Finch & Co



TWO INTERESTING NEW ZEALAND MAORI CARVED WHALEBONE BIRD SPEARS 'TARA, MAKOI'

TWO INTERESTING NEW ZEALAND MAORI CARVED WHALEBONE BIRD SPEARS 'TARA, MAKOI'
WITH AN OLD INK INSCRIBED LABEL READING; 'NEW ZEALAND WEAPONS 156'
18TH / EARLY 19TH CENTURY
SIZE: 31CM LONG AND 24.5CM LONG – 12¼ INS AND 9¾ INS LONG

LITERATURE

THE PRE-CONTACT MAORI HAD A PREDOMINANTLY HUNTING AND GATHERING ECONOMY WHICH EXPLOITED THE RICH RESOURCES OF THE FORESTS AND WATERWAYS. VARIOUS FOREST BIRDS WERE HUNTED SEASONALLY IN LARGE NUMBERS AS WELL AS THE BIGGER BIRDS LIKE THE MOA, WHICH UNTIL ITS TIME OF EXTINCTION WAS A VALUABLE QUARRY AND SOURCE OF FOOD, PARTICULARLY IN THE SOUTH ISLANDS. THESE BARBED WHALEBONE SPEARS WERE USED EITHER WITH A 'WHISPLING', A SPEAR THROWER, THAT WOULD PROPEL THE SPEAR POINT TOWARDS ITS TARGET, OR BOUND TO A 20 TO 30 FOOT LONG SHAFT THAT WAS USED TO IMPALE BIRDS PERCHED IN THE TOPS OF FRUIT BEARING TREES. THE UNSUSPECTING BIRD, ONCE STRUCK BY THE SPEAR, COULD NOT ESCAPE.