

Finch & C^o



TWO INTERESTING SHIELDS FROM THE DAYAK OR IBAN PEOPLES OF BORNEO

TWO INTERESTING SHIELDS FROM THE DAYAK OR IBAN PEOPLES OF BORNEO, INDONESIA

PARISHIA SOFT WOOD AND RATTAN

19TH CENTURY

SIZES: 128 CM HIGH, 40 CM WIDE – 50½ INS HIGH, 15¾ INS WIDE

121 CM HIGH, 38 CM WIDE – 47½ INS HIGH, 15 INS WIDE

LITERATURE

BORNEO IS THE WORLD'S THIRD LARGEST ISLAND AND BECAUSE OF ITS OVAL SHAPE ITS CENTRAL REGIONS ARE FAR FROM THE COAST AND UNTIL FAIRLY RECENTLY WERE LARGELY INACCESSIBLE.

THE IBAN WARRIOR WAS A HEAD HUNTER PROVING HIS COURAGE AND ABILITY BY RETURNING WITH THE HEAD OF A DEFEATED ENEMY. THE NEED FOR HEADS WAS LEGITIMISED BY INCORPORATING THEM INTO A FERTILITY CULT THAT LINKED HEADS TO THE FERTILITY OF THE IBAN'S SUBSISTENCE CROP OF HILL RICE AND TO THE FERTILITY OF THE WOMEN.

IN BATTLE THE SHIELD IS AS IMPORTANT TO THE IBAN AS THE SWORD. THE SHIELD IS A SHALLOW 'V' SECTION AND IS DESIGNED WITH A TAPERED TOP AND BASE SO THAT IT DOES NOT BECOME TANGLED WITH THE MANY CREEPERS THAT ABOUND IN THE FOREST. MADE OF SOFT WOOD BOTH FOR LIGHTNESS TO PARRY WITH IN DEFENCE AND TO CATCH THE BLADE OF THE ENEMY IF A FULL BLOW IS PARRIED ON THE SHIELD, IT IS STRENGTHENED AT THE TOP AND BOTTOM WITH FRAPPED RATTAN TO PREVENT SPLITTING AND TO ENSURE THAT EVEN IF IT IS OPENED UP IN BATTLE IT CAN STILL BE USED.

THE MAKING OF A SHIELD IS PRECEDED BY A RITUAL THAT INVOLVES THE WHOLE IBAN LONGHOUSE COMMUNITY OF MEN. A DISCUSSION TAKES PLACE CONCERNING WHO WANTS TO MAKE A SHIELD AND OFFERINGS ARE MADE TO THE GOD'S. THE NEXT DAY THE WHOLE COMMUNITY PROCEEDS TO A PLACE WHERE THE SOFT WOOD PARISHIA TREE GROWS AND MORE OFFERINGS ARE MADE PRECEDED BY A BLOOD CURDLING IBAN WAR CRY FROM A SENIOR WARRIOR THAT HE

UTTERS SEVEN TIMES. THE TREE IS STRUCK THREE TIMES BY HIM AND CUT DOWN AND THE SHIELDS ARE THEN CAREFULLY FASHIONED FROM IT.