Finch & Co



AN ANCIENT PUNUK OR THULE BERING SEA ESKIMO COMB 'NUYIURUTET'

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WALRUS IVORY

AD 800 - 1200

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CARVED WITH AN AMULETIC MASKED AND TATTOOED MALE FIGURE PROBABLY REPRESENTING A SHAMAN A LOOP TO THE BACK OF THE HEAD FOR ATTACHMENT TO A BELT

THE TEETH MOSTLY MISSING SMOOTH SILKY CREAMY PATINA

WALRUS IVORY

AD 800 - 1200

SIZE: A. 6CM HIGH, 2.5CM WIDE, 1.3CM DEEP - 2¼ INS HIGH, 1 INS WIDE, ½ INS DEEP

LITERATURE

LARGER COMBS WERE USED TO PREPARE OR 'HACKLE' FIBRES OF SINEW, OR TO COMB THE FUR ON CLOTHING. THESE

SMALLER ONES WERE USED AS PERSONAL HAIR COMBS AND THEY EPITOMISE THE ESKIMOS SKILL IN INFUSING ITEMS OF EVERYDAY USE WITH ARTISTIC ELEGANCE. ESKIMO ARTISTS WERE INDIFFERENT TO VERTICALITY AS, LACKING IN LITERACY, THEY VISUALISED FORMS WITHOUT A KNOWLEDGE OF WESTERN PERSPECTIVE, AND POSSESSED A SIMULTANEOUS PERCEPTION OF MULTIPLE MEANINGS WITHIN ONE FORM.

THIS COMB HAS PRECISELY RENDERED FEATURES WITH DEEP SET EYES, PERHAPS ONCE WITH INLAY, AND A LARGE BROAD NOSE. AN ENCIRCLING GROOVE AROUND THE FRONT OF THE HEAD SUGGESTS THAT THE FACE IS MASKED LIKE THAT OF A SHAMAN PERFORMING A RITUAL. THE TATTOOS TO BACK AND FRONT OF THE TORSO MAY REPRESENT SCARIFICATION OR CLOTHING. THE FIGURE IS ALSO SHOWN WEARING A NECKLACE.

PROVENANCE

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