

## Punuk ivory socket piece for a child's "training" harpoon. 20.9 cm



This piece has a 3 mm diameter socket, a typical tapered and scored stem with a lashing slot at the butt end for insertion into a wood harpoon shaft, and a "flattened" diamond-shaped cross-section (0.7 x ~0.9 cm). The decorated recesses on opposite edges near the socket are a feature related to the regions where flint side blades are inserted in an ivory spear head.

Although not intended for a really operational harpoon, this socket piece was most probably made for a toy or training harpoon for a 7-9 year old boy. Boys of that age frequently play at being hunters and thus train to become beginner hunters as teenagers. For the target, they usually used a large barbed seal's liver. Although polar bear and barbed seal liver are poisonous due to their very high concentrations of vitamin A (even dogs never eat it), it is perfect as a soft target for a little toy harpoon.

A similar 17.8 x 1 cm example of this type of socket piece is in the Menil collection in Houston (A7408-62).

