

3105

Ritual Knife

Edna Russmann: This is a very special knife that was probably used for some kind of religious ceremony or ritual. This was made perhaps 5,500 years ago. This is so early in Egyptian history that we know very little about how this type of knife was used, or in what kind of ceremony. The ivory handle is carved with lots and lots of little figures. Imagine the skill and the eyesight it must have taken to carve all of these tiny animals. If you look at the side with the thumb rest and imagine where your thumb would rest, you can see that it was made to be used by a right-handed person.

The blade has been worked to form a ripple effect, which also creates serrations along the curved edge, so the knife would actually cut something if you sawed away at it. This took someone with much experience of working flint and a great deal of skill and patience, because that person applied another stone to the surface and pressed along the top and the edges so that the flint flaked away to make, in this case, a very regular, very fine series of ridges and serrations.