Finch & Co



A FINE INDO-PORTUGUESE GOA SILVER FILIGREE MOUNTED LARGE BEZOAR STONE

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OLD SMOOTH POLISHED PATINA

LATE 17TH – EARLY 18TH CENTURY

SIZE: 9CM HIGH, 7.5CM DIA. (MAX) 3½ INS HIGH, 3 INS DIA. (MAX)

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LITERATURE

FAMED FOR THEIR CONSIDERABLE POWERS AS A UNIVERSAL ANTIDOTE TO POISON AND FOR ALLEVIATING MELANCHOLIC CONDITIONS, THE WORD ‘BEZOAR’ DERIVES FROM ‘BAD-SAHR’ THE PERSIAN TERM FOR ‘ANTIDOTE’. THE STONES ARE FORMED IN THE STOMACHS OF CENTRAL ASIAN GOATS FROM A MASS OF HAIR TRAPPED IN THE GASTRO-INTESTINAL SYSTEM. THEY ARE ALSO FOUND IN CATTLE, SHEEP AND OTHER RUMINANTS WHO ACQUIRE NUTRIENTS FROM PLANTS BY FERMENTING THEIR FOOD IN A SPECIALISED STOMACH AND CHEWING A SECONDARY ‘CUD’.

DESIRED FOR THEIR MAGICAL HEALING PROPERTIES, BEZOAR BECAME VALUABLE LUXURY COMMODITIES TRADED BY THE PORTUGUESE FOR OVER 250 YEARS, WHO OFTEN ORNAMENTED THE STONES IN SILVER FILIGREE WORK. IN THE 19TH CENTURY APOTHECARIES FOUND THE CHEMICAL COMPOUND ‘BRUSHITE’ IN THE STONES WHICH CAN EXCHANGE THE TOXIC COMPOUND CONTAINED IN ARSENIC FOR PHOSPHATE THEREBY RENDERING THE POISON HARMLESS.