

Finch & C^o



FJIAN CHIEF'S SPLIT WHALE TOOTH IVORY NECKLACE 'WASEISEI'

A WESTERN POLYNESIA FJIAN CHIEF'S SPLIT WHALE TOOTH IVORY NECKLACE 'WASEISEI' COMPOSED OF 25 CAREFULLY SHAPED POINTS (EACH CARVED AND INDIVIDUALLY FULLY WORKED OUT OF A LARGER WHALE TEETH)

BOUND WITH FINE PLAITED COCONUT FIBRE SINNET CORD

EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 15.5CMLONG – 6 INS LONG (MAX) / 9.5CMLONG – 3¾ INS LONG (MIN)

LITERATURE

THESE FANTASTICAL NECKLACES CARVED FROM SPERM WHALE TEETH WERE A REFINEMENT OF THE 1810-50 PERIOD. THE INTRODUCTION OF METAL TOOLS TOGETHER WITH A REGULAR SUPPLY OF SPERM WHALE TEETH FROM THE VISITING EUROPEAN WHALING SHIPS MEANT THAT THESE 'WASEISEI' NECKLACES SOON REPLACED THE EARLIER TYPE 'SISI' WHICH WAS COMPOSED OF WHOLE PILOT WHALE TEETH. ALTHOUGH THE IDEA FOR THEM ORIGINATED IN FIJI THEY WERE MADE BY SPECIALISED TONGAN AND SAMOAN CRAFTSMEN 'TUNFUNGA FONOLEI'. MADE AS CHIEFLY REGALIA AND IMPORTANT STRATEGIC GIFTS, THEY WERE MUCH PRIZED THROUGHOUT THE ISLANDS FOR THEIR BEAUTY.

PROVENANCE

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