Finch & Co



NEW ZEALAND MAORI NEPHRITE TIKI

AN UNUSUAL AND RARE FORM OF A NEW ZEALAND MAORI HEI TIKI

CARVED OF DEEP GREEN KAWAKAWA POUNAMU OR NEPHRITE. THE TIKI WITH ONE HEAD AND TWO MOUTHS, ONE HAND ON ITS CHEST AND ANOTHER ON ITS HIP. AN OLD SUSPENSION HOLE DRILLED BEHIND THE TOP OF THE HEAD

OLD SOFT WORN AND SMOOTH SILKY PATINA

18TH CENTURY

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LITERATURE

NEPHRITE, A FORM OF JADE, ASSISTED THE MAORI CONSIDERABLY BY PROVIDING THEIR TOTALLY STONE BASED CULTURE WITH A MATERIAL OF METAL-LIKE PROPERTIES. THE MAORI PRIZED JADE ABOVE ALL OTHER POSSESSIONS AND IT SERVED THEM AS A TOOL, WEAPON, ORNAMENT, ITEM OF TRADE AND A SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY AND CEREMONY.

HEI-TIKI ARE STYLIZED HUMAN NECK PENDANTS OF GREAT SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE WORN BY BOTH MEN AND WOMEN USUALLY HANGING VERTICALLY, BUT SOMETIMES HORIZONTALLY. MOST OF THEIR 'MANA' OR PRESTIGE DERIVES FROM THEIR CLOSE CONTACT WITH THOSE GREAT ANCESTORS WHO HAVE WORN THEM IN THE PAST.

ON HIS FIRST VISIT TO NEW ZEALAND CAPTAIN COOK DISPLAYED A CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE HEI-TIKI. THEY WERE NOT COMMON AT THIS TIME, BUT WHEN HE AND THEIR OTHER EUROPEANS CAME TO NEW ZEALAND ON LATER VISITS HEI-TIKI WERE PLENTIFUL AND FREELY OFFERED BY THE MAORI FOR BARTER. HEI-TIKI HAD BEGUN TO BE MANUFACTURED BY THE MAORI AS TRADING COMMODITIES TO EXCHANGE FOR METAL TOOLS AND OTHER ARTICLES THAT THE VISITING SEALERS AND WHALERS COULD SUPPLY. HOWEVER, NOT ALL WERE INTENDED FOR TRADING AND MANY OLD TREASURED HEI-TIKI THAT HAD ACCUMULATED MUCH PRESTIGE CONTINUED TO BE PASSED DOWN THROUGH GENERATIONS OF MAORI FAMILIES.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE ENGLISH COLLECTION

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EX PRIVATE ENGLISH COLLECTION

SEE: FINCH & CO CATALOGUE NO. 9, ITEM NO. 48, FOR ANOTHER MAORI HEI-TIKI