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Source: *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 23 (1894), pp. 317-320

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2842082>

Accessed: 16/06/2014 00:04

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On a Modification of the AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL WEAPON, termed the LEONILE, LANGEEL, BENDI, or BUCCAN, &c. By R. ETHERIDGE, JUN.

I AM indebted to Mr. W. H. Hargraves, Deputy Master-in-Equity, Sydney, for an opportunity of noticing an interesting modification of the Australian weapon known as the *Leonile* or *Langeel*. It is one of the lesser known weapons, but appears to have been used by the aborigines of Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland. The *Leonile* consists, speaking generally, of a more or less long straight handle, or shaft, and a sharp pointed head, of greater or less length, either at right angles to the former, or opposed to the shaft at an angle somewhat greater than a right angle. It is used in single combat, and is one of the most deadly weapons amongst the aborigines themselves, "because of the facility with which the point can be suddenly turned at the moment of striking."¹ The combatants are protected, when in combat with this weapon, by the small, flat-faced and angular-backed shield, formerly termed by the Victorian blacks, the *Mulga*.

Considerable variation seems to exist in the relative length of head to shaft, and the width at that point where shaft and head may be said to meet. In the Victorian weapon, figured² by the late R. B. Smyth, the enlargement is, in proportion, greater than in our specimen, the head of moderate length, tolerably thick, and fined off to an obtuse rather than an acute point. Smyth's figure gives one the idea of a roughly finished weapon, except at the immediate handle, or hand-grasp, where it is elaborately carved, with vertical lines filled in transversely with herring-bone sculpture and figures on the shaft above. On the shaft is a rhomb with dots, and two indistinct figures, but rather resembling insects.

The modifications figured by the late Governor G. J. Eyre are very marked. One³ exhibits the short and acutely pointed head absolutely at right angles to the shaft; a second⁴ is much enlarged and thickened at the distal end of the handle, with a short head forming almost an acute angle with the former. In the third modification,⁵ the union of the head and handle forms a more obtuse angle, and approaches nearer to Smyth's figure,

¹ "Aborigines of Victoria," 1878, i, p. 302.

² *Ibid.*, f. 62.

³ "Journ. Exped. Discovery into Central Australia," 1840-41 (2 vols., London, 1845). Vol. II, Pl. III, f. 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Pl. III, f. 12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Pl. III, f. 11.

except that the head is bluntly pointed. The fourth¹ and last of Eyre's figures represents a very extraordinary weapon, more like an openly-curved sickle, set on a long, slightly bent handle, than anything else it can be compared with. It retains the same width throughout, no apparent difference between head and shaft being noticeable, but terminating distally in a very sharp point. Three out of the four are sharpened at the proximal end, and all are transversely carved to afford a firm hold for the combatant.

Lieut. Breton, R.N., many years ago figured² "a formidable weapon, used at Port Macquarie;" its length is 3 feet, and the arm (if it may be so termed) about 18 inches more." The *Leonile* in this case, for no other weapon can be intended by the author, consists of a cylindrical handle, gradually enlarging upwards to its union with the head, which is absolutely at right angles to the former, and thence tapering in an inverse ratio to the distal point of the weapon. Allowing for a certain amount of conventionality in the figure, I cannot do better than compare Breton's figure of the *Leonile* to a mason's or carpenter's square.

The present weapon, represented in the accompanying figure (No. 2) has a total length of about 2 feet 5 inches. The shaft is hardly straight in any part, but is comparatively so for about 1 foot 9 inches, thence gently curved round into the head, which is for all practical purposes at right-angles, with an obtuse distal end. As compared with other modifications of this weapon, the head is short. The only attempt at ornamentation consists of a transverse ridge, close to the proximal end, probably to give a firmer grasp to the hand of the holder. The weapon is an exceedingly well finished one, made from a handsome variegated wood, which may possibly be that of the "Beantree" (*Castanospermum australe*), a leguminous wood not unlike walnut. It weighs 1 lb. The width of the shaft at the point held by the hand is $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches; at its widest point $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches; whilst the length of the head is 6 inches.

Compared with the published figures of the *Leonile*, our weapon is unquestionably of a much more finished type. It is not precisely like either of the four illustrations given by Eyre, and, as compared with that of Smyth, lacks the carving of the handle, gradate nature of the immediate proximal end, and the figures on the shaft. Judging, however, by the shading of the latter, the present weapon appears to be a much more finished one, in

¹ *Ibid.*, Pl. III, f. 10.

² "Excursions in New South Wales," &c., 1830-33 (8vo., London, 1833), p. 238.

³ "Aborigines of Victoria," 1878, f. 62.

so far as the actual shape, make, and surface fining-down are concerned.

The name *Leonile* or *Langeel* is applied to this weapon in Victoria proper, but in South Gippsland, about Lake Tyers, the late R. B. Smyth believed it was known as *Darn-de-wan*. We have Lieut. Breton's statement that it was known at Lake Port Macquarie, New South Wales, although he does not supply a local name for it. I am informed by Mr. Robert Grant, Zoological Collector to the Australian Museum, Sydney, that the *Leonile* is known in the Bellinger, Clarence, Tweed, and Nambuckra Rivers Districts as *Coupon*, and, in all probability, that now under description comes from hereabout, as the exact locality is unknown. Carl Lumholtz figures a short-headed, long-handled *Leonile*, closely resembling a single-headed miner's pick, from the Herbert River District, Central Queensland, where it is known as *Bendi*.¹ It is made from the wood of the *Eucalyptus exurata*. The weapon is also known in the Moreton and Wide Bay Districts, Queensland, where Mr. Archibald Meston, of Brisbane, informs me it is called *Buccan*.

The following table shows the local names and distribution at a glance.

Locality.	Name.	Authority.
Victoria generally	<i>Leonile</i> or <i>Langeel</i> .	R. B. Smyth.
South Gippsland	<i>Darn-de-wan</i> .	"
Port Macquarie, N.S.W.	—	Breton.
Bellinger, Clarence, and Tweed } River Districts, N.S.W. ..	<i>Coupon</i> .	R. Grant.
Moreton and Wide Bay Districts, Ql.	<i>Buccan</i> .	A. Meston.
Herbert River District, Ql. ..	<i>Bendi</i> .	C. Lumholtz.

Mr. R. Grant says that in the district where he has observed this weapon (Bellinger, &c.), advantage is taken by the blacks of any large protruding excrescence from the trunk, and the *Coupon*, as they call it, is then cut out of it cross-wise. I also think little doubt can be entertained that, from the appearance of Eyre's illustrations, roots have been taken advantage of to fashion this remarkable weapon.

Some diversity of opinion seems to exist as to the method of using the *Leonile*, whether the point or the round is used in striking. As a matter of fact, both appear to be employed. Lieut. Breton² tells us that the object of its peculiar shape is

¹ "Amongst Cannibals," 1890, p. 332.

² *Loc. cit.*

“that the warrior may be enabled to strike round the shield, or eleman, of his adversary.” Mr. G. F. Lang¹ relates a case where an intended husband, when beating an eloped girl, “finished by driving the point of his liangle into the crown of her head.” The object of striking over the guard, afforded by the shield, with the point, has been confirmed by Messrs. Meston and Grant, both of whom have seen the *Leonile* used. Mr. Grant further states that when a combatant wishes to strike side-wise and from himself with a back-handed blow, the round, and not the point, of the *Leonile*, is used. Perhaps, after all, the most peculiar mode of using it is that related by Lumholtz, who says that about the Herbert River, fighters “try to hit the kidneys of their opponents,” that being the most vulnerable point to the aborigine mind.

As in the case of the basket, I am indebted to Mr. Charles Hedley, F.L.S., for the accompanying drawing.

An AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL MUSICAL INSTRUMENT. By
R. ETHERIDGE, JUN.

THE recorded instances of the use of Musical Instruments amongst our aborigines are, comparatively speaking, so few, that the description of an authenticated instrument will probably prove welcome. For an opportunity of describing the present example of what may, for the want of a better name, be termed a rattle, or perhaps even “castanets,” I am indebted to the well known Australian traveller and explorer, Mr. Harry Stockdale. The instrument was obtained 100 miles inland from Port Douglas, near Cairns, on the north-east coast of Queensland. Before proceeding to describe this interesting object, I may perhaps, be allowed to refer to what is generally known of the use of instruments of music amongst the Australian aborigines, or, at any rate, their rough and ready make-shifts for the more finished appliances of cultured peoples. During the widely spread dance generally known as the *Corroboree*, or, more particularly in Victoria as *Ngargee*, or *Yain-yang*, the women of the tribe, who take the part of musicians, are seated in a semi-circle, a short distance from the large fire lit on these occasions holding on their knees opossum rugs tightly rolled and stretched

¹ “Aborigines of Australia,” 1865, p. 11.