Finch & Co



SOUTH AFRICAN TSONGA FIGURATIVE PRESTIGE STAFF ATTRIBUTED TO THE 'BABOON MASTER'

A SOUTH AFRICAN TSONGA FIGURATIVE PRESTIGE STAFF ATTRIBUTED TO THE 'BABOON MASTER'
OLD SMOOTH SILKY REDDISH PATINA
LATE 19TH CENTURY
SIZE: 120CM LONG - 47¼ INS LONG

LITERATURE

REMARKABLY COMPLETE, THIS LONG STAFF IS CARVED FROM ONE PIECE OF 'RED IVORY' WOOD WHICH WAS PRIZED AND FAVOURED BY THE ARTISTS OF THE REGION FOR USE IN STAFFS MADE FOR IMPORTANT MEN OF RANK. THEY HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO AN ITINERANT TSONGA CRAFTSMAN WORKING IN THE ZULU KINGDOM DURING THE LATE 19TH CENTURY IN THE AREA OF DURBAN OR PIETERMARITZBURG.

THE HEAD OF THE STAFF WOULD BE VIGOROUSLY RUBBED AS BABOONS SYMBOLISED GOOD HEALTH, AND IN SWAZI LEGEND THEY ARE LINKED WITH SORCERERS, WITCHES AND 'TOKOLOSHES' A KIND OF SHORT, HAIRY DWARF WHO AT NIGHT RIDE THEIR BABOON FAMILIARS FACING BACKWARDS HOLDING THE BABOONS TAIL AS A REIN. APPEALING BOTH TO THE INDIGENOUS LEADERS AND THE COLONIALISTS OF ZULU NATAL, THE 'BABOON MASTER' MUST HAVE ENJOYED CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS.