

Lime Spatula



- Melanesia
- PNG, Louisiades Archipelago, Tagula (Sudest) Island
- Massim area
- First half of the 20th century
- Turtle shell
- Height: 27.3 cm
- INV. 4160

Both the wooden and the turtle shell versions of these objects serve to carry shell discs tied to the edge of the crescentic handle. However, the turtle shell pieces are also used as lime spatulas and carried by women in ritual dances. Both the shell discs and the handles are items of value.

Battaglia¹ (1990: pp. 128-30) reports that viewed as shown in this illustration, the handle represents a human being; however, with the blade pointing upwards, it represents a canoe. The design of the scrolls on the handle and the arrangement of the birds' heads at the top of the blade suggest this handle was made in the first half of the 20th century. The production of the handles was confined to the Louisiades Archipelago, especially Sudest Island, and ceased in the 1960s.

Harry Beran, *Shadows of New Guinea. Arts of the Great Island of Oceania from the Barbier-Mueller Collections*, musée Barbier-Mueller & Somogy éditions d'arts (eds.), 2006: cat. 96, p. 185.

¹ D. Battaglia, *On the Bones of the Serpent: Person, Memory, and Mortality in Sabarl Island Society*, Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 1990.
