



Sunduk, Mindanao, Philippines



1 200 EUR

Period : 20th century

Condition : Etat d'usage

Material : Solid wood

Height : 95 cm

Description

This grave marker comes from the Badjao or Bajau population, meaning man of the sea, and is used to describe the tribal group that can be found in many coastal settlements and the waters and shores of the Sulu archipelago, Tawi-Tawi, Basilan, and Zamboanga del Sur. These sea gypsies are born on the water, live on their vintas or houseboats--drifting the southern seas to fish--and say they will only set foot on land to die. They are a peaceful people who have remained animists, practicing a form of ancestor worship. Their belief that the spirits of their dead still roam the natural world is evident in their elaborate funerary rites and tombs. On the shallow grave, above the head, a "sunduk" or grave marker is placed, in the form of a totem pole carved back to back with an intricate pattern

Dealer

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of leaves and vines--similar to the okir designs commonly found in woodwork, metalwork, and textiles from southern Mindanao--made even more beautiful by signs of use and aging, with a more rounded top indicating that it was a male.

The mortar This memorial post or grave marker known as a *sunduk* was carved from a single piece of ironwood. It is typical in style and shape of those found in the Sulu Archipelago of the southern Philippines. The region is home to the indigenous and strongly Islamic Tausug, Samal, and Badjaw peoples and was under the control of the Islamic Sultanate of Sulu. A large number of Moro from Mindanau also live in the area. This memorial post or grave marker known as a *sunduk* was carved from a single piece of ironwood. It is typical in style and shape of those found in the Sulu Archipelago of the southern Philippines. The region is home to the indigenous and strongly Islamic Tausug, Samal, and Badjaw peoples and was under the control of the Islamic Sultanate of Sulu. A large number of Moro from Mindanau also live in the area. The grave marker is carved to be viewed from all sides. It has been decorated with a traditional Malay-inspired carving (*ukkil lukis*) in a tree plant motif (*birdo*) and is topped with a crown-like motif that could also be a stylized lotus flower (*sumping kayapu'*). Most likely, this example was for a male; those intended for females tend to be wider, less post-like, and more slab-like. The marker is weathered and has a fine patina and obvious age. There is a minor loss to one of the lower protuberances. Muslim funerary duties include cleansing and shrouding the body, as well as performing the necessary prayers for the deceased. The custom for several Muslim communities in the Sulu Archipelago is to place the cleansed and shrouded body upright in graves, usually within twenty-four hours of the time of death. Graves are commonly adorned with markers called "*sunduk*" that help both identify and serve as a form of protection for the body resting in the grave. *Sunduks* are inserted directly

into the ground, above the head of the deceased.

A sunduk can be made from wood, stone, or even coral or metal. Many traditional markers are carved with designs, but increasingly, newer markers may be left uncarved and painted in bright colors. Ukil is a technique used in Mindanao, specifically in the Sulu Peninsula. It is a decorative motif used in sculpture, basketry, pottery, and weaving with designs similar to the Western style of arabesque and Art Nouveau.

According to my humanities teacher, during the Byzantine era, iconoclasts influenced the art of Arab countries that spread throughout Asia.

Previously, it was a sin for Muslims to recreate or paint/sculpt God's creations such as humans or animals. That is why they used geometric patterns, ornamental designs, and icons. We can see this in the art of the Tausug, Maranao, and Yakans here in Mindanao, which uses shapes and patterns similar to Byzantine-era art. Ukkils usually have wave-like designs...