Finch & Co



NEW ZEALAND MAORI CARVED WHALEBONE HEI-TIKI PENDANT

A NEW ZEALAND MAORI CARVED WHALEBONE HEI-TIKI PENDANT THE EYE INDENTATIONS WITH TRACES OF RED SEALING WAX THE FEATURES DEFINED WITH GUM INLAY

SMOOTH WORN PATINA

EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 7.2CM HIGH, 4CM WIDE – 2¾ INS HIGH, 1½ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

WHALES WERE ALWAYS VALUED BY THE MAORI AS AN ABUNDANT SOURCE OF MEAT AND BONE. WHALEBONE HAS A BRIGHT, LUMINOUS QUALITY WHEN CARVED AND POLISHED, AND AS THE WHALES WERE CONSIDERED BY THE MAORI TO BE THE INCARNATION OF CHIEFS, WHALEBONE OBJECTS WERE REGARDED AS TREASURE.

THE MAORI HAD NO MEANS OF HUNTING THE WHALES AND SO WOULD WAIT FOR THEM TO BECOME STRANDED ON BEACHES. BEFORE EUROPEAN WHALERS INVADED THE PACIFIC SUCH STRANDINGS WERE QUITE REGULAR. THE MAORI WOULD AID THESE EVENTS BY USING A SACRED 'MAURI', A MAGICAL TALISMAN, ON THE TE MAHIA PENINSULA IN THE FORM OF A WHALE SHAPED HILLOCK TO EFFECTIVELY DRIVE THEM ONTO THE BEACHES.