Finch & Co



41 A triton shell trumpet 'Putona' from the Marquesas Islands
19th CENTURY

Size: 34cm long

Cook noted that in the Marquesas Islands there were proper war leaders, 'Toa' whose duty it was to lead the battle in the name of the chief. They wore particular insignia such as the skull of an enemy, which was hung down over their back. The shell trumpet was an instrument used by these war leaders to call their men to ranks.

Generally used as a signalling instrument it was also used by chiefs to announce their arrival by canoe, for the birth of a male heir and other ceremonial purposes. It was worn or carried with a band made of coconut cord or barkcloth.

The shell trumpet was known in the Marquesas as the 'wife of the shark' and instruments such as this were 'Tapu'.

A TRIRON SHELL TRUMPET 'PUTONA', FROM THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS

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LITERATURE

COOK NOTED THAT IN THE MARQUESAS ISLANDS THERE WERE PROPER WAR LEADERS, 'TOA' WHOSE DUTY IT WAS TO LEAD THE BATTLE IN THE NAME OF THE CHIEF. THEY WORE PARTICULAR INSIGNIA SUCH AS THE SKULL OF AN ENEMY, WHICH WAS HUNG DOWN OVER THEIR BACK. THE SHELL TRUMPET WAS AN INSTRUMENT USED BY THESE WAR LEADERS TO CALL THEIR MEN TO RANKS.

GENERALLY USED AS A SIGNALLING INSTRUMENT IT WAS ALSO USED BY CHIEFS TO ANNOUNCE THEIR ARRIVAL BY CANOE, FOR THE BIRTH OF A MALE HEIR AND OTHER CEREMAONIAL PURPOSES. IT WAS WORN OR CARRIED WITH A BAND OF COCONUT CORD OR BARKCLOTH.

THE SHELL TRUMPET WAS KNOWN IN THE MARQUESAS AS THE 'WIFE OF THE SHARK' AND INSTRUMENTS SUCH AS THIS WERE 'TAPU'.