Finch & Co



PAPUA NEW GUINEA MADANG PROVINCE, MIDDLE RAMU RIVER / UPPER KERAM RIVER CARVED WOODEN FLUTE MASK

A PAPUA NEW GUINEA MADANG PROVINCE, MIDDLE RAMU RIVER / UPPER KERAM RIVER CARVED WOODEN FLUTE MASK
WITH INCURVED HOOKS THE NOSE PIERCED. TRACES OF PIGMENT AND OLD WEAR
SMOOTH PATINA FROM HANDLING, AN OLD COLLECTION LABEL TO THE REVERSE
EARLY 20TH CENTURY
SIZE: 31.5CM HIGH, 5CM WIDE, 5CM DEEP – 12½ INS HIGH, 2 INS WIDE, 2 INS DEEP

LITERATURE

PROBABLY SERVING AN AMULETIC PURPOSE, THE KNOB SHAPED ENDS OF THIS MASK OR PLAQUE SERVED FOR BINDINGS OF CANE OR FIBRE FOR ATTACHMENTS TO ANOTHER OBJECT. IT IS SAID OF A COMPARABLE EXAMPLE IN THE BARBIER-MUELLER COLLECTION THAT THESE LITTLE MASKS WERE FIXED ALONG THE SIDES OF HUGE CEREMONIAL BAMBOO FLUTES. THESE FLUTES ARE DESCRIBED BY DIRK SMIDT, AS SACRED VOICE MODIFYING INSTRUMENTS THAT ARE ESPECIALLY PLAYED AT INITIATION RITUALS. THEY ARE NOT WIND BLOWN INSTRUMENTS, BUT ARE PLAYED BY SINGING OR SHOUTING INTO ONE END, THE PLAYER THUS MODIFYING HIS VOICE AND CREATING THE 'ILLUSION THAT THE SOUNDS EMANATE FROM NON HUMAN SOURCES'. ALTHOUGH THE BAMBOO FLUTES ARE DISPENSABLE THE LITTLE MASKS ARE ALWAYS TREASURED AND KEPT TO BE USED AGAIN.