

Finch & C^o



TWO ASMAT, WESTERN NEW GUINEA MANGROVE WOOD WAR SHIELDS

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FIRST HALF 20TH CENTURY

SIZES: 229CM HIGH, 222CM HIGH

LITERATURE

THE ASMAT LIVE AMONGST THE WINDING RIVERS AND STREAMS ON THE SOUTH WEST COAST OF NEW GUINEA AND ALTHOUGH A COLONIAL GOVERNMENT WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1938 IT WAS NOT UNTIL 1950 THAT THE AREA WAS BROUGHT UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL.

ASMAT ART IS CONSIDERED TO BE THE MOST AGGRESSIVE AND DYNAMIC OF THIS WHOLE AREA AND THE CONCEPTUAL STRENGTH AND POWER OF THE ASMAT ARTISTS WORK CERTAINLY MAINTAINS THEIR REPUTATION AS FIERCE HEADHUNTERS.

IT IS BELIEVED BY THE ASMAT THAT THEIR CARVING SERVES AS A VEHICLE FOR APPEASING ANCESTORS. EVERY DEATH MUST BE AVENGED IN ORDER FOR THE SOULS OF THE DEAD TO MOVE INTO THE NEXT REALM. WARFARE IS THEREFORE AN INTEGRAL PART OF LIFE.

THESE SHIELDS WERE USED NOT JUST FOR DEFENCE BUT TO STRIKE TERROR INTO THE ENEMY. NEW SHIELDS WERE CARVED AND NAMED AFTER A RELATIVE OF THE BEARER WHOS DEATH HAD TO BE AVENGED AND THERE WERE THEREFORE IMBUED

WITH GREAT SUPERNATURAL POWERS.