Finch & Co



AUSTRALIAN WESTERN DESERT ABORIGINAL HARDWOOD SPEAR THROWER 'WOOMERA'

AN AUSTRALIAN WESTERN DESERT ABORIGINAL HARDWOOD SPEAR THROWER 'WOOMERA' ETCHED WITH AN ABSTRACT WAVE DESIGN TO BOTH SIDES THE END WITH A KANGAROO CLAW ATTACHED WITH RESIN AND FIBRE. THE OTHER END WITH A STONE SET IN A RESIN HANDLE

TRACES OF WHITE CLAY OLD DUSTY DRY PATINA

19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 54.5CM LONG – 21½ INS LONG

LITERATURE

THE NAME FOR A SPEAR THROWER 'WOOMERA' IS A WORD LIKE 'KANGAROO' WHICH DERIVES FROM THE SOUTH EASTERN ABORIGINAL PEOPLES WHO HAD THE EARLIEST CONTACT WITH EUROPEANS AND IS ESSENTIALLY A WORD LOST IN TRANSLATION.

THE SPEAR WAS HELD ALONG THE LENGTH OF THE SPEAR THROWER BY THE THUMB AND FOREFINGER OF THE HAND GRASPING THE THROWER AT ITS HANDLE END. WHEN THRUST FORWARD THE SPEAR THROWER ACTED AS AN EXTRA FOREARM GIVING GREATER WHIP & POWER TO THE THROW. THIS EXAMPLE IS TYPICAL OF THE FORM FROM THE LESS HOSPITABLE AREAS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA. IT OFFERED MORE WIND RESISTANCE THAN THE THINNER VARIETIES BUT IT ALSO SERVED AS A FIRE SAW AND A DISH, AND HAS A CHIPPED STONE BLADE SET INTO THE RESINOUS BUTT WHICH WAS USED TO SHARPEN SPEARS AND FOR CUTTING PURPOSES. THESE WESTERN 'WOOMERA' DEMONSTRATE THE INGENUITY OF A NOMADIC DESERT PEOPLE WHO NOT WISHING TO ENCUMBER THEMSELVES MORE THAN NECESSARY MADE ONE IMPLEMENT SERVE FOUR PURPOSES.