Finch & Co



A RARE IRONWOOD TONGAN PADDLE CLUB 'MOUNGALAUAU'

A RARE IRONWOOD TONGAN PADDLE CLUB 'MOUNGALAUAU' DECORATED WITH A LARGE HUMAN GEOMETRIC FIGURE, IDEOGRAPHS OF TURTLES AND BIRDS, AND ZIG-ZAG MOTIFS (SIDES REDUCED)

EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE : 108 CM LONG

42½ INS LONG

LITERATURE

THIS PADDLE CLUB WITH ITS ROUNDED UPPER END IS DISTINGUISHED BY THE FINELY CARVED DECORATION OVER ITS ENTIRE SURFACE ACHIEVED BY USING A SHARKS TOOTH LASHED WITH PLAITED SINNET TO A WOODEN HANDLE. THE SHAPE IS PROBABLY MEANT TO REPRESENT A CROCDILE HEAD RATHER THAN A PADDLE.

THE PRIMARY USE OF THE TONGAN CLUB WAS TO KILL PEOPLE AND SOMETIMES TO KILL PIGS. HOWEVER, IT WOULD ALSO BE USED FOR CEREMONIAL PURPOSES AND EVEN FOR DANCING. AT A RECEPTION HELD FOR CAPTAIN COOK, HE WAS ENTERTAINED WITH A DISPLAY OF CLUB-FIGHTING

TRAVELLING ON COOK'S SECOND VOYAGE IN 1774 J.R FORSTER, A NATURAL SCIENTIST, STATED OF TONGAN CULTURE: 'THEIR UTENSILS, MANUFACTURES, AGRICULTURE AND MUSIC BESPEAK THEIR INVENTIVE GENIUS AND ELEGANT STYLE'. (FORSTER 1778:235)