



Object type: Club
Indigenous Name: *Totokia*
Culture/Location: Fiji
Date: 19th century Materials: Wood, leather
Dimensions: H. 33 in. x 8 7/8 in. Institute
and accession number: The Metropolitan
Museum of Art, 1979.206.1401



Object Type: War Club
Indigenous Name: *U'u*
Culture/Location: Marquesas Islands
Date: 19th Century
Material: Ironwood
Dimensions: 57 3/8 in.
Institute and accession number: The
Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992.223

The *Totokia* and the *U'u* are both war clubs developed in different islands in Polynesia. The *totokia* was built on Fiji while the *U'u* was a product of the Marquesan Islands. Both clubs were seen as essential items for warriors and chiefs on these islands. Although these clubs differ in many ways, there are some similarities in the way each club was made, used, and for whom they were made. War clubs were a warrior's favorite type of weapon because they represent strength and power. Each club was developed specially and for different purposes.

The Fijian *Totokia* is classified as a piercing club, as seen by its beaked head, which was capable of piercing a skull with a single swing (Derrick 1957, 392). Having a larger head allowed for maximum damage even without a large and forceful swing. Each *totokia* was built and manipulated uniquely to the preference of the warrior or chief. The handle of the *totokia* had low relief carving, to ensure a strong grip as well as the infusion of mana into the club. The *totokia* is also referred to as having a pineapple or pandanus shaped head (Elder 1990, 50). The pandanus shape of the *totokia*'s head exemplifies the connection the Fijians had with their land and environment. Not only does the shape of the head refer to forms from the environment, it also indicates the Fijian's resourcefulness in developing their weapons. Specifically, the *totokia*'s slightly curved form derives from manipulating the wood by gently mending it and

bending it to achieve the desired form (Derrick 1957, 394). This practice takes lots of tending to in order to achieve the *totokia*'s form.

The *U'u* was similarly used as a club in battle; however, it was classified differently than the *totokia*. It was seen as a very prestigious item, only for chiefs and high-ranking nobles. The *U'u* is classified as a crushing club (Ivory 1995, 22). The Marquesan warriors (*toa*) would use the large head of the *U'u* to smash or crush their enemies. The *U'u* was used not only as a war club, but also as a chief's staff and would be carried around every day by its owner. The shape of the *U'u* is relatively basic, in comparison to the *totokia*. The *U'u* was made out of ironwood and the only manipulation needed for the form was carving the wood down to the club's proper shape. The head of the *U'u* takes the form of a human head, with prominent eyes, nose and skull. The term *U'u* in itself means "head" (Pitt Rivers 2016). The nose and eyes of the *U'u* are actually smaller heads and faces, furthering the importance of the theme of genealogy in representation for the warrior or chief. Below the cross bar of the *U'u* were three bands of traditional tattooing designs called *ipu* (Kjellgren 2006, 54). The head of the *U'u* as well as these designs were representative of the lineage and genealogy of a warrior or chief. The representation of the head on the *U'u* is also significant in order to the club to be infused with mana. It was believed that the most powerful mana came from the head of a person. The head form on the *U'u* ensured the club would be infused with a lot of mana. The base of the *U'u* would have human hair wrapped around the shaft (Geary 2006, 38). By wrapping the shaft with human hair, the club would be infused with a tremendous amount of mana. The more mana infused in an object, the more powerful that object would become, and therefore the more success a warrior would have in battle.

The *totokia* and *U'u* are both deemed as the favorite weapon among warriors as well as chiefs. Chiefs and warriors of both the Marquesan and Fijian Islands are very fond of their war clubs, as they never leave their sides. While the *totokia* specialized in quick striking ambush tactics, the *U'u* was used to settle territorial disputes. War clubs are the most significant and important objects to a warrior and chief. All war clubs were either buried with the owner or passed down as heirlooms. It was more traditional for a *totokia* to be buried with the warrior or chief who owned it, while an *U'u* was more commonly passed down as an heirloom.

I have chosen to compare and contrast these objects in order to examine their similarities and differences in the overall culture of warfare in Fiji and Marquesas. By looking at

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the war clubs and understanding their significance to a specific group of islands or group of people, their importance can be illuminated.

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