

*A prestigious collection of*

# NEW GUINEA HIGHLANDS

## War Shields

*presented by*

**SHAK GALLERY**

Rue Darwin 59, 1050 Bruxelles

+322 735 48 35

[www.shakgallery.com](http://www.shakgallery.com)

[info@shakgallery.com](mailto:info@shakgallery.com)



It was in the 1930's that a group of Australian mining prospectors first ventured inland, to the vast mountainous areas of the New Guinea highlands region. Here they encountered remote verdant valleys and to mutual amazement of all, a population of approximately 1 million locals, scattered throughout hundreds of villages.

The Australians had no idea of their existence and the local inhabitants had never encountered other people, let alone beings with pale skin colour—a fact that probably saved the visitors—who they thought might be the spirits of the dead.

Prospectors were followed by explorers, scientists - naturalists and anthropologists: all curious about the discovery of things that had never been seen before. The New Guinea highlanders existed in a stone-age culture that hadn't changed much in thousands of years. They dressed from nature, with pelts, fibres, flowers and feathers and were all farmers, hunters as well as fierce warriors.

Tribal rivalry and warfare between the many clans existing in the highlands was commonplace and to defend themselves from arrows and stone-headed clubs used in battle, the men carved and decorated large scale war shields. The process, beginning with the selection and felling of a tree, was long and laborious, and the final work would be to decorate each shield with natural pigments and abstract patterns that would help identify the owner as well as protect them.

Artists, collectors and historians alike have marvelled at the harsh beauty of these archaic shields - so primordial in spirit but often displaying designs of great modernity and skilled dynamics. Abstract designs that are inspired by the surrounding nature and cosmos.

The fine selection presented here are all old and totally traditional examples with historical provenance and importance. Some predate the "first contact" period and all represent the authentic nature of the proud warriors that used them. The battle scars that are clearly visible on most, are testimony to a long and harsh life of use in warfare. 10 of the 12 examples were once part of the Jolika Collection—the most important grouping of Melanesian art ever assembled—once belonging to John and Marcia Friede, and published in the primary art reference to the region: *New Guinea Highlands: Art from the Jolika Collection* (De Young Museum, San Francisco & Prestel, 2017).

MELANESIA

PNG Highlands

unknown group

Wood & pigments

Early 20th C

55x56 cms

# Archer's Shield



#### NOTES & REFERENCES

Pre-contact stone carved shield collected in the 1960's by Stan Moriarty.  
Ex Stan Moriarty collection, Australia;  
Ex Wayne Heathcote;  
Acquired from Marcus Raccanello.

<https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/new-guinea-art-collection-is-striking-evidence-of-one-mans-passion-20140529-zrrs9.html>

MELANESIA

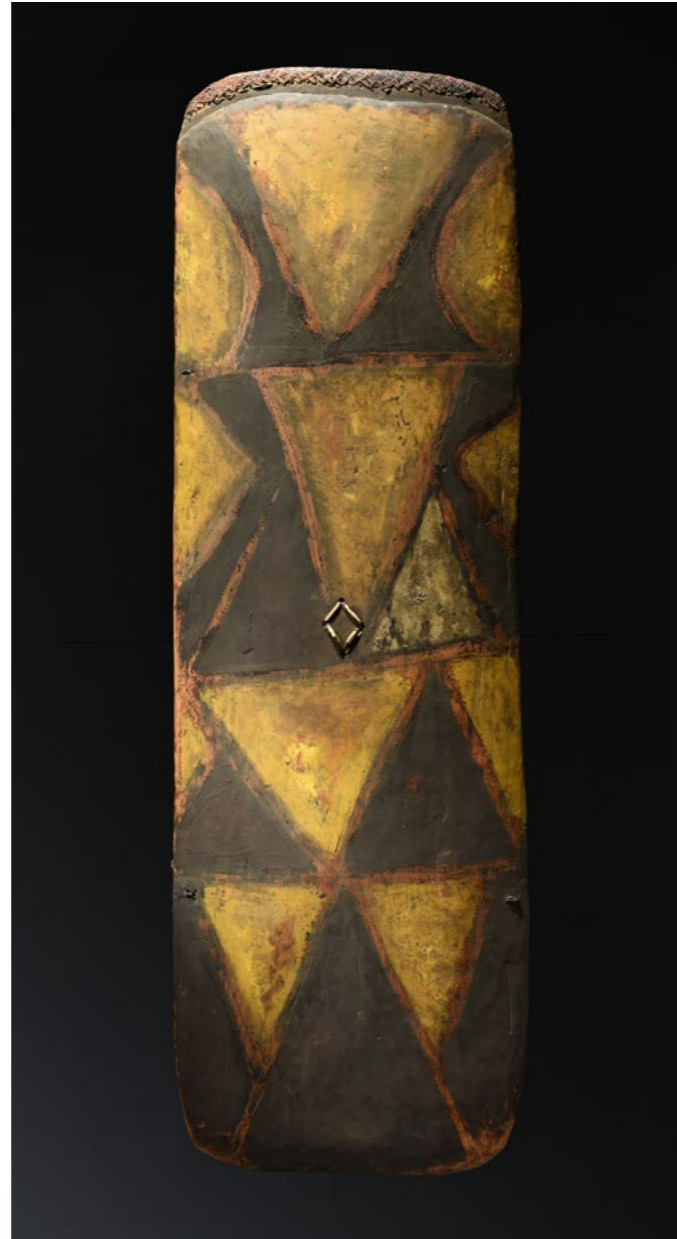
PNG Highlands

Simbu (Chimbu)

Wood, fiber & pigments

20th C

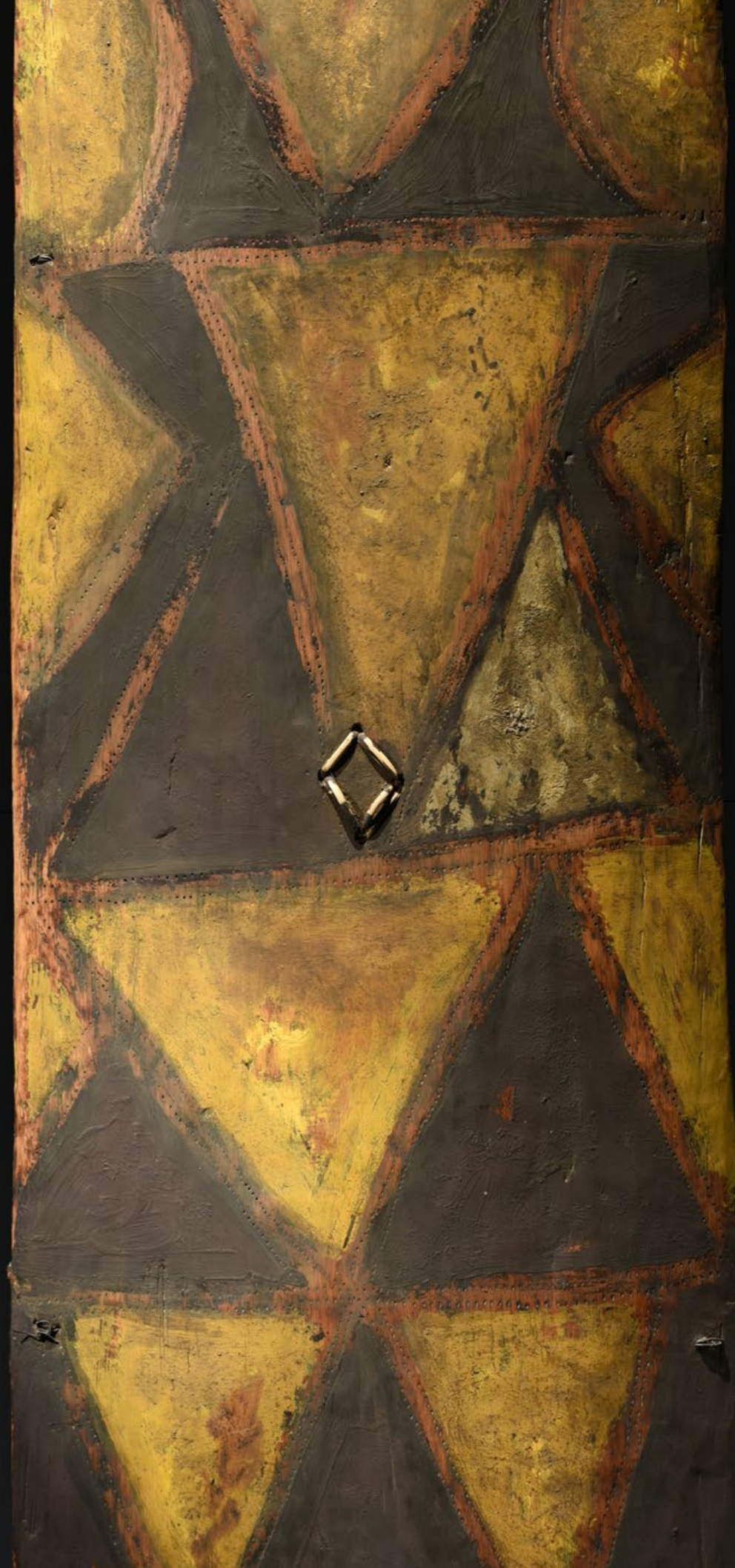
150 x 52 cms



NOTES & REFERENCES  
Collected by Chris Boylan on Mount Hagen.  
Ex Chris Boylan, Sydney;  
Ex Jolika collection - John & Marcia Friede;  
Ex Marc Assayag, Montreal;  
Ex Berry de Bruijn, The Netherlands

PUBLISHED  
*New Guinea Highlands, Art from the Jolika collection,*  
Pages 344-345, Fig.12-43

# War Shield



MELANESIA

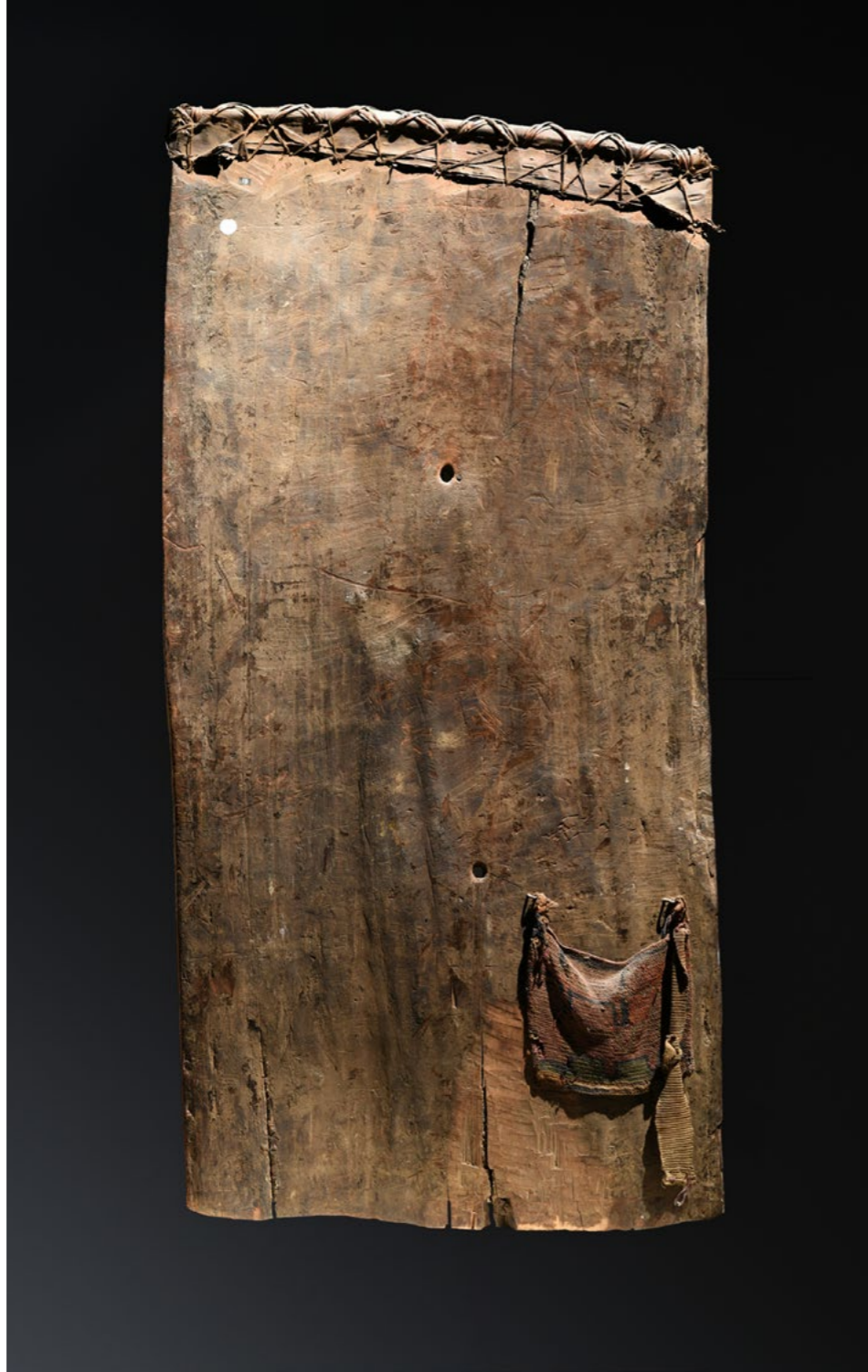
PNG E. Highlands

Benabena or Kamano

Wood & pigments

Early 20th C

129.5 x 63.5 cms



# War Shield

## NOTES & REFERENCES

Old war shield with incised and painted chevron designs on the front and a woven bag attached to the back for carrying spare arrows.

Ex Todd Barlin, Sydney;

Ex Jolika collection - John & Marcia Friede;

Ex Marc Assayag, Montreal;

Ex Berry de Bruijn, The Netherlands

## PUBLISHED

*New Guinea Highlands, Art from the Jolika collection,*  
Pages 116-117, Fig.6-9

MELANESIA

PNG Western Highlands

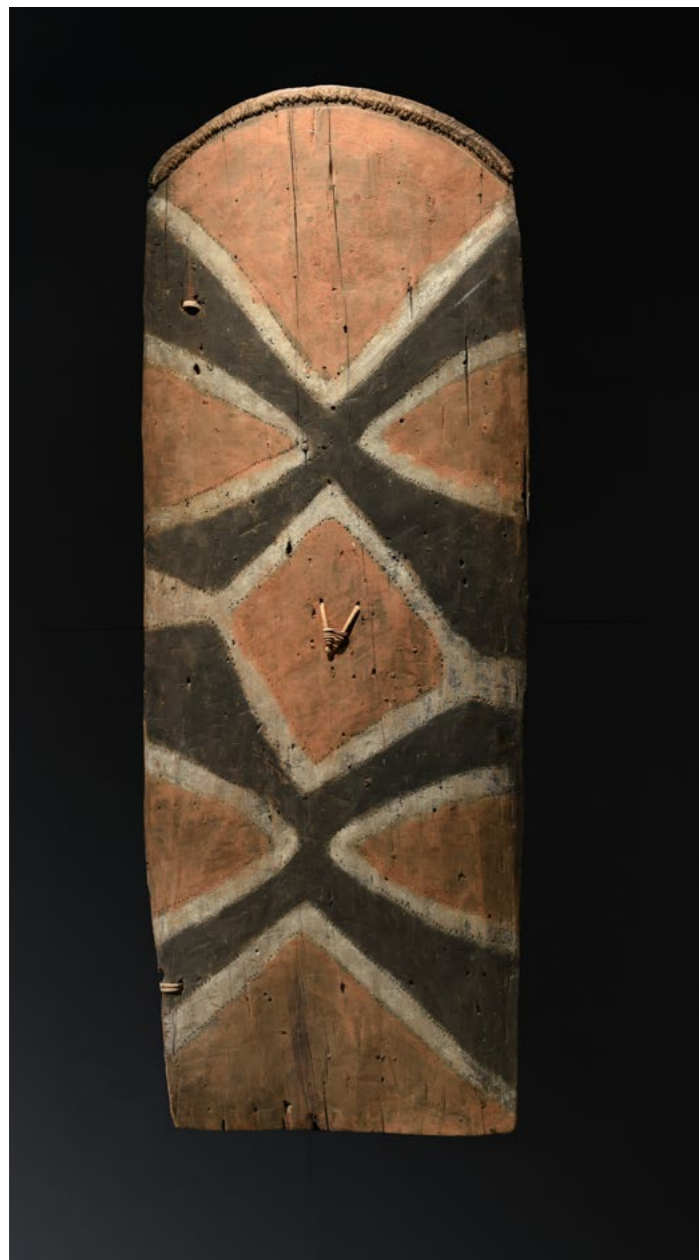
Wahgi

Wood, fiber & pigments

20th C

165.1 x 63.5 cms

# War Shield



#### NOTES & REFERENCES

Classic Wahgi-style shield, collected by Chris Boylan at Paikora village in the Nebilyer valley, 1997.

Ex Todd Barlin, Sydney;

Ex Jolika collection - John & Marcia Friede;

Ex Marc Assayag, Montreal;

Ex Berry de Bruijn, The Netherlands

#### PUBLISHED

*New Guinea Highlands, Art from the Jolika collection,*  
Pages 404-405, Fig.13-43



# War Shield

MELANESIA

PNG Western Highlands

Maring

Wood, fibre & pigments

Early 20th C

153.7 x 63.5 cms

## NOTES & REFERENCES

Well-used old war shield with incised and painted designs on the front.

Ex Todd Barlin, Sydney;

Ex Jolika collection - John & Marcia Friede;

Ex Marc Assayag, Montreal;

Ex Berry de Bruijn, The Netherlands

## PUBLISHED

*New Guinea Highlands, Art from the Jolika collection,*

Page 403, Fig.13-42

MELANESIA

PNG Western Highlands

Wahgi valley

Wood, fiber & pigments

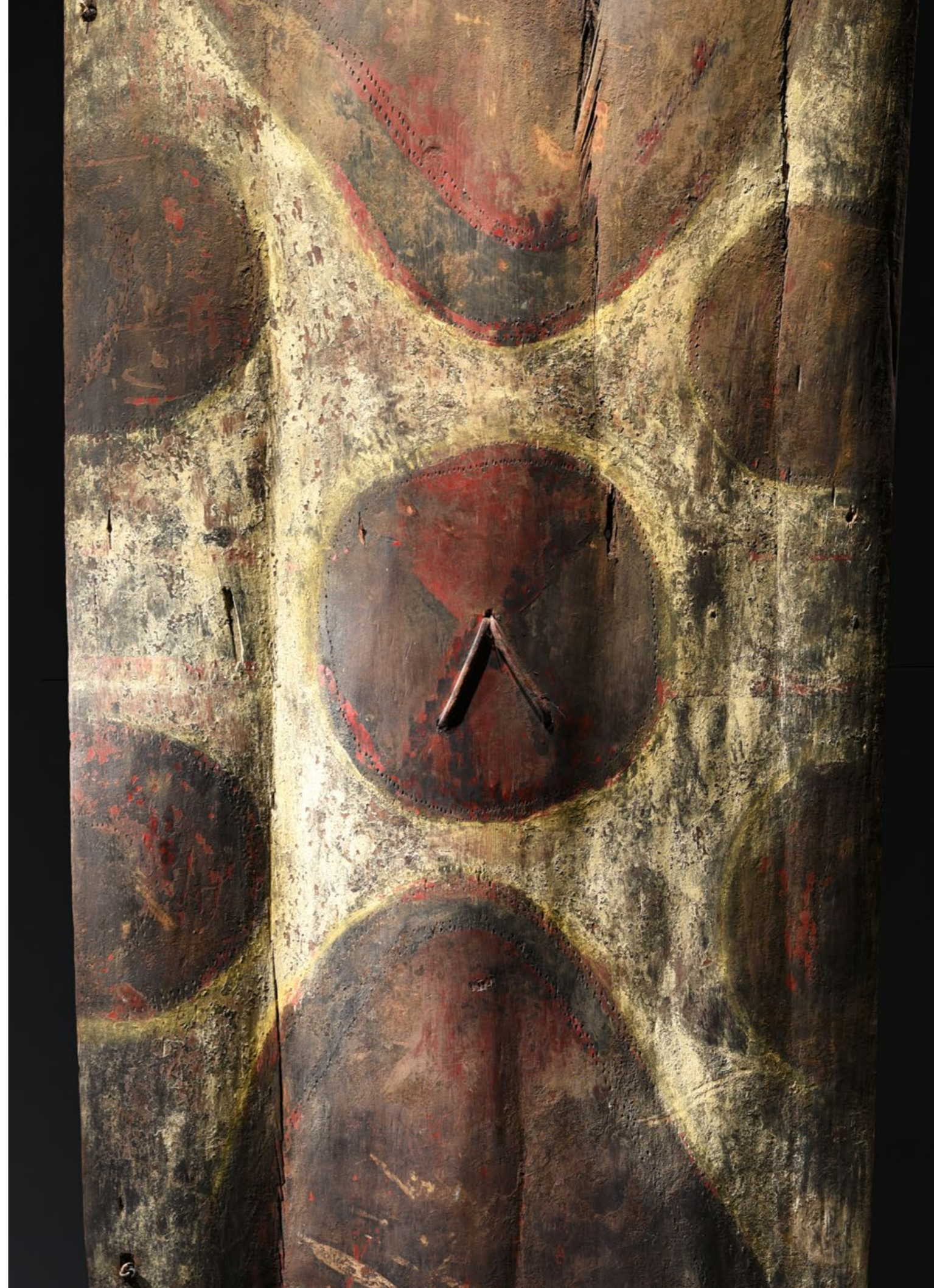
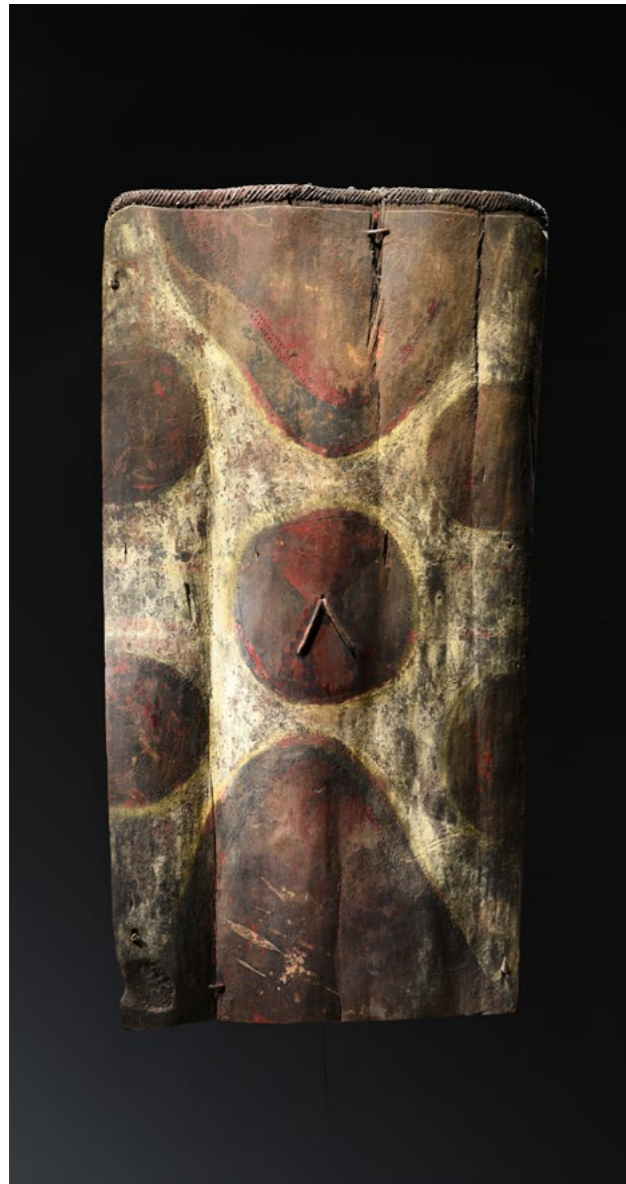
Early 20th C

135 cms approx

NOTES & REFERENCES

Well-used old war shield with incised and painted designs on the front and native repairs.  
Ex Jolika collection - John & Marcia Friede;  
Ex Marc Assayag, Montreal;  
Ex Berry de Bruijn, The Netherlands

# War Shield





MELANESIA

PNG Eastern Highlands

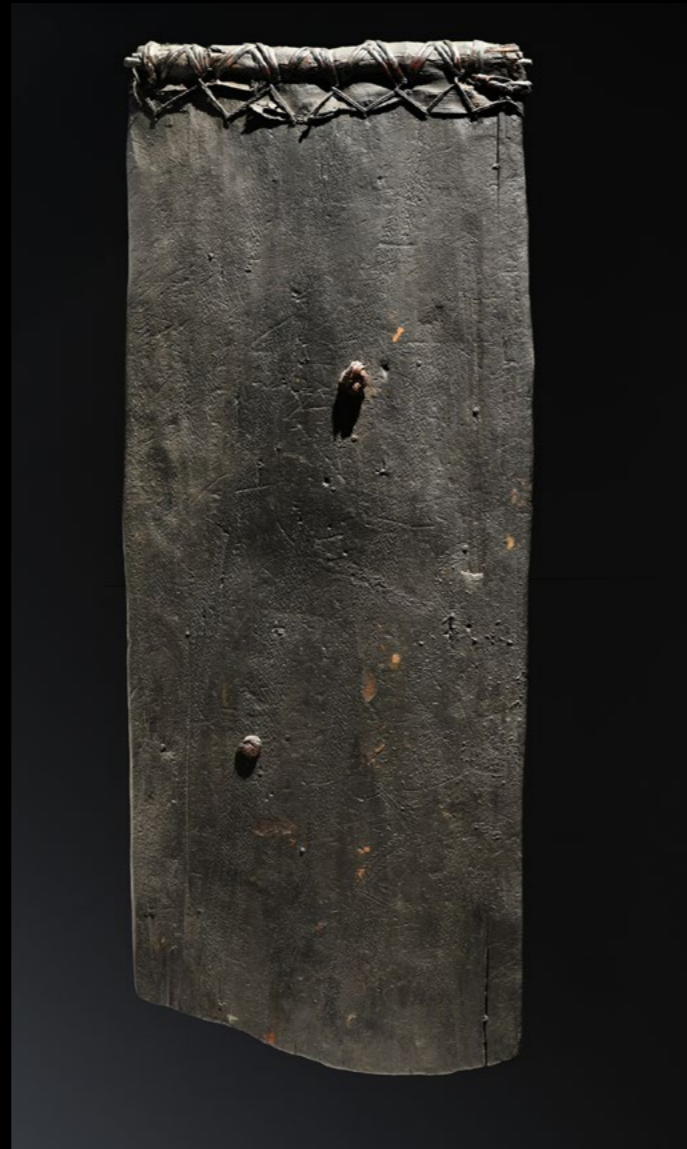
Awa or Tairora

Wood, rattan & bark fiber

Early 20th C

122.6 x 53.3 cms

# War Shield



## NOTES & REFERENCES

Old war shield with incised designs and a blackened smoke patina overall due to long period of storage in the rafters of the men's house.

Ex Todd Barlin, Sydney;

Ex Jolika collection - John & Marcia Friede;

Ex Marc Assayag, Montreal;

Ex Berry de Bruijn, The Netherlands

## PUBLISHED

*New Guinea Highlands, Art from the Jolika collection,*  
Page VIII; Pages 286-287, Fig.11-53





MELANESIA

PNG Eastern Highlands

Ambe people

Wood, natural fibre & pigments

Mid 20th C

104x42 cms

NOTES & REFERENCES

Collected in Mala village, Eastern Highlands.  
A rare example of a "gilimi hya" or 'shield with net'  
designed to carry up to 100 arrows into battle.

Ex Michael Hamson, L.A.;  
Ex Jolika collection - John & Marcia Friede;  
Ex Marc Assayag, Montreal;  
Ex Berry de Bruijn, The Netherlands

PUBLISHED

*New Guinea Highlands, Art from the Jolika collection,*  
Pages 120-122, Figs 6-12 & 6-13  
(more information than above)

# War Shield





MELANESIA

PNG Western Highlands

Kaugel people

Wood, fibre & pigments

Early 20th C

136x53 cms

# War Shield



## NOTES & REFERENCES

A related example from the Kambul area is housed in the British Museum.

Ex Chris Boylan, Sydney;  
Ex Jolika collection - John & Marcia Friede;  
Ex Marc Assayag, Montreal;  
Ex Berry de Bruijn, The Netherlands

## PUBLISHED

*New Guinea Highlands, Art from the Jolika collection*, Page 408, Fig 13-45  
(more information than above)



MELANESIA

PNG Western Highlands

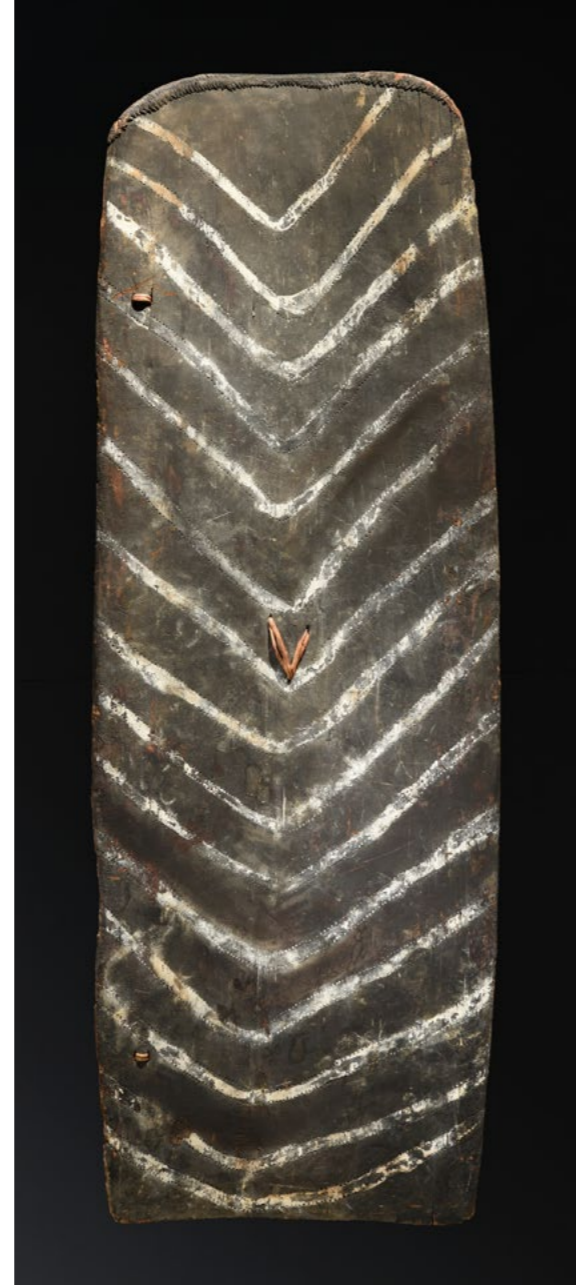
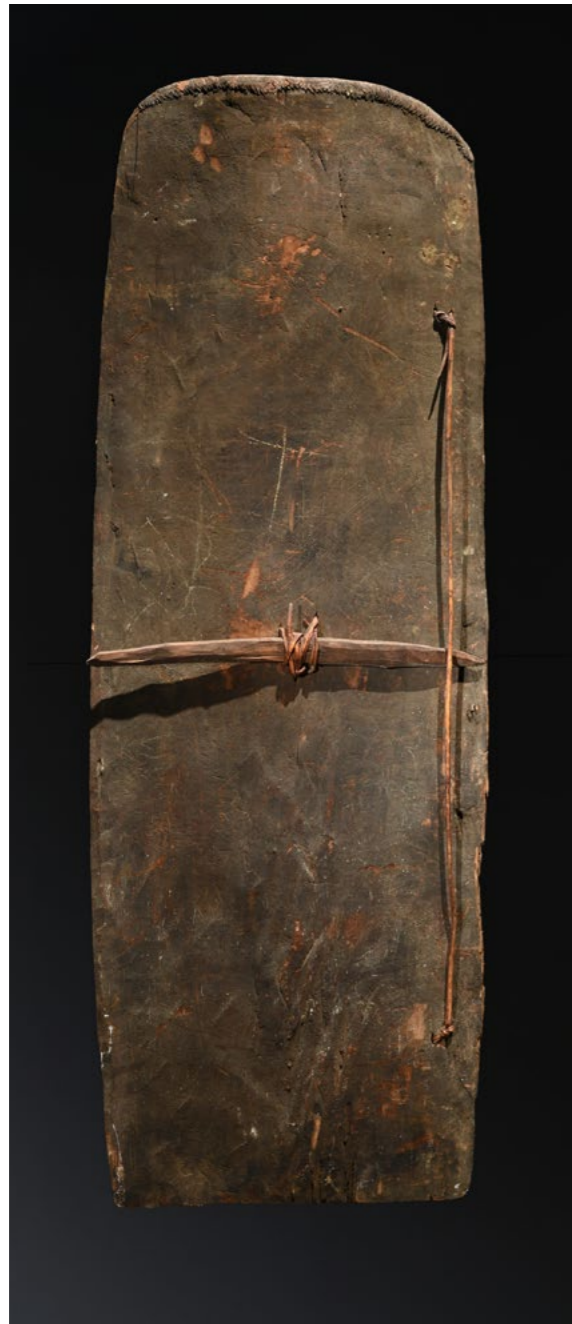
Maring

Wood, fiber & pigment

Early 20th C

154.9 x 55.9 cms

# War Shield



#### NOTES & REFERENCES

Collected in the Jimi River region, to the north of the main Wahgi Valley, an area inhabited by the Maring people.

Ex Alex Phillips, Melbourne

Ex Todd Barlin, Sydney;

Ex Jolika collection - John & Marcia Friede;

Ex Marc Assayag, Montreal;

Ex Berry de Bruijn, The Netherlands

#### PUBLISHED

*New Guinea Highlands, Art from the Jolika collection*, Page 132, Fig.6-23

MELANESIA

PNG Southern Highlands

Mendi Valley

Wood & natural pigments

Early 20th C

127x43 cms

# War Shield



#### NOTES & REFERENCES

Collected by Geoff Casey in the 1970's.

Ex Todd Barlin, Sydney;  
Ex Jolika collection - John & Marcia Friede;  
Ex Marc Assayag, Montreal;  
Ex Berry de Bruijn, The Netherlands

#### PUBLISHED

*New Guinea Highlands, Art from the Jolika collection,*  
Page 497, Fig 15-62  
(more information than above)



MELANESIA

---

PNG Southern Highlands

---

Nipa Valley

---

Wood & natural pigments

---

Mid 20th C

---

112 cms

---

# War Shield

---

## NOTES & REFERENCES

Collected in the Nipa Valley, Southern Highlands, 1986;  
Ex John Giltsoff collection, Spain/Belgium.

This wonderful old oval shield is decorated with the simplest of motifs – a central red circle. The circle represents a navel, and hides the underlying anthropomorphic meaning inherent in Southern Highland shields. It is carved from the timber of the fel tree. Generally, shields using this rarer hardwood are used by the fight leaders.







01

MELANESIA

PNG Highlands

unknown group

Wood & pigments

Early 20th C

55x56 cms



02

MELANESIA

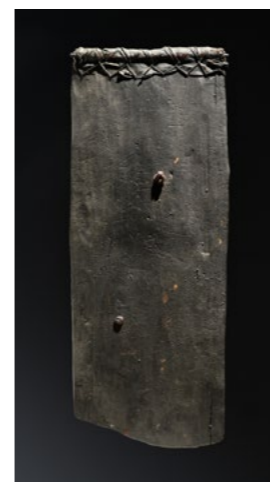
PNG Highlands

Simbu (Chimbu)

Wood, fiber & pigments

20th C

150 x 52 cms



07

MELANESIA

PNG Eastern Highlands

Awa or Tairora

Wood, rattan & bark fiber

Early 20th C

122.6 x 53.3 cms



08

MELANESIA

PNG Eastern Highlands

Ambe people

Wood, natural fibre & pigments

Mid 20th C

104x42 cms



03

MELANESIA

PNG E. Highlands

Benabena or Kamano

Wood & pigments

Early 20th C

129.5 x 63.5 cms



04

MELANESIA

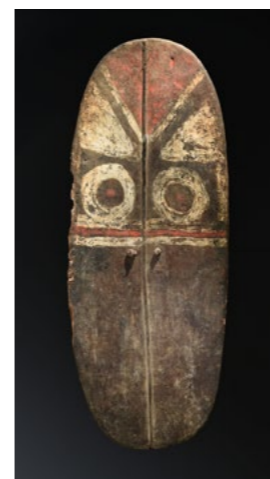
PNG Western Highlands

Wahgi

Wood, fiber & pigments

20th C

165.1 x 63.5 cms



09

MELANESIA

PNG Western Highlands

Kaugel people

Wood, fibre & pigments

Early 20th C

136x53 cms



10

MELANESIA

PNG Western Highlands

Maring

Wood, fiber & pigment

Early 20th C

154.9 x 55.9 cms



05

MELANESIA

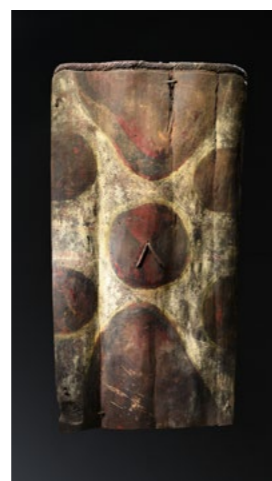
PNG Western Highlands

Maring

Wood, fibre & pigments

Early 20th C

153.7 x 63.5 cms



06

MELANESIA

PNG Western Highlands

Wahgi valley

Wood, fiber & pigments

Early 20th C

135 cms approx



11

MELANESIA

PNG Southern Highlands

Mendi Valley

Wood & natural pigments

Early 20th C

127x43 cms



12

MELANESIA

PNG Southern Highlands

Nipa Valley

Wood & natural pigments

Mid 20th C

112 cms

