Finch & Co



FIJIAN SPERM WHALE TOOTH PRESENTATION 'TABUA'

A FIJIAN SPERM WHALE TOOTH PRESENTATION 'TABUA' INSCRIBED WITH TRIBAL SYMBOLS
OLD DRILLED SUSPENSION HOLES FOR SINNET CORD
SILKY SMOOTH PATINA
EARLY 19TH CENTURY
SIZE: 19CM WIDE – 7½ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

ON THE ISLANDS OF FIJI IN WESTERN POLYNESIA SPERM WHALE IVORY WAS HIGHLY VALUED AND CULTURALLY IMPORTANT. THE PRESENTATION TABUA MAY BE CONSIDERED AS THE ULTIMATE TALISMAN OF FIJI. IT IS THE REPOSITORY OF GREAT 'MANA' WHOSE IMPORTANCE IS ENHANCED ACCORDING TO THE CHIEFLINESS AND STATUS OF THE INDIVIDUAL PRESENTING IT.

TABUA STILL FEATURE AS PRESENTATION ITEMS ON FIJI TODAY IN MARRIAGE CEREMONIES, BIRTHS, DEATHS AND ALL OCCASIONS OF STATE. THE METHODIST MISSIONARY DEAN IN 1921 WROTE THAT 'THE FATES OF MEN, CLANS AND TRIBES HAVE OFTEN DEPENDED UPON THE WAY IN WHICH THE WHALE'S TOOTH HAS BEEN PRESENTED OR RECEIVED..... THE SPHERE OF (EVERY OTHER EMBLEM) WAS MUCH MORE LIMITED THAN THAT OF THE TAMBUA'.