Finch & Co



RARE ANCIENT BEARING SEA ESKIMO 'OKVIK' WALRUS IVORY SHAMANIC FEMALE FIGURE

A RARE ANCIENT BEARING SEA ESKIMO 'OKVIK' WALRUS IVORY SHAMANIC FEMALE FIGURE WITH A RAISED OPEN LIPPED MOUTH

THE BODY INCISED WITH FINE LINES

THE OUTER SKIN WORN BY GRAVEL

200 B.C – 100 A.D

SIZE: 11CM HIGH, 4CM WIDE, 2.5CM DEEP - 4¼ INS HIGH, 1½ INS WIDE, 1 INS DEEP

LITERATURE

'OKVIK' MEANS 'THE PLACE WHERE WALRUS COME ON LAND' AND REFERS TO THE SITE ON THE LARGEST OF THE PUNUK ISLANDS WHERE MUCH OF THIS EARLY ART WAS FOUND. THE UNUSUAL FEATURE OF THE RAISED OPEN LIPPED MOUTH OF THIS FIGURE MAY REPRESENT A CHANTING, SINGING SHAMAN WITH THE INCISED LINEAR LINES ON THE BODY SUGGESTING TATTOOS AND AMULET STRAPS. THESE FORMS OF TRADITIONAL ADORNMENT WERE THOUGHT TO WORK AS VEHICLES FOR TRANSFORMING THE BODY EITHER THROUGH AESTHETIC OR RITUAL MEANS.

THIS POWERFUL STATUETTE WAS PROBABLY A GUARDIAN SPIRIT. ON ST LAWRENCE ISLAND GUARDIAN SPIRITS COMMUNICATED WITH THEIR HUMAN COMPANIONS IN DREAMS AND ADVISED THEM OF SPECIFIC CEREMONIAL ACTIVITIES TO AVOID SICKNESS OR TO BRING THE FAMILY SUCCESS IN HUNTING. IN SUCH CASES THESE FIGURES WOULD ACT AS SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS TO PROVIDE THEIR HUMAN MASTER WITH A MEANS TO INTERVENE IN THE COSMOS.