



## Ancestor Figure

### Date

mid 20th Century

### Primary Maker

Nagum Boiken

### Medium

Wood and pigment

### Description

While several cultures in northeastern New Guinea create ancestor figures of this general style, the wood carvings of the Nagum Boiken of the Prince Alexander Mountain range most closely parallel the lozenge shape of the head and body that we see here. Furthermore, the shape of the eyes and mouth are both rather distinct, and similar examples of especially the mouth shape have only been seen among the Boiken. There is not much information regarding the importance of the stance of the ancestral

figure. Boiken art is predominantly used as way of swiftly conveying concepts of masculinity, femininity, power, and nature. Through the use of specific artistic elements, art became a kind of visual shorthand for transmitting fundamental norms about their society, about their place as a man or women, their purpose in the universe. A design often featured on ancestral figures, as presented here, is the depiction of pointed female genitalia—meant to signify the close association of maternity and femininity. In other recorded depictions, the female genitalia encapsulate the head of the nagwalIndu spirit. According to some researchers, the depiction is meant to visually explain the encompassment of masculinity by femininity.

### Dimensions

19 1/4 × 6 × 1 3/8 in. (48.9 × 15.2 × 3.5 cm)