



Kneeling male figure

Not on display

Title/Description: Kneeling male figure

Born: 1800 - 1899

Object Type: Figure

Materials: Fibre, Gum, Pearl shell, Wood

Measurements: h. 178 x w. 133 x d. 88 mm

Accession Number: 172

Historic Period: Late 19th century

Production Place: Oceania, Pacific, Roviana region, Solomon Islands

Credit Line: Donated by Robert and Lisa Sainsbury, 1973

This finely modelled sculpture is an example of the naturalistic carving style which developed in the Roviana (New Georgia) area of the western Solomon Islands during the second half of the nineteenth century. This is possibly a comparatively early example, since it appears that by the beginning of the twentieth century images made in this style were larger and, although still technically proficient, had become sculpturally stiff (see McCarthy, 1951; Waite, 1983a: 119).

The emergence of this naturalistic style of carving was probably a local response to contact with European representational art, and it developed alongside the more familiar indigenous non-naturalistic style. After visiting the Roviana area in the early 1890s, Lieutenant Somerville (1897: 378) reported that two types of sculpture existed there - that of spirits and that of 'men' - and that the latter, naturalistic type was made for trade rather than for ritual purposes (see examples in Brown, 1910: 248, 251).

This kneeling figure is almost certainly one of a set representing warriors (with white face paint and limed hair) paddling a canoe, and he formerly would have held a paddle in both hands (information courtesy of Lawrence Foanaota, Director of the Solomon Islands Museum; see also an early canoe illustration in Waite, 1983a: 36). The arms are carved separately and are pegged at the shoulders and elbows. The rings on the upper arms represent shell armlets.

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. 70.

Provenance

Acquired by the Sainsbury Family in 1971. Donated to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1973 as part of the original gift.
