GALERIE MEYER
OCEANIC & ESKIMO ART

Yimar Figure Head St Augustine

A very expressive head representing Yimar - the central deity of the Yimam People. Yimar is represented by a large naturalistic male figure and the word means man or human-being. Whether Yimar represents an original ancestor, a clan founder, or a mythological hero is still uncertain. However, he is surely an entity of the greatest importance. How Yimar functions in the religious life of the Yimam is not known with precision either, but it seems certain that he occupies a central position with the yipwon, spirit hook-figures related to hunting and warfare, revolving around its fringe. Yimar occupies the central position on the sacred platform, at the rear of the Mens House, with the yipwon flanking him on either side. Yimar is definitely not a war or hunting spirit like the satellite yipwon. Only six or seven large and complet Yimar figures (over 100 cm tall) are recorded. This head would have been from a large figure as well.

Yimam (or Yimar) People, Upper regions of the Korewori and Blackwater Rivers, Southern Middle Sepik, P.N.G., New Guinea, Melanesia. Hard, dense, erroded and weathered wood (vitex cofassus ?). 28,8 cm x 9,2 cm x 11 cm.

A Carbon 14 test gives a conventional age of minus 180 years (pre 1950) +/- 25 years (1745 to 1795 AD). The calibrated C 14 age verified by dendrochronology gives an earliest date of 1650 AD for the death of the tree from which this figure is carved and an average latest date of 1820 AD. The ethnological information concerning the rituals and methods of wood-carving in New Guinea shows that

the wood is usually carved fresh. Thus, this head was in principal carved not long after 1650 AD but before 1820 AD.

Literature:

Ref.:

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