Finch & Co



BERING STRAIT INUPIAK ESKIMO WALRUS IVORY AND IRON TOGGLING HARPOON HEAD

A BERING STRAIT INUPIAK ESKIMO WALRUS IVORY AND IRON TOGGLING HARPOON HEAD
FIRST HALF 19TH CENTURY
SIZE: 16CM LONG, 4.5CM WIDE, 2.5CM HIGH - 6¼ INS LONG, 1¾ INS WIDE, 1 INS HIGH

LITERATURE

COMBINING BOTH ART AND TECHNOLOGY, THE ELEGANCE OF THIS TOGGLING HARPOON HEAD IS SHOWN IN ITS RESEMBLANCE TO A SWIMMING SEAL. SEALS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN CRUCIAL TO THE LIVELIHOOD OF THE INUIT AND THE TECHNIQUES FOR HUNTING THEM HAVE BEEN UNDERSTOOD FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS. THE ESSENTIAL IMPLEMENT IS THE HARPOON HEAD. THIS DEVICE HAS BEEN DEVELOPED ESPECIALLY FOR HUNTING MAMMALS AND FISH LIVING IN THE ARCTIC SEAS. THESE ANIMALS CANNOT BE TRACKED OR INTERCEPTED AS LAND ANIMALS CAN, AND IT IS NOT EASY TO KILL THEM IN THE INSTANT THEY APPEAR AT THE SURFACE OF THE WATER EVEN IF THEY ARE CLOSE TO THE HUNTER. A LINE MUST BE FIRST SECURED INTO THEIR HIDE SO THAT THEIR ESCAPE CAN BE IMPEDED UNTIL DEATH BLOWS CAN BE ADMINISTERED WITH A DIFFERENT WEAPON. TWO VARIETIES OF HARPOON HEADS WERE USED FOR THIS PURPOSE, BARBED HARPOONS AND TOGGLING HARPOONS SUCH AS THIS EXAMPLE. THESE ARE PREDOMINANTLY USED NORTH OF THE BERING STRAIT WHERE THE SEA ICE PERSISTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.