Finch & Co

TWO NORTHERN ALASKAN INUPIAK ESKIMO AMULETIC BOWHEAD WHALE IMAGES 'ARVERUAG'

TWO NORTHERN ALASKAN INUPIAK ESKIMO AMULETIC BOWHEAD WHALE IMAGES 'ARVERUAG' CARVED FROM WALRUS IVORY

MID 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 18.5CM LONG, 6.5CM WIDE – 7¼ INS LONG, 2½ INS WIDE

8CM LONG, 3.5CM WIDE – 3 INS LONG, 1½ INS WIDE

LITERATURE

THE BOWHEAD WHALE WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT ANIMAL TO THE NORTHERN ESKIMO AS A MAJOR SOURCE OF MEAT, OIL AND BALEEN AND SO THEY TOOK GREAT CARE IN THEIR TREATMENT AND DECORATION OF THESE MATERIALS THROUGHOUT THE WHALING SEASON SO AS NOT TO OFFEND THE SPIRITS OF THE WHALES AND IN ORDER TO INSURE THE SUCCESS OF THE HUNT.

ESKIMO HUNTING MAGIC AND RITUAL WAS PERFORMED TO INSURE THAT WHALING WOULD BE PRODUCTIVE AND THAT THE ANIMALS WOULD RETURN IN FUTURE YEARS. IN ORDER TO INSURE THE PROPITIATION OF THE WHALES' SPIRITS EACH BOAT OR 'UMIAK' HAD A NUMBER OF WHALING CHARMS FASTENED TO IT, WITH THE FLUKES CLIPPED AS A SYMBOL OF THEIR CAPTURE. THESE EFFIGIES LASHED TO THE BOAT AND IMBUED WITH MAGICAL POWER BY A SHAMAN WOULD PLEASE THE WHALES' SOULS AND SO GREATLY ENHANCE THE HUNTERS CHANCE OF SUCCESS.