Finch & Co



A BERING SEA ESKIMO SEAL SKIN HARPOON LINE WITH TOGGLING POINT

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19TH CENTURY

SIZE : 12 CM LONG – 4¾ INS LONG

LITERATURE

HARPOON LINES ARE MADE BY CUTTING A CONTINUOUS SPIRAL STRIP FROM THE HIDE OF THE BEARDED SEAL WHOSE SKIN IS THE PROPER THICKNESS. THE WIDTH OF THE CUT DETERMINES THE STRENGTH OF THE THONG, A SEAL HARPOON LINE GENERALLY HAS THE TENSILE STRENGTH OF SEVERAL HUNDRED POUNDS AND IS ABOUT 4MM IN DIAMETER. THESE LINES IN ADDITION TO TOGGLE HARPOON HUNTING AT SEA WERE USED WITH AN IVORY GRIP FOR ICE HOLE OR ICE FLOE EDGE HUNTING. THE LINE WAS CARRIED BY THE HUNTER IN HIS NON-THROWING HAND AS HE APPROACHED THE SEAL ON THE ICE OR AS HE PREPARED TO THRUST HIS TOGGLING HARPOON AT A SEAL COMING UP TO ITS BREATHING HOLE. IN A KAYAK THE COILED LINE WOULD REST ON A FLOAT BOARD IN FRONT OF THE HUNTER RUNNING OFF INTO THE WATER WHEN HE STRUCK AT HIS QUARRY, AND IF THE PREY WERE HEAVIER THAN A SEAL IT WOULD PULL A SEAL SKIN FLOAT FROM BEHIND THE ESKIMO HUNTER AFTER THE LINE AND BOARD.