

COLNAGHI



*DAYAK ARTIST
Half Trophy Skull with Engraving*

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Borneo, 19th-early 20th century

Half Trophy Skull with Engraving

Bone, vegetable fiber

h. 16 cm

6 ¼ in.

Provenance

Private collection, Antwerp, Belgium.

Headhunting played a critical role in the social organization, religion and culture of Dayak groups of Borneo. Headhunting expeditions were motivated by the requirement of a severed head to terminate the mourning period for an important person.

Only the taking of a head could finally release and appease the anger of the dead against the living. Another aspect of the acquisition of a head was to promote the fertility of women and the well-being and prosperity of a group in a new settlement.

The skulls taken in headhunting raids were intricately carved with animal or floral designs and carefully preserved for generations. Often these were cut horizontally or vertically and displayed in the ceremonial long houses to ensure peace and the well-being of the community.

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