

Finch & C^o



CHOISEUL OR NEW GEORGIA, WESTERN SOLOMON ISLANDS 'TRIDACNA GIGAS' CARVED OPENWORK FOSSILISED CLAM SHELL PLAQUE

A CHOISEUL OR NEW GEORGIA, WESTERN SOLOMON ISLANDS 'TRIDACNA GIGAS' CARVED OPENWORK FOSSILISED CLAM SHELL PLAQUE FRAGMENT OF FUNERAL CURRENCY 'BARAVA' DEPICTING A ROW OF ANTHROPOMORPHIC FIGURES STANDING WITH LINKED ARMS
19TH CENTURY OR EARLIER
SIZE: 8CM HIGH, 12CM WIDE, 1.5CM DEEP – 3¼ INS HIGH, 4¾ INS WIDE, ½ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

MOST OF THESE PLAQUES MADE BY THE PATIENT DRILLING AND ABRASION OF FOSSILISED CLAM SHELL, ARE FOUND IN FRAGMENTS ON OR INSIDE THE MORTUARY OR SKULL HUTS OF IMPORTANT INDIVIDUALS ON THE ISLANDS OF NEW GEORGIA, CHOISEUL AND SANTA ISABEL IN THE WESTERN SOLOMON ISLANDS. PRESTIGE AND STATUS WAS ACQUIRED THROUGH THE POSSESSION OF SHELL ORNAMENTS AND CURRENCY RINGS, BUT THESE CURIOUS ABSTRACT PLAQUES ARE SYMBOLIC OF THE AFTER LIFE AND ARE USUALLY FOUND IN GRAVE CONTEXTS. ONE OF THE EXAMPLES IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS MUSEUM (69.42) IS STATED TO HAVE BEEN INTENTIONALLY BROKEN ON THE GRAVE OF A DECEASED CHIEF AND THAT THIS CUSTOM WAS WIDESPREAD. THUS THE ABSTRACT PROFILE FIGURES MAY ALLUDE TO THE SPIRIT WORLD AND THE SHELL PLAQUES WOULD HAVE BEEN PRESENTED OR GIVEN AS A PRESTIGE MEMORIAL TO A FAVOURED AND IMPORTANT ANCESTOR.