Finch & Co



A PAPUA NEW GUINEA EAST SEPIK PROVINCE IATMUL PEOPLES CLAN EMBLEM

A PAPUA NEW GUINEA EAST SEPIK PROVINCE IATMUL PEOPLES CLAN EMBLEM
IN THE FORM OF A CROCODILE WITH HUMAN HEAD. WOOD, CLAY, HAIR AND COWRY SHELLS
CIRCA 1940'S – 50'S
SIZE: 62.5CM LONG, 10CM DEEP, 9.5CM WIDE – 24½ INS LONG, 4 INS DEEP, 3¾ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

THE IATMUL LIVE ALONG THE MIDDLE SEPIK RIVER WHICH FLOWS THROUGH NORTHERN PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND ARE ORGANIZED INTO LARGE VILLAGES THAT ARE STRUCTURED INTO TOTEMIC CLANS GROUPED AROUND THE CEREMONIAL DANCING GROUND WITH ITS MEN'S AND CULT HOUSES. NO OTHER NEW GUINEA PEOPLE HAVE MEN'S CEREMONIAL HOUSES THAT ARE SO LAVISHLY DECORATED WITH SCULPTED IMAGES. THE BUILDING ITSELF SYMBOLIZES THE ANCESTORS PROTECTIVE MANTLE WHICH SETTLED ON THE RIVER IN THE FORM OF A FLOATING GRASS ISLAND UNDER WHICH A CROCODILE, AN EMBODIMENT OF THE ANCESTORS, MAY LIE IN WAIT.
FOR THE IATMUL THEIR SEMI-SWAMP, SEMI-DRY LAND ENVIRONMENT WAS MADE BY THE PRIMORDIAL ANCESTOR HIMSELF, WHO IN THE FORM OF A CROCODILE CREATED THE DRY LAND FROM HIS SALIVA AS HE BEAT THE SURROUNDING WATERS. THE IATMUL THEREFORE BELIEVE THAT THE VISIBLE WORLD IS THE REPRESENTATION OF THE CREATION OF THEIR HEROIC ANCESTORS.