



### **Tonga Bowai ex van Eyck coll.**

A Bowai or pole club entirely covered with incised designs representing various forms of stylized woven matt motifs, geometric elements, 20 birds, 7 human figures, 3 Rarotongan type eye-motifs and 1 dog.

This remarkable weapon is much more than a simple club used in combat. The magnificent quality of carving and the diverse and multiple motifs offer a panorama of Tongan iconography here with what can be construed as appropriations from both early Fijian iconography as well as that of Rarotonga. This is a scepter, a badge, an indicator of hierarchy and position, an all-powerful emblem of royalty, prestige, power and control. It is a record of past deeds and events - probably a true milestone that still needs to be deciphered.

As well, this club has provided the genesis for the logo that has identified Galerie Meyer from the first days of its existence in the early 1980's. The gallery logo was created by mixing the human figure glyph at the top of the club with the large one on the side holding the weapons. It is a true pleasure to see that this masterpiece of Oceanic art has come home after being sold to the Van Eycks more than 40 years ago.

Tonga, Polynesia

Ironwood (*Casuarina equisetifolia*) with a superb patina of age and use.

92,5 cm

XVIII/XIXth century or earlier

**Literature:**

Pub. : Casse-tête. Exhibition catalogue, Galerie Meyer, Paris, 1989, p.25, no. 31.