



Northern Territory Sewn Bark Indigenous Canoe A6450

Vessel number

HV000515

Date

1918

Description

The Northern Territory sewn bark Indigenous canoe is in the South Australian Museum Collection, number A6450 and was acquired in 1918. It is just over 3.6m long and with its depth and high sides it would be able to carry one or two adults. It is not known what the bark is, but a stringy bark, eucalyptus tetradonta was commonly used in other bark canoe construction across Arnhem Land. The canoe features a very neat sewing pattern to the stem and stern ends. Both ends have a slightly raked profile, which is also concave and crescent shaped, a styling not seen on other bark canoes. In addition it is extremely well sewn with parallel stitches set just inboard of the edge, rather than going around the edge as seen on other types of sewn craft. The material appears to be a vine, possibly

lawyer cane which is common material for this purpose. The main hull is well supported. Along the edges a branch forms a strong gunwale, and it is lashed at intervals to the bark panel. A series of seven frames are set into the hull at roughly even intervals, bent between the gunwales and formed of very small diameter, supple branches. There are three beams and ties made of vine that run across the hull as well, pulling the sides together against the natural outward bend of the bark and the branches forming the frames. This forms a strong hull which has a rounded bottom and flared sides. These craft were used for fishing and transport along the coast and probably capable of a short passage across a channel to one of the islands in good conditions.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 3.6 m x 0.7 m (11.81 ft x 2.3 ft)