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# ETHNOLOGICAL NOTES.

## No. II.

By

W. W. THORPE, Ethnologist, Australian Museum.

(Plates Iv–Iviii.)

### INTRODUCTION.

The native handiwork described in the following pages includes pieces from Netherlands New Guinea and the Mandated Territory. Most, if not all, are new to the Museum collections, and were received, with few exceptions, in an undocumented condition. The belief that some possess a "pre-Melanesian" interest has prompted their inclusion. The idea of lost races,<sup>1</sup> and incidentally cultures, is gaining many adherents; so much of evidential value has been and is being discovered, all tending to thrust back to remoter times the date of man's advent in the South Seas. Another factor now in operation that the systematist must keep in mind, is the modern transfer of material culture from one group of islands to another. As far back as forty years ago it was recorded that "The labour trade which bids fair to spread over the whole of the Pacific is rapidly destroying all the most characteristic work of the natives. Men of mature age are deported from their own Island to others, often many hundreds of miles away, and they thus carry with them and introduce what may be described as foreign arts into the culture of their new homes."<sup>2</sup>

It is hoped that this contribution as a whole will at least form an illustrated record of material culture varying in degrees of rarity and specialization.

### STONE BOWL.

(Plate Iv, fig. 1.)

This stone bowl, or more probably mortar, composed of a kind of tuff, is irregularly rounded in general outline, the periphery carrying a series of nineteen bosses or knobs, varied in size and spacing. The depression is shallow, its greatest depth being two inches, with a transverse diameter of four and a half inches. The lip of the depression is rounded and marked off by a slight annular depression.

It was discovered by Mr. Wallace Anderson, a pioneer of Edie Creek Goldfield, on a slate bottom, under nine feet of superimposed

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<sup>1</sup> Etheridge, R., Junr.—*Rec. Austr. Mus.*, XI, 8, 1917, pp. 202-3.

<sup>2</sup> Edge-Partington and Heape.—*Ethnographical Album*, First Series, 1890 (Preface).

material consisting of two feet of alluvial earth, five feet of puggy clay and two feet of wash. The site is said to be the old bed of Edie Creek, some sixty feet from its present course, in the hinterland of Salamoia Bay, Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

Weight, six pounds fifteen ounces. It is comparable with the stone mortars found of late years in the auriferous regions of British Papua.<sup>3</sup>

#### CROCODILE-JAW DAGGERS.

(Plate IV, fig. 2.)

Over a large area of New Guinea the tibia of the cassowary is utilized in dagger-making. There is no doubt of its being a favourite weapon of despatch with the Papuan. Similar thrusting weapons composed of wallaby bone have been observed at Orokololo, Papuan Gulf.<sup>4</sup> The most effective mode of attack seems to be a dextrous downward thrust behind the clavicle, causing the weapon to pierce the pectoral walls.

Another serviceable dagger is composed of the jaw-bone of the crocodile.<sup>5</sup> There are two examples in the Australian Museum from Netherlands New Guinea. One, thirteen and a half inches long, from the Wildemann River, the gift of Mr. J. W. Earnshaw, and the other, some eleven inches in length, from the Lorentz River, obtained by exchange. Both examples are formed from the left ramus of *Crocodilus porosus* Schneider. One has a tooth *in situ* and is decorated with two red seeds, while the other is entirely denuded of teeth and undecorated.

This type of dagger seems to be restricted to the southern rivers of Netherlands New Guinea.

#### LARGE CIRCULAR SHIELD.<sup>6</sup>

(Pl. IV, figs. 3-4.)

This is a very old specimen, bearing many marks of combat. The obverse is asymmetrically quartered in the form of a crude Maltese cross, with a central concentric "eye-spot." Each limb of the cross terminates in a series of grooves, two transverse and five to eight radially arranged. One limb in addition bears a star or flower-like design. Two of the deltoid depressions between the quartering show a raised carving which resembles the head of a

<sup>3</sup> Chinnery, E. W. P.—Journ. Roy. Anthropol. Inst., XLIX, 1919, pp. 271-291 (with Bibliography).

<sup>4</sup> Vide S. G. Macdonell, who informed the writer that this variety is known as "hudaar." Cf. Neuhauss, R.—Deutsch-Neu-Guinea, Berlin, 1911, Band I, p. 136 *et seq.*

<sup>5</sup> Wirz, Paul.—Dämonen und Wilde in Neuguinea, Stuttgart, 1928, p. 309.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Finsch, O.—Samoafahrten, 1888, Atlas, pl. 12, f. 1. Meyer and Parkinson.—Album, part 1, pl. 34. Edge-Partington.—Ethnographical Album, First Series, part 2, plate 276, fig. 1. A shield of this description was on sale in San Francisco in 1905, vide Catalogue of Nathan, Joseph, Austr. Mus. Pamphlets, 18989.

crudely barbed spear. All the decorative treatment is enclosed within a subperipheral ring.

The reverse is slightly concave, with two raised and perforated ridges to which is attached a three-ply bark fibre handle or grip.

*Dimensions.*—Diameter two feet seven inches, thickness varying from one inch to one and three-quarter inches.

Probably from the Finisterre Range, Maclay Coast, Mandated Territory of New Guinea.<sup>7</sup>

#### COCONUT LADLE.

(Pl. Iv, fig. 5.)

This utensil, said to be from the hinterland of Eitape, Mandated Territory of New Guinea, is new to the museum collections. The bowl portion consists of rather more than the basal half of a coconut plus a pointed section of the ascending wall. A stick handle passes through a perforation in the bowl, and is held in position with close and regular rattan lashing. The handle at this point is likewise perforated to receive part of the binding, the latter returning inside the ladle to the distal end. The proximal end of the handle is carved on the same plane with a bird-head representation, while immediately adjacent a cruder head is at right angles to the handle. Coconut ladles of simple form are figured by Neuhauss<sup>8</sup> and Reche.<sup>9</sup> The above described specimen is the first of its type brought under my notice.

*Dimensions.*—Length, two feet seven and one-quarter inches; bird-head carvings, six inches.

#### MASSIVE CARVED BOWL.<sup>10</sup>

(Pl. lvi, figs. 1-2.)

This is one of the most beautiful pieces of Papuan handiwork that have come under my notice. The bilateral symmetry, both of the bowl itself and the carved designs, is of more than usual interest. It is similarly carved on both sides and at the extremities, and there are indications that the decorative treatment, though now much worn, continued from end to end along the base. At each extremity an ovoid human face in an inverted position is incised, enclosed by panelling and a notched or tooth-like motive. These faces, following the contour of this part of the bowl, cause the chins to be somewhat pointed. Above each face is a lenticular

<sup>7</sup> A shield of this type, embossed with a crude cross-fleurée is in the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

<sup>8</sup> Neuhauss, R.—Deutsch Neu-Guinea, Berlin, 1911, Band I, p. 251, fig. 161.

<sup>9</sup> Reche, O.—Ergebnisse der Südsee-Expedition, 1908-10, II, Ethnographie: A. Melanesien, Band I, Hamburg, 1913, p. 208, figs. 181-183.

<sup>10</sup> A smaller bowl, with inverted faces at the extremities, is in the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

bilobed design the significance of which is obscure. On each side of the bowl medially is a bird-like figure with outstretched wings in high relief, the tips terminating in a variation of the well-known Maori symbol known as the carved snake "manaia."<sup>11</sup> As a matter of fact there seems to be a definite Polynesian influence in the general decorative scheme. Skinner says: "I agree that the horizontal details are suggestive of Polynesian carving, particularly that of the Marquesas. The rendering of the nostrils in the human face is related to some Maori renderings of the nostrils."<sup>12</sup>

This vessel was acquired for the Australian Museum by Mr. Robert C. Dixon, and is probably from Tami, or Cretin Island, Huon Gulf, Mandated Territory of New Guinea.<sup>13</sup>

*Dimensions.*—Length, three feet two and one-quarter inches; depth, nine and a half inches; breadth, fourteen inches.

SKULL TABLET, OR "MASK."<sup>14</sup>  
(Pl. lvi, fig. 3.)

This consists of a human skull attached to a shield-like frame composed of interlaced rattan. The facial portion has been "restored" in a resinous material and extended in a pig-like proboscis. The eyes are composed of rings of nautilus shell. The skull is surrounded by pig tusks embedded in the same resinous substance and a series of the same teeth has been continued below. The "field" of the tablet is irregularly decorated with inverted cowries, pieces of Melo shell and Coix seeds. A fibre fringe is attached to the outer margin of this interesting piece of Papuan handiwork. A somewhat similar tablet was presented to His Excellency, Lord Forster, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, upon the occasion of his official tour during September, 1924. In this case the tusks and other decorations were set in the wax of the native bee, and the specimen was of considerable weight.

The following data regarding the Museum specimen were kindly supplied by the Rev. F. J. Kirschbaum, S.V.D., resident missionary: "The mask is from the Keram tributary of the Sepik (Mandated Territory of New Guinea). The skull of the deceased was set up in this way and kept in the 'tamborang house.' Exhibited to young men during ceremonies to impress them." Dr. Kirschbaum added that the object belongs to the pig-totem section of the tribe.

*Dimensions.*—Four feet six inches; breadth, seventeen inches; length of proboscis, five inches.

<sup>11</sup> Skinner, H. D.—Journ. Polynes. Soc., XXXIII, No. 132, 1924, p. 236, pl. vii, figs. A and B.

<sup>12</sup> Letter dated at Dunedin, N.Z., April 19, 1925.

<sup>13</sup> Finsch, O.—Samoafahrten, Atlas, 1888, pl. 3, f. 3; Zeitschrift f. Ethnol., 1897, p. 129 *et seq.*; Edge-Partington, Ethnog. Album, First Series, part 2, pl. 291, f. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Thorpe, W. W.—Aust. Mus. Magazine, ii, 8, 1925 (Frontispiece). Cf. Haddon, A. C.—Man, XXIII, 6, June, 1923, Art. 50; and Reche, O.—Ergebnisse der Südsee-Expedition, 1908-10, Band I, Hamburg, 1913, p. 401, f. 422.

## FRETWORK BOARD.

(Pl. lvi, figs. 4-5.)

In this elaborately carved board, the design in the upper part is a grotesque human face. The nasal portion is cut *en bloc*, perforated, returning to the main design some distance down the board (Pl. xlvi, fig. 3). On each side of this process a tusk-like motive is carved and the major portion of the slab consists of a series of spiral coils, terminating centrally in two hornbill heads. The lower end of the board is more open, showing four dentate projections crossing two subspherical apertures. The Rev. Kirschbaum (see *ante*) informed the writer that these striking examples of perforated carving belong to the "hanging rack" series and were placed at the entrance to houses.<sup>15</sup>

This specimen was received unaccompanied by information as to locality, but it probably comes from Tambonum or Palimbai, Sepik River, Mandated Territory of New Guinea.<sup>16</sup>

*Dimensions.*—Length, five feet six and a half inches; greatest breadth, one foot eleven inches; length of nasal projection, two feet three inches.

## TRIANGULAR SHIELD.

(Pl. lvii, fig. 1.)

This is a unique type of defensive weapon, said to have been collected on the head-waters of the Sepik River, Mandated Territory of New Guinea. There is no reason to doubt its authenticity, but it is quite new to the museum collections. It consists of a simple slab of light wood intentionally fashioned in a contorted manner, the reason for which is not apparent. A split-cane loop is attached to the upper end, this suspensory being partly covered with bark fibre. Probably carried from the left shoulder, the arm being thrust through the cane attachment. This is a very old piece, polished by contact with the body of the wearer.

*Dimensions.*—Breadth, eighteen inches; depth, sixteen inches; greatest thickness, seven-eighths of one inch.

## STONE MORTAR.

(Pl. lvii, figs. 2-3.)

This mortar is carved in the form of a human torso, the limbs being but slightly indicated, the face<sup>17</sup> flat and retreating. It is composed of diorite-porphry and weighs two pounds three ounces.

<sup>15</sup> Reche, O.—*Loc. cit.*, pl. xx, p. 126; Fuhrmann, Ernst.—*Kulturen der Erde*, xiv, 1922, p. 112.

<sup>16</sup> One very old and imperfect example and a comparatively modern one are in the Auckland War Memorial Museum. The latter is decorated with white and red pigment.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Etheridge.—*Records Austr. Mus.* VI, 1, 1908, pp. 26-7, pl. vii.

The information as to its use is conflicting. When first brought under my notice it was said to have been used as a mortar for grinding abortion herbs. It was subsequently stated that these mortars with the abdominal depression were used for pounding the betel-nut for the old men who have no teeth, and the duty is carried out by the wives of the lagoon, as the aged are called, or else the daughters do this work. The illustrations are about half natural size.

From Manam (Vulcan) Island, Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Original in the possession of Capt. J. H. J. Johnson, Rabaul, New Britain. Coloured cast in the Australian Museum.

#### HUMAN EFFIGY HOOK.

(Pl. lvii, figs. 4-5.)

This is a wooden hook carved in the form of a male human figure, the lower extremities merging into a two pronged hook. It is well carved and is typically Sepik work. The nose is perforated, and the eyes are represented by the opercula of a *Turbo*; the mouth is coarsely rendered. The shoulders and back are cicatrized in a series of wavy lines. The arms terminate at the knees, with which they unite. The legs and feet end in a similar manner at the base of the figure. A perforated slot has been cut behind the head to accommodate a suspensory cord. From the ears, arms, and legs hang tasselled palm leaves, and, when received, the figure was clothed with a short "rami" or "pul-pul." Several of these effigy hooks have been described and figured by Reche,<sup>18</sup> but none is quite as lifelike as the above described specimen.

*Dimensions.*—Length, three feet; breadth, across prongs, nine and a half inches; girth outside arms, twenty-two inches.

#### BOWSTICK.

(Pl. lviii, fig. 1.)

This black palmwood bow is medially oval in section, tapers towards the extremities and each end is provided with a peg thrust into a closely-plaited rattan socket. The exerted portion of one peg is bean-shaped and grooved, the other is angular and flat.

A somewhat similar bow is figured by Reche<sup>19</sup> from Vulcan Island, but it differs from this specimen in having the rattan binding in four cinctures, whereas the pegs are, in our specimen, entirely enclosed in the plaitwork.

Said to be from the head-waters of the Sepik River, Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

<sup>18</sup> Reche, O.—*Loc. cit.*, pls. xl and xli, opp. pp. 164 and 172.

<sup>19</sup> Reche, O.—*Loc. cit.*, p. 337, fig. 369.

*Dimensions.*—Length, five feet seven and a half inches; greatest girth, two and one-quarter inches.

BENT CLUB, OR "RIPPER."

(Pl. lviii, figs. 2-3.)

This weapon (Pl. lviii, fig. 2), having a more than superficial resemblance to the bent club of the Solomon Group<sup>20</sup> (Pl. lviii, fig. 3), has been described as a "ripper." It is stated on good authority<sup>21</sup> that it was "used for ripping up or disembowelling enemies, and has recently been sharpened."

Amongst savage peoples we find many clubs with pointed processes<sup>22</sup> set at various angles from the distal end, the object being to deliver a blow which will produce a punctured wound. In addition to being effective in this direction, this club possesses keen cutting edges both on the inner and outer curves. The latter is interrupted by a carved process which appears to be a debased or conventionalized human face.

*Dimensions.*—Length, three feet four inches; breadth of blade, five inches.

Tributary of Sepik River, 160 miles from coast, Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

Presented to the Australian Museum by Mr. R. A. Prescott.

CARVED SPINDLE-CLUB.

(Pl. lviii, figs. 4-6.)

This club, said to be from New Guinea, has given the writer much concern. In general outline it resembles the *tiara* of New Ireland,<sup>23</sup> but the incised work at the distal end compares favourably with the handiwork of the Papuan. This combination of characters was puzzling until a somewhat similar but cruder design was noticed on the handle of a stone-headed club (Pl. lviii, fig. 6) from Hänischhafen, Mandated Territory of New Guinea.

The weapon about to be described had, in all probability, its origin in New Ireland and was traded to New Guinea, where the incised ornamentation was subsequently added. Parkinson says<sup>24</sup> that the *tiara* club was introduced into the Gazelle Peninsula,

<sup>20</sup> Guppy, H. B.—"The Solomon Islands and their Natives," London, 1887, p. 73.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* Prescott, R. A., Advance Agent, British Expedition to German New Guinea, 1924.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Erskine, J. E.—Jnl. Cruise . . . Western Pacific, London, 1853, p. 178;

Guppy, H. B.—"The Solomon Islands and their Natives," London, 1887, p. 74, fig. 5; "Zeitschrift f. Ethnologie," 1911, p. 245; Neuhauss, *loc. cit.*, p. 204, fig. 203;

Skinner, H. D.—Journ. Royal Anthropol. Soc., XLIII, 1918, pp. 205-8.

<sup>23</sup> Parkinson, R.—"Dreissig Jahre in der Südsee," Stuttgart, 1907, pl. viii, opp. p. 112, figs. 1 and 5.

<sup>24</sup> Parkinson.—*Loc. cit.*, p. 283.

New Britain, from Cape Strauch district, New Ireland, so it is quite conceivable that the specimen under description was conveyed still further to New Guinea. The *tiara* is normally mushroom-headed. The present shape of this specimen, could, by reduction, be modified to its present double-headed hoe-like form.

It appears to be a two-handed weapon, one hand grasping the space between the two proximal collars and the other in advance of the whole series of four. Each face of the distal end, or head, is decorated with a design combining tothing and a central eye-spot. After several attempts a successful rubbing (Pl. lviii, fig. 5) was made of the main design. The dominating element is two human heads adorned with horns. Wavy, parallel, and zig-zag lines combined with triangular tothings, both in oval panels and free, produce a very interesting and effective appearance.

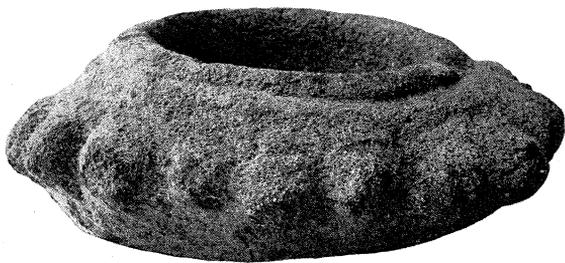
*Dimensions.*—Length, three feet eight and one-half inches.

Presented to the Australian Museum by Mr. G. J. Waterhouse.

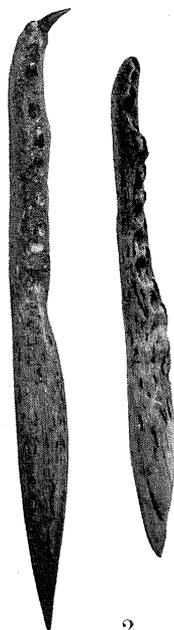
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EXPLANATION OF PLATE LV.

- Fig. 1. Stone bowl or mortar. Edie Creek, hinterland of Salamao Bay, Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Greatest diameter,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches.
- Fig. 2. Crocodile-jaw daggers. The larger one is from the Wilde-  
mann River, the other from the Lorentz River, both  
localities in Netherlands New Guinea.  $13\frac{1}{2}$  and 11  
inches long.
- Figs. 3-4. Obverse and reverse of a large circular shield. Probably  
from Finnisterre Range, Maclay Coast, Mandated  
Territory of New Guinea. Diameter, 2 feet 7 inches.
- Fig. 5. Coconut ladle. Hinterland of Eitape, Mandated Territory  
of New Guinea. Length, 2 feet  $7\frac{1}{4}$  inches.



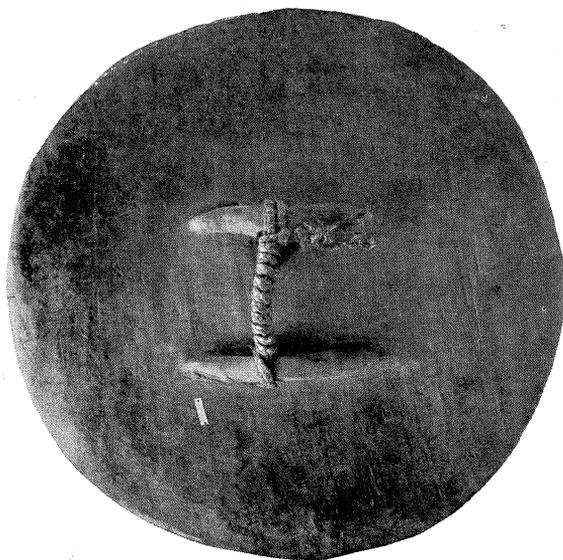
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EXPLANATION OF PLATE LVI.

Figs. 1-2. Massive carved bowl. Figure 2 illustrates the carving on an extremity. Probably from Tami, or Cretin Island, Huon Gulf, Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Length 3 feet  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches, depth  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches, breadth 14 inches.

Fig. 3. Skull tablet, or "mask." Keram Tributary of Sepik River, Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Length 4 feet 6 inches, breadth 17 inches.

Figs. 4-5. Fretwork board. Probably from Tambonum or Palimbai, Sepik River, Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Length 5 feet  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches, extreme breadth 1 foot 11 inches.



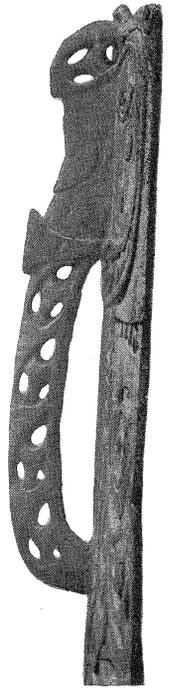
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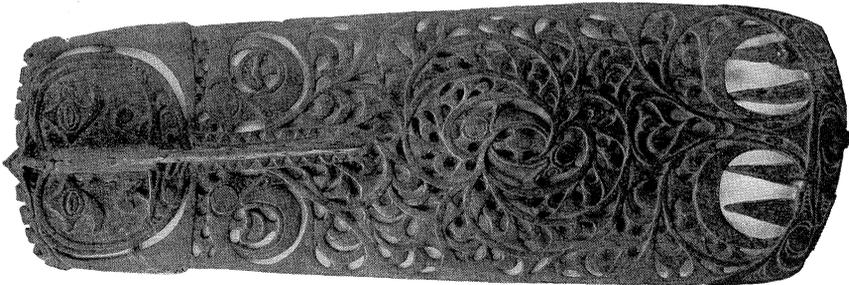
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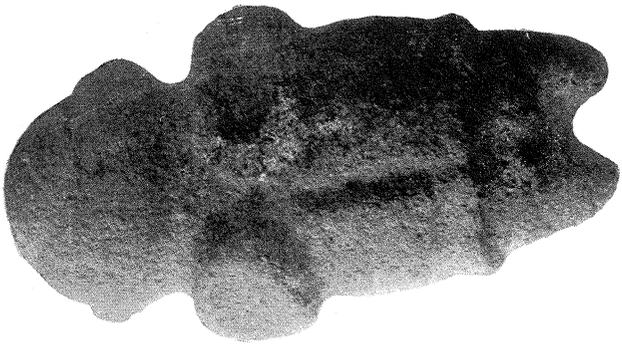


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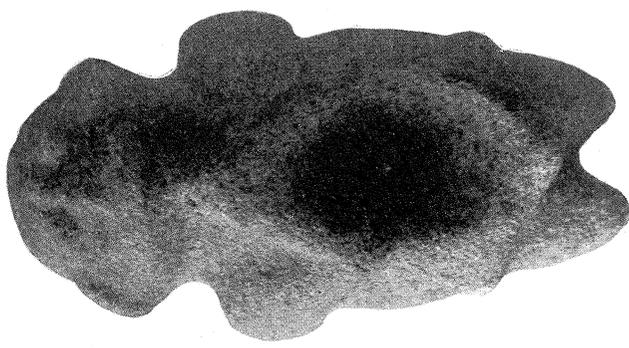
G. C. CLUTTON, photo.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE LVII.

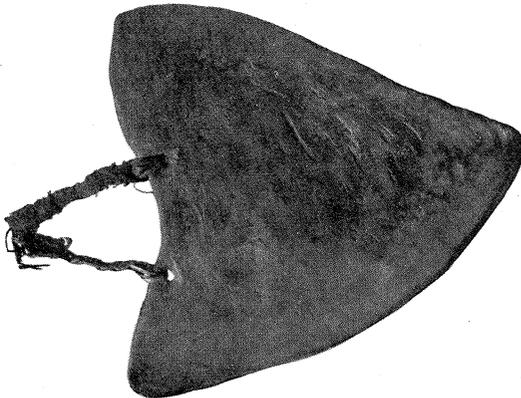
- Fig. 1. Triangular shield. Probably from head-waters of the Sepik River, Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Breadth 18 inches, depth 16 inches.
- Figs. 2-3. Stone mortar. Manam (Vulcan) Island, Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Length, 6 inches.
- Figs. 4-5. Human effigy hook. Sepik River, Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Length 3 feet, breadth across prongs  $9\frac{1}{2}$  inches, girth outside arms 22 inches.



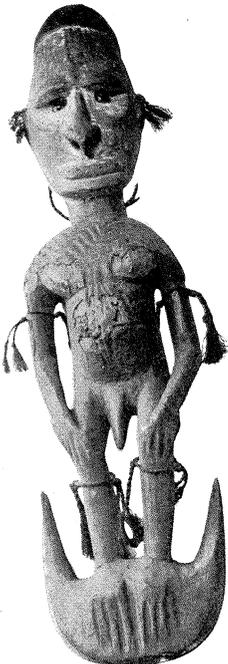
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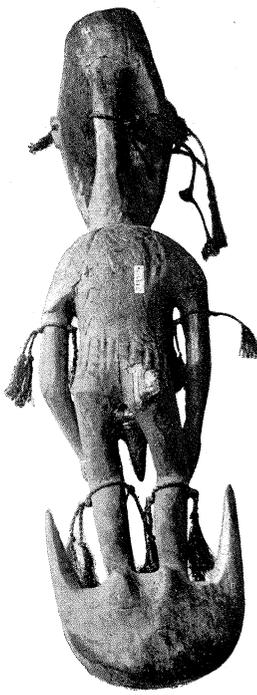
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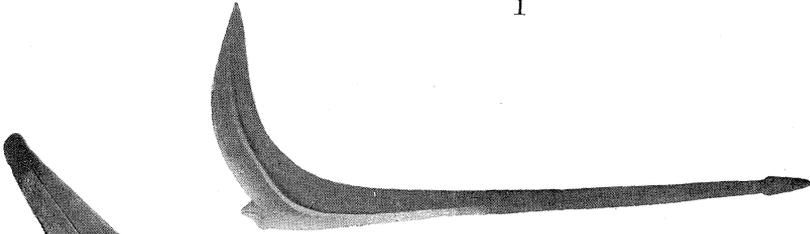
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EXPLANATION OF PLATE LVIII.

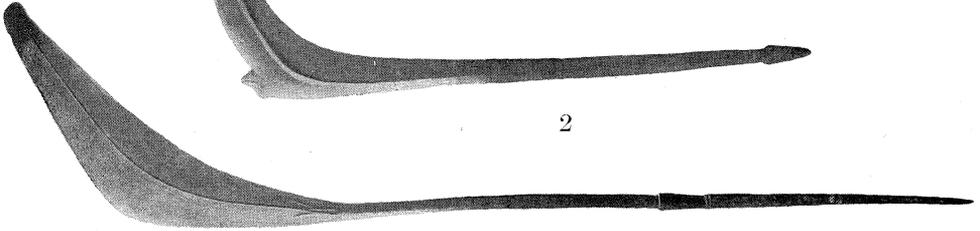
- Fig. 1. Bowstick. Probably from head-waters of Sepik River, Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Length, 5 feet 7½ inches.
- Figs. 2-3. Bent club, or "ripper." Tributary of Sepik River, 160 miles from mouth, Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Length 3 feet 4 inches, breadth of blade 5 inches.
- Figs. 4-6. Carved spindle-club. Probably originated in New Ireland and subsequently traded to New Guinea. Fig. 5 is a rubbing illustrating the design. Fig. 6 is a rubbing of a similar or cruder design on the handle of a stone-headed club from Hänischhafen, Mandated Territory of New Guinea. Length, 3 feet 8½ inches.



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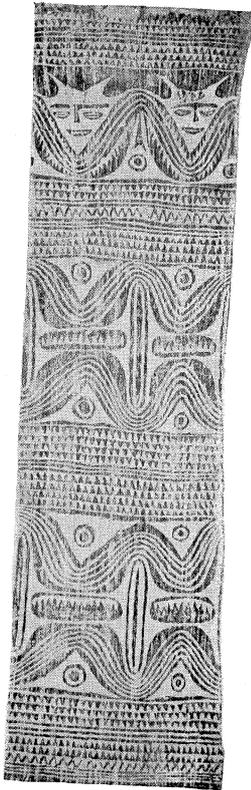
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