



Kanak Currency Necklace

A high value currency necklace composed of 135 carved and polished green ouenite beads and a skein of coconut fiber and flyingfox fur hair cord.

Kanak people. Isle of Ouen. New Caledonia.

Very fine patina of use and age.

Length: 65 cm.

XIXth century.

Literature:

Most of the green-stone that is cut, polished and exchanged in New Caledonia are varieties of Serpentine (or serpentinite), resulting from the alteration of peridotites, of which the New Caledonian subsoil is rich and are not jade (nephrite). The stone from the island of Ouen took the name Ouenite. Serpentine beaded necklaces, called caawe in the Nemi language (Hoot Ma Whaap custom area), tied to a skein of coconut fiber and flyingfox fur, were among the most prestigious riches, held by the wives and daughters of chiefs. The coconut fiber and flyingfox fur skein (called hījuk), an animal respected by the Kanak, was also an important currency in itself, the longer the skein, the greater its value.

Ref. : <https://museenouvellecaledonie.gouv.nc/expositions/les-objets-du-mois/colliers-de-jade-kanak>