

Finch & C^o



SOUTH AFRICAN TSONGA PRESTIGE STAFF ATTRIBUTED TO THE 'BABOON MASTER'

A SOUTH AFRICAN TSONGA PRESTIGE STAFF ATTRIBUTED TO THE 'BABOON MASTER' DEPICTING A CHIEFLY ZULU ELDER
WEARING A HEAD-RING BEARD AND LOINCLOTH
OLD SMOOTH SILKY REDDISH BROWN PATINA
LATE 19TH CENTURY
SIZE: 91CMLONG - 35¾INS LONG

LITERATURE

AT THE END OF THE 19TH CENTURY THERE WERE SEVERAL MIGRANT TSONGA CRAFTSMEN WORKING IN THE COLONY OF NATAL CARVING HARDWOOD FIGURAL STAFFS FOR SALE TO THE EMERGING EUROPEAN MARKET. MANY BRITISH SOLDIERS WERE BROUGHT TO FIGHT IN THE ANGLO-ZULU WAR AND THEN LATER IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR. THEY ALL WANTED KEEPSAKES TO TAKE BACK WITH THEM; AS COLONEL HENRY FANSHAWE DAVIES OF THE GRENADIER GUARDS NOTED IN APRIL 1879 IN A LETTER HOME: 'I BOUGHT A ZULU'S WALKING STICK AT DURBAN'.

THE MOST FAMOUS OF THE CARVERS CAME TO BE KNOWN AS THE 'BABOON MASTER' AS WORKING IN THE REGION OF PIETERMARITZBURG AND DURBAN IN THE 1880'S AND 1890'S HE CARVED STAFFS INCORPORATING THE FORM OF A BABOON INTO THE HANDLE ASTRIDE TWO MALE HEADS. HE ALSO CARVED FINE SINGLE SOUTH AFRICAN ZULU MALE AND FEMALE FIGURES, AND IT IS NOW THOUGHT THAT HIS DISTINCTIVE CARVINGS WERE ALSO USED AS CEREMONIAL AND IMPORTANT PRESTIGE ITEMS BY THE INDIGENOUS ZULU PEOPLE OF THE AREA