Finch & Co



FINE FIJIAN SPERM WHALE TOOTH BREAST ORNAMENT 'TABUA'

FINE FIJIAN SPERM WHALE TOOTH BREAST ORNAMENT 'TABUA'

WITH OLD DRILLED SUSPENSION HOLES FOR SINNET CORD, INSCRIBED WITH 'NATIVE' SYMBOLIC 'GRAFFITI'

AGED SMOOTH SILKY PATINATION

WHALE TOOTH

FIJI

EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 17CM LONG, 5.5CM WIDE, 4.5CM DEEP - 6⅝ INS LONG, 2⅛ INS WIDE, 1¾ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

FIJIAN MEN OF RANK WORE A VARIETY OF NECK AND CHEST ORNAMENTS MADE MOSTLY FROM THE SPERM WHALE IVORY THAT WAS MADE READILY AVAILABLE IN THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY BY THE SEAFARING WHALERS HUNTING IN THE SOUTH SEAS. WHEN FIRST OBTAINED THE TEETH WERE ANOINTED WITH COCONUT OIL AND TURMERIC TO DARKEN THEM AND THEN TIRELESSLY POLISHED TO OBTAIN A SILKY TEXTURE. SOMETIMES THEY WOULD BE SMOKED OVER A FIRE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN A RICH DARK WALNUT COLOUR.

TABUA HAVE A PROFOUND CEREMONIAL SIGNIFICANCE ON FIJI AND WERE HIGHLY IMPORTANT AS PRESENTATION ITEMS DURING DYNASTIC EXCHANGES AT WEDDINGS, FUNERALS AND OTHER GATHERINGS.

PROVENANCE

SEE: FOR A COLLECTION OF THREE 'TABUA' SEE FINCH AND CO ITEM NO. 126, CATALOGUE NUMBER 16, SPRING 2010, INCLUDING A TOOTH WITH OLD 'NATIVE GRAFFITI'