



Tabua From The Fiji Islands, 19th Century. Sperm Whale Tooth Scrimshaw.

1 200 EUR



Period : 19th century

Condition : Etat d'usage

Material : Ivory

Length : 14,5cm

Description

Rare tabua or tambua, pierced at both ends to pass a braided coconut fiber cord, and worn as a pendant by Maori chiefs as a sign of distinction. Fiji Islands, Tonga 19th century. This one measures 14.5cm. Tabuas, made of sperm whale teeth, were often exchanged by whaling sailors who owned them for hunting sperm whales, during barter with the natives of the islands, this one bears the beginning of an engraving made by a sailor who hoped to make a scrimshaw. The tabua was presented during major state speeches, offered as a marriage token, during funeral rituals, or to ask for forgiveness for a fault. In the past, the sperm whale tooth or "tabua" represented a precious and highly symbolic currency on Vitilevu Island (Fiji). The Tabua, a tooth from the lower jaw of the sperm

Dealer

ASIAN ART

Okimono, Netsuke, Ivory, Marfil, Elfenbein, Avorio

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whale *Physeter macrocephalus*, had a spiritual and sacred meaning for the inhabitants of Viti. Equipped with a cord, like a pendant, the tabua was used as currency during wedding ceremonies; it was also offered as a mark of esteem, to repair a fault or obtain a favor. A feminine symbol of fertility, the tabua was also associated with the protection of the spirit after death. With the braincase, it accompanied the deceased to his grave in order to help him cross the afterlife without incident. The tabua is also present in the Tonga Islands.