



Northern Territory Sewn Bark Indigenous Canoe A6456

Vessel number

HV000516

Date

1918

Description

The Northern Territory sewn bark Indigenous canoe is in the South Australian Museum Collection, number A6456, and was acquired in 1918. It is 2.5 metres long but still has a deep hull with high sides. It could carry an adult, but was probably more suited to children and as a child's canoe gave them experience before moving into larger craft. 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 six frames are set into the hull at uneven intervals, bent between the gunwales and formed of very small diameter, supple branches. There are three 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, however the smaller size of this craft suggests it would not have made any passages, instead it was probably used off the shore in a bay or estuary.

Dimensions

Vessel Dimensions: 2.5 m x 0.7 m (8.2 ft x 2.3 ft)