



Club

Not on display

Title/Description: Club

Measurements: l. 1055 x w. 94 x d. 94 mm

Accession Number: 894

Historic Period: 18th/early 19th century

Although clubs from the Fiji-Tonga area are numerous, this particular type is rare and examples are found mainly in collections of early material. Two examples in the Peabody Museum, Salem (nos. E4800, E4840) were acquired in 1823. It is not possible to be certain that this type originates from Fiji, for although the bulbous club head, grip carving and butt form are characteristic of Fijian clubs (see Clunie, 1977), the six oval faces around the club head correspond more closely to faces on Tongan images than to Fijian forms (see Oldman, 1943: pl. 45–6; Larsson, 1960).

Tongan images are thought to have been produced in Ha'apai, the central of the three groups of islands which compose Tonga, and since it is clear that there was considerable communication between Fiji and Tonga it is possible that these clubs were made by Tongan craftsmen resident in Fiji.

This example is made from a heavy hardwood, probably vesi (*Intsia bijuga*), a material from which many items of ritual importance were carved. This, combined with the anthropomorphic imagery, makes it a kind of god/ancestor image, a conception consistent with club forms from other parts of Polynesia (see the Marquesas club 193).

Steven Hooper, 1997

Entry taken from *Robert and Lisa Sainsbury Collection, Vol. 2: Pacific, African and Native North American Art*, edited by Steven Hooper (Yale University Press, 1997) p. 36.
