



## Mask (Barak)

### Date

20th Century

### Medium

Wood and pigments

### Description

This is a wooden brag mask from the Lower Sepik Region of Papua New Guinea. Each of these masks was intended to represent an ancestor or mythological figure. The mask itself was highly associated with war and initiation ceremonies as its usage coincided with headhunting parties and certain initiation rites. Larger brag masks generally remained attached to wooden frameworks where they would be possessed by a village's shaman, but not actually worn. These could become powerful magical objects, in some cases passed off for fear of bringing curses to one's own village. The distinctive beak-shaped nose of this mask is said to be associated with a

male war spirit. In specific examples it has been noted to be the abstracted beak of the Rufous-bellied Giant Kingfisher, but it is not certain that this mask is representative of that specific bird.

### Dimensions

18 1/2 × 7 1/4 × 5 1/4 in. (47 × 18.4 × 13.3 cm)