Finch & Co



A VERY RARE FIJIAN KAVA BOWL 'TANOA' IN THE FORM OF A TURTLE

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EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 89.5CM HIGH X 58.5CM WIDE

LITERATURE

YAQONA' IS THE FIJIAN WORD FOR KAVA AND IS A TYPE OF PEPPER PLANT, PIPER METHYSTICUM. THE INTOXICATING DRINK IS MADE FROM THE ROOTS THAT ARE GRATED, CHEWED AND POUNDED AND THEN MIXED WITH WATER IN A BOWL SUCH AS THIS ONE AND SERVED IN COCONUT SHELL CUPS. IN PRE CONTACT TIMES IT WAS USED AS AN EXTREMELY SACRED POTION AT ALL CEREMONIAL AND IMPORTANT POLITICAL OCCASIONS. YAQONA DRINKING WAS ITSELF A SACRED AND RELIGIOUS EVENT. TODAY IT IS DRUNK FOR RECREATION.

THE BOWLS ARE KNOWN AS 'TANOA' AND WERE MADE FROM A VALUABLE HARDWOOD CALLED VESI WHICH WAS MUCH USED FOR BOWLS, CLUBS AND CANOES.

BARON VON HÍ¼GEL IN HIS FIJI JOURNALS OF 1875-1877 TELL OF AN ENCOUNTER WITH AN ENORMOUS 'TANOA' OR YAQONA BOWL; 'IT IS OVER A YARD ACROSS AND IT CUT OUT OF ONE BEAUTIFUL PIECE OF VESI. IT USED FORMALLY TO BE KEPT IN THE SPIRIT 'BURE' AND NO DOUBT HAS HISTORY . . . I EVENTUALLY OFFERED £5 IN TRADE OR MONEY FOR THIS TANOA, BUT COULD NOT GET IT'.

THE TURTLE SHAPE OF THIS BOWL IS VERY RARE. IT HAS A GOOD PATINA WITH THE REMAINS OF A RIMMED KAVA DEPOSIT. SOME OF THE FEET ARE MISSING AND

DAMAGED BUT ITS CONDITION IS ORIGINAL AND UNRESTORED.
ONE SIMILAR BUT SMALLER SOLD IN CHRISTIES TRIBAL ART SALE 6TH DECEMBER 1995 (LOT 9).