



Fiji Bowai War Club

An exceptionally large and massive bowai (or more properly pronounced "mbowai") a pole-club of unusual length and weight. The club is completely smooth and perfectly cylindrical from one end to the other. The only decoration is the deeply recessed butt with the rim decorated with three concentric engraved rings. Fiji, Western Polynesia. *Casuarina Equisetifolia*. 126 x 6 cm. 19th century.

While the mbowai is truly the war-club of the simplest form amongst the remarkable corpus of Western Polynesian club types and shapes it is often the most essential and elegant. There are several types of mbowai notably those that resemble the American baseball bat. Of these some of the rarer examples are carved over all with typical Fijian, Tongan or Samoan motifs. Others are carved only at the grip.

Then there are those mbowai which are simply cylindrical or with the slightest taper like the one presented here. On this club the tip of the club is slightly conical and not rounded off as with the baseball bat type. These weapons are magnificent due to their extreme and essential simplicity and in rare cases the added value of their sometimes very large size and amazing heft - such as is the case with

the present example.

Literature:

See : Clunie, Fergus : Fijian weapons & warfare. With drawings by Kolinio Moce. Fiji Museum, Suva, 1977.

See : Journal of the Polynesian Society : Volume 66 1957 > Volume 66, No. 4 > Notes on a Fijian club with a system of classification, by R. A. Derrick, p 391-395.

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