

Basic Detail Report



War Club

Date

c. 1620-1680

Primary Maker

Eastern Woodlands

Medium

Hardwood, brass, iron, copper, shell

Description

Only six seventeenth-century Woodlands war clubs are known to exist. Family tradition relates that Lieutenant John King of Northhampton, Massachusetts, acquired this club in 1676 when he battled near Hatfield, Massachusetts. The shaft depicts one of the earliest known representations of a Native warrior, perhaps a self-portrait. His face is tattooed in three places: a rayed sun motif at his mouth, a straight line and a dotted line running diagonally across his face, and a zigzag line arcing over his left eye. The other side includes a stylized turtle with a four-pointed star representing its plastron (the bony structure on the turtle's underside), and two headless figures that likely symbolize vanquished enemies. A wolf with his tongue lolling out embellishes the end of the club. Its eyes were likely once inlaid with shell. Near the grip is a zigzag line, possibly referring to the bolt of lightning emanating from the thunderbird's wings.

Dimensions

Overall: 2 1/2 × 1 × 24 in. (6.4 × 2.5 × 61 cm)