA

A rare and extremely fine example of a gobaela (gabaela) type lime spatula made of turtle-shell. These objects were used as money presentation scepters in imitation of the larger wood gobaela and also as wealth exchange items during marriage transactions. The form of the gobaela relates to several essential ideas, which refer back to the origins of the people of the Louisiade Archipelago. Bataglia (1990, p. 129, fig. 7) indicates that if the gobaela is viewed with the spatula blade pointing down it represents a stylized male anthropomorphic being. In this position the gobaela can also be seen as a schematic representation of both the male and female reproductive organs. When Bataglia places the spatula blade pointing upward the gobaela becomes the representation of a single-mast, double-ended canoe. This position can also be the representation of an erect phallus. The decorative representations on this example are unusual in that the typically repetitive head of a bird possibly the heron, or boi is here highly stylized and reduced. The outer edge is pierced along the curvature for the attachment of shell money.

Louisade Archipelago, Southern Massim region, PNG, Melanesia.

Turtle shell (Hawksbill Turtle - *Eretmochelys imbricata*) : statut UICN : CR A2bd. CITES Annex I.

25,5 x 14,5 x 0,2 cm max.

19th or early 20th century.

Exhibitions

Exhibited : SPATULES – MASSIM - SPATULAS. 20th Anniversary Exhibition. 2000.

Published : SPATULES – MASSIM - SPATULAS. 20th Anniversary Exhibition Catalogue, 2000, N° 70,
pp. 66/67

Literature:

Ref. :

Aldridge, Richard and Hamson, Michael : Art of the Massim and Collingwood Bay. Michael Hamson
Oceanic Art, Palos Verde, 2009.

Meyer, Anthony JP.: SPATULES A CHAUX MASSIM LIME SPATULAS. Catalogue d'exposition.
Galerie Meyer, Paris. 2000. Text by Harry Beran