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43. Notes on the Manufacture of the Malaita Shell Bead Money of the Solomon Group.

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Source: *Man*, Vol. 8 (1908), pp. 81-84

Published by: [Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland](#)

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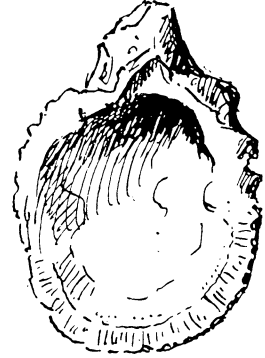
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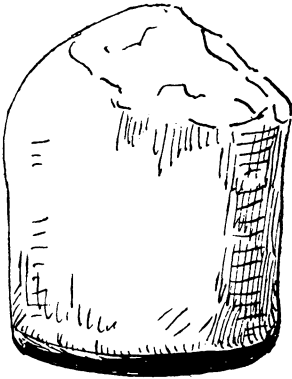
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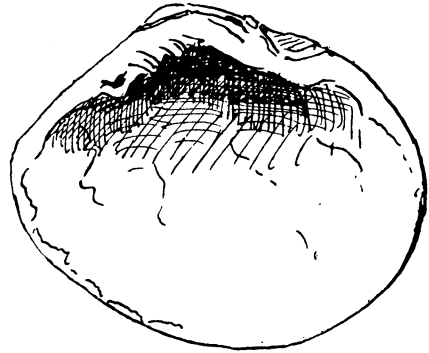
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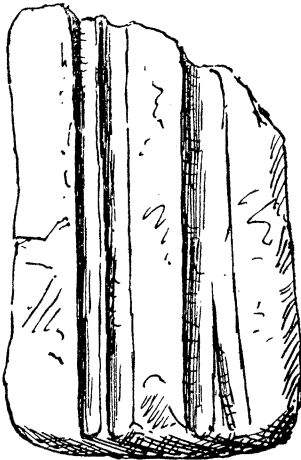
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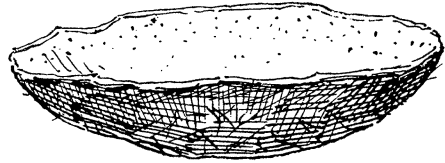
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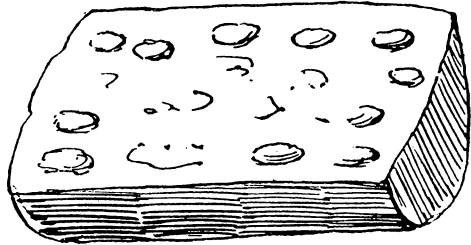
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THE MANUFACTURE OF MALAITA BEAD MONEY.

## ORIGINAL ARTICLES.

Solomon Islands.

With Plate F.

Woodford.

**Notes on the Manufacture of the Malaita Shell Bead Money of the Solomon Group.** *By C. M. Woodford.* **43**

At various places off the coast of Malaita a series of small inhabited islets have been built up upon the fringing reef. These singular reef-islet villages occur at Alite, Langalanga, and Auki, on the west coast; at Sio Harbour, at the extreme north-western end of the island; and at Funafou, Urassi, Sulafou, Atta, Beresombua, Kwai, Nongasila, and Uru, on the east coast.

The islets appear to have had their origin in raised patches of coral upon the reef flats, which have been laboriously added to and gradually built up by their inhabitants until a solid foundation, well raised above the water, was produced. They are undoubtedly of very ancient origin. The islets are faced with a wall of coral stones about six to eight feet high, with here and there an opening like an embrasure with a sloping beach for the admission of the canoes.

They vary from as little as under a quarter of an acre to two or three acres in extent, and are densely peopled by a seafaring population, who speak a different dialect from the bush natives of the mainland.

The inhabitants of these islets get their living by fishing. The fish they sell to the natives of the mainland, in exchange for vegetables, pigs, and articles of native manufacture, at certain recognised market-places on the beach, to which they resort in their canoes almost every day at times arranged beforehand with the natives of the bush.

The actual bartering is done by the women, who advance one towards another, the island woman with a fish, and the bush woman with yams or taro, while the men stand on guard on either side with spears or rifles.

Sometimes it is not even safe for the two parties to approach one another, and in that case a small canoe is veered ashore with a line, the articles for exchange being placed in it.

I am informed that disputes at these markets are rare, but at other times the island natives cannot venture ashore upon the mainland without risk.

Having no canoes, the bush natives cannot visit the reef islets, and the islanders probably take good care that they shall keep none.

The reef islanders, on the other hand, are accustomed from their earliest years to be constantly afloat, and become expert in the management of the merest shell of wood. I remember, during my first visit to Auki in 1886, counting no less than ninety-five canoes round the ship at one time, from the crazy thing hardly larger than a butcher's tray, skilfully managed by a child of six, to the more perfect article large enough to carry three or four men. They have, of course, larger canoes capable of carrying twenty or thirty men, but these are only used for long voyages.

Even upon such a small island as Auki two factions exist. The island, which may be perhaps two acres in extent, is of reniform shape, and, probably, was originally two islets. The western part of it is known as Auki, and the eastern part as Lisiala. There is a strip of neutral ground in the centre separating the two settlements, divided on either side by walls of coral stone six feet in height. The population of this islet, I was told, and I can well believe it, amounted in 1896 to 500.

The houses, or rather hovels, for they are nothing else, are crowded so closely together that there is hardly room to pass between them, and the ground set apart for the burial of the dead still further curtails the space available for habitation.

It is at Auki, Langalanga and Alite that the manufacture of shell money is carried on, and the quantity produced during a year must amount to many hundreds of fathoms.

I have elsewhere spoken of the state of existence upon these small reef islets as probably presenting some resemblance to the condition of the ancient lake-dwellers of Europe, but perhaps a comparison with the first beginnings of Venice would be juster, and it is a curious and possibly significant fact that Venice is to this day celebrated for its manufacture of glass and coral beads, doubtless the survival of a primitive industry, the finished result of which, probably, somewhat resembled the shell bead money of the Solomons.

The shell bead money of Malaita is of three colours—white, red, and black. It is generally known as *Rongo*. The white money is called *Rongo pura* and the red money *Rongo sisi*. The black is not made up in strings by itself, but a few beads of it are introduced here and there in the red and white money, either for contrast or to mark the length.

The shell from which the white money is made is the *Arca granosa* (Pl. F, 4), native name on Malaita, *Kakandu*; the red is made from the shell *Chama pacifica*, native name *Romu* (Pl. F, 5); the black is made from the shell of the large black mussel or pinna, native name *Kurila*.

These shells, especially the red ones, are articles of trade among the natives of Malaita and are bought by the basketful by the money-makers from distant parts of Malaita, and even from other islands.



FIG. 1.—METHOD OF SHARPENING FLINT DRILL USED IN MAKING SHELL MONEY OF MALAITA.

The shells are first broken into irregular fragments rather smaller than a threepenny piece. In this condition they are called *fulo-mbato* (Pl. F, 7). For breaking the shells a stone hammer-head without a handle is used called *fau-ui* (Pl. F, 9). The stone anvil upon which the shells are broken is also called *fau-ui*, or *fauli-ui*.

The broken pieces are then chipped into the form of a roughly circular disc, in diameter about as large as a pea. They are then placed upon the flat surface of a piece of soft wood of semi-circular section (Pl. F, 11). This instrument is called *ma-ai*. Upon its flat surface are a number of shallow counter-sunk holes in which the fragments of shell are placed. These are ground flat and smooth, first on one side and then on the other, upon a flat rectangular stone

called *fou-sava*. This grinding stone is of a particular kind, and the Auki people purchase it from the bush natives at the market place at Fiu, near Auki. It appears to be highly valued, as I was unable to obtain a specimen, but I have since obtained fragments.

The broken pieces of shell, now ground flat on each side and reduced to the requisite thickness, are placed one at a time into the half of a coco-nut shell, called *teo-le-futa* (Pl. F, 10), and a hole is drilled through the centre by means of a pump drill, *futa*. This drill is tipped with a piece of flint or chalcedony, called *landi* (Pl. F, 1). The stone of which these drills are made is also purchased from the Malaita bushmen.

The fly-wheel of the drill is a disc of turtle bone and is called *taka*. The pump handle is called *randi* and the spindle *futa*.

The flint points are sharpened by means of the large freshwater mussel or cockle shell, native name *kée* (Pl. F, 6). The flint is held down upon a piece of wood with the left hand and small flakes are pressed off it by the edge of the shell, held in the right hand, until the requisite degree of pointedness has been attained (Fig. 1, text).

After boring, the pieces of shell (Pl. F, 8) are threaded on a string, made of a strong bush fibre called *lili*, in lengths of about four or five feet. From their previous grinding on both sides, the shells, or as they may now be termed, beads, lie closely together along the string, but their edges are still irregular.

The next process is to remove the rough edges and to reduce the beads to the proper size. To effect this the strings of rough beads are fastened upon a flat piece of board called *mbambaliara*, and rubbed lengthwise with a grooved stone (*fouliara*, Pl. F, 12) and sand (*ole*) and water until the requisite size and smoothness have been attained.

The beads are now finished and ready for the final stringing. The finished beads are called *bata*.

A fathom of white money is called *forososo*, in the language of Malaita, where it is made; in the language of Gela and Guadalcanar, where much of it is taken for sale, *turumbuto*.

The red money is put up in two ways: first in strings of about five feet or a fathom long. Ten such strings are called in the language of Malaita *tavuli-ei* or *apuala avu*, and in the language of Gela, *baru*. The other way of stringing is in lengths of about ten feet or two fathoms with a patch of black or white money in the centre. One such string is called *vinda*. Two strings joined at each end and in the centre are called *kongana*; three strings, *sautolu*; four strings, *matambala* or *sauvati*; five strings, *rapakava*; six strings, *talina*. A proper *talina* consists of six strings, although sometimes five strings only are called by this name. An *isa* is ten strings of red money.

One *talina*, one hundred *randi* (porpoise teeth), and four *turumbuto* are also equivalent to an *isa*.

There is yet another kind of red money, more precious than the ordinary red, on account of its intense colour. It is made from fragments selected from the most highly coloured part of the *romu* shell, and from selected shells only. A single shell may perhaps supply one bead of the requisite colour.

It is said that two years are required to make a piece of this very red money measuring in length from the hollow of the elbow joint to the end of the middle finger. It is known in the language of Malaita as *ferai*, and in the language of Gela as *baru nekasa*.

Another kind of black money, other than the *kurila*, above referred to, is made from a vegetable seed called *fulu*. The tree upon which it grows is called *sisis*.

I have obtained a small sample of another kind of shell money from Malaita (Pl. F, 2), which differs considerably from the shell money made on the islands described above. It is made in small quantities by the bush natives living inland from Kwa, between Onepusu and Bina. I am informed that only one quality is made. The colour is pinkish-white, and the beads are much smaller than those of the ordinary Malaita money. It is called *mamalakwai*. A small piece, measured from the hollow of the elbow to the end of the middle finger, is called *lo-suu*.

One fathom is called *baniou*; two fathoms are called *rua mamalakwai*.

*Bead Money from Guadalcanar.*—There is a very scarce kind of bead-money from Guadalcanar (Pl. F, 3), which used to be made by the bush natives inhabiting the centre of the island in the neighbourhood of Tatuve.

It is not now made, and the old bush chief, Sulakava, from whom I obtained my specimens, could not tell me what the material was. It consists of coarse, black,

irregularly sized discs, but whether it is made of shell, or the shell of a nut, or of some kind of mineral, my informant was unable to say, and after examination I am equally at a loss to determine. Half a fathom of it is called *Kurina*; one fathom is called *Paku*.

C. M. WOODFORD.

Africa, West.

Punch.

**Further Note on the Relation of the Bronze Heads to the Carved Tusks, Benin City.** *By C. Punch.* **44**

In MAN, 1908, 2, appeared an article on the relation of the bronze heads of Benin to the carved tusks from that city, together with a photograph of two of the heads. There is also a reference to a photograph taken by myself which appeared in Ling Roth's book, *Great Benin*. As there appears to be a doubt in some minds as to whether the heads, such as illustrated in MAN, 1908, 2, formed the support for carved tusks, perhaps the testimony of an eye-witness may be worthy of record.



I myself took the photograph herewith reproduced, and the tusks were at that time standing on top of the heads, and not, as has been suggested, behind them. I can guarantee that the altar was exactly as it appears and that the negative has undergone no retouching. I cannot remember whether there were any wooden spikes fixed in the holes in the crowns of the heads which supported the tusks, but if there were the white ants would soon have made short work of them. The carved tusks were of all sizes, from "scrivelloes" of 4 or 5 lbs. to large ones of 60 to 70 lbs. Of course all tusks were not necessarily supported on heads, nor, at the time of my visit, did all heads support tusks. I believe that originally all the heads were intended for this purpose, but that the state and ceremony which must have prevailed in Benin in early times had sadly declined. The compounds in which stood the juju altars were neglected, cattle wandered about and displaced the objects on them. New altars were made as each king died, and the older ones fell into decay.

CYRIL PUNCH.