

Finch & C°



AN UNUSUALLY LARGE AND FINE TSONGA 'ANTELOPE' HEADREST
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WOOD, PIGMENT, GLASS BEADS

ZIMBABWE

19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 20CM HIGH, 32CM WIDE - 8 INS HIGH, 12½ INS WIDE

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LITERATURE

AMONG THE TSONGA, WOOD CARVING 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.

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.

REPRESENTATIONAL ANIMAL FIGURES, MOSTLY OF ANTELOPE AND CATTLE, APPEAR VERY RARELY IN THE ART OF

SOUTH AFRICAN HEADRESTS. THE ICONOGRAPHY SUGGESTS THAT THIS HEADREST PROBABLY BELONGED TO A MAN OF STATUS AND HIGH RANK.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE UK COLLECTION

SOLD THROUGH AUCTION AND PURCHASED THROUGH FINCH AND CO, MARCH 2012

EX PRIVATE COLLECTION