Finch & Co



NAGA, CHANG, HEADHUNTERS BODY CLOTH WOVEN WITH COWRIE SHELL CIRCLES

AN ANTIQUE NAGA, CHANG, HEADHUNTERS BODY CLOTH WOVEN WITH COWRIE SHELL CIRCLES OVER SQUARES OF RED DOG HAIR

EARLY 20TH CENTURY

SIZE: 122CM HIGH, 152CM WIDE – 48 INS HIGH, 59¾ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

THE NAGA LIVE IN THE MOUNTAINOUS HILLS OF THE INDIAN STATES OF NAGALAND BORDERING ASSAM, ALTHOUGH SOME GROUPS CAN STILL BE FOUND IN ARUNACHAL, PRADESH, MANIPUR AND IN PARTS OF BURMA. THEY NUMBER OVER HALF A MILLION DISTRIBUTED IN SOME 20 TRIBES. THEY DIFFER FUNDAMENTALLY FROM THE INDIAN HINDU, AND THEY WERE INTRODUCED BY HINDU CIVILISATION AND BUDDHISM. HOWEVER, SINCE THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR MANY NAGA HAVE BEEN CONVERTED TO CHRISTIANITY.

HEAD HUNTING DETERMINED MANY OF THE ALLIANCES BETWEEN NAGA GROUPS. THEY HAVE A SET OF BELIEFS ABOUT A POWERFUL VIRTUE THAT RESIDES IN THE HUMAN HEAD, AND THAT PART OF A MAN'S PERSONALITY IS SEATED IN THE SKULL EVEN AFTER DEATH, AND SO THE CAPTOR OF A SKULL THEREBY ACQUIRES THIS POWER FOR HIMSELF.

FEASTS AND FEAST GIVING WERE ALSO CENTRAL TO NAGA LIFE, EACH ONE GIVEN ENHANCING THE PRESTIGE OF THE FEAST GIVER AND LEADING TO RECOGNITION OF HIS RITUAL STATUS. A MAN WHO HAD CARRIED OUT A FULL SERIES OF FEASTS OF MERIT AND WHO HAD TAKEN MANY HEADS COULD WEAR THIS MAN'S BODY CLOTH.