

Finch & C^o



PAPUA NEW GUINEA LOWER SEPIK RIVER MURIK LAKES DARAPAP VILLAGE FEMALE SPIRIT FIGURE DEPICTING A YOUNG GIRL
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TRACES OF RED OCHRE TO HEAD
OLD SMOOTH SHINY PATINA TO CONTACT AREAS
THE HEADDRESS AND EARS PIERCED WITH SUSPENSION HOLES FOR HAIR AND FEATHERS
EARLY 20TH CENTURY
SIZE: 43CM HIGH - 17 INS HIGH

LITERATURE

NEAR THE MOUTH OF THE SEPIK RIVER A SERIES OF COASTAL LAGOONS, THE MURIK LAKES, ARE THE LAST REMNANTS OF THE INLAND SEA THAT ONCE FILLED THE ENTIRE SEPIK BASIN, BUT WHICH GRADUALLY SILTED UP UNTIL APPROXIMATELY ONE THOUSAND YEARS AGO WHEN THE LAKES WERE ESTABLISHED. IT IS HERE THAT THE MURIK PEOPLE LIVE AND INHABIT A WORLD OF WATER, LIVING ON A NARROW FRONTIER BETWEEN THE LAKES AND THE SEA, THEIR HOUSES ON STILTS ON THE BEACH OR ABOVE TIDAL FLATS. THEY ARE WITHOUT LAND TO CULTIVATE SO THEY HARVEST FISH AND SHELLFISH FROM THE MANGROVES AND ACQUIRE VEGETABLES AND OTHER FOOD AND RESOURCES BY TRADE.

THE ROLES OF MURIK MEN AND WOMEN WERE COMPLIMENTARY AND THERE EXISTED BOTH MEN AND WOMEN'S SECRET SOCIETIES WHICH PARALLELED EACH OTHER AND INVOLVED INTERDEPENDENT RITUAL CYCLES THAT INITIATED MEMBERS INTO SUCCESSIVE GRADES. YOUNG FEMALE NOVICES IN THE WOMEN'S CULT WERE SHOWN FIGURES SUCH AS THIS EXAMPLE AND TAUGHT THAT THEY REPRESENTED SPIRITS THAT GAVE SUPERNATURAL POWER AND PROPHECIES. THE YOUNG WOMEN, AS MEMBERS OF THE CULT, WERE ALSO TAUGHT THAT THEIR SEXUALITY SHOULD BE USED IN THE SERVICE OF PRESTIGE AND AS AN ACCESS TO SPIRITUAL POWER.