

Finch & C^o



A WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL 'CHURINGA' OR SACRED BOARD

A WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL 'CHURINGA' OR SACRED BOARD DECORATED WITH INCISED ANGULAR DESIGNS AND PAINTED WITH PIPE CLAY , OLD COLLECTION NUMBER PAINTED ON REVERSE ; H 760

19 TH CENTURY

SIZE : 52.5 CMLONG , 9 CMWIDE – 20¾ INS LONG , 3½ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

INTENSE RITUAL AND RELIGIOUS LIFE WAS OF OVERWHELMING IMPORTANCE TO THE SEMI-NOMADIC ABORIGINES . THE BASES FOR THEIR BELIEFS WAS THE TOTEM WHICH COULD BE A NATURAL OBJECT , PLANT OR ANIMAL WHICH WAS SACRED TO ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE DIVISION OF THE TRIBE . 'INCREASE' CEREMONIES WERE CONDUCTED IN WHICH THE SPIRITS WERE INVOKED TO INCREASE THE TOTEM SPECIES OF THE GROUP PERFORMING THE CEREMONY . ELDERS KNOWLEDGEABLE IN TRIBAL CUSTOMS AND HISTORY PRESIDED OVER THE PROCEEDINGS FOR WHICH SACRED OBJECTS WERE BROUGHT OUT FROM SACRED STORAGE . THE BULL ROARER WAS USED BOTH DURING CEREMONIES AND TO SUMMON THE PARTICIPANTS . IT WAS WHIRLED ROUND THE HEAD ON A HAIR STRING AND GAVE OUT A CHARACTERISTIC RHYTHMIC , DEEP VIBRATING SOUND WHICH THE UNINITIATED BELIEVED TO BE THE VOICE OF THE SPIRITS WARNING THEM TO KEEP AWAY FROM THE SACRED CEREMONY .

THOSE PLAYING A MAJOR PART IN THE CEREMONY DECORATED THEIR BODIES WITH OCHRE , BIRDS DOWN AND BLOOD AND CONSULTED ENGRAVED SACRED WOOD OR STONE TABLETS , SUCH AS THIS EXAMPLE . THESE WERE OFTEN SIMILAR IN FORM TO BULL ROARERS AND SERVED AS A KIND OF 'MNEMONIC' RECORD OF TOTEMIC MYTHS . 'CHURINGA' IS AN 'ARANDA' , CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL WORD , AND IS USED TO DESCRIBE THESE SACRED BOARDS AND STONES WHICH WERE HELD IN GREAT REVERENCE , AND KEPT SAFE BY THE ELDERS OF THE TRIBE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS .