

T O M A S S O



Near Eastern c. 3rd – 1st millennium B.C.

28. Mace Head

Nephrite

10.5 x 9 cm (4 1/8 x 3 1/2 inches)

Mace heads have been attested since the latter part of the Neolithic across central Asia and other areas, such as Predynastic Egypt. They were club-like weapons that could play both a functional and a ceremonial role, depending on their period, place of origin and specific characteristics such as size, material, and decoration. In Egypt, for example, they came to be intimately associated with the power of the pharaohs.

The present mace, carved in lustrous nephrite stone, presents the characteristic round shape, with a hole in the middle for the insertion of a handle, which would have likely been of organic material, and as such did not survive. Mace heads have been found by archaeologists in grave sites, which suggests their presence would have connotated the status of the deceased, and proves mace heads were invested with a symbolic, and not solely practical, function.