Finch & Co



SOUTH AFRICAN NORTH NGUNI CARVED WOOD AND ABSTRACT POKER-WORKED DOUBLE HEADREST

A SOUTH AFRICAN NORTH NGUNI CARVED WOOD AND ABSTRACT POKER-WORKED DOUBLE HEADREST
REPAIR TO BASE OF TWO LEGS
OLD SMOOTH SILKY PATINA THE EDGES WORN FROM DOMESTIC USE
LATE 19TH – EARLY 20TH CENTURY
SIZE: 14.5CM HIGH, 5.5CM DEEP, 53.5CM WIDE – 5¾ INS HIGH, 2¼ INS DEEP, 21 INS WIDE

LITERATURE

AFRICAN HEADRESTS WERE MADE TO SLEEP ON AND TO PROTECT THE ELABORATE HAIRSTYLE OF THE SLEEPER. BY DAY THEY WERE KEPT IN THE RAFTERS OF THEIR OWNERS HUTS GAINING A PATINA FROM THE SMOKE OF THE FIRE AND BY NIGHT FROM THE OIL IN THE HAIR. THEY WERE HIGHLY PORTABLE AND WOULD BE CARRIED BY THE OWNER WHEN TRAVELLING. IN 1870 THOMAS BAINES TRAVELLING IN THE SHONA AREA NOTED: 'TO KEEP THE WELL OILED LOCKS FROM BEING SOILED BY DUST EVERY MAN CARRIES WITH HIM A NECK PILLOW LIKE A LITTLE STOOL, WHICH SUFFERS NOT THE HEAD TO COME WITHIN EIGHT OR TEN INCHES OF THE GROUND'; (BAINES 'THE NORTHERN GOLDFIELDS' 1877:27).