Finch & Co



RARE LARGE SICILIAN TREPANI CARVED RED CORAL FIGURE OF A DOLPHIN

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LATE 17TH – EARLY 18TH CENTURY

SIZE: 3.5CM HIGH, 6.5CM WIDE, 3.5CM DEEP - 1¼ INS HIGH, 2½ INS WIDE, 1¼ INS DEEP

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LITERATURE

THE ANCIENT GREEKS LOVED DOLPHINS. THEY CALLED THEM 'PHILOMOUSOI', MUSIC LOVERS, BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED THAT DOLPHINS DANCED WHEN THEY HEARD IT. CONSIDERED A BENEVOLENT, INTELLIGENT ANIMAL, ITS APPEARANCE IN THE WAKE OF BOATS WAS CONSIDERED A GOOD OMEN. THEY WERE THOUGHT TO BE POSEIDON'S MESSENGERS AND MANY ITEMS OF ANCIENT JEWELLERY AND COINS DEPICT THE IMAGE OF THE GOD OF THE SEA'S SON TARAS RIDING A DOLPHIN. THE GODS APHRODITE AND APOLLO BELIEVED THEM TO BE SACRED.

THE ANCIENT GREEK APOTHECARY DIOSCURIDES WHO WROTE 'MATERIA MEDICA' IN THE EARLY 6TH CENTURY BC, BELIEVED CORAL COULD STAUNCH BLEEDING. IN GREEK, CORAL WAS KNOWN AS 'LITHODENDRON' OR STONE PLANT, A POWERFUL APOTROPAIC MATERIAL HALFWAY BETWEEN A SOFT PLANT AND A HARD STONE. IT WAS THOUGHT TO HAVE TAKEN ITS COLOUR FROM THE BLOOD OF THE MEDUSA, BUT IN LATER HISTORY POWERFULLY RECALLED THE COLOUR OF CHRIST'S BLOOD.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE EUROPEAN COLLECTION

ACQUIRED LONDON EARLY 1970'S