Finch & Co



TWO MINIATURE ANTHROPOMORPHIC BERING STRAIT THULE ESKIMO WALRUS IVORY CARVINGS

TWO MINIATURE ANTHROPOMORPHIC BERING STRAIT THULE ESKIMO WALRUS IVORY CARVINGS
PROBABLY ST LAWRENCE ISLAND
18TH – 19TH CENTURY
SIZE: A 4.5CM HIGH – 1¾ INS HIGH
B 2.5CM HIGH – 1 INS HIGH

LITERATURE

WALRUSES ARE SIGNIFICANT FOOD ANIMALS ESPECIALLY ON ST LAWRENCE ISLAND AND APPEAR IN BERING STRAIT ORAL TRADITION AS PERSONALISED BEINGS THAT CHANGE FROM HUMAN TO ANIMAL FORM OR THE REVERSE. WALRUS SPIRITS WERE SAID TO INFLUENCE THE AVAILABILITY OF OTHER SEA MAMMALS THEREBY COMMANDING THE RESPECT OF THE ESKIMO HUNTERS. THE STORY OF THE ST LAWRENCE ISLAND FAMINE OF 1878-80 WHEN A FAILURE OF GAME COMBINED WITH TERRIBLE WEATHER CONDITIONS AND EPIDEMIC DISEASE CAUSED MORE THAN A THOUSAND DEATHS, AROUND TWO THIRDS OF THE ISLANDS THEN INHABITANTS, SERVES TO ILLUSTRATE THIS BELIEF. THE PEOPLE ATTRIBUTED THE DISASTER, IN PART, TO THE WANTON DISRESPECT SHOWN TO THE WALRUSES: IT IS SAID THAT IN THE PREVIOUS SEASON THE HUNTERS HAD SKINNED THEM ALIVE.