



NWC Bent Wood Halibut Fish Hook

A very fine and early (possibly pre-metal) MAKAH or taaGuu, a bentwood fishhook specifically created to catch a calibrated size of Pacific Halibut (flounder) (*Hippoglossus stenolepis*). These hooks used in pairs and set on complex leader systems were arranged to float at a specific height in relation to the seabed. This system of double hooks and calibrated hook size facilitated the catching of medium size halibut avoiding the larger examples which were too heavy for the rigs or the smaller juveniles. Made usually from spruce wood (*Picea sitchensis*) which has a superior elasticity and resistance to breakage although other woods such as yew, fir, balsam, or hemlock were used as well, the shanks were thermo-formed by inserting the original straight shank into the large bulb of a specific type of algae. The bulb was then further filled with water and buried deep in the embers and ashes of the evenings fire. The heat slowly steamed the wood overnight rendering it pliable enough to be curved to fit into a mold or form where it then dried to shape. Once the curved form was set the shank was carved down to the correct thickness and size, and the bone point was tightly lashed on at an acute angle with cedar bark or root strips. The leader, possibly made of twisted nettle (?) fiber was simply hitched on to the shank.

Haida (Haida Gwaii), North West Coast - British Columbia, Canada, North America.

Spruce wood, cedar bark or root, nettle fiber (?) and bone with a superb patina of age and possible usage.

16,5 x 9 cm

19th century

Literature:

See the examples N° Am,VAN.131.b & Am,VAN.132 in the British Museum collected on George Vancouver's voyage to Hawaii and the NW coast of North America 1791-1795 by the Surgeon's mate George Goodman Hewett.

Ref. : Stewart, Hilary : Indian fishing: Early methods on the Northwest Coast. University of Washington Press and Douglas & McIntyre, 1977