Finch & Co



NORTON SOUND YUPIK ESKIMO CARVED WALRUS IVORY BLADDER DART

A SUPERB NORTON SOUND YUPIK ESKIMO CARVED WALRUS IVORY BLADDER DART HARPOON SOCKET PIECE IN THE FORM OF A BEARDED SEAL

THE TOOTHED MOUTH EMBRACING A WHALEBONE BARBED POINT AN ATTACHED WALRUS IVORY TOGGLING POINT CARVED AS THE HEAD OF A WOLF

EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: APPROX: 54CM LONG - 20¼ LONG

LITERATURE

THE YUPIK ESKIMO USED THESE WEAPONS FOR HUNTING BEARDED SEAL, KNOWN AS 'MUKLUK', WALRUS AND BELUGA WHALE. 'MUKLUK' ARE THE LARGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT SEAL FREQUENTING THESE WATERS WITH FULL GROWN MALES WEIGHING BETWEEN 600 AND 800 POUNDS. AS WELL AS AN IMPORTANT SOURCE OF FOOD THEY PROVIDE RAWHIDE THONG, BOOT SOLES, KAYAK AND UMIAK BOAT COVERS, BLADDER FLOATS AND GUT SKIN FOR CLOTHING. HUNTING EQUIPMENT, AND ESPECIALLY BLADDER DART SOCKET PIECES, OFTEN DISPLAY LAND OR SEA PREDATORS WHOSE CUNNINGNESS IS ENGAGED SPIRITUALLY TO ENHANCE THE HUNTER'S SUCCESS. THE SOCKET PIECE ON THIS EXAMPLE IS ENGRAVED WITH A SEAL'S HEAD WITH OPEN MOUTH, TEETH AND WHISKERS, EARS, EYEBROWS AND EYES SET WITH RUSSIAN BLUE GLASS TRADE BEADS. THE STYLISED 'TOOTH PATTERN' OF THE SEAL IS OFTEN FOUND ON ARTEFACTS FROM THE NORTON SOUND REGION WHERE HUNTING MAGIC AND ANIMAL SYMBOLISM ARE IMPORTANT. IN THE SPRING, SEALS ARE HUNTED FROM KAYAKS AND ADVANTAGE IS TAKEN OF THE LARGE CONGREGATIONS OF SEALS BASKING UPON THE ICE FLOES. AT SUCH TIMES THE HUNTER WEARS A WHITE SHIRT SO HE CAN BE CAMOUFLAGED AGAINST THE ICE, DISEMBARK AND RAPIDLY APPROACH THE SEALS BEFORE THEY BECAME ALARMED. WALRUS ARE ALSO TAKEN AROUND THE ICE FLOES.