

Finch & C^o



CHINESE IVORY HU OR COURT TABLET

A FINE CHINESE IVORY HU OR COURT TABLET
SUPERB GOLDEN BROWN COLOUR AND SMOOTH PATINATION
MING DYNASTY 17TH CENTURY
SIZE: 50CM LONG, 5.5CM WIDE (MAX) – 19¾ INS LONG, 2¼ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

THESE AESTHETICALLY PLEASING CURVED LENGTHS OF ELEPHANT IVORY WERE CARRIED BY CHINESE COURT OFFICIALS AND DIGNITARIES AND WERE HELD IN FRONT OF THE FACE AS THEY BOWED DEEPLY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE EMPEROR. THEY WERE KEPT BY COURT DOORKEEPERS AND WOULD BE COLLECTED ONLY ON ENTERING THE IMPERIAL PALACE, AS IT WAS AN OFFENCE TO KEEP A HU BECAUSE IT ALLOWED ACCESS TO THE RESTRICTED AREAS OF THE COURT. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO MING SHI, JUAN 68, PAGE 1665, THERE WERE COMPLAINTS THROUGHOUT THE 16TH CENTURY THAT THEIR DISTRIBUTION WAS ONLY LAXLY SUPERVISED. BY THE QING DYNASTY THEY WERE NO LONGER IN USE AT THE IMPERIAL COURT, BUT CONTINUED TO BE REGARDED AS DESIRABLE ANTIQUARIAN CURIOSITIES.