



Fijian Men with Clubs

Date

1871-1879

Medium

Photographic print

Description

This 19th century photograph depicts two Fijian men holding clubs, which are culturally significant artifacts. Up until and in the few decades following Fiji's willing cession to the United Kingdom in 1874, clubs were held as ferocious and vitally important weapons within a Fijian society which revolved in part around combat. Bows, arrows, and spears abounded in skirmishes between Fijian moieties, but even so the comparative prevalence of clubs is astonishing. In the 19th Century it is estimated that over 100,000 clubs may have been made in Fiji, 4,000 of which are now catalogued in museum collections around the world. Early explorers explain that even in peacetime

Fijian men did not leave their homes without at least a decorative club, that visiting a neighboring village without a club was seen as discourteous, and that lowering a club was a standard sign of greeting throughout the Fijian islands. Smaller clubs were used by male dancers to accentuate their motions during rituals and feasts. Though some of this information may have been exaggerated, photographs confirm the pervasiveness of clubs in Fiji.

Dimensions

4 1/8 × 2 1/2 in. (10.5 × 6.4 cm)