

Finch & C^o



FIJIAN ROOTSTOCK CLUB 'VUNIKAU' WITH AN UNUSUAL INSCRIPTION 'TONGATABOO WAR CLUB MAY 1830'

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OLD DRY PATINA, SOME SPLITS ALONG THE SHAFT

EARLY 19TH CENTURY

SIZE: 112CMLONG – 44 INS LONG

LITERATURE

AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY FIJI WAS A LAND IN WHICH FEW PEOPLE LIVED TO DIE OF OLD AGE, MEN DID NOT DARE TO MOVE ABOUT THE ISLANDS UNARMED. WILLIAM MARINER WROTE OF FIJI IN THE EARLY 1800'S: 'A MAN SELDOM GOES OUT, EVEN PERHAPS WITH HIS GREATEST FRIEND, WITHOUT BEING ARMED, AND CAUTIOUSLY UPON HIS GUARD'. (MARINER 1827: 208). HEAVY CLUBS, SPEARS AND OTHER WEAPONS ACCOMPANIED THE WARY FIJIAN ON EVEN SHORT WALKS BEYOND HIS VILLAGE.

MOST PROBABLY COLLECTED AND BROUGHT BACK TO EUROPE IN 1830, THIS CLUB MAY ALSO BE THE WORK OF TONGAN CRAFTSMEN OF WHOM THERE WERE MANY RESIDENT IN FIJI. BY THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY BOTH SAMOAN AND TONGAN CARPENTERS WERE SETTLED IN EASTERN AND COASTAL FIJI WORKING IN THE SERVICE OF LOCAL CHIEFS, AND WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING MANY FIJIAN ARTIFACTS. THERE EXISTED AN EXTENSIVE AND VERY ACTIVE TRADE NETWORK BETWEEN THE ISLANDS OF SAMOA, TONGA AND FIJI SO IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT THIS CLUB WAS COLLECTED ON TONGA IN THE YEAR THAT THE TONGAN CHIEFS WERE CONVERTED TO CHRISTIANITY BY THE MISSIONARIES OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.