

Finch & C^o



MARQUESAS IRONWOOD CEREMONIAL STILT STEP 'TAPUVAE'

A RARE MARQUESAS IRONWOOD CEREMONIAL STILT STEP 'TAPUVAE'

THE CURVED TOP INCISED WITH DIAGONAL MOTIFS THE STANDING MALE TIKI FIGURE PIERCED FREE OF THE SHAFT AT ITS BACK AND HEAD THE EARS CARVED AS DOUBLE SCROLLS IN RELIEF CLUSTERS OF TATTOO MOTIFS AT EACH SIDE OF THE MOUTH AND ON THE CHIN ABOVE THE EYES A CURVED HEAD BAND WITH FEATHERING THE BODY HANDS AND LEGS

CARVED WITH SHALLOW DIAGONALS

DARK GLOSSY PATINA

PATCHES OF WEAR AND SURFACE LOSSES

EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 34.5CM HIGH, 7CM WIDE, 9.5CM DEEP - 13½ INS HIGH, 2¾ INS WIDE, 3¾ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

THESE CURIOUS STILTS WERE ATTACHED TO LONG POLES OF LIGHTER WOOD AND USED BY THE MARQUESANS IN SPECIAL COMPETITIONS HELD AS PART OF IMPORTANT RITUAL FUNERARY RITES FOR MEN OF RANK AND STATUS. SPECIAL RACES AND INDIVIDUAL CONTESTS TOOK PLACE IN WHICH THE PARTICIPANTS ATTEMPTED TO KNOCK ONE ANOTHER TO THE GROUND. THEY ARE ONE OF THE MOST DISTINCTIVE OF MARQUESAS ART FORMS AND WERE MADE BY SPECIAL CRAFTSMEN KNOWN AS 'TUHUKA VAEAKE'. THE SHALLOW STRIATED LINES COVERING THE BODY OF THE TIKI SUGGESTS TATTOOING. THE HEADBAND AND CURVED SECTION ABOVE THE FIGURE PROBABLY REPRESENTS THE SHAPE OF A FEATHER HEADDRESS.

GEORG HEINRICH VON LANGSDORFF WRITING IN HIS 'VOYAGES AND TRAVELS' PUBLISHED IN 1813 WROTE: 'THE BEST RUNNERS ON STILTS, WHO PERFORM AT THE PUBLIC DANCING FESTIVALS ARE TABOOED FOR THREE DAYS BEFORE; THEY DO NOT, IN CONSEQUENCE, GO OUT, ARE WELL FED AND HAVE NO INTERCOURSE WITH THEIR WIVES. THIS IS PROBABLY WITH A VIEW TO INCREASING THEIR STRENGTH.'