

# Finch & C<sup>o</sup>



## **SOUTH AFRICAN TSONGA 'ANTELOPE' HEADREST**

A RARE SOUTH AFRICAN TSONGA 'ANTELOPE' HEADREST  
CARVED OF REDWOOD WITH SOME OLD DAMAGE TO THE BASE  
SUPERB SILKY SMOOTH PATINATION

19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 17.5CM HIGH, 13CM WIDE, 7CM DEEP – 7 INS HIGH, 5 INS WIDE, 2¾ INS DEEP

## **LITERATURE**

ANCESTRAL SPIRITS WERE BELIEVED TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEIR LIVING DESCENDANTS THROUGH DREAMS AND  
THUS THE 'SUPPORT OF DREAMS' (FALGAYRETTES 1989), THE HEADREST, MANIFESTED THIS INTERDEPENDENCE IN A  
MATERIAL FORM. HEADRESTS WERE OFTEN GIFTS TAKEN BY A BRIDE TO HER NEW HOME WHEN SHE MARRIED AND THIS  
CUSTOM SYMBOLICALLY LINKED HER ANCESTORS WITH HER HUSBANDS.

THE CARVING OF WOOD WAS AN EXCLUSIVELY MALE OCCUPATION AND HEADRESTS PROVIDED CONSIDERABLE SCOPE  
FOR THE SKILL OF A CARVER TO ELABORATE ON VARIOUS LOCAL STYLES. REPRESENTATIONAL ANIMAL FIGURES, MOSTLY  
OF ANTELOPE AND CATTLE, APPEAR VERY RARELY IN THE ART OF SOUTH AFRICAN HEADRESTS. HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF  
THEIR APPEAL TO WESTERN AESTHETIC SENSIBILITIES THEY APPEAR IN MUSEUMS AND COLLECTIONS IN NUMBERS THAT  
OUTWEIGH ANY PROPERLY BALANCED SELECTION.