



Necklace
Fiji-Islands (Viti-Levu), Polynesia
Wasekaseka
26 whale ivory pendants
Musée Godeffroy Nr. 1033



Necklace

Viti-Islands (Fiji), Polynesia

Provenance

- Andreas Schlothauer from 1998
- Rudolf Strube, Berlin
- Godeffroy Museum, Hamburg (Nr. 1033)
- Viti-Levu Island, collected by Eduard Graeffe (1862, 1865) or Theodor Kleinschmidt (1876-78), commissioned by Godeffroy Museum

Object description

The necklace is known as *wa-seka-seka* (or *wasekaseka*). It consists of 26 slightly bent, split toothed whale (*Odontoceti*) teeth, probably sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*), pierced through their blunt end, on a coir (*Cocos nucifera*) i.e. coconut cord. The longest teeth are in the middle of the necklace and hang on the chest, while the teeth get shorter at either end. The design is symmetrical and balanced. The dominant colour is white, but with numerous discoloured sections ranging from gray-black to yellowish. Together with the matt gloss this clearly indicates that the necklace was often worn.

The cord is double-threaded and z-twisted. There are four simple knots: two to separate the teeth and two at the cord ends. This is a further indication that the necklace was worn.

Label

The round label has writing on both sides. On the front it reads: "*Porcus babirusa* tooth, '24 ink' (sic.) necklace. Viti Islands" but *Porcus babirusa* has been crossed out in pencil.

On the back a stamp reads "Museum Godeffroy - Hamburg" and there is a hand-written number: "1033".

The label's description of the artefact as originating in the Viti Islands is plausible, as is its description as a necklace. Both texts relating to object 1033 in the Godeffroy Museum's inventory, one from 1876 and the other from 1881, fit this description. However, the claim that it is "made of *Porcus babirusa*" (or *Porcus babyrusa*), i.e. pig-deer, teeth is contradicted by the general consensus that it is made of whale ivory, usually known as *cachalot* teeth. The crossing out by hand indicates that the original designation was subsequently recognised as erroneous. What was meant by

‘24 ink’ is unclear. Possibly it refers to ‘inches’, i.e. approx. 60cm.

Provenance

Described in 19th century texts as the **Viti-Islands**, today this group of islands goes by the name of Fiji or the Fiji-Islands. It is a Pacific republic situated on the Melanesia-Polynesia divide. Viti-Levu is the main island and covers an area of 10,530 square kilometres. Mount Monavatu (or Muanivatu) is 1,131m high and the fourth highest mountain on Viti Levu. The Singadoko river is today known as the Sigatoka.

Godeffroy Museum, Hamburg (1861-1885)

From 1861 to 1885 the Godeffroy, Hamburg was a natural history and ethnographic museum, founded by the businessman and shipowner Johan Cesar Godeffroy VI (1813-1885). From 1860 onwards he instructed the captains of his merchant ships to collect zoological, botanical and ethnographic material on their voyages to Australia and the South Seas. Soon these collections were so diverse and extensive that few museums could compare with them at the time. Starting in 1861 there was a permanent exhibition on the company’s premises, from 1876 a two-storey museum in its own building. Since the documentation was very demanding and since there were already on-site scientists from 1861, the reliability of the collection’s information was a high priority and a feature of the museum. The high quality of their work was widely recognised in the scientific world.

In 1863 Johannes Dietrich Eduard Schmeltz, a trader in natural history specimens, was made custodian. He wrote: “the first priority is to determine the exact provenance of every single object“ (Schmeltz 1888: 61).¹ Even after the Godeffroy company became insolvent in 1879 the museum lived on because it was not a company asset. The voyages of acquisition were discontinued and no further objects collected. From 1881 the new owner, Wilhelm Godeffroy, a relative of J.C. Godeffroy, tried to find a buyer for the whole collection but failed. Therefore he sold it to various museums in 1885 instead. The Grassi Ethnological Museum, Leipzig acquired the lion’s share of the ethnographic artefacts, including almost all of Kleinschmidt’s Viti collection of over four hundred objects (inventory numbers Me 6006-6440).² Other artefacts went to the Hamburg Ethnological Museum and to the Roemer- und Pelizaeus-Museum in Hildesheim. From 1882 Captain Carl A. Pöhl, Schmeltz’s previous assistant, was the new custodian and was cited as seller of the objects.³

The Godeffroy Museum’s receipt log no longer exists. However two inventories were published – one in 1876, another in 1881, as well as an exhibition guide (1882) and the so-called Journals (1873-1909). Eight catalogues appeared between 1864 and 1881 with a view to selling the stock. There are also unpublished letters in various archives.

The Godeffroy Museum’s published inventory books

In “*Verzeichnis der im Museum Godeffroy vorhandenen ethnographischen Gegenstände*“ (“*Directory of the Godeffroy Museum’s ethnographic objects*”), 1st September 1876, entry number 1033 states: “1033 necklace of a row of teeth, probably from Porcus babyrussa”. The inventory comprises a total of 1,108 items, of which 106 come from the Viti-Islands. These are not grouped together because the inventory was not organised by region. More precise origins are only cited in three cases:

„upper Wai-da-lidi-rivers. Viti Levu.“ (988) and „Motu“ (998, 999).⁴

The second inventory „*Die Ethnographisch-Anthropologische Abtheilung des Museum Godeffroy In Hamburg*“ (“*The Ethnographic-Anthropological Department of the Godeffroy Museum, Hamburg*”), (Schmeltz & Krause, 1881) lists the “Viti”-collection on pages 137-188, with a total of more than 460 numbers.

The present artefact features as follows: “No. 1033 (2 samples) *Necklace. In one case 30, in the other 32, polished pig-deer teeth, 11-16 cm long, threaded on a coir such that the longest form the central section of the artefact. Known locally as “Wa-Secka-Secka”. Muanivatu mountains. Viti-Levu interior. Christmann II, page 154(?), Cuzapos, page 73, Williams, page 125*”. As on the label, the artefact is said to be a “necklace” made of “porcus babyrussa”, or “pig-deer” teeth, but complementary information states that the chord is of coconut fiber, that it is locally referred to as „*Wa-Secka-Secka*“ and that it originates in the „*Muanivatu mountains. Viti-Levu interior*“. This claim regarding place of origin can safely be assumed to imply that it was collected by Johann Theodor Kleinschmidt, who was there in October 1877, as evidenced by one of his drawings (*Tischner 1961: Abb.8, Tafel 144*).⁵



1. „Muanivatu. Viti Levu, village and peak“ (Drawing by Th. Kleinschmidt, 1877/78)

In the 1881 inventory Number 1033 mentions two samples: one with 30, the other with 32 teeth (the wording in the 1876 inventory is such that it could refer to one or several samples). According to documents in the Leipzig collection, one of the two pieces is to be found in the Grassi-Museum (Me 6076). It does have 30 teeth but there is no Godeffroy Museum label, from which we may assume that Number 1033 originally comprised more than two necklaces, since it was the museum’s normal practice to sell so-called “duplicates”. The Introduction to the Godeffroy Museum’s 1882 exhibition guide states: “*Moreover, duplicates (...) may be issued from the (...) ethnographic collection*”. Eight sale catalogues appeared with respect to these from 1864 to 1881 (Godeffroy 1882: 3). These duplicates were mostly inventoried as types under the same number. So far evidence exists of purchases by ethnographic museums and collections in Berlin, Jena, Dresden, Weimar and Vienna.⁶

The well-known artist and collector Gabriel von Max also repeatedly made purchases for his private collection from 1875 onwards. These artefacts are now in the Mannheimer Reiss-Engelhorn Museums (*rem-Archive*, Gabriel von Max file).

Eduard Graeffe and Theodor Kleinschmit on Viti-Levu

Graeffe was in Viti-Levu in 1862 and 1865 ⁷. In 1862 he twice travelled to the island's interior together with an American by the name of Dyer and a gardener Storck, a German.⁸

In his travel log Graeffe makes no mention of acquiring ethnographic artefacts, but he did obtain the necklace: "*After the reception ceremony, in which some cachelot teeth were presented ...*" (Graeffe 1868: 11, 12). The expedition reached, at its furthest point, the "*village of Raravatu (... on the slopes of Buke-Levu-Mountain*" (Graeffe 1868: 13).

Kleinschmidt was in the Viti-Islands from 1875 and travelled into the interior of Viti-Levu in March 1876 (Kleinschmidt 1879: 32ff.). His travel log also fails to document the acquisition of ethnographic objects. However, in the Godeffroy Museum's 1876 Journal there is a report of ethnographic collections arriving from Viti-Levu (Journal of the Godeffroy Museum, 1876 Vol. XII: 160 ff.). Some of Kleinschmidt's handwritten notes and drawings are in the Hamburg Ethnographic Museum. "*These comprise three manuscripts and a number of salvaged original drawings by Theodor Kleinschmidt*" (Tischner 1961: 668). Among them is a hitherto unpublished text entitled "*Viti Levu's mountain dwellers: Their life and activities*", parts of which are cited in Tischner. This evidences a further excursion on Viti Levu in the autumn of 1877, along the Singadoko (Sigatoka) river and as far as Mount Muanivatu (Monavatu).

The man in the photo has a *wa-seka-seka* round his neck. In Kleinschmidt's published travel report there is also a warrior with a club and necklace (Kleinschmidt 1879: picture 16).

Persons other than Graeffe and Kleinschmidt who collected for the Godeffroy Museum in the Viti-Islands are unknown.

On the use and significance of the necklace

These necklaces were accorded great value and worn exclusively by men of high status. In Fiji's coastal towns most of the older pieces had already been sold to Europeans between 1800 and 1850. But in the country's interior the ancient culture was still intact during the lifetimes of Graeffe and Kleinschmidt. The artefacts in the Godeffroy Museum which they collected are clear testimony to this fact. Kleinschmidt's pictures of a Fiji warrior show how the necklace was worn (pic. 2, 3).

Texte : Dr. Andreas Schlothauer

Traduction : Dr. Thomas Hawes



2. "Young man from Nadrau, upper Singadoko river" (Drawing by Th. Kleinschmidt, 19th October 1877).



3. Viti-Island warrior with necklace (Kleinschmidt 1879).

Notes

1 Schmeltz, an autodidact who completed no formal studies, was conservator and, from 1895, director of the Leiden Ethnographic Museum.

2 *“Among these collections which came to Leipzig in 1885 (...) is also nearly the entire Kleinschmidt Viti-collection. It comprises more than a hundred objects, designated by inventory numbers 6006-6440, not counting individual pieces added later. As (...) another approx. 300 ethnographic artefacts from Viti join these from other collections, the museum holds one of the most important Viti collections, in fact possibly the largest of any on the European continent”* (Tischner 1961: 666).

3 A large number of the duplicates were acquired by C.A. Pöhl in 1885. These provided the basic stock for his trade in natural history and ethnographic objects. Until at least 1888 he was still selling objects from the Godeffroy Museum in his own right (compare Scheps 2005: 222).

4 According to the 1882 exhibition guide the Viti-Island objects were on walls 39, 40 and 74, as well as in cabinets 42 (No. 14), 45, 45a and in Group 47 (No. 11) or frame 64 (No. 1). A few spears were hanging from the ceiling (Group 46, 47). There are further descriptions of these pieces in the exhibition guide. (see Addendum p. 5)

5 Kleinschmidt originally intended to become a painter, which would explain the high quality of his drawings. For over 150 years this important material has lain dormant and unpublished in the Hamburg Ethnological Museum.

6 The University of Jena's ethnographic collection acquired ethnographic objects from Australia, Fiji and the Gilbert Islands (formerly known as the Kingsmill Islands) (Schmeltz 1888: 200). *“In 1877/78 the ethnographic collection of the Royal Natural History Museums of Saxony, Dresden bought 67 objects from Fiji, Palau, the Gilbert Islands, the Carolines and Melanesia (...). In 1913 the Weimar City Museum also bought comparative Godeffroy duplicate pieces for its ‘pre and early history collection’. Between 1872 and 1879 Adolf Bastian bought approximately 93 objects for the Berlin Ethnological Museum's collections. In 1879 the Natural History Museum of the Viennese Royal Court, founded in 1876, acquired objects from Samoa, the Marquesas Islands and Micronesia”* (Scheps 2005: 56).

7 Scheps is mistaken about the island destiny of the 1862 voyage. Graeffe was on Viti-Levu, not Ovalau, as Scheps writes. *“Then they briefly went ashore on the island of Ovalau in the south-eastern part of Fiji, where Graeffe - together with a German gardener Storck, who was living there and an American called Dyer - twice made excursions of several days each along the Vai Levu (Peale's River) into the island's interior”* (Scheps 2005, p.77f.).

8 During his second visit in *“July and August 1865 Graeffe took part in the first excursion to cross the entire island from south to north. This trip, which took around three weeks, was accompanied by the then British Consul Captain Jones”* (Scheps 2005: 82ff).

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Band 1: Heft 1, 2 und 4 mit 35 Tafeln und 8 Holzschnitten (1873-74);

Band 2: Heft 3, 5, 7 und 9 mit 83 Tafeln und 10 Holzschnitten; enthielt Teil I „Fische der Südsee“

Band 3: Heft 6, 8 und 10 mit 43 Tafeln (1873-75)

Band 4: Heft 11, 13 und 15 mit 57 Tafeln und 3 Holzschnitten; enthielt Teil II der Fische der Südsee

Band 5: Heft 12 und 14 mit 24 Tafeln und 7 Holzschnitten (1876-79)

Band 6: Heft 16 und 17 mit 40 Tafeln (1909-10).

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Addendum to note no.4 on page 2

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|-----------|---|-----------|---|
| 307-311 | Keulen von den Viti-Inseln, als Kriegsbeute nach Tonga gebracht. | 1011 | Schurz, „Ligu“ genannt, aus verschiedenem gefäbtem Bast. |
| 312-320 | Wurfkeulen, „Ulo“ genannt | 1013-1016 | Keulen. |
| 455 | Keule, geschnitzte | 1017 | Keule reich geschnitzt, wahrscheinlich von einem Häuptling herrührend aus uralter Zeit. |
| 745 | Pfeil und Bogen | 1018-1022 | Keulen |
| 747, 748 | Wasserbehälter, Thönerne (Trinkgefässe) | 1023 | Pfeil und Bogen. |
| 814 | Gabel, hölzerne, vierzinkig, bei cannibalischen Mahlzeiten gebraucht. | 1024-1026 | Wurfkeulen |
| 815 | Gabel, hölzerne, dreizinkig, mit eingeritzter Verzierung. Gebrauch; siehe No.814. | 1027 | Schaale aus Holz, mit dazu gehörigem kugelförmigem Klöpfel, wahrscheinlich beim Cavatrinken gebraucht. |
| 816-818 | Keulen. | 1028-1030 | Schaalen aus Holz, tellerförmige, wahrscheinlich gebraucht bei cannibalischen Festen, um Menschenfleisch darauf zu legen. |
| 819 | Matten, geflochten. | 1031 | Schaale aus Holz mit Untersatz, aus einem Stück geschnitten, wahrscheinlich beim Cavatrinken gebraucht. |
| 820-822 | Tapa, bedruckte. | 1032 | Halsschmuck aus kleinen auf eine Schnur gereihten Cachelot-Zähnen, von der das untere Ende abgeschnitten. |
| 826 | Gürtel aus Bast. | 1033 | ... |
| 988 | Keule mit geschnitztem Handgriff, das entgegengesetzte, durch einen Wurzelstock gebildete Ende mit eingelegter Verzierung (Sterne und runde Plättchen aus Muschelschaale). Diese Keule gehörte dem in der Masernperiode 1875 verstorbenen Häuptling M'Bule am oberen Wai-da-lidi-Flusse. Viti Leva. | 1034 | Freundschaft- und Friedenszeichen bestehend aus einem grossen Cachelotzahn, an einer Bastschnur befestigt. |
| 989 | Keule, „Ai-wau-wuni-kau“ genannt, theils mit Bastschnüren bewickelt. | 1036 | dito polirt. |
| 990 | Keule, „N-Gandi“ oder „Waka-Salle“ genannt, aus Noko-Noko-Holz (Cassia equisetifolia.) | 1037 | Tapa. |
| 995 | Keule, „Keakova“ genannt mit Bastschnüren beflochten. | 1039 | Essbare Erde |
| 992 | Keule, „N'Gadde“ genannt. | 1040 | Lanze. |
| 993 | Keule | 1041 | Speer aus Rohr mit Knochenspitze, der Schaft sehr hübsch verziert. |
| 994-996 | Wurfkeulen | 1042-1044 | Tapa. |
| 997 | Spazierstock, „Didoko“ genannt, für Alte und Schwache. | 1045 | Schmuck eines Häuptlings, auf der Brust getragen, „Sekke-Sekke“ genannt, aus einer aus Walfischzahn verfertigten Platte bestehend; als mühsam gearbeiteter Zierrath sehr hoch geschätzt. |
| 998, 999 | Kopfuntersatz beim Schlaf gebraucht „Kali“ genannt. Motu, Viti-Inseln. | 1046 | Halsband aus wohlriechenden Algen. „Solu-Solu“ genannt. |
| 1000 | Speer mit Widerhaken aus einem Stück Holz geschnitten. | 1047 | Schurz, „Ligu“ genannt, aus Pandanus Blättern verfertigt. |
| 1001 | Bogen und Pfeil, um Pteropus (fliegende Hunde) zu schiessen. | 1048 | Schurz aus Balawa- (Ananas) Blättern verfertigt. |
| 1002 | Kamm aus dünnen Holzstäben mit Bast beflochten, bei festlichen Gelegenheiten getragen. | 1049 | Steinaxt, kleine, „Matau“ genannt. |
| 1003 | Beinzierrath, „Lilara“ genannt, ein Bastring an dem eine grosse, mit rothen Früchten besetzte Harzkugel befestigt ist. | 1050 | Kopfuntersatz (siehe Nr. 998, 888), ein Stück Rohr auf gebogenen hölzernen Füssen. |
| 1004 | Steinaxt, alte mit Original-Handgriff. | 1051 | Kopfuntersatz hölzerner, kleiner. |
| 1005-1006 | Steinbeil-Klingen, alte. | 1053 | Keule, „Tokokio“ genannt. |
| 1007 | Armringe aus Trochus Niloticus. | 1054-1063 | Keulen. |
| 1008 | Halsschmuck, Schaale einer rothen Muschel (Spondylus) an mit Perlen besetzter Schnur befestigt. | 1064-1066 | Wurfkeulen, „Ulo“ genannt. |
| 1009 | Halsschmuck, abgeschliffene Perlmutterschaale an einer Schnur, auf welcher weisse aus dem Kopfe von Conus verfertigte runde Scheiben aufgereiht sind, befestigt. | 1067-1068 | Schläger, „Ike“ genannt, für die Zerkleinerung des zur Herstellung des Papierzeuges benutzten Bastes. |
| 1010 | Halsschmuck, längliches, löffelförmiges Stück aus einer grossen Avicula geschnitten. | 1069 | Turban aus feiner Tapa, des „Ratu (Prinz, Häuptling) Timothy“, Sohn des früheren Königs „Thakombau“. Der Stoff erhielt seine schöne braune Farbe dadurch, dass er mit dem ausgekäuten und hernach wieder getrockneten Holzstoff des Zuckerrohrs geräuchert wurde. |