Finch & Co



PACIFIC PALAU ISLANDS TURTLE SHELL WOMAN'S CEREMONIAL DISH MICRONESIA

A PACIFIC PALAU ISLANDS TURTLE SHELL WOMAN'S CEREMONIAL DISH
MICRONESIA
MID 19TH CENTURY
SIZE: 19.5CM WIDE, 11CM DEEP, 2.5CM HIGH – 7¾ INS WIDE, 4¼ INS DEEP, 1 INS HIGH
SEE FINCH & CO CATALOGUE NO. 10, ITEM NO. 2, CATALOGUE NO. 16, ITEM NO. 127, AND CATALOGUE NO. 14, ITEM NO. 42, FOR THREE EXAMPLES
CF: JAMES HOOPER COLLECTION; STEVEN PHELPS, ITEM NO. 939

LITERATURE

ORIGINALLY KNOWN AS THE PELEW ISLANDS, PALAU IS AN ARCHIPELAGO OF OVER 200 ISLANDS OF WHICH ONLY 8 ARE INHABITED. EACH ONE HAVING NUMEROUS HIDDEN LAKES AND LAGOONS THAT SUSTAIN THEIR OWN ECOSYSTEMS, WHICH HAVE DEVELOPED IN ISOLATION. THIS HAS PRODUCED ADAPTATIONS IN THE PLANTS AND ANIMALS THAT ARE OFTEN UNIQUE TO EACH LAKE.

IT WAS THE WOMEN OF THE PALAU ISLANDS WHO MADE THESE DISHES BY HEATING TURTLE SHELL IN HOT WATER AND THEN SHAPING IT IN A WOODEN MOULD WHERE IT COOLED AND HARDENED. THEY BECAME OF CEREMONIAL IMPORTANCE AND WERE USED ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS AS A FORM OF CURRENCY DURING RITUAL EXCHANGE. REGARDED BY PALAU WOMEN AS THEIR EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY THE DISHES WERE OFTEN PASSED AS HEIRLOOMS TO THE NEXT GENERATION THROUGH THE FEMALE LINE.