



## Sword (Tetoanea or Tewinnare)

### Date

mid 19th Century

### Primary Maker

I-Kiribati

### Medium

Palm wood, shark skin, shark teeth, reed and sennit

### Description

This hand sword is one of many traditional weapons made with shark teeth on the Gilbert Islands. Known possibly as tetoanea or tewimare, this sword would have been used in close proximity to a foe in hand-to-hand combat. Sharks were important culturally to the people of Gilbert Islands and their teeth were used for many various weapons and objects. Larger shark tooth weapons were the main implement of defense in ritual duels held to defend honor and settle disputes. A man would have an entire ensemble that included various shark tooth weapons,

armor made from tightly woven coconut fiber, a belt of stingray skin, palm leaf hand covers with shark teeth attached and a helmet of a dried and hollowed out puffer fish. The teeth of tiger sharks were very often used to fashion the weapons featured in this ensemble. By studying the teeth used in weaponry, scholars have learned that many of the species used are no longer found in the Gilbert Islands. The Field Museum has a collection of 124 shark tooth weapons from the Gilbert Islands. The indigenous name for the Gilbert Islands is Tungaru, with independence the islands were renamed Kiribati. The people of the Islands sometimes refer themselves as I-Tungaru or I-Kiribati.

### Dimensions

19 × 2 1/2 × 3/4 in. (48.3 × 6.4 × 1.9 cm)