

Finch & C^o



A WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL MESSAGE STICK

A WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL MESSAGE STICK . THE WOOD WITH FINE SHALLOW INCISED DECORATIVE LINES

19 TH CENTURY

SIZE : 42 CMLONG – 16½ INS LONG

LITERATURE

ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE USED OCCASIONALLY FOR MAGICAL PURPOSES , A MESSAGE STICK WAS USED ESSENTIALLY AS AN AIDE-MÉMOIRE AND AS A GUARANTEE OF SAFE CONDUCT THROUGH FOREIGN TERRITORY . A PARTICULAR STICK DOES NOT CONVEY ANY FORM OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE SENDER AND RECEIVER AS THE ABORIGINES HAD NO SYSTEM OF WRITING , BUT IS A GUARANTEE OF THE INTEGRITY OF THE MESSENGER AND THE MESSAGE . THUS THE ENGRAVED DESIGNS SERVED AS A FORM OF PERSONAL SEAL AND WAS OFTEN USED AS A SIGN OF GOOD FAITH IN TRADING TRANSACTIONS .

'CORROBOREES' WERE NON-RELIGIOUS CELEBRATIONS TO WHICH MEMBERS OF OTHER TRIBES COULD BE INVITED BY MEANS OF MESSAGE STICKS . THE INCISED PICTOGRAPHIC SYMBOLS SERVED BOTH AS AN INVITATION TO THE INTERTRIBAL CEREMONIES AND AS PROTECTION TO THE CARRIER OF THE STICK WHEN IN ALIEN TERRITORY .