



Abelam Bone Tube ex Anthony Forge

A very fine and archaic bone magical tube carved overall with stylized representations of the ancestral spirits or Nggwalndu. Long thought to worn in the hair these remarkable and esoteric objects are now known to be used in making magic – the type of magic however is still yet to be disclosed. Michal Hamson reports in his Abelam catalogue of 2015 (p. 241) that the tubes and their function were « each time ... explained in terms of magic and secrecy with the suggestion of malicious intent »... by his informants in the field. In some cases old traces of compounded lime are found on the well worn, porous surface in the inside of the tube, however this presence of lime is still unexplained as well.

Bukie or Northern Abelam Area, PNG, Melanesia.

Human bone with a fine patina of long usage and great age.

12,8 cm.

19th century or earlier.

Collected in the field by Anthony Forge (c. 1960's).

Literature:

See the diagram showing the extreme stylization of the human body in the « hoker » position resulting in the elimination of the head, hands and feet creating a repeating design pattern of ovals and chevron shapes. There is also a sexual conotation with the oval « body » representing a highly stylized vulva.