Finch & Co



A FINE DANCE ORNAMENT WITH HERALDIC EMBLEMS - CHAKANA

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AYMARA FEATHER MOSAIC LICHIWAYU

TROPICAL BIRD FEATHERS, WOOD SLAT, COTTON TWINE, GLUE

DEPARTMENT OF LAW PAZ, PROVINCE OF CAMACHO, BOLIVIA

18TH TO 19TH CENTURY

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SIZE: 23CM HIGH, 68CM WIDE - 9 INS HIGH, 26¾ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

THE EXISTENCE OF PRE-COLUMBIAN FEATHER-WORK WAS INITIALLY DOCUMENTED BY SPANISH CONQUISTADORS IN THE 16TH CENTURY. FRANCISCO PIZARRO OBSERVED THAT TEXTILES SERVED AS A MEANS OF RECORDING RELIGIOUS NARRATIVES, FUNCTIONING AS A FORM OF RELIGIOUS TEXT FOR THE NATIVE ANDEAN PEOPLE.

OVER THE YEARS FOLLOWING EUROPEAN CONQUEST, FEATHER-WORK GRADUALLY DECLINED FROM MOST NATIVE TEXTILE TRADITIONS. HOWEVER, IN BOLIVIA, IT PERSISTED WELL INTO THE 20TH CENTURY AND MAY STILL BE FOUND IN REMOTE VILLAGES TODAY. VARIOUS 19TH-CENTURY TRAVELER'S TO BOLIVIA, INCLUDING THE FRENCH ETYMOLOGIST ALCIDE D'ORBIGNY AND THE GERMAN ETHNOGRAPHER CHARLES WEINER, DOCUMENTED THE EXISTENCE OF FEATHER-WORK. NEVERTHELESS, IT WAS IN A PUBLICATION BY THE GERMAN ARCHAEOLOGIST MAX UHLE THAT WE FIRST

ENCOUNTERED A METICULOUSLY DRAWN IMAGE OF A ‘CHACANA’ (UHLE 1890, PL. 20).

THE TERM ‘CHACANA’ IS DERIVED FROM THE QUECHUA AND AYMARA LANGUAGES AND REFERS TO AN ASSEMBLAGE OF ATTACHED FEATHER-COVERED REEDS OR STICKS THAT FORM A WIDE, FLEXIBLE BELT, TYPICALLY WORN OVER THE SHOULDER. THE STRUCTURAL MATERIALS USED IN ‘CHACANAS’ DISTINGUISH THE TWO TYPES CURRENTLY RECOGNISED. THOSE ASSOCIATED WITH THE SICA-SICA REGION NEAR LAKE TITICACA UTILISE REEDS AS THEIR BASE ELEMENT, WHILE THOSE FROM FURTHER AWAY FROM THE LAKE EMPLOY RECYCLED WOODEN CRATES.

THE PRECISE MEANING OF THE IMAGERY DEPICTED ON THESE TWO ‘CHACANAS’ REMAINS ELUSIVE. WHILE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS PRE-COLUMBIAN BELIEFS IN THE MYSTICAL POWER OF ANIMALS, THERE ARE ALSO INDICATIONS OF CHRISTIAN INFLUENCES. IT IS KNOWN THAT ‘CHACANAS’ AND THEIR ASSOCIATED HEADDRESSES WERE PRIMARILY WORN DURING DANCE FESTIVALS, AND DANCE IMAGERY, ENCOMPASSING BOTH HUMANS AND ANIMALS, IS PROMINENTLY FEATURED.

THESE EXQUISITE OBJECTS, CHARACTERISED BY THEIR VIBRANT COLOURS, DELICATE CRAFTSMANSHIP, AND EXCEPTIONAL QUALITY, SERVE AS CONTEMPORARY REMINDERS OF THE PROFOUND SIGNIFICANCE AND POWER OF FEATHER-WORK IN THE PRE-COLUMBIAN WORLD.

PROVENANCE

EX SOUTH AMERICAN COLLECTION

EX PRIVATE USA COLLECTION FORMED IN SOUTH AMERICA AROUND 45 YEARS AGO

EX PRIVATE COLLECTION