



Object: War Club
Indigenous name: Sali
Culture: Fijian
Date: nd
Materials: wood, sennit
Dimensions:
Institution and accession number:
Burke Museum, 4-12567



Object: War Club
Indigenous name: U'U
Culture: Marquesan
Date: nd
Materials: ironwood
Dimensions: 66 x 9.5 in
Institution and accession number:
Burke Museum, 1997-126/25

Warfare stems from a when a culture, society, or nation is unable to coexist together with others peacefully. Using the available resources and technology that are prevalent, weapons were able to be made efficiently. Many different types of weapons were constructed and each had a different structure that was associated with its purpose. War clubs, also known as *U'U* in the Marquesas Islands, were mainly constructed of ironwood because the island has a vast amount of forestry and timber (De 1947, 5). Ironwood was used to create the above war club and is one of the heavier woods in Polynesia (Wagner 1997, 3). Typically, the length of the club would be shorter so it would still remain effective during combat (De 1947, 6). Some types of war clubs were shaped differently to inflict different types of wounds. The primary interest in the weapons is its linkage with violence and masculinity. Practices within Marquesan society follow the study done by Elliston in analyzing the “sociological processes through which gender differences, and masculinity more specifically, are produced” (Elliston 2004, 609). Masculinity in many Pacific cultures was demonstrated through war accomplishments. Weapons, such as war clubs, became symbols of masculinity. The carved detail on the weapon also is heavily influenced by the culture and the surrounding islands as the war clubs share similar decorative attributes (Suggs 1961, 8). The theme of warfare is shown through these weapons which would be handled by high ranking chiefs during combat or during religious ceremonies. The overall purpose of the weapon is to demonstrate masculinity and how that theme is associated with the art of warfare (Class Notes on Marquesas Islands 2016).

The art within warfare and masculinity is frequently seen in Fiji with war clubs, known as *Sali*. Similarly to that of the Marquesas' Islands, the material used to make the clubs was wood, an abundant resource on the island. The war club's appearance comes from the inspiration from the nature on the island. This club is associated with the trees and their roots by the way the handle of the club is shaped. War clubs on Fiji had a longer length to them than other clubs on Polynesian islands. The act of savagery and cannibalism was carried out on the island before European colonization. The war clubs would be used for cannibalism and in combat (Johnston 2005, 23). Before the European influence in the late 19th and early 20th century, the culture, intellect, and technology was different on the island. The 19th century Fijian people tended to "focus upon savage nature" (Johnston 2005, 25). In Fijian culture there is an apparent priority with males showing off their masculinity. Local powers had excused the violence performed by men, suggesting that "these acts were 'authorized'" because they were achieving "political dominance" (George 2008, 164). The importance of implemented violence built a strong tie between man and weapon. A Fijian man would not be given his adult name until he had made his first kill. Men would be buried with their war club as a sign of accomplishment (Class Notes on Fiji 2016). Ancestry is a crucial matter in the Oceania region and the connections between past and present is represented (Jolly 2008, 1). The burial with the war club shows honor and the achieved masculinity.

I chose these objects to compare and contrast the similarities and differences in which war is portrayed in two different cultures involving the same type of object. By looking at war clubs, the immediate understanding of the usage of the object is to inflict pain upon an enemy. By understanding that the overall use of the objects was the same, it was the different sub qualities that each war club illuminated in the other that truly showed the differences and means of importance in either the Marquesan or Fijian culture. With a common theme of men and masculinity running throughout both of the clubs, the importance of masculinity and the history within that realm was similar although they were different cultures. I found this very interesting because it shows the influence that cultures have on each other.

Bibliography

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