



### **Fiji I Ula Tavatava with Whale Ivory Inlay**

I ULA TAVATAVA, a very fine, functional, short throwing - club with a gadrooned or lobed (segmented) head and engraved grip inlayed with 6 round segments of whale-tooth (4 remain).

Fiji, Polynesia

Ironwood (*Casuarina equisetifolia*), Sperm whale tooth (*Physeter catodon*) with a superb patina of age and usage.

39,8 x 11 cm

XVIIIth/XIXth century

The inclusion of carved sections of whale-tooth indicates that the club here belonged to someone of great importance and that the club had a personal prestige and an identity of its own. Clubs as we now know were not only weapons of warfare – they were indicators of rank, origin, power, prowess, and prestige. The club itself was often named and identified as a spiritual, possibly even a living entity. The apparent simplicity and even rusticity here must not be misconstrued. This is a powerful weapon,

belonging to an eminent person, who embellished it with the ivory plugs probably in remembrance of either past victims or events for all to see and recognize.

**Literature:**

CASSE-TÊTE II : ARMES ET ARMEMENTS DE L'OCÉANIE. Exhibition catalogue, Gal. Meyer, Paris, 2022, pp. 154-155