

Cedar Bowl

ORIGINS

Date: Unknown

Place: Northwestern Coast

Materials: Red Wood Cedar



Cedar Bowl

Donated

By: Unknown

DESCRIPTION

The artifact is a small dark brown wooden bowl with two faces on the ends that appear to be bear heads. Lengthwise, from the beginning of one face to the other, the cedar bowl is approximately 19.5 cm long. Widthwise, the artifact is about 7.6cm across. The opening of the actual bowl crater is roughly 10.1cm by 7cm. The heads on both ends of the item are approximately 5cm, with one of the heads being just slightly smaller than the other. The two faces look inwards towards the bowl and are facing one another. The faces both have two ears sticking up off the head, two eyes, a nose, and a mouth. Their faces give the appearance of an animal. The cedar bowl itself weighs only 38g. The bowl is made of cedar wood. The bowl has the look of cedar wood and the ridges on the sides of the artifact correspond with this. The artifact is overall smooth to the touch. The item is dark brown, however, there are lighter marks throughout the object. It extends deep into the object. The hollow of the bowl has many scratches and marks within in. It extends deep into the object. There are many light areas within the bowl area. The outside of the artifact is noticeably lighter than the inner parts and faces of the object. The ridges of the cedar wood are very prominent and there are numerous small chips out of the sides of the item. The bottom of the cedar bowl is a light brown and is the lightest part of the entire object. It is relatively smooth similar to the sides of the bowl.



Cedar Bowl Crevice



Cedar Bowl Head

CULTURE

Description:

The peoples of the Northwest Pacific Coast arrived in this area about 10,000 years ago. The area they inhabited spanned from Yakutat Bay in the Northeastern Gulf of Alaska south to Cape Mendocino in present-day California. There were around thirty different political groups in the Northwestern coastal area speaking over nineteen different languages. However, the main nations and languages in the area can be grouped together as the Haida, the Tlingit, the Tsimshian, the Nuu-chah-nulth (Nootka), and the Salishan.

The peoples of the Northwest Pacific Coast lived in a narrow section of coastal land stretching from the northeastern Gulf of Alaska to northwest California. Therefore, the temperature was mild and the weather was often rainy. The environment of the Northwest Coast was very diverse. The Northern Coast Range consisted of high peaks and ridges. In the northwest, the region was cut by narrow channels and deep fjords.

There were specific roles that men and women played in the Northwest Coastal groups. Men did the hunting, fishing, carving, and building. Women did the household chores, gathering, weaving of baskets, and making of clothing. Their society was not ruled by democracy but by wealth. Their societies were divided into social classes of the nobles, the commoners, and the slaves. The oldest and highest ranking individual was the leader of a family and then in accordance with their relationship to the chief, their rank was determined.

Like many natives, the peoples of the northern coast relied primarily on the natural resources they had available. They were predominantly dependent on local wildlife and edible greenery as a main source of sustenance. Many of the animals they found in the forest were black tailed deer, elk, mountain goats, and bears. They took advantage of the forest area and used cedar trees extensively in their lives. Cedar trees were used for everything ranging from longhouses, clothing, dishes, tools, and art. In addition to wildlife, they were skilled fishermen due to their close proximity to the Pacific Ocean. Pink salmon was abundantly located in these waters making it one of their primary assets for survival.

In the Northwest Coastal region, the people passed down their beliefs, customs, and history orally since they had no written language. In their culture, spirits were connected to all living things. This is reflected through their art, tools, and religious ceremonies. Their pipes, masks, clothing, canoes, boxes, and dishes all portrayed animals either painted or carved on the items. Many of the dishes the Northwest Coastal people crafted, have images or carvings of all the different animals found in the region.



Caption:

Tlingit Dancers with totem poles
in the background

Photo Credit: Wikimedia.org

Use within Culture:

The cedar bowl's use within the Northwest Coastal region culture was as a decorative bowl. Like many groups at the time, these people relied primarily on the natural resources they had available. Cedar was a predominate resource in the area and this material corresponds with the artifact, since using cedar for dishes was a common practice. Similarly, many of the animals found in the surrounding area were reflected in the Northwest Coastal art, tools, and religious ceremonies. Their pipes, masks, clothing, canoes, boxes, and dishes all portrayed animals either painted or carved on the items. The Cedar Bowl Artifact adheres to this practice with its two bear head carvings on the ends of the bowl.

Report written by: Juliana E. Martinez