Finch & Co



A COLLECTION OF ANTIQUE CORAL JEWELLERY, AMULETS, PENDNATS AND CHAINS

A. A COLLECTION OF NINE ANTIQUE ITALIAN CORAL TALISMANIC AMULETS TWO OF BLACK CORAL FIVE OF RED CORAL AND TWO OF A RARE VARIEGATED WHITE AND RED MEDITERRANEAN CORAL

ALL WITH GOLD OR SILVER MOUNTS HELD ON A SNAKE-HEADED GOLD RING

18TH AND 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 4CM LONG - 1½ INS LONG (MIN) / 6.5CM LONG - 2½ INS LONG (MAX)

SOLD

B. A FINE ITALIAN GOLD AND CARVED CORAL ROPE SHAPED PENDANT CHAIN SET WITH A RED CORAL AMULETIC 'FIGA'

A HAND SUSPENDING ON A GOLD HOOP EIGHT CORAL CHARMS A DOG, PIG, HEART TRICORN HAT, MONGOOSE, EWER, SHOE AND HORN

PROBABLY NEAPOLITAN

MID 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 29CM LONG - 11½ INS LONG / 50CM LONG - 19¾ INS LONG (MAX)

SOLD

C. AN ITALIAN CARVED LAVA AMULETIC 'FIGA'

HOLDING SEVEN RED CORAL CHARMS SUSPENDED FROM A GOLD HOOP ON A PENDANT CHAIN

LATE 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: CHAIN: 22.5CM LONG - 8¾ INS LONG / 45CM LONG - 17¾ INS LONG (MAX) PENDANT HAND AND AMULETS: 5CM LONG - 2 INS LONG

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LITERATURE

CORAL HAS BEEN THOUGHT SINCE ANTIQUITY TO HAVE GREAT AMULETIC POWERS. ACCORDING TO GREEK MYTHOLOGY IT ORIGINATED AS THE SPURTS OF BLOOD GUSHED FORTH WHEN THE GORGON MEDUSA'S HEAD WAS CUT OFF BY PERSEUS. LATER IT RECALLED THE BRIGHT RED OF CHRIST'S BLOOD AND IN MANY MEDIEVAL PAINTINGS THE INFANT JESUS IS SHOWN WEARING OR HOLDING A CORAL ROSARY AS CORAL STRENGTHENED THE HEART. IN HIS 'MATERIA MEDICA' THE ANCIENT APOTHECARY AND HERBALIST DIOSCORIDES BELIEVED CORAL STAUNCHED BLEEDING. IN GREEK IT WAS CALLED 'LITHODENDRON' OR STONE PLANT AND THOUGHT TO BE PLIABLE, ONLY BECOMING HARD AFTER BEING EXPOSED TO THE AIR. ITS BRIGHT COLOUR SUGGESTED HELP WITH AILMENTS OF THE BLOOD AND ITS HARDNESS THAT IT COULD AID THE TEETH SO IT WAS CONSIDERED ESPECIALLY GOOD FOR CHILDREN'S TEETHERS WHICH SET IN A PRECIOUS METAL WOULD DOUBLE AS A RATTLE.

THE POTENT GESTURE OF THE 'FIGA', THE HAND-SHAPED AMULET WITH THE FIRST FINGER AND CHARACTERISTIC POSITION OF THE THUMB FORMING THE 'MANO CORNUTA', WAS DIRECTED TO WARD OFF THE EVIL EYE. MADE OF CORAL THESE WERE BELIEVED TO BE HIGHLY EFFICACIOUS AFFORDING THE WEARER SPECIAL PROTECTION. CORAL HORNS WERE AN ANCIENT PHALLIC SYMBOL OF PLENTY, A POWERFUL APOTROPAIC DETERRENT TO BAD SPIRITS AND A FORCE FOR GOOD LUCK.

PROVENANCE

ALL, EX PRIVATE ENGLISH COLLECTION