



Patu Paraoa

A very fine and archaic patu paraoa, a short spatulate bladed fighting weapon. The word patu refers to the type of weapon whilst the word paraoa refers to the material which is bone from the lower jaw of the sperm whale. The present example is very unusual in that it shows what appears to be the impact of a massive lead bullet which partially shattered the blade leaving a crater and collateral damage. The butt of the patu is perfectly smooth and rounded off in the most archaic manner.

Maori People, New Zealand, Polynesia.

Whale bone (physeter catodon) with a very early and worn patina. 36 x 7,5 cm. 17/18th century, pre-contact from the Te Puawaitanga period, 1500-1800.

Literature:

Julian Harding in his descriptive letter of 2005 offers that the missing section of this patu was specifically created to accommodate the user's thumb when grasping the weapon for combat. I beg to

differ and propose that the missing section has specific characteristics that can be related to a blunt force trauma such as a lead bullet from a musket. Weapons are often damaged in combat and this could be one example of what can happen on the battlefield to such a prestigious weapon. It is of course pure conjecture, but one can surmise that perhaps the Patu deflected a bullet, saving the Maori warrior from injury and thus acquiring powerful mana for both it's owner and the Patu.