

Basic Detail Report



Flesh Fork (Icula)

Date

early 20th century

Medium

Wood

Description

By the early 20th Century when this fork was made, there was already a thriving market for "cannibal forks," and

very little cannibalism in Fiji, meaning that it was almost certainly only ever used for the consumption of non-human meat at ceremonies. Even traditionally, the belief that these forks were used exclusively to eat human flesh is false. In fact, these utensils were used by priests to eat any type of cooked meat. This did include human flesh but it was considered no different from the flesh of any other animal which could equally be used for consumptive sacrificial offerings. The reason a fork was used at all was because priests were tabu, and could not touch cooked meat. Stories of cannibalism became wildly popular among Europeans, increasing demand for these kinds of forks, as well as a thriving counterfeit market for them. The vessi wood they are carved from is extremely hard, a testament to the skill of Fijian carvers to this day.

Dimensions

10 1/2 × 1 1/4 × 1/4 in. (26.7 × 3.2 × 0.6 cm)