

Napoleonic prisoner of war carved bone

Sold



REF: 7157

Height: 20 cm (7.9")

Diameter: 1.5 cm (0.6")

Description

An early 19th century Napoleonic prisoner of war carved bone letter opener and ink pen.

Napoleonic prisoner of war bone carving represents resilience, skill, and survival during prolonged captivity. British and French prisoners, confined in hulks and depots, transformed leftover beef and mutton bones into intricate boxes, dominoes, ships, and religious objects. Using improvised tools, they carved, polished, and assembled pieces to sell or barter, earning small comforts and preserving dignity.

These carvings blend folk art with technical precision, reflecting maritime culture, military experience, and personal memory. Today, surviving examples offer intimate insight into wartime imprisonment, creativity under constraint, and the human need to make beauty amid hardship.