



'Bird-headed' club

Not on display

Title/Description: 'Bird-headed' club

Object Type: Club

Materials: Wood

Measurements: l. 743 x w. 240 x d. 70 mm

Accession Number: 897

Historic Period: 19th century

Production Place: New Caledonia

A variety of clubs were made in New Caledonia, and several examples were collected in 1774 during Cook's second voyage (see Kaeppler, *Melanesia and Micronesia* 1978: 245). Perhaps the most distinctive form is the 'bird-headed' type represented here (see Sarasin, 1929: pls. 52-5 for examples). The name derives from the resemblance to a profile bird's head, though the symbolic significance of the form is not clear.

This is a particularly elegant example, having a long beak and curving handle. It also has an expanded section at the end of the handle, characteristic of New Caledonian clubs. As in other Pacific societies, most able-bodied men carried weapons, though contrary to European popular notions they were not in constant use.

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. 78.
