

Finch & C^o



FJIAN NECKLACE COMPOSED OF SIXTEEN SMALL WHOLE SPERM WHALE TEETH

A FINE FIJIAN NECKLACE COMPOSED OF SIXTEEN SMALL WHOLE SPERM WHALE TEETH

'VUASAGALE'

SHAPED AND POLISHED

EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 8CM LONG – 3¼ INS LONG (LONGEST TOOTH)

LITERATURE

THE TEETH OF THE SPERM WHALE WERE GREATLY VALUED AND WERE USED IN VARIOUS WAYS ON FIJI, POLISHED AND UNPOLISHED, LARGE AND SMALL. THE PURELY CEREMONIAL FORM KNOWN AS 'TABUA' WERE LARGER AND WERE PAINSTAKINGLY POLISHED AND SOMETIMES ANOINTED WITH COCONUT OIL AND TURMERIC TO DARKEN THEM. THE SMALLER TEETH WERE PRIZED FOR MAKING NECKLACES, SUCH AS THIS EXAMPLE AND FUNCTIONED AS HIGHLY REGARDED ORNAMENTAL OBJECTS FOR HIGH RANKING FIJIAN NOBLES, BUT WERE WITHOUT THE DEEPLY SYMBOLIC AND RITUALISED SPIRITUAL OVERTONES OF THE PRESENTATION 'TABUA', AND SO WERE NOT 'TABOO'.