

Finch & C^o



A VERY RARE SOLOMON ISLANDS CANOE PROW ORNAMENT, WESTERN REGION

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NEW GEORGIA ISLAND

CARVED AND BLACKENED WOOD WITH NAUTILUS PEARL SHELL INLAY

19TH CENTURY

SIZE : 32 CM LONG, 12 CM WIDE, 15 CM DEEP – 12½ INS LONG, 4¾ INS WIDE, 6 INS DEEP

LITERATURE

THESE GUARDIAN FIGURES ARE THE BEST KNOWN OF ALL THE SYMBOLS OF SPIRITS CARVED IN WOOD FROM THE SOLOMON ISLANDS. ASSOCIATED WITH THE SPIRIT CALLED 'KESOKO', WHO WAS A KNOWN EXPERT BONITO FISHERMAN AND A SKILLED HEAD HUNTER, THE CARVINGS WERE ATTACHED TO THE BOWS OF CANOES JUST ABOVE THE WATER LINE. HERE THEY WOULD HELP PILOT THE CANOE AND WARN OF APPROACHING ENEMIES, SHOALS AND DANGERS. IN THE WESTERN REGION OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS ESPECIALLY ON NEW GEORGIA ISLAND CANOES WERE USED FOR HEADHUNTING EXPEDITIONS AND BONITO FISHING. THEY WERE CAREFULLY MADE, AND BEAUTIFULLY SHAPED AND OFTEN DECORATED WITH SHELL INLAID HULLS. HOWEVER, EVEN BY 1910 THESE CANOES AND THEIR GUARDIAN FIGURE HEADS HAD BECOME RARE AS THE FIELD DIARIES OF A.B. LEWIS SHOW. ON FRIDAY DEC' 16TH 1910 HIS ENTRY READ 'NOT MANY THINGS TO BE GOTTEN IN SOLOMON'S AT PRESENT AND PRICES FOR THESE VERY HIGH, EVEN WHEN THE NATIVES CAN BE INDUCED TO PART WITH THEM.