



Toggle, harpoon finger rest or club head

On display

Title/Description: Toggle, harpoon finger rest or club head

Object Type: Implement

Materials: Walrus ivory

Technique: Carving, Drilling

Measurements: h. 112 mm

Accession Number: 1114

Historic Period: Early centuries AD

Production Place: Alaska, Bering Sea, North America, The Americas

Credit Line: Donated by Anthony Plowright, 1995

Is this an owl, or is it even a bird at all? Whatever this object might be, the colours are mesmerising and stand out. The waving layers with different colours might suggest that this might be walrus ivory teeth that was used for smaller carvings and displayed “rings of colour” or a mastodon tusk which possesses beautiful colours. [1]

The hole in the middle suggests that a thread or rope would have passed through it. Could this object be a toggle, a harpoon finger rest, or indeed a club head as suggested in SVCA records? A slightly similar object, identified as a Raven amulet, has been found at the Boardwalk Site in British Columbia. [2] Yet, it remains difficult to know identify who made this rare object and when.

Peter Loovers, February 2022

[1] Susan W. Fair, *Alaska Native Arts and Crafts*, (Anchorage: Alaska Geographic Society, 1985), p. 55

[2] Aron L. Crowell, *Prehistory of Alaska’s Pacific Coast*, in *Crossroads of Continents: Cultures of Siberia and Alaska*, ed. by William W. Fitzhugh and Aron L. Crowell, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), pp. 130-141

Provenance

Gift from Anthony Plowright to the Sainsbury Centre, University of East Anglia in 1995.
