

Finch & C^o



A RARE PACIFIC PALAU ISLANDS TURTLE-SHELL DISH

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MICRONESIA

LATE 18TH – EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 21.5CM WIDE, 11.5CM DEEP, 3CM HIGH – 8½ INS WIDE, 4½ INS DEEP, 1¼ INS HIGH

LITERATURE

ONCE KNOWN AS THE PELEW ISLANDS, PALAU IS AN ARCHIPELAGO OF OVER 200 ISLANDS ONLY 8 OF WHICH ARE INHABITED. THE ISLANDS WOMEN REGARDED THESE DISHES AS THEIR EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY AND THEY WERE USED, TOGETHER WITH TURTLE-SHELL SPOONS, ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS AS A FORM OF CURRENCY IN RITUAL EXCHANGE. THEIR CEREMONIAL IMPORTANCE MEANT THEY WERE OFTEN GIFTED AS HEIRLOOMS THROUGH THE FEMALE LINE. AS WELL AS BOWLS; JEWELLERY, COMBS, FISH HOOKS AND SPOONS WERE ALSO MADE OF SEA TURTLE-SHELL ON THE PALAU ISLANDS. THE TURTLE-SHELL WAS FIRSTLY HEATED IN HOT WATER AND THEN SHAPED BY PLACING IT IN A WOODEN MOULD WHERE IT COOLED AND HARDENED INTO THE DESIRED SHAPE.