

Finch & C^o



SOUTH AFRICAN TSONGA CARVED REDWOOD HEADREST

A RARE SOUTH AFRICAN TSONGA CARVED REDWOOD HEADREST OF ANTHROPOMORPHIC FORM THE UPRIGHTS AND
FIGURE DECORATED WITH POKERWORK
FINE OLD SMOOTH DARK BROWN PATINA

19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 14.5CM HIGH, 18.5CM WIDE, 8CM DEEP - 5¾ INS HIGH, 7¼ INS WIDE, 3 INS DEEP

LITERATURE

AMONGST THE TSONGA, THE CARVING OF WOOD WAS AN EXCLUSIVELY MALE OCCUPATION AND THE TYPES OF OBJECTS CARVED, SUCH AS MEAT DISHES, MILK PAILS, HEADRESTS AND STAFFS WERE STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH MEN, THEIR CATTLE AND THE ANCESTORS. THE HUMAN HEAD OF THIS HEADREST IS ATTACHED TO A POWERFUL QUADRUPED'S BODY, AND IS WEARING A HEAD-RING. THE DETAILED MALE GENITALIA SUGGESTS THE BODY OF A BULL, REFLECTING THE IMPORTANCE OF CATTLE TO THE TSONGA AND THEIR ECONOMY. THE ICONOGRAPHY SUGGESTS THAT THIS HEADREST MOST PROBABLY BELONGED TO A MAN OF STATUS AND HIGH RANK, AS THE CONTROL OF CATTLE WAS ALWAYS UNDERTAKEN BY MEN.