Finch & Co



**FIJIAN CHIEF'S SPLIT WHALE TOOTH IVORY NECKLACE 'WASEISEI'**

A WESTERN POLYNESIAN FIJIAN CHIEF'S SPLIT WHALE TOOTH IVORY NECKLACE 'WASEISEI' OF TWENTY SEVEN POINTS
MELLOW HONEY COLOURED SMOOTH PATINA
EARLY TO MID 19TH CENTURY
SIZE: APPROX: 15CM LONG - 6 INS LONG (LONGEST TOOTH)
23.5CM HIGH, 41CM WIDE - 9¼ INS HIGH, 16 INS WIDE (ON STAND)

**LITERATURE**

MOST OF THE SKILLED IVORY WORK ON FIJI WAS CARRIED OUT BY TONGAN AND SAMOAN CRAFTSMEN 'TUN FUNGA LEI' WORKING IN THE SERVICE OF FIJIAN CHIEFS. THIS FORM OF NECKLACE 'WASEISEI' HAS LONG POINTED PENDANTS CUT FROM SPERM WHALE TEETH. THEY WERE A REFINEMENT OF THE EARLIER 'SISI' NECKLACE COMPOSED OF WHOLE UNCUT PILOT WHALE TEETH. THEIR PRODUCTION WAS MADE POSSIBLE BETWEEN 1810 AND 1850 WHEN THE INTRODUCTION OF METAL TOOLS AND A REGULAR SUPPLY OF SPERM WHALE TEETH FROM THE VISITING WHALING SHIPS WAS A FREQUENT OCCURRENCE. PRIZED FOR THEIR BEAUTY AND STARTLING EFFECT WHEN WORN ABOUT THE NECK THEY WERE MADE AS CHIEFLY REGALIA AND AS IMPORTANT STRATEGIC GIFTS. AS HIGHLY VALUED OBJECTS THEY WERE USED TO PROMOTE ALLIANCES, MARK SUCCESSIONS, REWARD LEADING WARRIORS AND SOMETIMES TO ENCOURAGE ASSASSINATIONS.

THE DARKENED HONEY COLOUR OF THE NECKLACE IS THE RESULT OF CONTACT WITH SCENTED COCONUT OIL APPLIED AS A BODY OIL BY THE WEARER.