



Ramu/Sepik Fiber Face Mask

Rare form of mask or facial ornament composed of a face with broad smile surmounted by a crest of dogs teeth. A nasal ornament made of a piece of polished giant clam shell pierces the septum. This type of mask is little known in the literature and its exact use remains relatively mysterious, although it was probably worn during so-called naven ceremonies. Lower Sepik Region, PNG, Melanesia. Fiber, tradecloth, vegetable fiber, shells (nassa) and Giant Clam shell, coconut, dog teeth and red ocher. 24 x 25 x 11 cm. Patina of wear, repairs and deficiencies in conformity with use (missing a tie). Early 20th century.

Literature:

See the two photographs circa 1930/40 showing a group of dancers wearing fiber "U'Panin" masks near Madang, PNG. Photographer unknown. MEL.PNG.049 & MEL.PNG.050. Coll. Anthony JP Meyer