Finch & Co

VICTORIAN HALL DINNER GONG WITH A HISTORICAL CONNECTION TO THE EMIN PASHA RELIEF EXPEDITION LED BY THE AFRICAN EXPLORER HENRY MORTON STANLEY

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FORMED OF THREE FINE OLD CENTRAL AFRICAN IVORY KUBA WOMENS PESTLES FROM WHICH HANGS A BRASS GONG. THE OAK RECTANGULAR BASE WITH A BRASS PLAQUE INSCRIBED 'IVORY FROM ARUWIMI RIVER 1888 J ROSE TROUP, EMIN RELIEF EXPEDITION'

CIRCA 1888

SIZE: 54CM HIGH, 53.5CM WIDE, 24CM DEEP – 21¼ INS HIGH, 21 INS WIDE, 9½ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

THE EMIN PASHA RELIEF EXPEDITION OF 1886 TO 1889 WAS ONE OF THE LAST MAJOR EUROPEAN EXPEDITIONS INTO THE INTERIOR OF THE CONGO IN AFRICA. IN JANUARY 1885 GORDON OF KHARTOUM WAS SLAIN WITH MOST OF HIS EGYPTIAN FORCES AND THE MAHDI BECAME THE UNDISPUTED MASTER OF THE SUDAN. THEN HE DIED AND THE COUNTRY FELL INTO CHAOS. ON THE UPPER NILE THE GOVERNOR OF EQUATORIA, EMIN PASHA, HIS SUDANESE SOLDIERS AND TWO EUROPEANS WERE SUBSEQUENTLY CUT OFF FROM ALL CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD. ONE OF THE EUROPEANS, WILHELM JUNKER MANAGED TO GET TO CAIRO IN 1886 AND RAISE HELP FOR HIS COMPANION'S PREDICAMENT. PUBLIC CONCERN IN BRITAIN LED TO A FUND TO EQUIP AN EXPEDITION TO TAKE SUPPLIES TO EMIN PASHA AND BRING THEM BACK TO EUROPE. HENRY MORTON STANLEY WAS PUT IN CHARGE.

STANLEY DECIDED TO START FROM THE MOUTH OF THE CONGO, CROSS THE TROPICAL RAIN FOREST IN THE CENTRE OF AFRICA TO LAKE ALBERT AND SAIL UP THE RIVER WADELAI TO THE BELEAGUERED EMIN. EVEN TODAY THE ITURI FOREST OF CENTRAL CONGO REMAINS SECOND ONLY TO THAT OF THE AMAZON BASIN AS THE DENSEST, DARKEST, WETTEST, MOST IMPENETRABLE TROPICAL FOREST ON EARTH. NO SUNLIGHT PENETRATED THE JUNGLE CANOPY AND RAIN FELL FOR SEVERAL NIGHTS AND DAYS ON END. PYGMIES FIRED POISONED ARROWS AT THE INTRUDERS AND PLANTED POISONED SKEWERS IN THEIR PATH. HORNET STINGS AND CUTS DEVELOPED INTO TERRIBLE ULCERS. THE MARCHERS ROUTE TOOK THEM THROUGH A REGION DEPOPULATED BY SLAVERS SO NO FOOD WHATEVER WAS TO BE FOUND. IT TOOK FIVE MONTHS TO GET THROUGH THE JUNGLE AND THEY LOST 180 MEN. EVENTUALLY THEY REACHED THE SHORES OF LAKE ALBERT AFTER 169 DAYS ON DECEMBER 13TH 1887.

THE ARUWIMI RIVER, MENTIONED ON THE BRASS PLAQUE, WAS ANOTHER OF STANLEY'S PROBLEMS. HE HAD ENLISTED THE CO-OPERATION AND HELP OF THE TRADER TIPPU TIB IN ORDER TO GET OVER THE HOSTILITY OF THE ARABS TO THE EUROPEANS, BUT EVEN HIS CARRIERS REFUSED TO GO BEYOND THE ARUWIMI RIVER AND ONCE AGAIN THE WHOLE EXPEDITION STOPPED.

STANLEY'S GRUELLING RESCUE OF EMIN PASHA TURNED OUT TO BE A GREAT ANTICLIMAX. THE GERMAN TURNED OUT TO BE IN THE BEST OF HEALTH AND SEEMED TO LACK FOR NOTHING. HE HAD CONTINUED HIS STUDIES INTO BIRD MIGRATION AND ETHNOLOGY AND HAD EVEN AMASSED A COLLECTION OF IVORY. FAR FROM WANTING TO BE RESCUED,

HE WANTED TO STAY WHERE HE WAS. EVENTUALLY, VERY RELUCTANTLY HE AGREED TO GO WITH STANLEY TO THE COAST. ON THE WAY BACK, NOW WITH A GATHERED ENTOURAGE OF 1300 PEOPLE, STANLEY MADE HIS LAST TWO GEOGRAPHICAL DISCOVERIES, LAKE EDWARD AND THE LEGENDARY 'MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON', THE RUWENZORI RANGE, BELIEVED BY THE ANCIENT GREEKS AND ROMANS TO BE THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF THE NILE.