Finch & Co



POLYNESIAN TONGAN ISLANDS RED WOOD WAR BOW 'KAUFANA'

A RARE POLYNESIAN TONGAN ISLANDS RED WOOD WAR BOW 'KAUFANA' NATURALLY CURVED WITH A NOTCH AT ONE END FOR SECURING THE BOW STRING A LONG GROOVE ALONG THE LENGTH OF ITS BELLY

18TH CENTURY

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CF: A VERY SIMILAR EXAMPLE COLLECTED ON COOK'S VOYAGES IN THE LEVRIAN MUSEUM WIDDICOMBE HOUSE COLLECTION (1922.939)

THE ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM OXFORD HAS AN EXAMPLE WHICH IS PART OF THE FORSTER COLLECTION (FORSTER 67.1886.1.1260)

EDGE-PARTINGTON 1895 PLATE 48 ‘BOWS OF RED WOOD’ COLLECTED BY COOK ON HIS 2ND VOYAGE 1772 - 1775

LITERATURE

CAPTAIN JAMES COOK WROTE ON HIS SECOND VOYAGE…. ‘ON THE INSIDE OF THE BOW IS A GROOVE IN WHICH IS PUT THE ARROW FROM WHICH IT SHOULD SEEM THAT THEY USE BUT ONE’. (A VOYAGE TOWARDS THE SOUTH POLE ETC VOL I PG. 221) A COLOURED PLATE IN ‘COSTUME DE GUERRE’ BY M JULES DUMONT D'URVILLE 1826 - 1829 DEPICTS A TONGAN WARRIOR WITH HIS FACE AND UPPER BODY DECORATED WITH DARK PAINT AND PIGMENTS ON THE RIGHT HAND SIDE HOLDING ALOFT A BOW AND A SINGLE ARROW. IT IS THOUGHT THAT THE DISCHARGING OF A SINGLE ARROW IN BATTLE CONSTITUTED A RITUAL ACT OF WAR WHICH WAS REMINISCENT OF THE FORMER IMPORTANCE OF THE BOW AND ARROW AS A WEAPON OF WAR. TONGAN TWO-HANDED CLUBS, FINELY FINISHED AND INLAID WITH WHALE IVORY GLYPHS, REPRESENT SOME OF THE FINEST EXAMPLES OF TONGAN ART. ALTHOUGH NOT SYMBOLIC OF SOCIAL STATUS, THE RED WOOD BOW IS A MUCH RARER ARTEFACT.

PROVENANCE

EX PRIVATE LONDON COLLECTION

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