



Snow Knife

E 385) A fine and well used snow knife in the form of a curved cutlass. The composite knife is composed of two distinct sections which are the permanent handle and the replaceable blade. In this case the handle made of walrus bone is very ancient and well-worn through decades of usage whereas the blade is of later manufacture although showing signs of wear and usage. The remarkably perfect blade is cut from a central slice of a medium sized walrus tusk and is tightly lashed to the handle with sinew bindings and reinforced with small, wood wedges. The distal end of the blade is notched to match and fit with the notching's on the handle reinforcing the attachment. The sinew attachment loop for portage is still present on the handle.

Iglulik people, Nunavut, Northern Canada. Thule period c. 1700/1900 AD. Walrus bone, tusk and sinew with a fine patina of age and use. 45 x 5,5 x 1,5 cm.

Literature:

See similar examples in the Horniman, British (from Winter Island : N° Am1987, Q.38) and Pitt Rivers Museums, UK.

These large knives are used to cut compacted snow for the construction of ice shelters and to melt for water. They are treasured and important heirloom yet mundane and essential survival objects.