



Tabua, Sperm Whale Tooth, Ivory. Polynesia, 19th Century.

580 EUR



Period : 19th century

Condition : Bon état

Material : Ivory

Length : 14,5cm

Description

Rare tabua or tambua, pierced at both ends for a cord, worn as a pendant by Maori chiefs as a sign of distinction. Polynesia, 19th century. This one measures 14.5cm. Tabuas, made of sperm whale tooth, were often exchanged by whaling ship sailors who owned them for hunting sperm whales, when bartering with island natives. The tabua was presented during major state speeches, offered as a token of marriage, during mortuary rituals, or to ask forgiveness for a fault. In the past, the sperm whale tooth or "tabua" represented a precious and highly symbolic currency on the island of Vitilevu (Fiji). The Tabua, a tooth from the lower jaw of the sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus*, held spiritual and sacred significance for the people of Viti. Fitted with a cord, like a pendant, the tabua was used as

Dealer

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Mobile : 06 16 40 89 83

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currency during wedding ceremonies; it was also offered as a mark of esteem, to make amends for a fault or to obtain a favor. A feminine symbol of fertility, the tabua was also associated with the protection of the spirit after death. Together with the puzzle, it accompanied the deceased to the grave to help him or her pass safely through the afterlife. Tabua is also found in Tonga.