

Finch & C^o



ANCIENT CARVED WALRUS IVORY BERING SEA ESKIMO SLED RUNNER SHEATHS 'PIRLAAT'

THREE ANCIENT CARVED WALRUS IVORY BERING SEA ESKIMO SLED RUNNER SHEATHS 'PIRLAAT'

600 – 900 AD

SIZES: 16CM WIDE – 6¼ INS WIDE (MIN) – 31.5CM WIDE – 12½ INS WIDE (MAX)

LITERATURE

TRAVELLING OVER THE TUNDRA IN THE ARCTIC IS MORE FREQUENTLY DONE DURING THE LONG WINTER MONTHS WHEN THE SURFACES ARE FROZEN AND MARSHY GROUND BECOMES EASIER TO TRAVERSE BY DIRECT ROUTES. DURING THIS SEASON MOVEMENTS ARE MADE WITH THE AID OF SLEDS, DOGS AND SNOWSHOES. THESE CARVED WALRUS IVORY SHEATHS HAVE HOLES FOR THE WOODEN NAILS THAT WERE USED TO FASTEN THEM TO THE RUNNERS. IT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO DRIVE A SLED WITH UNSHEATHED RUNNERS AS THE SNOW WOULD ADHERE TO THEM. THE NORWEGIAN ADVENTURER J A JACOBSEN NOTED IN 1882 THAT WHEN DRIVING IN DEEP COLD ONE HAD TO TURN THE SLED OVER AND MOISTEN THE RUNNERS WITH SNOW MELTED IN THE MOUTH TO MAKE THEM SMOOTH.

IN 1877 E W NELSON STUDIED THE BERING SEA ESKIMOS FOR THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTE AND CAME TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF SLEDS AND DOG TEAMS TO THE ESKIMO: '..... WITHOUT DOGS THE LARGER PORTION OF THE GREAT ESKIMO FAMILY..... WOULD FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO EXIST IN ITS CHOSEN HOME..... IN WINTER THE HUNTER IS ACCOMPANIED BY HIS SLEDGE AND DOGS ON EVERY IMPORTANT HUNT..... THEY HAUL THE SLEDGES LADEN WITH HOUSEHOLD GOODS AND CHILDREN WHEN A CHANGE OF ABODE BECOMES NECESSARY....'