

NOTES ON SOME OF THE MORE RECENT ADDITIONS TO
THE ETHNOLOGICAL COLLECTION, AUSTRALIAN
MUSEUM: No. 1.

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(Plates xlvi., xlix.)

1.—KNUCKLE DUSTERS.

THE use of "Knuckle-dusters" (Plate xlvi., figs. 2, 3) on some of the Pacific Islands is noteworthy. They are made of thick plaited and knotted sinnet cord, roughly shaped to the outline of the backs of the hands clenched, stiff and rigid, and answer more to the Roman *cestus* than to the modern boxing-glove. The positions corresponding to thumbs and index finger knuckles are raised into hard and formidable protuberances. Each "duster" is held in position on the hand by a thumb loop, and loops for the first and second fingers, placed along the front edge, through which the fingers are passed before the hand is clenched, and a long wrist cord, which wraps round the wrist several times. The weight is five and a half ounces. These were purchased as coming from Santa Cruz, but later information induces me to believe that they are from the Ellice Group. Cook described¹ boxing matches as indulged in by both sexes on the island of Hapalee in the Tongan or Friendly Group. It appears the boxers held a piece of cord in one hand, which they wrapped firmly about it when they proceeded to box. Mariner, in his "Account of the Natives of the Tongan Islands,"² beyond quoting Cook, makes no remark on the subject. Ellis says³ that amongst the Tahitians, *moto-raa*, or boxing, was conducted with the open fist. On the Ellice and Tongan Groups, a much more formidable hand-cover was used, but on the palm. Mariner describes it⁴ as a glove set with shark's teeth, the latter "being fixed in three rows on the palm and fingers of a species of glove made of the plaited bark of the *heábo*; and both hands being armed in this manner, every man endeavours to come to a close scuffle with his antagonist, and to tear open his bowels, with these horrid weapons."

¹ Cook—Voy. to Pacific Ocean, 1776-80, 2nd edit., i., 1785, pp. 246 and 302, pl. xv.

² Mariner—Natives Tongan Isds., ii., 1817, pp. 306 and 326.

³ Ellis—Polynesian Researches, i., 1832, p. 208.

⁴ Mariner—*Loc. cit.*, i., p. 320.

2.—PREGNANCY MAT.

A curious custom exists on the island of Santa Cruz, Solomon Group, where the women, when pregnant, and appearing in public, wear a specially ordered mat on the abdomen. It is ten and three-quarter inches square, made of Pandanus leaf plaited in alternate zones of different colour, a white zone, and a chequered zone (white and black). A border is sewn on of thinner strips, and finished off with thin black runners in three lines, held in position by passing-under one ribbon of the plaiting at regular intervals. Around the edges are attached as ornaments a series of Money Cowries (*Cypræa moneta*, Linn.), mouths upwards. The shells are made fast by passing a string through two bored holes. At the four corners the free ends of the plaiting are extended as tags, bound with sinnet, and to each two Cowries are made fast. Mr. A. Mahaffie, Deputy British Resident, Solomon Islands, informed me that it would be a great breach of etiquette for the pregnant woman to appear in public without this mat.

3.—WOODEN GOLD-PROSPECTING DISHES.

Wooden Gold-prospecting dishes from Sœpajang, Sumatra, may be regarded as a novelty. They are broad-oval shallow dishes, obtusely pointed at one end, but coming to a sharp point and flat shelf-like protuberance at the other; they are round below. The largest is twenty-one and a half inches long, by fifteen inches wide, and three and three-quarter inches deep. Whether these dishes are indigenous, or as used by the Chinese gold-washers, I am unable to say. The dishes were presented by Mr. E. V. Bensusan.

4.—TROPHY SKULL AND BAG.

Trophy Skulls from British New Guinea are not uncommon in collections, but the method of carrying these, or at any rate one of the methods, is not so commonly seen. It consists of an oblong bag, fifteen inches long and thirteen inches wide, made of strips of split Pandanus leaf, loosely plaited, smoke dried, and discoloured; plaited loop handles are attached round the mouth. The skull carried in this, although to some extent broken in the malar and zygomatic regions, is a good example of an incised trophy skull, with a narrow pannel carved across the frontal region, and the former incised with roughly executed rhombs. It is from the Fly River Estuary, and was presented by Mr. P. G. Black.

5.—SHELL MONEY.

The manufacture of Shell Money has always been a subject of much interest to Ethnologists, and specimens illustrating the process are always welcome in collections. To the courtesy of Mrs. E. E. Kolbe, of Rallum, New Britain, we are indebted for a series of specimens illustrating the method employed in that

district. The shell used is *Chama pacifica*, Brod., and the portion employed is chiefly the red intermarginal ventral area, although the white inner layers of the valves are also utilised. The shells are first broken up into conveniently sized pieces of about three-sixteenths of an inch diameter, and roughly circular. The latter are then smoothed on a flat stone, with a piece of stick eighteen inches long, and three-eighths of an inch diameter, having at its distal end a depression to prevent the shell piece from slipping away. When ground down and finished-off the discs are a trifle less in size than the measurements just given. They are next pierced through the middle by a drill, consisting of a shaft twenty-one inches long and formed from a small reed, rather thicker at one end than the other, to which is attached a fragment of chert, as a bit, and bound on by fine twine. The entire exhibit consists of—(a) Samples of *Chama pacifica*, Brod.; (b) piece of chert for preparation of bits; (c) smoothing stick; (d) two drill sticks, with chips mounted; (e) shell discs in two stages of preparation; (f) the same completed ready for stringing; (g) string of money ready for use. It is presumed that the drills are rotated with the finger and thumb, as there does not appear to be any contrivance similar to the bar and string of the pump-drill. Compared with some shell-money discs in our collection, and figures of others in various works, these discs are small. This form of shell-money is referred to by Dr. O. Finsch⁵ in his “Ethnologische Erfahrungen und Belagstücke aus der Südsee,”—here it is called *Kokonon*, and like the better known *Dewara*, is still powerful as a means of commercial interchange. According to Dr. Finsch, the red beads are the most valuable, or of the first grade, and the white of the second grade. Both are used by the women at Nusa, New Ireland, for purchasing purposes. The beads figured by Finsch are quite similar to those presented by Mrs. Kolbe.

6.—CUIRASS OR CORSELET.

In the “Annual Report for 1900,”⁶ I described two of these body protectors from the Kingsmill or Gilbert Islands. Another specimen (Plate xlviii., fig. 1) has now been presented by Mr. A. E. Finckh, from Nikunua, in the same group.

The front of the ventro-thoracic shield is ornamented by a median longitudinal line of three black diamond-shaped figures only, with three similar lines on the inside of the tergal shield, but six diamonds in each row. On the back, or outside of the tergal shield are four lines of like figures, each with six diamonds, and one line of two figures on each side below the axillæ. The tergal shield is high and upstanding, without a collar of any kind,

⁵ Finsch—Ann. K. K. Naturhist. Hofmus. Wien., iii., 1888, p. 127, pl. iii., (1), f. 4 and 5.

⁶ Etheridge—Rec. Aust. Mus., iv., 4, 1901, p. 164, pl. xxii.

the occipital edge being chequered with black spaces. From the arm-holes onwards the cuirass is open at both sides, with overlaps of the tergal shield forwards over the ventro-thoracic shield. The margins of the former have large coir loops, through which the lacing for drawing the two flaps together passes. This lacing is made fast in the centre of the ventro-thoracic shield, each lace being composed of two plaited parts, ending in a free twisted end. The neck or cervico-clavicular opening is pentagonal, and follows the arched outline of the shoulder-pieces. All the diamond-shaped figures are made of human hair. The height of the tergal shield is three feet two inches, the ventro-thoracic is eighteen inches and a half, the width across the shoulders seventeen inches, and the depth across the cervico-clavicular opening nine and a half inches. The circumference around the overlap is three feet nine inches, and the weight seventeen pounds. The execution of the knitting is remarkably good, and the general characters are a combination of those of the two corselets described last year.

7.—ANCESTRAL DRUM, OR GONG.

The Rev. F. Paton, of Mallicollo, New Hebrides, forwarded to the Museum one of the Ancestral Drums met with in parts of that island, similar in many respects to another received from the Rev. T. Watt Leggatt a year or two ago. The present drum (Pl. xlix.) is a log seven feet four inches long, of teak wood, and in its reduced state two feet six inches in circumference. The slit-like aperture is two feet seven inches long, and one and a quarter inches in width, swelling out a little at the extremities; it is rather nearer the lower than the upper end of the drum. The interior is hollowed out to a shell for the length of the aperture, but the ends of the drum are solid. The front of the upper part of the drum is carved to represent a grotesque human face, with large staring eyes and prominent nostrils, very lateral in position. The nose is in relief, the remainder of the face intaglio; the nose and cheeks are red, the eyes with the irides blue, and the pupils white, the nostrils blue. The face is surmounted by a kind of head-dress, with above it two leaf-like ornaments, one on each side.

This drum represents one of the two types of upright drum, being planted in the ground, and is evidently ancestral in character, of the same type as that presented by the Rev. T. Watt Leggatt already referred to. The latter was from the village of Aulua, Mallicollo, and in forwarding it the Reverend donor supplied the following information, which, I have no doubt, equally applies to Mr. Paton's gift:—"These drums, made of teak-wood (*Na-ka-mu*) are carved into the conventional figure of a deceased ancestor (*Temes*), by men who make such their profession, and then purchased by any man who wishes to add to his importance. The latter then erects it

in the village square (*Amil*), and it is used in signalling or calling the people in the event of war; or, announcing the deaths of men (not women); or, also used along with others of different timber to supply music for dances.

WAR CALL (*Naburra*)—

teen teen, teen teen, teen.
 " " "

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT (*Memisien*)—

teen, teen, teen teen teen, teen teen teen.
 " " " "

Dr. H. B. Guppy suggests⁷ the name of "Melanesian Drum" for those made of a portion of tree trunk, hollowed and placed lengthwise on the ground. He says:—"Similar drums are employed by the inhabitants of the New Hebrides." I have already stated that there are *at least* two types in the New Hebrides, both upright drums (we have examples in this Museum), and probably possessing an entirely different significance to Dr. Guppy's horizontal drum, hence his proposed term cannot be accepted to embrace the whole series, as he evidently desires it should.

The two types may be summarised as follows:—

Upright drums or gongs.

- (a) Enlarged somewhat upwards, and carved into the semblance more or less of a human head and face.
- (b) Tapering more or less upwards, and without human representation; either plain, or perhaps carved into the rough semblance of a shark.

A village scene is depicted at Lakarere, Aurora Island, by the late Capt. W. T. Wawn,⁸ showing upright drums, with these remarks:—"In an open space at one end of the village, stood half-a-dozen native drums—hollow logs, having an opening cut in one side—planted on end in the ground. This was the 'sing-sing' ground, where dances and festivities were carried on."

The drums on Fila Island, off Vate Island, are referred to by Mr. F. A. Campbell⁹ as "groups of hollowed-out trunks of trees or posts, fixed in the ground in a circle, a space being cleared all round them . . . upon the largest one of the circle some rude kind of figure was generally traced."

An example of the non-facial upright hollow log drum is figured by Edge-Partington¹⁰ as a "gong" from Fila Island, and is similar

⁷ Guppy—The Solomon Islands and their Natives, 1887, p. 143.

⁸ Wawn—The South Sea Islands and the Queensland Labour Trade, 1893, p. 59.

⁹ Campbell—A Year in the New Hebrides, Loyalty Islands, and New Caledonia, n.d. [1873], p. 108, sketch, p. 111.

¹⁰ Edge-Partington—Album, 2nd ser., pl. lxxvii., fig. 6.

to one we possess from Mili Point, on Vate Island, presented by Mr. P. G. Black,¹¹ except that ours is more ornate in carving. It is evidently intended to represent a shark.

The treatment and method of carving on Mr. Paton's drum is similar to that on an object figured by Edge-Partington¹² from the New Hebrides, and termed by him a "fetish post, with head carved and coloured red and green."

In New Britain again, similar upright drums are used. Mr. W. Powell¹³ says:—"There is also a larger drum, called 'garamoot,' made of a trunk of a tree, hollowed out, I believe, by dropping small red-hot stones continually into the inside through a small slit on one side. The cylinder is struck with a long stick just below this slit, and produces a deep note that can be heard for an immense distance in fine weather."

"Drums of this kind are heavy, and therefore are seldom moved from the dancing-ground, which is generally an open space in front of a chief's house, and is kept swept and clean by women specially appointed to look after it. The 'garamoot' is also used for alarm signals, in case of war, when it is struck so as to give a sharp quick sound, also for calling the people together." The similarity of this description to that given by the Rev. T. Watt Leggatt needs no comment.

¹¹ Etheridge—Aust. Mus. Ann. Report Trustees for 1897 (1898), p. 7.

¹² Edge-Partington—*Loc. cit.*, pl. lxxxi., f. 1.

¹³ Powell—Wanderings in a Wild Country, 1883, p. 71.



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