

ORNAMENTAL HOOK AND DISC FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Artist: Unknown

Date: Before 19th Century

Dimensions: Disc: 42 x 38 x 3.2 cm; Hook: 67 x 21 x 18 cm

Material: Painted wood, vegetable fibres

Inventory Number: 100576, 110845

Total Cost: € 12.325,00

STATE OF PRESERVATION:

This piece is in poor condition. There are abrasions and fissures throughout the surface. A layer of dust and debris covers both pieces. The fibers are dehydrated and torn. In some areas the colors are missing.

RESTORATION PROCESS INCLUDES:

- Pesticide treatment
- Scientific study and research
- Cleaning of wood
- Cleaning of the fibers
- Consolidation of both pieces
- Touching-up of the colors where needed
- Photographic documentation before, during and after restoration
- Construction of a new mount for better display of the piece in the Missionary Ethnological Museum

This hook and disc come from the area of Blackwater River, Kanengara in Sepik, Papua New Guinea. The wooden hook is carved in the shape of a "Janus" type human figure. This small wooden sculpture has two heads and a round base with a hole in the center. The base has seven hooks from which to hang offerings to thank the gods after a successful hunt. A piece of bamboo wrapped with strips of vegetable fiber is placed behind one of the heads, possibly serving as a support. A small rope made of vegetable fibers is wrapped around the neck of the sculpture and plant fibers are inserted in holes at the ears.

The disc has a hole in its center and it is painted on one side with geometric patterns in red, white and black. These colors match those of the hook. Unfortunately, both objects were damaged when the Missionary Ethnological Collection was transferred from St. John Lateran to the Vatican Museums. The disk and the wooden sculpture are believed to be two parts of the same object and were likely originally one. Historical sources state the disc was an integral part of the hook.

