



Axe (Gi Okono)

Date

19th Century

Primary Maker

Kanak

Medium

Wood, fiber and nephrite stone

Description

Ceremonial Axe also known a "gi okono" from Kanak, New Caledonia. Dates to the 19th century. This axe consists of a wood cylindrical-handle attached to an irregular circle-shaped green axe head. The axe head is made from nephrite stone. It is primarily green in color with golden lighter green and black accents throughout. There are also natural striations throughout. This is attached to the handle by fibrous golden brown twine. The twine goes through the perforated end of the axe head. About 3/4 of the handle is covered in strips of braided fiber. Of what is

exposed, the handle is mahogany brown in color and its patina is glossy. The delicate nature of this axe's disc-shaped blade is an indication that it was not intended as a weapon. When held to the sun, the blade, which is fastened with finely braided cord to a wood staff, becomes semi-translucent. Ceremonial axes were prized possessions of Kanak chiefs, representing status and power. Serpentine stone, a jade-like material, was part of an island trade system that moved from the south to the north of New Caledonia and as far east as the Loyalty Islands. Symbolically the axe is thought to represent the cosmologic view of a linked heaven and earth, and reportedly a vehicle through which ritual plea for favorable weather is made.

Dimensions

28 7/8 x 7 1/4 x 1 3/4 in. (73.3 x 18.4 x 4.4 cm)