Finch & Co



AN ENGLISH CARVED SPERM WHALE TOOTH SNUFF BOX

AN ENGLISH CARVED SPERM WHALE TOOTH SNUFF BOX
THE LID DECORATED WITH A NAÏVE CROWNED LION HAVING A HUMAN FACE
LATE 18TH CENTURY – EARLY 19TH CENTURY
SIZE: 10.5CM DEEP – 4¼ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

THE CONQUISTADOR BERNAL DÍ®AZ DESCRIBED HOW THE AZTEC KING MONTEZUMA AFTER HE HAD EATEN WOULD HAVE PLACED BEFORE HIM 'THREE TUBES MUCH PAINTED AND GILDED IN WHICH THEY PUT LIQUID AMBER MIXED WITH SOME HERBS WHICH ARE CALLED TOBACCO.' LATER EXPLORERS DISCOVERED THAT THE AZTEC'S PREDECESSORS THE MAYA HAD PRACTISED THE SMOKING OF TOBACCO A THOUSAND YEARS EARLIER. IN 1532 FRANCESCO PIZARRO DISCOVERED THE INCAS ALSO USED TOBACCO, BUT THEY DID NOT SET FIRE TO THE DRIED LEAVES AND INHALE THE SMOKE AS DID THE AZTEC'S; THEY POWDERED THE TOBACCO AND SNIFFED THIS POWDER UP THEIR NOSTRILS. BY 1560 CATHERINE DE MEDICI HAD BECOME EUROPE'S FIRST ROYAL SNUFF TAKER AND THE DEMAND FOR SNUFFBOXES HAD BEGUN.