



35

HORATIO GORDON ROBLEY

1840 - 1930

Matai

Watercolour

Signed. Inscribed verso

8,000 - 12,000

Inscription in artist's hand verso reads:

A very old specimen that had been thickly coated for protection with tar. It was sold as a "Dyak" to artist (signed) 1890.

- The tar was removed, there was good tattooing.

- Only 6 bands on the lower forehead usually 8.

- The teeth much worn down by eating fern root

- In old days. Vide Cooks voyages, the septurns of the nose was pierced for feathers or ornament

"Matai" or iron was so valued, this ring may have been out in by the man. "Matai" means from the sea, ie, from ships

Former Auckland Museum ethnologist Dave Simmons says that in the early part of the 20th Century Robley tried to sell his collection of Maori Heads to the New Zealand Government. Ministers at the time, Sir James Carroll and Apirana Ngata said "New Zealand was not in the business of buying the ancestors." Rebuffed by New Zealand, Robley eventually sold his collection to the American Museum of Natural History, New York where it remains to this day, although unavailable for public viewing.