

Basic Detail Report

00001827

Title

Paddle

Date

1987

Primary Maker

Issac Walayungkuma

Medium

Wood

Dimensions

Overall: 1695 × 38 × 170 mm, 2.75 kg

Name

Paddle

History

This canoe and paddles was specifically commissioned by the Australian Maritime Museum in 1987 in an attempt to record and preserve a record of the tradition and methods of canoe construction in the Borroloola region. In keeping with Yanyuwa tradition the canoe is called 'Rra-Kalwanyimara', which can be translated literally as "the female one from Kalwanyi". As Annie Karrakayn puts it: 'All the canoe got name... [from the] country where they come from'. The Yanyuwa history of canoe making is a good example of Aboriginal culture's quick response to change. Dugout, and later aluminium, canoes were readily adopted by the Yanyuwa as they were a better version of the bark canoes they already had. As such they represent cultural change very much on Yanyuwa terms. The use of dugout canoes allowed the Yanyuwa to exploit their environment in new ways. Resources such as bird and turtle eggs on isolated islands could be obtained and previous activities such as turtle and dugong hunting would have been both safer and more productive. This canoe took around 720 hours to make and if in traditional use would last up to 2 - 5 years, sometimes less. It would take a lot of maintenance to keep the canoe in working order however and patching up leaks by using bark, ochre, mud and later metal tacks and tar was a constant. When aluminium canoes became available in the 1960's the move to them was inevitable and saw a decline in the production and thus knowledge of dugout canoe techniques.