Finch & Co



FINE CHINESE IVORY COURT TABLET 'HU'

A FINE CHINESE IVORY COURT TABLET 'HU'
FINE MELLOW GOLDEN BROWN COLOUR WITH DARKER EDGES
SOFT SILKY PATINA
MING DYNASTY 17TH CENTURY
SIZE: 50CM LONG, 7.5CM WIDE - 19¾ INS LONG, 3 INS WIDE / 53CM HIGH - 21 INS HIGH (WITH BASE)

LITERATURE

IN THE MING DYNASTY IVORY HU WERE TRADITIONALLY USED AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE BY COURT OFFICIALS FROM THE FIRST TO THE FIFTH RANK, WHILST THOSE OF THE SIXTH TO EIGHTH RANK USED HU CARVED OF BOXWOOD. IT IS SAID THAT THE IVORY TABLETS WERE CARRIED BY OFFICIALS ONLY WHEN THEY WERE ACTUALLY IN THE IMPERIAL PRESENCE, AND THAT THEY WERE USED AT LEAST AS EARLY AS THE TANG PERIOD. THEY WERE KEPT BY THE COURT DOORKEEPERS AND COLLECTED ONLY ON ENTERING THE PALACE AS THEY GAVE ACCESS TO RESTRICTED AREAS, AND IT WAS AN OFFENCE TO OBTAIN THEM WITHOUT PERMISSION. HOWEVER, IN THE 16TH CENTURY MING SHI (JUAN 68 PG. 1665) RECORDS THAT THERE WERE MANY COMPLAINTS THAT THEIR DISTRIBUTION WAS VERY LAXLY SUPERVISED. DURING THE QING PERIOD HU FELL FROM FAVOUR AND WERE NO LONGER USED, BUT THEY REMAINED A POPULAR ANTIQUARIAN CURIOSITY.