



Nose Ornament (Bia Ngangnep Barat)

Date

early to mid 20th Century

Medium

Cassowary quill, cane, siyot seed and cockatoo feather

Description

Piercing the nose and wearing a bone is known among many traditional cultures around the world, but has

become synonymous with New Guinea. From the jungles of the Sepik river area to the mountainous regions of the Highlands, men continue today to wear nose ornamentation by inserting a variety of objects through their septum. There are a variety of reasons and materials used. In the Western Sepik region human bones from deceased relatives are sometimes used - connecting the person to the deceased spirit, and men on ceremonial occasions use beautiful combinations of cassowary quills and cockatoo feathers. In the Middle Sepik region, elongated bat bones are used, while boar tusks are commonly used in both the Sepik and Highland regions. In Western New Guinea (Irian Jaya) intricately carved wood is used. Always a sign of status and wealth, the reasons for use vary from region to region. In many regions it is a sign that you have passed your initiation as a young man, and you are now considered an adult. In the Asmat region, it signifies you have taken a head in battle and you have achieved a respected position in the community.

Dimensions

6 × 1/4 × 11 1/2 in. (15.2 × 0.6 × 29.2 cm)