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## **RAGO'S PREMIERES A TRIBAL ART AUCTION ON MARCH 1, 2009**

**A Chilkat dancing blanket, classic Punu and Baule masks, Colima shaman vessel and an Easter Island Moai Kava Kava among the highlights.**

**Lambertville, NJ:** Attention will be paid by buyers of tribal arts and artifacts when Rago's inaugurates an ethnographic auction on Sunday March 1, 2009 - the first addition to this sector of the auction market in years. The public is invited to the exhibition and sale, on view from Saturday, February 21 through the morning of March 1, and online in full color and detail at ragoarts.com from February 13.

The auction will not disappoint. It offers an exceptional selection of property from Africa, the Americas and the Pacific. The over 400 lots encompass ritual dance masks and magic fetish figures, weapons and utilitarian objects, as well as a selection of rare artifacts from Pre-Columbian cultures.

This is the latest venture of Rago Arts and Auction Center, one of the most successful auction houses in the country. Rago's market savvy and use of online media has taken it from a small specialty house to international prominence with appraisers appearing regularly on The Antiques Roadshow. It adds tribal arts to a roster of sales in the fields of 20th century design, fine art and estate property.

Todd Zieseniss, the specialist in charge of the new auction, brings over two decades of experience in evaluating, authenticating, buying and selling ethnographic art.

"You really do have only one time to make a first impression," said Zieseniss. "So I vetted this sale for absolute quality, no matter what the price point. We've brought in exceptional objects, many with important provenance attached, property from notable collectors and museums and top dealers. It's a sale that I am proud to put before everyone I know who loves tribal arts."

Native American property leads off the sale, highlighted by two rare textiles. The first is a Northwest Coast Tlingit Chilkat dancing blanket from the 19th C., with an estimate of \$20,000-\$30,000.00. The second is an early 19th century Athabaskan Shot pouch with accoutrements, including an incised powder horn. From a private collection, it is estimated at \$5,000-8,000. Buyers will take particular note of the collection of Hopi Kachina Dolls, including several rare examples like the Citoto "flower Kachina," pictured in Gregory Shaaf's book "Hopi Katsina". Also of interest: a turn-of-the 20th century Acoma canteen-style vessel in black and white (another fine example of Pueblo Indian artistry), collected in the 1930s by an officer for the American Indian Council (presale estimate \$1,500-2,000) and a charming contemporary Northwest Coast potlatch bowl in the form of an otter with a prominently curved tail and inlaid abalone eyes (presale estimate \$1,000-1,500).

Perhaps the most sought after lots of the African section of the auction will be three masks from the noted mid-20th C. New York dealer J.J Klegman, among them a classic Baule male mask from the Ivory Coast. This early 20th C. example has an estimate of \$3,000-4,000. Another fine lot from the Baule is a rare divination figure estimated at \$5,000-8,000. This section of the sale is also notable for its collection of highly desirable Punu masks

from Gabon, noted for their Asian appearance. Two outstanding examples being offered are a classic white Punu mask from a private New York collection, estimated at \$3,000-5,000, and a very rare black Punu mask from a New England collection, valued at \$6,000- \$8,000. Sure to attract attention is a macabre and rare Tiv Imborivungu cult fetish staff from Nigeria, purportedly from the only documented cannibal cult in Africa. The provenance for this small scepter is a virtual "Who's Who in African Art" and includes Pierre Darteville, Dr. Noble Endicott, Erwin Hershey and Dave De Roche. It carries a pre-sale estimate of \$2,500-3,500. One of the most impressive objects in the sale has to be a Yoruba shrine altar from the Shango cult of Nigeria. This altar features several figural images carved in the round and a unique carved door and compartment. One of the best examples of its type that we have seen, it has a pre-sale estimate of \$8,000-12,000. Also here: a turn-of-the-20th century Hemba Singitti male ancestor figure from the Congo. From a private collection, it carries an auction estimate of \$8,000 -10,000.

The Pre-Columbian section of the sale features a wide range of important ancient artifacts, including a Vera Cruz stone palma bearing the image of a ball player with harpy eagle headdress. (Scholars believe that palmas were the marker stones in Meso-American ball games.) It is estimated at \$7,000-9,000. Another key lot is an Aztec stone metate with the image of a lord and supplicant figure, estimated at \$3,000-5,000. Also to be had is a Colima metate from Mexico with a presale estimate of \$7,000-10,000 and ceramics from the Colima culture, including a monumental Shaman vessel estimated at \$8,000-12,000 and several redware pottery dogs. Another of the treasures here is a solid gold beaker or "kero" from the Chimu of Peru. Dating to AD 1200 - 1470, it carries an estimate of \$5,000-8,000. Also sure to attract attention is an Incan frog vessel in terra cotta with hallucinogenic, spiraling eyes, AD 1450-1550, for \$1,500-2,000 and a rare Chancay wood figure from Peru, AD 800-1150, estimated at \$3,000-4,000.

Our Oceanic section includes objects from the Melanesian and Indonesian cultures. Of special interest is a mid-19th C. Maori Kava Kava figure from Rapa Nui/Easter island, its eyes accented with shell and obsidian. Standing two feet high, the figure carries an estimate of \$15,000-20,000. Rago's is proud to offer a rare and important selection of Massim artifacts that have been de-accessioned from the magnificent South Seas collection of the De Young Museum in San Francisco. These include spatulas and containers ranging in presale estimate from \$700-2,800. Among the Indonesian tribal property is a Dyak Bidayuh clan mask from the collection of Thomas Murray, estimated at \$2,000-3,000 and several large hampatong figures, including a rare feline estimated at \$5,000-8,000. There is an excellent selection of Oceanic clubs and shields, including a rare Marquesas Islands staff estimated at \$4,000-6,000 and several Fiji islands clubs, including a classic "pineapple" club estimated at \$2,200-2,800. Also not to be missed: a very rare mid 19th C. Cannibal Fork estimated at \$3,000-5,000.



**From left: RARE CHILKAT DANCE BLANKET, NORTHWEST COAST** Classic ceremonial garb of hand-woven mountain goat hair, dye with natural pigments, decorated with highly stylized clan symbols and animal forms, mid-19th c. \$20,000-30,000. **IMPORTANT BAULE FEMALE FIGURE, IVORY COAST** Heavily patinated carved wood, used as a divination idol, early 20th c. \$5,000-8,000 **RARE RAPA NUI MOAI KAVA KAVA, EASTER ISLAND** Carved wood male ancestor figure, eyes accented with shell and obsidian, mid-19th c. \$10,000-15,000. **IMPORTANT VERA CRUZ EAGLE PALMA, MEXICO** Carved volcanic stone marker featuring the regal face of a ball player wearing an ornate headdress of a happy eagle, AD 550-900. \$9,000-14,000.

**Auction**

Sunday, March 1, 2009 at Noon

**Auction Information**

Todd Zieseniss: 609.397.9374 or [tribal@ragoarts.com](mailto:tribal@ragoarts.com).

**Exhibition Preview**

Saturday, February 21 - Saturday, February 28, Noon - 5pm and by appt. Doors open at 9 a.m. on the morning of the sale.

**Catalogues**

Printed catalogues are \$20 each and can be purchased by calling (609) 397.9374 or e-mailing your request to [info@ragoarts.com](mailto:info@ragoarts.com). A digital version of the complete catalogue can be viewed online at [ragoarts.com](http://ragoarts.com) on or about February 13th.

**Online Bidding**

Online bidding available through the services of Live Auctioneers ([www.liveauctioneers.com](http://www.liveauctioneers.com)) and The Saleroom ([www.the-saleroom.com](http://www.the-saleroom.com)).

**Notes for the Editor**

High-resolution images available. More information online at [ragoarts.com](http://ragoarts.com).

*About Rago Arts and Auction Center*

Since 1994, Rago's has served thousands of sellers and buyers with a singular blend of global reach and personal service. First specializing in 20th century design, Rago's expertise now covers centuries of fine art, decorative arts, furnishings, jewelry and ethnographic artifacts. It is a world-class venue through which to buy and sell, with sales of over \$25 million in the 2008 season. It is also a destination for those who seek to learn and share knowledge about art, antiques and collecting, with free valuations for personal property (from a single piece to collections and estates) and auction exhibitions in house and online.

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