Finch & Co



A RARE SOUTH AFRICAN TSONGA PRESTIGE STAFF PROBABLY BY THE 'BABOON MASTER'

A RARE SOUTH AFRICAN TSONGA PRESTIGE STAFF
PROBABLY BY THE 'BABOON MASTER'
FINE OLD SMOOTH PATINA
LATE 19TH CENTURY
SIZE : 94 CM LONG – 37 INS LONG

LITERATURE

THIS FINELY CARVED FIGURAL STAFF DEPICTS A YOUNG UNMARRIED ZULU MALE FROM KWA-ZULU NATAL. AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY THERE WERE SEVERAL MIGRANT TSONGA CARVERS WORKING IN THE COLONY OF NATAL, THE MOST FAMOUS OF WHOM IS NOW KNOWN AS THE 'BABOON MASTER'.

A WORKSHOP PROBABLY EXISTED IN THE AREA OF PIETERMARITZBORG AND DURBAN CARVING STAFFS FOR SALE TO THE EMERGING EUROPEAN COMMERCIAL MARKET. SOLDIERS, TRADERS, TRAVELLERS AND COLONISTS, MANY OF WHOM WERE BROUGHT TO THE CAPE AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE ANGLO ZULU AND DUTCH WARS, WOULD PURCHASE A 'SOUVENIR OF ZULU LAND'.

HOWEVER, IT IS ALSO NOW THOUGHT THAT MANY OF THESE STAFFS WERE ALSO USED AS CEREMONIAL, AND IMPORTANT PRESTIGE ITEMS, BY THE INDIGENOUS ZULU LEADERS AND OTHER MEN OF RANK.