

## A PAPUAN SORCERY TUBE.

BY

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(Figure 1-2).

From His Excellency, Judge J. H. P. Murray, Lieutenant-Governor of Papua, the Trustees have just received as a donation, a small bamboo box, or tube (Fig. 1), used for the purpose of sorcery.

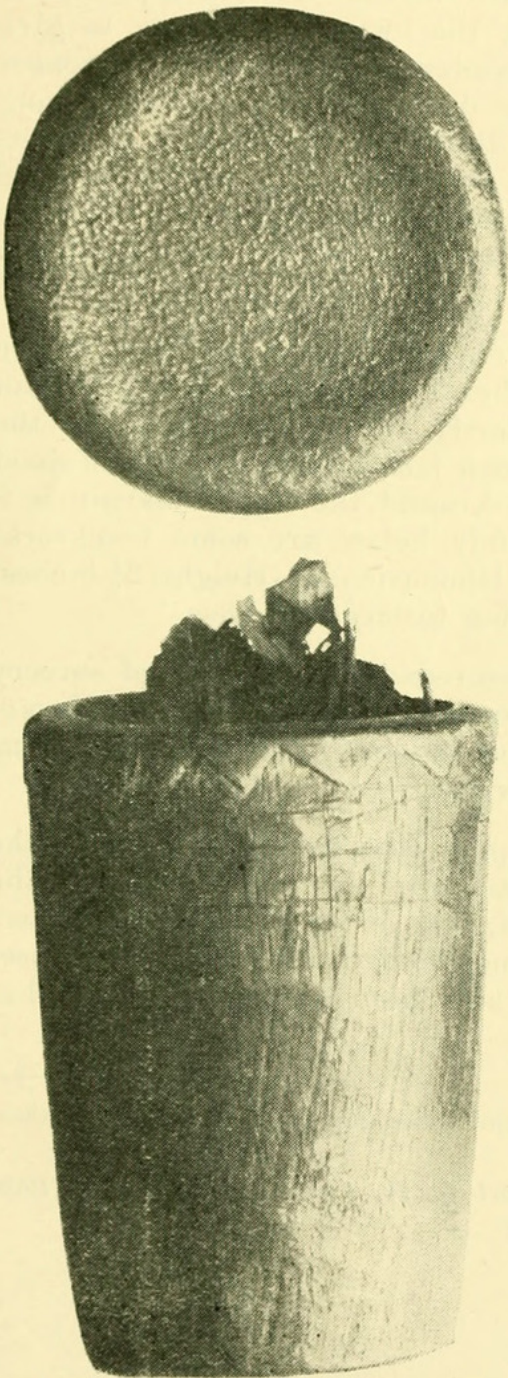


Fig. 2.

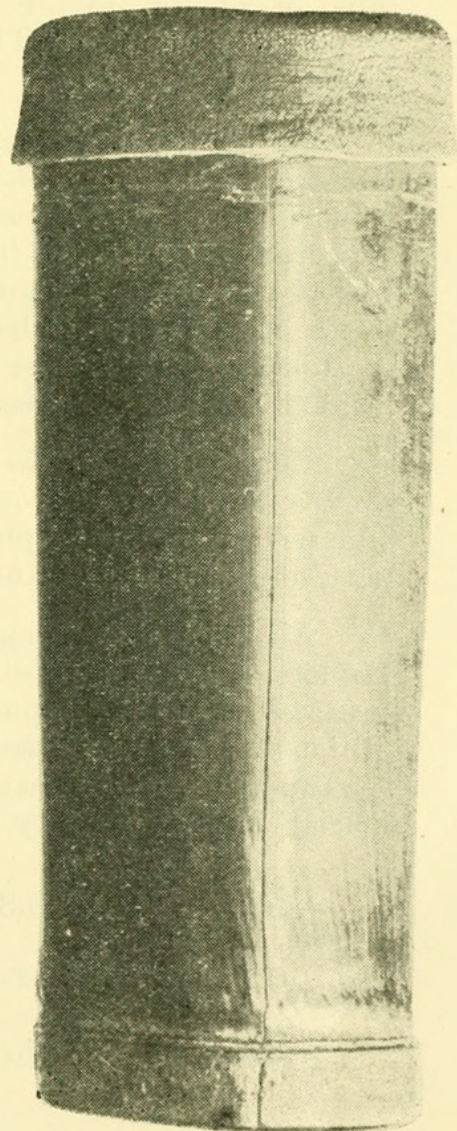


Fig. 1.



This receptacle, known as *ile*, is from Modeva Village, on Suau, or Stacey Island, South Cape District, Eastern Division, Papua. The tube is an ordinary section of bamboo, with a length of  $4\frac{1}{4}$  inches and a diameter of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches, the internode forming the bottom, and capped by a rind lid. This latter has been identified by Mr. E. Cheel, of the Botanic Gardens, as the rind of a lime (*Citrus*). Some transverse scratches are added near the upper margin of the tube which may be scars produced when trimming the lid.

The tube is about one-third full of what appears to be vegetable mould, and, to obtain possession of the pigs, or women folk, of another native the owner follows this procedure:—"To use the charm you dip your finger in cocoanut water and then into the *ile*. Then you pass your finger round your lips and proceed to ask the owner of the pig to give him to you. He will give him. The procedure with relation to women is analogous." It was represented to the donor as being a "very strong bottle," this description having reference to its potency for the purposes indicated. Here we have just the mere possession of a simple bamboo tube of mould, giving immediate command over the most valuable property of another. There does not appear to be any counter-charm against this practice.

For many years a somewhat similar object (Fig. 2) has been in the Museum, hitherto without any data other than "Scent Bottle, British New Guinea," and because of their similarity, the writer has taken the opportunity of figuring it with the specimen just described. It is of wood with a rind lid, but containing leaves. Around the upper margin is a series of raised triangles, and immediately below are some transverse scratches as noted on the first specimen. Dimensions:—Height,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  inches, inside diameter,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches, slightly tapering towards the base.

Very little seems to have been written regarding this form of sorcery in New Guinea. The only direct reference available is that of Bevan, who writes<sup>1</sup> of "little phials of bamboo containing liquids and solids," as part of the outfit of the Koitapuan sorcerer.

An official<sup>2</sup> writing his annual report records his opinion of the Papuan sorcerer as follows:—"The sorcerer, is without doubt, the greatest curse that Papua is possessed of, and, owing to the over-superstitious nature of the natives, is an influence for evil, wherever he exercises his functions." The same opinion has also been expressed by another official<sup>3</sup> in the Territory.

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<sup>1</sup> Bevan (T. F., F.G.S.)—*Toil, Travel and Discovery in British New Guinea*, London, 1890, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> O'Malley (J. T.)—*Papua, Annual Report for the Year ended 30th June, 1908*, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Beaver (W.)—*Ibid.*, p. 58.



Thorpe, William Walford. 1920. "A Papuan sorcery tube." *Records of the Australian Museum* v. 13 (1920-1923), 173–174.

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