

# Finch & C<sup>o</sup>



## **A NORTHERN ARNHEM LAND AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL BULL ROARER**

A NORTHERN ARNHEM LAND AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL BULL ROARER , THE WOOD INCISED AND PAINTED WITH OCHRE AND WHITE CLAY PIGMENTS , OLD COLLECTION NUMBER ; H 730

19 TH CENTURY

SIZE : 48 CM LONG , 3 CM WIDE – 19 INS LONG , 1¼ INS WIDE

WITH OLD LABEL READING : BULLROARER – BY SWINGING AROUND THE HEAD A ‘...’ SOUNDS ARE ‘...’ DENOTES THE PRESENCE OF A POWERFUL SPIRIT P 13 .

## **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 .