Finch & Co



A VERY RARE HAWAIIAN NECKLACE BLACK SEED BEAD AND WHALE TOOTH NECKLACE 'LEI NIHO PALAOA'

A VERY RARE HAWAIIAN NECKLACE CONSISTING OF TWENTY 'BLACK SEED' BEADS AND A WHALE TOOTH PENDANT 'LEI NIHO PALAOA'

FINE COLOUR AND RICH PATINA

WHALE-TOOTH, SEED AND OLD BLUE VELVET CORD

HAWAII

19TH CENTURY

NOW SOLD - SIMILAR EXAMPLES ARE ALWAYS REQUIRED FOR STOCK

SIZE: PENDANT: 4.5CM HIGH - 1¾ INS HIGH / NECKLACE: APPROX: 46CM LONG - 18 INS LONG

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LITERATURE

LIKE THE CROWNS OF EUROPEAN ROYALTY, HOOK SHAPED PENDANTS MADE FROM THE TEETH OF SPERM WHALES WERE WORN BY HAWAIIAN 'ALI'I' AS MARKS OF NOBLE BIRTH. THEY SERVED AS VISUAL SYMBOLS OF EXALTED STATUS AND COULD BE WORN BY PERSONS OF HIGH RANK OF BOTH GENDERS.

'LEI NIHO PALAOA' WERE WORN AS FORMAL REGALIA AS THE 19TH CENTURY HAWAIIAN HISTORIAN DAVID MALO HAS WRITTEN: 'IN BATTLE OR ON OCCASIONS OF CEREMONY AND DISPLAY'. THE NAME OF THESE PENDANTS TRANSLATES AS 'WHALE TOOTH NECKLACE' WHICH WAS THE PREFERRED MATERIAL USED IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY WHEN IT COULD ONLY BE OBTAINED THROUGH THE CHANCE STRANDINGS OF SPERM WHALES AS THEY PASSED BY ON THEIR ANNUAL MIGRATIONS. ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE FOUND OTHER PENDANTS IN SHELL, BONE AND CORAL WHICH INDICATES THAT IT IS THE DISTINCTIVE 'HOOK' SHAPED FORM OF THE PENDANT, RATHER THAN THE MATERIAL, WHICH SERVES AS THE SYMBOL OF CHIEFLY AUTHORITY.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE ENGLISH COLLECTION

PURCHASED IN A LONDON ANTIQUE MARKET IN THE 1970'S

SEE: FOR A 'LEI NIHO PALAOA' WITH BRAIDED HAIR SOLD BY FINCH AND CO ITEM NO.1, CATALOGUE NUMBER 22, SUMMER 2014

CF: FOR A SIMILAR EXAMPLE SEE; POLYNESIAN ART, EDWARD DODD; ROBERT HALE & COMPANY, LONDON, PAGE 140