



Fiji Clam Shell Amulet ex Nelly Van den Abbeele,

A large, complete and natural clam shell wrapped and tied off with a sennit cord and suspension loop.

Of unknown use, and unrecorded as an object type, it can only be surmised that it has some form of amuletic function. It appears to be the shell of an endemic clam called "Kai buli" harvested mainly in the Ba River on Vitu Levu and which is eaten as a food of choice offering an excellent source of protein.

When offered at the Van Den Abbeele auction in 1999 the shell was thought to be full of some sort of fetish or amuletic substance. The binding is remarkably tight and does not allow removal nor for the shell to open. Further investigation has proven the shell to be empty and completely clean inside with no animal remains. Just what was the reason for creating this object will remain an enigma. It was perhaps an amulet to induce more bountiful clam harvesting results, or perhaps a trophy to remind the owner of the possibly unusually large proportions of the shell, or of a specific moment...whatever the reason it is a remarkable object compelling both in form and materials.

Ba River (?), Viti Levu Island (?), Fiji, Polynesia.

Shell of *Batissa violacea** (?) and sennit (coconut fibre rope).

19th century or earlier.

11 x 12 x 7.3 cm.

*CITES : Not Evaluated

Literature:

Ref. : Lako, Jimaima ; Kuridrani, Nanise ; Sobey, Milika : Freshwater Mussel (*Batissa violacea*) Fishery and its Value in Fiji in The Journal of Pacific Studies, Volume 39 Issue 1, 2019, University of the South Pacific, Suva, Fiji Islands

<https://www.usp.ac.fj/journal-of-pacific-studies/all-issues/volume-39-issue-1-2019/freshwater-mussel-batissa-violacea-fishery-and-its-value-in-fiji/>