

# **HISTORICAL AND TECHNICAL REPORT**

## ***PATU ONEWA STONE CLUB***

**RUTH CHANDLER WILLIAMSON GALLERY  
SCRIPPS COLLEGE, CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA, USA.**



**REPORT PRODUCED BY  
BRENT KEREHONA PUKEPUKE-AHITAPU BA, MTeach  
MAY 2025**

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# KUPUTAKA/GLOSSARY

Kupu ē-kaupapa/Term	Whakamāramatanga/Definition
Haerenga	Journey
Hapū	Sub-tribe
Haehae	Parallel lines used in carving designs
Hītori	History
Iwi	Tribe
Kaiwhakairo	Carver
Kakau	Handle
Kaumātua	Respected elders
Kawa	Protocols of practice, how things are done (see also tikanga)
Onewa	Stone (usually basalt)
Pounamu	Greenstone (Nephrite Jade)
Pūrākau	Stories, oral history
Mātauranga	Traditional knowledge
Rangahau	Research
Rangatira	Chief or chiefly in nature
Rau	Blade of a weapon, or a leaf
Taonga	Cultural treasure or artefact
Tāhuhu Kōrero	Background story
Taura	Thong or strap attached to a weapon
Tikanga	Correct procedure or custom (see kawa)
Tinana	Body
Tūpuna	Ancestors
Te Ao Māori	The Māori World or Māori worldview
Uhi	Chisel
Uri	Descendants
Whakanakonako	Embellishments
Whakapapa	Genealogy
Whānau/Whanaunga	Relative/s

## KUPU WHAKATAKI/PREFACE

*‘Ko te manu e kai ana i te miro nōnā te ngahere, ko te manu e kai ana i te mātauranga nōnā te ao.’*

The forest belongs to the bird who feasts on the miro berry, the world belongs to the bird who feasts on education.  
Māori Whakatauki/Proverb

The *whakapapa* and *hītori* of *taonga*, or the provenance and history of cultural treasures, are as important as the items themselves. Whenever the term *taonga* is used within this report, the author is referring to cultural treasures, although Western practice usually refers to them simply as artefacts or objects.

*Mātauranga* (knowledge) of who the *kairaranga* (weaver) or the *kaiwhakairo* (carver) was, the *iwi* or *hapū* (subtribe) from which they affiliate, the identity of the receiver, and the reasons for the gifting – are also *taonga* and unfortunately, far too much of this information has been lost to time.

Māori *taonga* rest in countless institutions around the world, museums, galleries, libraries, and private collections, and although the author does not take issue with this as such; he does feel that far too many *taonga* are displayed, or held, without an appropriate level of cultural and historical context. After visiting several museums in Europe, the United States of America, Australia, and the United Kingdom, the author noticed that several of our *taonga* had either minimal information, no cultural context, or worse, some information panels bore the terms ‘Unknown’ or ‘Unidentified’ and the name of the collector or collection was more prominent than the *taonga* itself.

As a weaver, a novice carver, and a Māori historian, the author felt that he was able to examine select *taonga* from institutions in countries to which he travels and produce documents that would provide these institutions with a general level of historical and technical information. The author has been fortunate to have undertaken extensive international travel, for work, research, and holidays, and has recently begun integrating museum and gallery visits into these trips; contacting institutions prior to any of his *haerenga* (journeys), to ascertain what *taonga* they have, and what he might want to access and examine – or what they would like to know more about.

By no means does he claim to be an expert in the study of Māori *taonga* and feels that there are others of greater standing within the field; however, he offers his knowledge, as best as he is able, to produce research documents that provide substantially more information than is currently held on these specific *taonga*.

The compilation and provision of these reports serve several purposes: to do the *taonga* justice by visiting and spending time with them; to examine them and promote their whereabouts; make their locations known to Māori (and other interested persons); and to uncover their *pūrākau* (stories) and bring them back to life. This third practice of uncovering their *pūrākau* achieves several outcomes, these being: to reunite them with *uri* (direct descendants) and *whanaunga* (relatives); to provide the institutions with a credible and informative record of the respective *taonga*; and ensuring their stories are not forgotten – *ka maumahara tonu tātou kia rātou*.

This particular *pūrākau* (story) focuses on a *patu onewa* (stone club) which is part of the Nagel Collection held by Scripps College, Claremont, California, USA. The word ‘*patu*’ translates as ‘to strike’, which is an apt name, as this precisely what is done with a weapon or tool of this kind. *Patu* can be crafted from a variety of stone (commonly basalt), wood, and *wheua paraoa* (whalebone).

## HAURONGO/BIOGRAPHY



The author's cultural background sees him affiliated with the *iwi* (tribes) of Ngāpuhi, Ngāi Tūhoe, Te Whakatōhea, and Te Whānau-a-Apanui, as well as having connections to Alveston in Gloucestershire, Bloomsbury in London, and Helsingborg in Sweden – all of which he has visited.

He is ex-military, having served in the army as a paratrooper and then military police officer; before studying a Bachelor of Arts, and then a Master of Teaching degree, and becoming a history teacher, and a military and Māori historian.

The author is a cultural practitioner: *kairaranga* (weaver), novice *kaiwhakairo* (carver), and *kaihaka* (performer).

He is a published author, producing articles, reports, and story books; produced a historical short film; delivered lectures around the world; and contributed towards exhibitions in institutions in Aotearoa New Zealand, and Australia.

The author's research has been referred to in the media; mentioned in legal cases; used on government websites; presented in museums; stopped the sale of *taonga* at auction and assisted in the repatriation of *taonga* back to Aotearoa New Zealand.

He has also appeared on television and radio in Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, as a *tumu kōrero* (historian), in documentaries, news, and cultural programs.

The author is a husband, father, and grandfather, who believes in the importance of teaching his *whānau* (family) *mātauranga* and *toi Māori* and including them in his *kaupapa rangahau* (research projects); taking them with him on these *haerenga* (journeys) if the opportunities allow.

It is his goal to contribute toward *Māoritanga* and *Te Ao Māori* (The Māori World) in a positive and impactful manner and hopes that this report goes some way towards achieving this objective.

## ARA RANGAHAU/RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



The author wields the *patu onewa* during the examination process at SCRIPPS College.  
Photograph courtesy of Dr Julia Lum (2025).

This report was compiled by the author, utilising: online and library/archive-based research; consultation with curators; conducting interviews with *kaiwhakairo* (carvers); as well as carrying out a physical examination of the *patu onewa* itself. The physical examination of the artefact was undertaken at SCRIPPS, Claremont on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025. The online and library-based research was undertaken between April 2025 – May 2025. The consultation process and interviews with Māori academics and *kaumātua* began in May 2024, and are ongoing, as per Māori *kawa* and *tikanga*.

Facsimiles of original documentation, provided by Scripps College during the research process, included: Milton Holland fine Arts inc. appraisal documentation. Information from, and images of these documents, are either provided by, or taken, by permission of the Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Scripps College. All physical descriptions, including measurements, and any condition notes, were obtained during the author's examination of the *taonga*.

## HE MIHI/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks, and acknowledgment goes to the following people and institutions for their support and assistance: Scripps College, Claremont, California, USA (Dr Julia Lum PhD – Asst Prof. Art History, Dr. Erin Curtis – Director Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, and John Trendler – Curator of Visual Resources, Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery).

# **PŪRONGO KŌRERO O NEHE**

## **HISTORICAL REPORT**

## TĀHUHU KŌRERO/BACKGROUND STORY

*‘Kaua e mate wheke mate ururoa.’*

‘Don't die like an octopus, die like a hammerhead shark.’

- Māori whakatauki.

Octopus are renowned for their lack of resistance when being captured, however a hammerhead shark will fight bitterly to the end, which is what occurs once combatants fight in close combat.

### Mau Rakau/Māori Weaponry

A *patu* is an effective striking weapon for use in close combat, a preferred method of warfare.<sup>i</sup> The word ‘*patu*’ translates as the ‘*to strike*’, which is its purpose, whether being wielded as a weapon or used as a tool. *Patu* are known to have been used as pounders to crush fern root for food preparation, and to soften wet hanks of *muka/whitau* (extracted *harakeke* fibres) during the *kōmuri* (softening) process in readiness to *whatu/weave* garments.

While the term *mere* was, and is, used in some regions to refer exclusively to clubs made from *pounamu* (greenstone), in other regions, *mere* was more broadly used to refer to *patu* of a similar shape and design made from hardwood (*meremere*, *mere rakau*), whalebone (*patu paraoa*), or stone (*patu ōnewa*) – in these areas, a *mere* made from greenstone was known as a *mere pounamu* or *patu pounamu*.



*Patu onewa,<sup>ii</sup> Mere paraoa,<sup>iii</sup> and mere pounamu.<sup>iv</sup>*



Most of the time, a Māori warrior would take two weapons into battle, a short, striking one and a long weapon, which allowed him to stand further away from his enemy.



National Library of Australia. Reference: nla.pic-an2948236-v  
Watercolour by Joseph Merrett.<sup>v</sup>

In lieu of an origin of this *taonga* regarding where and when it was created, a provenance has been included from the first-known existence to its current location.

\*For more information – see the Provenance section pp. 22-24.

# **PŪRONGO KUPU Ā-KAUPAPA TECHNICAL REPORT**

## Pūrongo Tīariari/Existing Report

There is no existing report, and the only documents held by the Ruth Chandler Williams Gallery, were excerpts from appraisal documentation undertaken in September 1971.

## Taipitopito tirohanga/Examination details

**Initial Examination Date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025

**Examination location:** Scripps College, Claremont, California, USA.

**Staff present at examination:** Dr Julia Lum PhD – Asst Prof. Art History.

**Momo Taonga/Type of Object:**

*Patu onewa* – Stone hand club.

**Accession Number:**

Not applicable at the time of this examination.

**Pinetohu/Labels, tags:**

There is currently no label or tag affixed to the *taonga*.

**Whakaahuatanga/Description:**

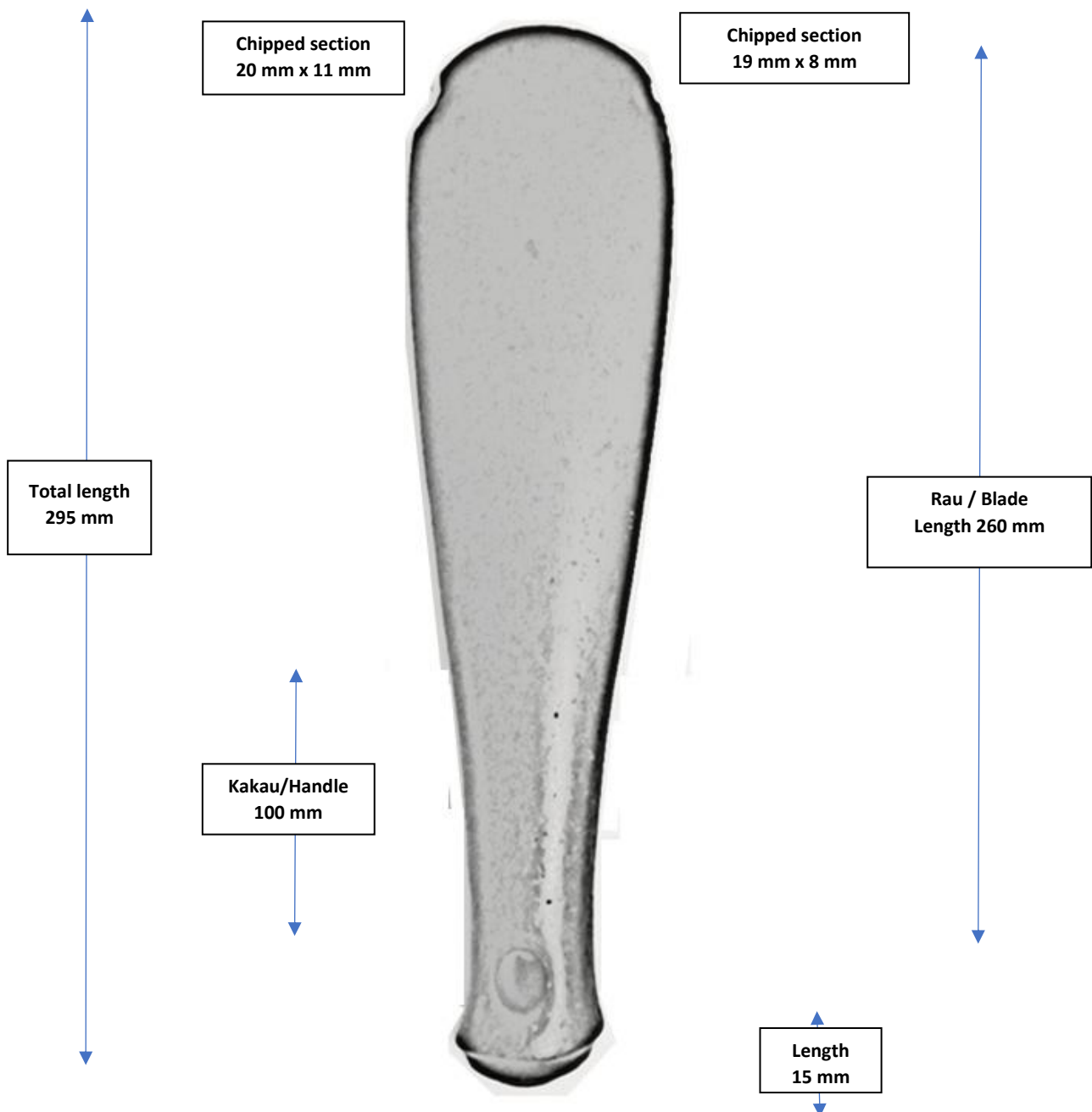
This *patu onewa* appears to be a pre-contact or early-contact artifact, crafted from *onewa* (basalt). The *patu* is dark grey in colour, and its patina is as would be expected from a *taonga* of its estimated age. The *reke* (butt/pommel) of the *patu* is decorated with three horizontal lines which are approximately 5 mm apart. There are two noticeable chips on the same aspect of the *rau* (blade) which may have occurred during training or in battle. At first glimpse, the *kowhao*/hole appears to have the 'hourglass' appearance which a *pirori* (traditional Māori drill) would produce, and it is this and the uneven, horizontal bevelled lines on the *reke* (butt/pommel) that indicate this was produced using traditional methods.

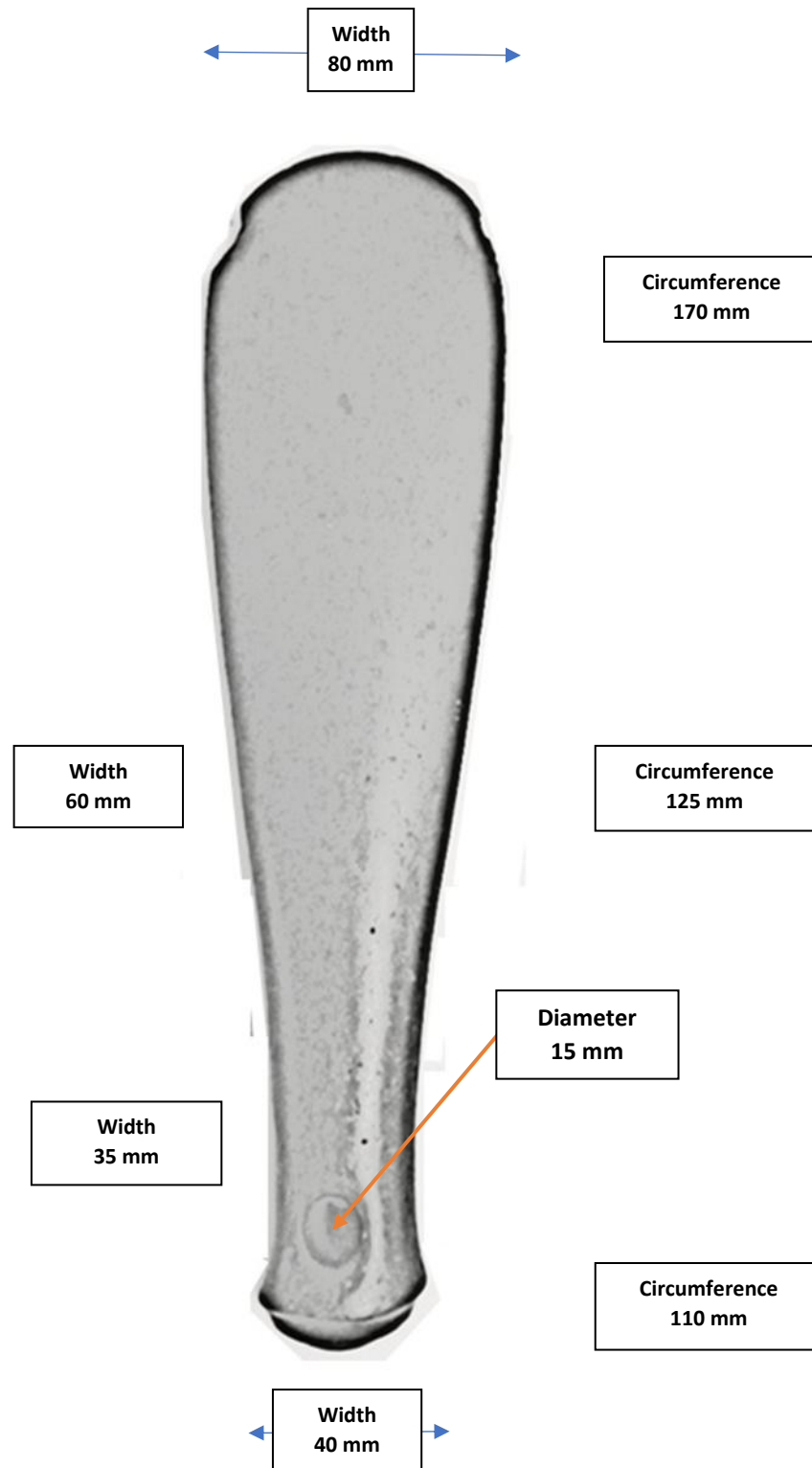


Image © the author (2025).

### Inenga/Dimensions:

The length of this *taonga* at the longest point is 295 mm measured from the top edge of the *rau* (blade) to the bottom of the *reke* (butt/pommel). This *taonga* is also 80 mm in width at its widest point, 60 mm in width at the midpoint, and 40 mm wide at its narrowest point at the *kakau* (handle). The design is quite generic, and it is symmetrically shaped.





**Taimaha/Weight:**

This *patu onewa* weighs 677 grams.

**Rauemi/Materials:**

*Onewa* (basalt) is a type of volcanic rock that is formed from the solidification of molten lava. It is an igneous rock, meaning it is formed through the cooling and solidification of magma or lava. Basalt is one of the most common rock types on Earth, and it can be found in various locations around the world, both on land and under the ocean floor.

Basalt is known for its dark colour, typically ranging from black to dark grey, and its fine-grained texture. This fine-grained texture is what enables the surface to be polished to a smooth gloss finish. Basalt is extremely durable, has a high density and strength, which makes it ideal for use as a striking weapon, especially as a club with a narrow edge around the *rau* (blade).



A rough, unworked piece of basalt.<sup>vi</sup>

### Reke/Butt or Pommel

The *reke* (butt or pommel) comprises of three horizontal, concentric ridges, which measure 15 mm from the point to the uppermost ridge at the widest point, which measures 40 mm in width, and 110 mm in circumference.





## Kowhau/Hole

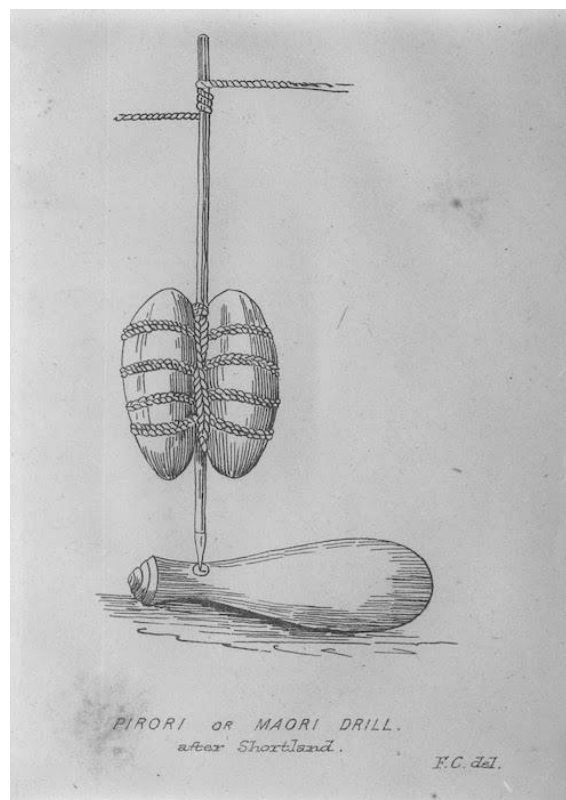
The *kowhau* (hole) serves as a point where a *taura* (thong) was threaded through, to ensure the security of the weapon. The *kowhau* appears to have been created using a *tūwiri* or *pirori* (traditional drill), the recessed grooves (hourglass shaped hole) bear evidence of this method of drilling. The *kowhau* is drilled into one side, then the *taonga* is turned over and the *kowhau* is drilled into the opposite side until the pair of recesses join, this creates the hourglass shaped hole. 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> century metal drills cut cleaner, cylindrical holes. The diameter of the *kowhau* measures 15 mm, and it is situated 20 mm from the point of the *reke* (butt or pommel).



The *kowhau* on the left profile of the *kakau*



The *kowhau* on the right profile of the *kakau*



A sketch of one type of *tūwiri* or *pirori* (traditional drill).<sup>vii</sup>

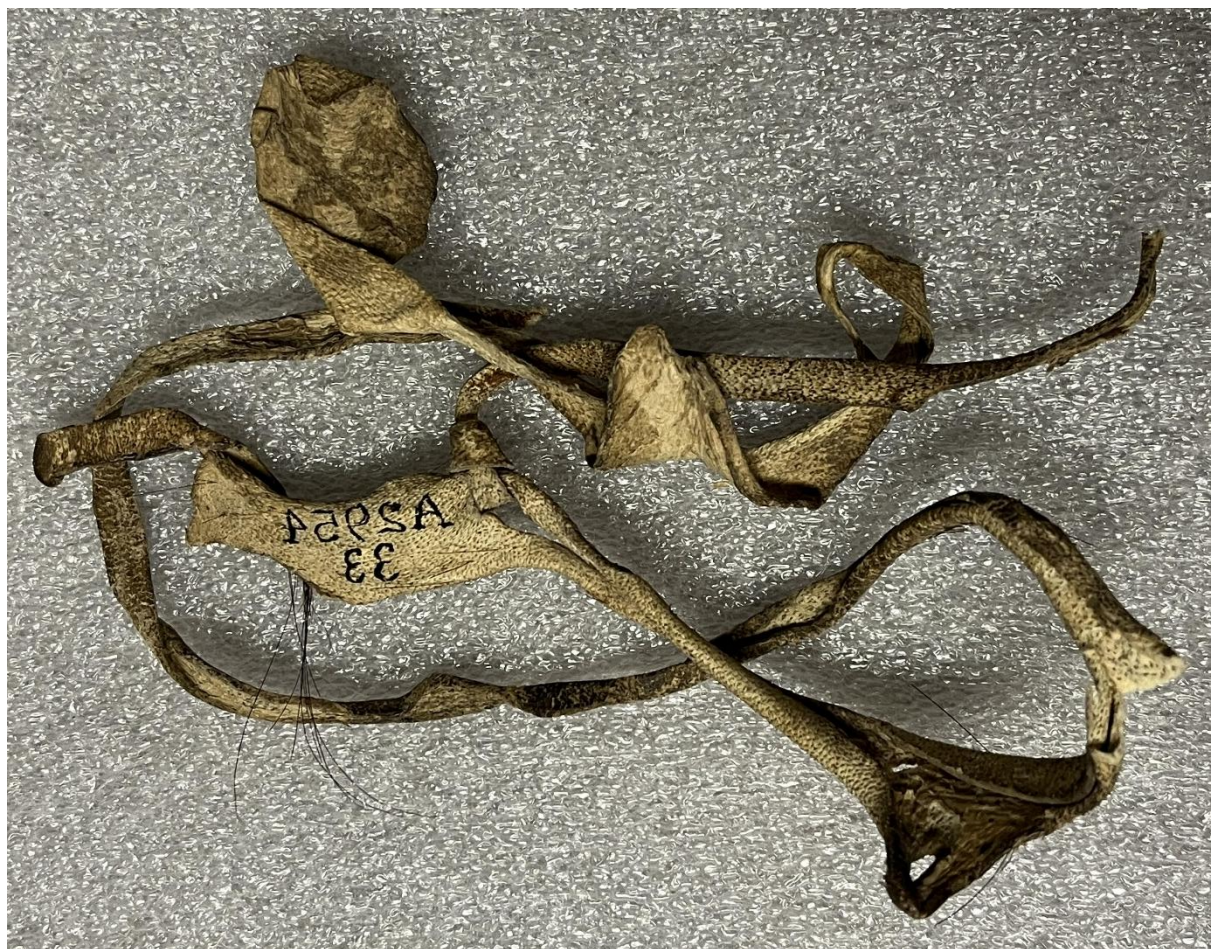


## Taura Here/Thong

There is no *taura here* (thong), or evidence of one attached to this *wahaika* or in the storage area. *Taura* are usually plaited cords made from *harakeke* (Phormium tenax) or made from narrow strips of *kiri kurī* (dog skin).



An example of a *taura* (plaited by the author) which would normally be found on this type of weapon.



An example of a *taura kiri kurī* (dog skin thong). This is from the Museum of Natural History LA collection.

### Kakau/Handle

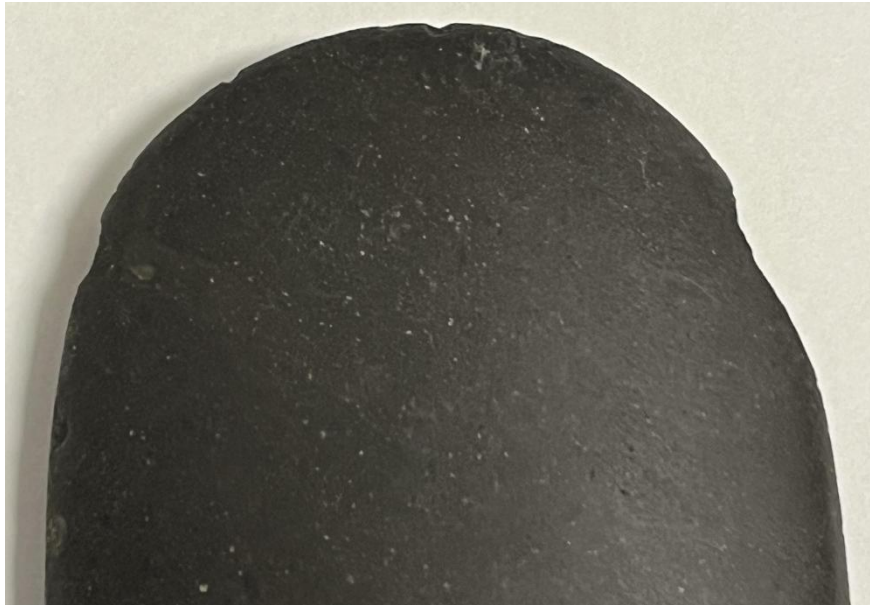
The *kakau* (handle) is rounded without any motifs or designs and representative of the common style of *kakau* found on most *patu* or *mere*. It is 35 mm in width, and 100 mm in length. There is a *kowhau* (hole) drilled into the *kakau* approximately 20 mm down from the *reke* (butt or pommel) through which a *taura* (thong/cord) would have been threaded. The circumference of the *kakau* (handle) at the point where the *kowhau* (hole) is measures 95 mm, and the circumference at the widest point before the *rau* (blade) begins measures 125 mm.





## Rau/Blade

The *rau* (blade) measures 260 mm in length from the tip down to the *kowhao* (hole), 80 mm in width at the widest point (toward the top), 60 mm in width across the centre, and 35 mm across the narrowest point of the *rau*. The circumference around the widest point of the *rau* measures 170 mm. The *rau* has convex edges. Missing are two small portions of the front edge of the *rau* (one on each *kauko* or side edge). These 'chips' measure 20 mm x 11 mm on the left edge, and 19 mm x 8 mm on the right edge. The *kauko* (edges) of the *rau* are quite thin and sharp, and capable of slicing the skin of enemy combatants, as well as breaking bones.



### Whakanakonako/Decorations and embellishments:

There are no discernible embellishments to this *taonga*.

### Pakarutanga/Condition:

Overall, this *taonga* appears to be in extremely good condition, however, there are two significant chips on the front top edge of the *rau* (blade). The patina and appearance of the *taonga* itself is indicative of its estimated age (circa 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> centuries), and the chips on the top front portion could very well have been sustained in battle.



### Whakaaturanga, Whakahaumarutanga rānei/Display, Storage:

Although this *taonga* was presented to the author in the black box (lined with a sheet of black satin) pictured below, that ‘...was only for transportation...’, and it is normally ‘...stored on open shelving and may eventually be stored in a closed cabinet drawer.’<sup>viii</sup>



## Whakapapa/Provenance:

### Private ownership

1800s-1900s: Edward M Nagel received heirlooms and artifacts passed down from his family in Wuppertal, Germany.



1960s-1970s: Appraisal documentation sought by Mr. Edward M. Nagel, of 2254 Leavenworth Street, San Francisco, California, shows that this *taonga* was in his possession as of September 1971. The documentation lists this *patu* (recorded on page 12, as 'Item 99, LOT, FOUR OCEANIA ARTIFACTS, comprising: Jade Axe, New Caledonia; Jade Ceremonial Spear Head, Mexican; Stone Club, New Zealand; Pestle, New Zealand; with bronze bases.' and appraised as being worth USD\$2,000.00 as a group. These documents are provided by *MILTON HOLLAND fine Arts inc.* Appraisals for insurance and market value – Art Brokerage, located at that time, at both 1204 Russ Building San Francisco, and 8899 Beverly Boulevard, Los Angeles.

PROPERTY OF:  
MR. EDWARD NAGEL

MILTON HOLLAND *fine Arts inc.*

APPRAISALS FOR INSURANCE AND MARKET VALUE • ART BROKERAGE

8899 BEVERLY BOULEVARD • LOS ANGELES 90048

1204 RUSS BUILDING • SAN FRANCISCO 94104

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ITEM	DESCRIPTION	SCHEDULE	APPRAISED VALUE
98.	LOT, SEVEN MINIATURE CARVED SKULLS; executed in wood, ivory, silver and porcelain; Spanish, Mexican and Japanese.		\$ 175.00
99.	LOT, FOUR OCEANIA ARTIFACTS, comprising: Jade Axe, New Caledonia; Jade Ceremonial Spear Head, Mexican; Stone Club, New Zealand; Pestle, New Zealand; with bronze bases.		2,000.00

A cropped section from appraisal documentation dated September 1971, showing 'Stone Club, New Zealand'.<sup>ix</sup>



Edward M. Nagel (1905-1996) 'had a lifelong interest in world art. He served as a commissioner of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and liberally donated to many museums and institutions from his collection. In 1992, his eponymous foundation was founded, providing funding to universities to grant scholarships to disadvantaged students majoring in business and related fields, including the business aspects of art programs.'<sup>x</sup>

Edward M. Nagel 'had an early fascination with art, antiquity, and material culture from the heirlooms and antiques passed down through his family in Wuppertal, Germany. He immigrated to New York in 1926, where he worked as a coder and decoder in Wall Street, and later moved to Los Angeles following the stock market crash in 1929. Throughout his successful business career, which gave rise to the Oroweat Baking Company, Edward would visit museums, galleries, and antique stores and was an admirer, collector, and patron of art, particularly ethnographic art.'<sup>xi</sup>

In 1969, Nagel donated several objects to UC Davis and had this *patu onewa* appraised two years later in September 1971. Maybe this appraisal was undertaken in preparation for gifting to SCRIPPS College as part of the Nagel Collection.

### SCRIPPS College

The current *kaitiaki* (custodian) of this *taonga* is currently SCRIPPS College, who, when considering the appraisal documentation acquired by Nagel, likely acquired this *taonga* in, or after, 1971.



Scripps College seal.<sup>xii</sup>



Scripps College, Claremont.<sup>xiii</sup>

'In November 1908, Ellen Browning Scripps, a philanthropist and prominent figure in the worlds of education, publishing, and women's rights based in La Jolla, Calif., first visited Pomona College in Claremont for its Dedication Day. Scripps met many notable members of the young college, particularly James A. Blaisdell, the new president of Pomona College. Scripps continued to stay involved with Pomona College's community and kept in touch with Blaisdell in the years following the event, funding some of the college's lecture series.

Following an increase in enrollment of female students at Pomona College in 1919, Blaisdell turned to Scripps for the possibility of funding a "Woman's Campus." Scripps was willing to invest money into creating a college campus that would preserve her values of education. Over the next several years, she bought surrounding lots of land in Claremont and funded the construction of a new set of dormitories in what would become "Scripps College for Women." According to Scripps, "The paramount obligation of a college is to develop in its students the ability to think clearly and independently, and the ability to live confidently, courageously, and hopefully." To provide a liberal arts experience with both an all-women's education and co-education, she wanted the college "to stress the essentials, reduce the size of the curriculum instead of increasing it."

Scripps initially did not want the college to be named after her, but Blaisdell convinced her that her name would help grow and publicize the college.

The development of Scripps College marked the start of Claremont's "group-college" system, similar to that of the Oxford Colleges, to which Scripps received much publicity. Scripps was featured on the cover of Time magazine for establishing this new consortium of colleges, which became known as the Claremont Colleges.

Scripps College was founded in 1926, following the coeducational Pomona College and Claremont Graduate University.<sup>xiv</sup>

As there are no labels or markings on this *taonga*, unfortunately no further leads are available regarding earlier provenance; however, the traditional production methods indicate it may date to the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

### **Hītoritanga/Publication history:**

There is no history of this *taonga* having been published within either in-house or external publications.

### **Ngā tuhinga a te kaituhituhi/Author's notes:**

As a former soldier, I am always drawn to weapons, and as a former fighter (Kyokushin Karate and Muay Thai), the idea of close-quarter combat is something that I am versed in, and I am aware of the damage that combat with these types of weapons could inflict.





This particular *patu onewa* feels relatively light for its size and would have been used with extremely quick strikes and thrusts, as opposed to heavier weapons where the emphasis may have been more on causing blunt force trauma.

The opportunity to test weaponry such as this is an interesting proposition, especially as the blade edge was so sharp, however, I did not feel the need to do anything other than hold and admire this *taonga*.

I find this *taonga* an aesthetically attractive piece, with the combination of the smooth, glossy surface and patina; and the two significant chips on the *rau* (blade) edges giving it quite a striking appearance, the damaged sections adding to the weapon's appeal.

Knowing that this is a weapon of war, and that it may have taken lives reminds me of the reverence I must practice whenever I handle a *taonga* such as this, both as a former soldier, and a human being, the gravity of this is not lost to me.

The 'hourglass' shaped *kowhao* (hole) and the lack of clearly delineated ridges on the *reke* (base or pommel) are indicative of traditional methods being used, and as such, I am inclined to view this as being produced in the 1600s-1700s.

An aesthetically pleasing and authentic *taonga*, with evidence of use in training or battle.

## Rārangi pukapuka/Bibliography-End Notes

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<sup>i</sup> Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Wahaika (striking weapon).

<https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/104468> (accessed 21 November 2024).

<sup>ii</sup> Brooklyn Museum website. Hand Club (Patu Onewa). <https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/objects/119013> (accessed 11 May 2025);

<sup>iii</sup> Bonhams (Auctions) website. A Maori Whalebone Club (Patau) 19th Century.

<https://www.bonhams.com/auction/28728/lot/127/a-maori-whalebone-club-patau/> (accessed 11 May 2025).

<sup>iv</sup> Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa website. "Tuhiwai" mere pounamu (nephrite weapon).

<https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/71840> (accessed 11 May 2025).

<sup>v</sup> Rangi Matamua, 'Mau rākau – Māori use of weaponry - Māori weaponry in the 2000s', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/artwork/39769/traditional-weapons-and-muskets> (accessed 4 May 2025)

<sup>vi</sup> Minerals Education Coalition website. Minerals Database. Basalt.

<https://mineralseducationcoalition.org/minerals-database/basalt/> (accessed 3 May 2025).

<sup>vii</sup> Coventry, Frederick Halford, 1905 - :Pirori or Maori drill after Ahortland. F. C. del [ca 1930].

<https://digitalnz.org/records/22683142> (accessed 23 November 2024).

<sup>viii</sup> Email from John Trendler to the author dated 6 May 2025.

<sup>ix</sup> Appraisal documentation provided by Dr Julia Lum in an email dated 26 April 2025.

<sup>x</sup> UC Davis website. Department of Anthropology Museum. Edward M. Nagel Ethnographic Art Collection.

<https://anthromuseum.ucdavis.edu/edward-m-nagel-ethnographic-art-collection> (accessed 3 May 2025).

<sup>xi</sup> UC Davis website. Department of Anthropology Museum. Edward M. Nagel Ethnographic Art Collection.

<https://anthromuseum.ucdavis.edu/edward-m-nagel-ethnographic-art-collection> (accessed 3 May 2025).

<sup>xii</sup> Scripps College seal. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scripps\\_College#/media/File:Scripps\\_College\\_seal.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scripps_College#/media/File:Scripps_College_seal.svg) (accessed 3 May 2025).

<sup>xiii</sup> SCRIPPS College website. Scripps College Facts. <https://www.scrippscollege.edu/admission/scripps-college-facts> (accessed 3 May 2025).

<sup>xiv</sup> Scripps College. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scripps\\_College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scripps_College) (accessed 3 May 2025).

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