



PUNUK SPINNING TOP

E 329) A large, heavy and very fine spinning top carved as a thick bi-conical disc decorated on one side with a powerful incised motif of radiant lines in a double circle. The point of the spinning top is missing but the spinning handle is still present on the reverse. Penuk Islands, Bering Strait, Alaska. Penuk Culture 400 to 1000 AD. Mineralized walrus tusk (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*) with a superb patina of age and use. 7,8 x 6,5 x 4,5 cm.

Literature:

Spinning tops are a very ancient form of game, past-time and can be used as well in magical and religious rituals and practices. Amongst the Eskimo the spinning top is recorded as early as the Penuk culture of the Bering Strait (400-1000 AD) and possibly further back into the OBS era (Old Bering Sea) several hundred years earlier. Dr David Riches reports that in the historical period "...Spinning tops were used in the later Thulé cultures as a gambling game when living in the hunting camps far away from the permanent settlements."

See : Not Working Alone – Games People Play by Dr David Riches in New Scientist, 26 July 1979

See others in the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. & NY.