



Abelam Bark Painting

A fine and early painting on bark representing an ancestral spirit figure or ndudama. These painted panels cover the inside and the façade of the great Spirit House or korambo (haus tambaran in Pidgin) that has place of pride in the village. Maprik (Abelam) area, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia. Sago bark, wood, cane and natural pigments. 150 x 73 cm. Early to mid 20th century.

« ...The ndudama, the human figures on the façade painting (fig. 22g), address a maira which for the Abelam is of primary significance: that of decorated men. The figures actually depict nare, ritual dancers common to all initiation ceremonies. In reality, and depending on context, nare wear either plaited, round route headdresses or triangular, painted wagnen head pieces, which is why they are shown on the painting wearing both adornments. Like the nggwalnggwal, the ndudama are also endowed with female pubic triangles – for certain dances women wear this motif also as a facial pattern. The equal rendering in imagery of secret figures and ritual dancers which have, through seclusion and adornment, themselves become otherworldly entities, indicates that, in initiations, the Abelam do not distinguish between the two spheres, that is, human representatives and beings from the world beyond. » From : Hauser-Schäublin, Brigitta : CEREMONIAL HOUSES OF THE ABELAM

PAPUA NEW GUINEA ARCHITECTURE AND RITUAL – A PASSAGE TO THE ANCESTORS.

Literature:

See : Hauser-Schäublin, Brigitta : CEREMONIAL HOUSES OF THE ABELAM PAPUA NEW GUINEA ARCHITECTURE AND RITUAL – A PASSAGE TO THE ANCESTORS. Crawford House Publishing, Australia, 2015.