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Note on the Use of the New-Zealand Mere

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Source: *The Journal of the Ethnological Society of London (1869-1870)*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1870), pp. 106-109

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

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3014414>

Accessed: 17/06/2014 06:12

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and classes among the inhabitants of the Caucasus, opposite to the Kitai. He concurred with Dr. Oppert in believing that the application of the terms Manchoo, Mongol, Tongoos, and Turk must have been interchangeable in many cases, or that they are much mixed up. The languages are distinct (except some accidental identity of communicated roots), but there is a general grammatical affinity suggesting relationship. He believed they might be regarded as holding the same relationship within themselves as the more southern groups, the Tibetan (including the Caucasian), the Chinese, and Indo-Chinese.

Dr. Oppert had called attention to an interesting ethnological fact, that the Kitai having once exercised a great empire have now dwindled to 50,000 souls. Mr. Clarke considered this to be due to the fact that a race of small numerical resources had become dominant over many others; the certain result in such cases is the decline of the dominant race, if not, as in the case of the Romans, extinction. A dominant race can only be maintained by large and compact bodies of its members, as in the case of the Turks, the Magyars, and the English, but when these are diffused over greater numbers they must decline.

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The following note was then read by the author :—

XI. *NOTE on the USE of the NEW-ZEALAND MERE.*

By Col. A. LANE FOX, F.S.A.

IN a paper which I read last year at the United Service Institution upon "*Primitive Warfare*," the subject of which had reference to the origin and development of the weapons of savages and early races, I ventured an opinion that the Mere or Pattoo-Pattoo of the New Zealanders ought to be classed rather with axes or thrusting-weapons than with clubs; and that in all probability this weapon derived its origin from the stone celt which is well known to be common to those regions, as, indeed, it is to the stone period of nearly every part of the globe.

My reasons for this opinion were the following :—

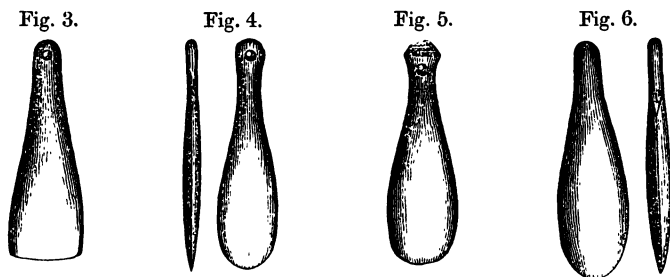
First, that it is usually composed of jade or some other hard stone,—materials of which the celt is also constructed in New Zealand, Australia, New Caledonia, and the adjoining isles.

Secondly, that the Mere is not unfrequently ground to a sharp edge at the *end* like a celt, a form which would not have been given it unless it was either itself used for striking at the end, or derived from a similar implement so used.

Thirdly, that amongst the various forms of the New-Zealand Mere, all the connecting-links between it and the celt are found; one specimen in the Christy Collection (fig. 3), believed to be from New Zealand, has a straight sharp edge at the end, and could only have been used as a celt. Many others, as for example, fig. 4, in the Christy Collection, resemble celts that are

slightly rounded at the small end to receive the hand ; and the ultimate perfection of the weapon with a carved knob at the small end (fig. 5) appears to be merely a development of the earlier forms.

Fourthly, that similar stone clubs are found in Ireland, one of which, from my Collection, is here given (fig. 6), and another



is figured in the 'Ulster Journal of Archæology'\*; these are evidently stone celts similarly cut at the small end to fit the hand.

Fifthly, that analogy would lead one to suppose that so peculiar a weapon as the Mere, not being the best adapted, either as to its form or composition, to be used as a hand-club, must have been derived from some other implement of traditional usage amongst the people, it being a fact capable of demonstration that nearly all the weapons of savages *have derived their form from an historical development, and are capable of being traced back through their varieties to earlier and simpler forms, with as much certainty as the various forms of animal and vegetable life.*

Some time after I had read my paper, and before it had been published in the Journal of the Institution, Sir Charles W. Dilke happened to see my collection of prehistoric antiquities, and in looking over the series of stone celts from various countries, amongst which I had included some of these Meres, according to the classification which I had adopted, he took up one of them and said to me, "Do you know the way in which the New Zealanders use this weapon? They do not strike with it like a club or sword, but use it in prodding the enemy behind the ear with the sharp end;" and he then told me that he had obtained this information from a New-Zealand chief, when travelling in New Zealand.

I afterwards mentioned the subject to Dr. Hooker, and he, having been struck by the circumstance, determined to write to New Zealand and obtain further information on this point from

\* Ulster Journal of Archæology, No. 18, April 1857.

the old Maories. The result has been the following correspondence :—

*Dr. Hooker to Col. Lane Fox.*

“Sept. 30th, 1869.

“DEAR COL. LANE FOX.—I wrote to New Zealand respecting the use of the Mere as a thrusting-weapon, and have received the enclosed answer. If you think it worth while, will you communicate it, or a copy of it, to the Ethnological Society and return me the original.

“Ever truly yours,  
“JOS. HOOKER.”

*Rev. Jas. W. Stack to Dr. Haast.*

“St. Stephens, Kaiapoi,  
May 17th, 1869.

“MY DEAR HAAST,—I trust you will forgive me for leaving your kind note so long unacknowledged. With regard to Dr. Hooker's inquiry, I have obtained the necessary information for you from the old Maories. The Mere was, as he conjectures, a ‘thrusting-instrument.’ The warrior before delivering the thrust generally seized his enemy by the hair, and then drove the point\* of the Mere either into the temple or at the angle of the jaw just below the ear, or at the back of the head. A down stroke or a blow with the sharp edge would have shattered the Mere. It was grasped with the thumb towards the blade. If I have omitted any point please let me know.

“Believe me, faithfully yours,  
“JAMES W. STACK.”

“To Dr. Haast,  
“Canterbury, New Zealand.”

From this letter, which entirely corroborates the information received from Sir Charles Dilke, it will be seen that the Mere is used exactly in the way that a stone celt or any other weapon of the axe-type would be used, *if held in the hand without a handle*. I am therefore confirmed in my conjecture that it must have derived its origin from the celt, and probably from a period when the celt was used in this manner, perhaps before the idea of using it in a handle had been thought of. As these weapons are known to have been handed down as heirlooms, and to be much prized by the chiefs as symbols of office, they have probably (as not unusually happens in like cases) retained their primitive character, and may therefore be regarded as belonging to the class of objects which Mr. E. B. Tylor has aptly termed “survivals.” We have not far to go to find the stone or jade celt

\* It should rather be the *end*, for the Mere is not pointed.—A. L. F.

actually used at the present time in the manner I have described. Fig. 7 is a drawing showing the manner in which the South

Fig. 7.



Australians use their celts, grasping the small end in the hand and prodding with the broad sharp end, the fore arm of the holder itself supplying the place of a wooden handle. The drawing was kindly sent to me by Mr. Hodder Westropp, and was sketched by an eye-witness, Mr. Chas. Seymour.

I believe that the evidence afforded by the study of weapons and implements will eventually prove to be of the utmost value as a means of tracing back the connexion of races and the sources of early culture, owing to the persistent manner in which all savages preserve their ancient types. Whilst language, having no material existence previously to the introduction of writing, is liable to constant change as the words are passed from mouth to mouth; so much so that amongst the Polynesian and Melanesian races, the Bishop of Wellington has told us, there are no fewer than 200 languages, differing from each other as much as Dutch differs from German; these implements, having been handed down from generation to generation, or having been otherwise preserved in their original forms, constitute the most enduring memorials of the ancestors of the people, and are often found to present strong family likenesses in regions remotely separated.

I have not been able to trace the Mere with certainty out of New Zealand; but it is worthy of mention that Dr. Klemm, in his work on the *Weapons and Implements of Savages\**, gives an illustration of a stone Mere, which he attributes to the ancient Peruvians (fig. 8). Its identity with the New-Zealand Mere is evident; but little reliance can be placed on an isolated example. Some of the small wooden clubs from British Guiana very much resemble the Mere, and those constructed of bone from Nootka Sound (fig. 9) still more closely resemble the New-Zealand weapon. I also exhibited a wooden club of the same form from New Guinea, the ornamentation upon which is so perfectly identical with that of the New-Zealand canoes as to leave no doubt of a connexion between them. Dr. Klemm also mentions some Meres from the New Hebrides; but I have not been able to verify that, and I believe it to be a mistake of the author.

Fig. 9.



Fig. 8.




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\* 'Werkzeuge und Waffen,' by Dr. Gustav Klemm, p. 26.