

# *Finch & C°*



**A RARE SPIRIT MASK 'BARAK' OR 'YAMBURAI PARAK'**

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WOOD, REMAINS OF POLYCHROME

EASTERN SEPIK PROVINCE, NEW GUINEA

LATE 19TH - EARLY 20TH CENTURY

SIZE: 45CM HIGH, 35CM DEEP - 17¾ INS HIGH, 13¾ INS DEEP

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#### **LITERATURE**

ORIGINALLY THESE MASKS WERE BRIGHTLY COLOURED. HOWEVER, AFTER MANY YEARS OF EXPOSURE WITHIN THE CEREMONIAL HOUSES THE COLOUR FADED AWAY THROUGH USE AND WEATHERING. THE MASK WAS TRADITIONALLY WORN BY A DANCER WHOSE PLANT FIBRE COSTUME COMPLETELY COVERED HIM, AND WAS ASSOCIATED WITH AN IMPORTANT MALE MYTHICAL BEING. THE BARAK (SOMETIMES SPELLED 'BARAG' OR 'BRAG') WERE SITUATED TO THE WEST OF THE SEPIK RIVER.

THE SEPIK RIVER WAS FIRST EXPLORED IN 1885 BY OTTO FISCH. HE WROTE OF THE REGIONS CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND BEAUTY OF THE VILLAGES THAT HE SAW ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER OVER WHICH TOWERED THE 'MEN'S HOUSES'.

IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY COLLECTORS OF PRIMITIVE ART WERE ASTOUNDED AT THE SHEER QUANTITY OF MARVELLOUS OBJECTS TO BE FOUND IN THIS REGION AND THE EXTRAORDINARY INVENTIVENESS OF THE FORMS IN THIS DIFFICULT SWAMPY TERRAIN.

#### **PROVENANCE**

EX UK ART MARKET

EX PRIVATE COLLECTION

CF

'NEW GUINEA ART, MASTERPIECES FROM THE JOLIKA COLLECTION OF MARCIA AND JOHN FRIEDE, FINE ARTS MUSEUM SAN FRANCISCO, VOL. 2, PG. 89. ILL. 39