Monzino Fiji Oil Dish

A tripod, lenticular, flat, priestly oil-dish sedre ni waiwai which contained sanctified coconut oil taken and rubbed on the priest's body prior to the ceremony of communing with the ancestors and performing rituals. The large crescent-form handle is carved with a rare form of repetitive triangular motifs reminiscent of shark teeth. The four, square sectioned struts which attaches the handle to the bowl were originally six, however two were obviously cut away in olden times for unknown reasons. Fiji Islands, Polynesia. Vesi wood (Intsia bijuga) with a fine oily patina of age and use. 56.9 x 30 x 8.6 cm. 19th century.

See the very similar example MAA:Z 3718 in the Museum of Anthropology, Cambridge which has a crescent handle with two panels of carved triangles collected by Sir Arthur Gordon between 1875 and 1880.

See the drawing : « Fiji Jaqona bowls Miss Gordon Cumming » for the various shapes of what Cumming describes as Jaqona (yaqona or Kava) bowls or dishes. There is a constant discrepancy between scholars with some declaring in their publications these lenticular flat dishes as for the drinking of kava while others describe them as oil dishes.

BM registration N° Oc2006,Drg.421. NB : the British Museum describes this drawing as : « … tracings of drawings made by Constance Gordon-Cumming, of objects collected in Fiji by Baron Von Hugel and Sir Arthur Gordon. These objects are now in the Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Whether or not the tracings were made by Constance Gordon-Cumming is unclear. »

Literature:

Ref.:

Clunie, Fergus: YALO i VITI. Fiji Museum, Suva. 1986.

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