Finch & Co



PACIFIC MARQUESAS ISLANDS WHALE TOOTH MAN'S EAR ORNAMENT 'HAKAKAI'

A PACIFIC MARQUESAS ISLANDS WHALE TOOTH MAN'S EAR ORNAMENT 'HAKAKAI' CARVED WITH A TIKI FIGURE TO THE TAPERED SPUR

PIERCED WITH A HOLE FOR RETENTION BEFORE THE LARGE OVAL DISC

OLD SMOOTH CREAMY PATINA

EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 7CM HIGH, 8CM WIDE, 5CM DEEP - 2¾ INS HIGH, 3¼ INS WIDE, 2 INS DEEP / 11.5CM HIGH - 4½ INS HIGH (WITH BASE)

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LITERATURE

MARQUESAS CHIEFS AND MEN OF RANK ADORNED THEMSELVES FOR FEASTS AND IMPORTANT CEREMONIES WITH EAR ORNAMENTS IN A VARIETY OF TYPES, FROM LARGE AND IMPOSING SUCH AS THIS EXAMPLE, TO SMALL AND DISCRETE. KNOWN AS 'HAKAKAI' THEY WERE CARVED FROM LARGE SPERM WHALE TEETH WITH THE SMALLER EXAMPLES SOMETIMES MADE FROM BOAR'S TUSKS. ORIGINALLY THE TEETH WERE OBTAINED FROM THE SEASONAL AND OCCASIONAL BEACH STRANDING'S OF THE WHALES, AND WERE REGARDED AS PRECIOUS AND VALUABLE OBJECTS. LATER IN THE EARLY 19TH WITH THE COMING OF THE EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN WHALERS, AND THE SANDALWOOD TRADERS, THE WHALES TEETH BECAME MORE PLENTIFUL AS THEY WERE TRADED BY THE SHIPS' CAPTAINS AND CREW IN EXCHANGE FOR FOOD AND OTHER SUPPLIES. THE LARGE DISC IS WORN IN FRONT OF THE EAR WITH THE CURVED SPUR INSERTED THROUGH THE EARLOBE WHICH THEN PROJECTED BEHIND THE EAR. A SMALL STICK PLACED THROUGH THE HOLE HELD IT IN PLACE. BOTH MEN'S LARGE, AND WOMEN'S SMALL, 'HAKAKAI' WERE CARVED WITH THE ENIGMATIC TIKI FIGURES, BUT THESE ARE NOT RECORDED OR DESCRIBED BEFORE THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE BELGIAN COLLECTION OF MRS NELLY VAN DEN ABEELE

SOLD CHRISTIES AMSTERDAM 6TH DECEMBER, 1999, LOT 568

EX PRIVATE COLLECTION PARIS, ACQUIRED BY GALLERY FLAK, PARIS

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