Finch & Co



PAPUA NEW GUINEA MIDDLE SEPIK IATMUL MAN'S CONUS AND TRIDACNA SHELL GIRDLE

A RARE PAPUA NEW GUINEA MIDDLE SEPIK IATMUL MAN'S CONUS AND TRIDACNA SHELL GIRDLE THE CUT SHELL RINGS ATTACHED TO A PLAITED FIBRE AND CANE BAND

LATE 19TH – EARLY 20TH CENTURY

SIZE: APPROX: 104CM LONG – 41INS LONG /109CM HIGH – 43 INS HIGH (WITH STAND)

LITERATURE

THIS GIRDLE IS OF EXCEPTIONAL SIZE AND IS ONE OF THE LARGEST SURVIVING EXAMPLES KNOWN. THEY ARE WORN BY MEN OF RANK WHEN SPECIAL COSTUMES ARE REQUIRED FOR COURTING PARTIES AND RELIGIOUS CULT AND EXCHANGE GIFT CEREMONIES. THESE ELABORATE SHELL DECORATIONS ARE WORN FOR THESE EVENTS IN ORDER TO ENHANCE AND DEMONSTRATE THE WEARER'S STATUS. THE NUMBER OF VALUABLE SHELLS A 'BIG MAN' CAN CALL INTO PLAY DURING AN EXCHANGE GAINS HIM INCREASED STATUS AND PRESTIGE. THEY ARE ALSO AN IMPORTANT FORM OF CURRENCY FEATURING IN BRIDE PRICE CEREMONIES WHERE THE SUITOR CAN VISUALLY DISPLAY HIS WEALTH IN ORDER TO ATTRACT A BRIDE AND CONVINCE HER FAMILY OF HIS WORTH.

MAKING A GIRDLE OR BRACELET OF CONUS OR TRIDACNA CLAMSHELL IS A TASK THAT CAN TAKE WEEKS IF NOT MONTHS WHEN ONLY RUDIMENTARY TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE. EXCHANGES FOLLOW COMPLEX RITUALS AND ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE AS THEY MAKE POSSIBLE THE ACQUISITION OF MATERIALS, AND EVEN WIVES, FROM OUTSIDE THEIR CLAN'S IMMEDIATE REGION.