Finch & Co



A RARE IVORY ENGLISH TEETOTUM/ GAMBLING BALL

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LITERATURE

A TEETOTUM OR 'TOTUM' (MEANING THE WHOLE, I.E. THE WHOLE STAKE) IS A MANY FACETED SPINNING TOP WITH EACH SIDE NUMBERED. IT ACTS IN THE SAME WAY AS A SPINNING DICE, BUT IF IT IS MADE TRUE, WHICH IS WHAT THE INCISED CROWN ON THIS EXAMPLE DENOTES, THERE IS AN EQUAL CHANCE OF ANY NUMBER TURNING UP WHICH IS NOT THE CASE WITH DICE.
THIS IVORY TEETOTUM BALL HAS 32 SIDES INCISED WITH THE NUMBERS 1 TO 32 AND A CROWN. THE GAMBLING GAME OF STAKING ON A TEETOTUM IS RECORDED IN 1753 AND HAS ITS ORIGINS IN THE EARLY 18TH CENTURY, WHEN IT WAS INSCRIBED WITH LETTERS AND NOT NUMBERS. T FOR TOTUM (WHOLE), A FOR AUFERRE (TAKE AWAY), D FOR DEPONERE (PUT DOWN) AND N FOR NIHIL (NOTHING).