

NOTE ON FIJIAN CLUBS ORNAMENTED WITH
MAORI PATTERNS.

*By R. H. Walcott, F.G.S., Curator of the Geological and
Ethnological Collections.*

(Plate VIII.)

During a visit to the Museum, Professor R. B. Dixon, of the Anthropological Department of the Harvard University, was particularly interested in a Fijian club bearing an incised design of distinctly Maori origin. Professor Dixon had previously seen elsewhere two other specimens ornamented with a similar type of design, and as, apparently, no record had been made of such an interesting instance of borrowed art, it is well that the Museum should publish a description of the specimen in its collection.

I was fortunate enough, on mentioning the subject to Mr. W. H. Schmidt, of the Australian Metal Company, Melbourne, to find that he had in his private collection another example of a club decorated in a similar manner, which he kindly offered to lend for description.

The Museum specimen, Reg. No. 14,870 (Fig. 1), is, apart from its ornamentation, an ordinary Fijian club of the cylindrical type. Its total length is 3 feet $7\frac{3}{4}$ inches, with an approximate diameter of $1\frac{3}{8}$ inches for 23 inches of its length from the end of the handle. It then gradually increases in diameter to the termination of the head, where it attains a maximum of $1\frac{7}{8}$ inches.

The end of the handle is hollowed out to a depth of a quarter of an inch, a feature not uncommon in Fijian clubs.

The incised design on the handle extends from the extreme end for $11\frac{3}{4}$ inches without a break, and from its termination to the end of the head, seven bands, about three-quarters of an inch wide, of the same incised design are unequally spaced.

The specimen was acquired from Mr. W. Simmonds, of Melbourne, in March, 1908, by whom I have been informed that it was collected by himself some thirty or more years before. Mr. Simmonds, who made a number of visits to Fiji, was unfortunately unable to recollect under what circumstances he obtained the club, or from which island of the group.

The style of ornamentation is common in Maori carvings, and consists, as may be seen from Fig. 2, which is a reproduction of a rubbing, of a series of transverse parallel bands each of four lines, alternating with single lines of diamond-shaped points. The bands of parallel lines do not continue unbroken round the whole

circumference of the club, but at some place or places in their length bend sharply either upwards or downwards to meet the adjacent band. Interspersed among these are six link-like ornaments, five resembling the stud links of a ship's cable, and the sixth resembling two long plain links. They are arranged longitudinally with reference to the greater axis of the club, or at right angles to the main design, which they resemble in principle, but they are composed of three lines instead of four, as in the transverse bands of the main design.

It seems evident that this type of ornamentation is derived from the spiral, so characteristic of Maori art, and only resembled at all by the scroll pattern prevalent in New Guinea decoration.

Mr. A. Hamilton,* Director of the Dominion Museum, Wellington, N.Z., was informed by an old Maori that the spiral, called *pitau*, represented the young circinate frond of the tree fern, *pitau* being the Maori term applied to the young frond of the tree fern (*Cyathea*).

The small studs between the coils of the spiral in the carvings represent the pinnæ of the frond. The five links in the design on the club are plainly only the elongated first or central coil of the spiral, with one end continued and closed on the central coil, while in the double links both ends are continued and closed.

The transverse bands are simply a further elongation of the same coil, although their origin is not so apparent. The diamond-shaped points forming lines between the bands and in the links take the place of the studs in the spiral.

Mr. Schmidt's specimen (Fig. 3), which has no available history, he having purchased it from a dealer in Prahran, a suburb of Melbourne, is what is commonly known as the pineapple type among Fijian clubs, on account of the head bearing a resemblance to that fruit.

As in the previous specimen, there is also nothing in the form of this club which shows any departure from the type it represents.

The ornamentation (Fig. 4) is restricted to $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches of the handle, the rest being perfectly plain. With the exception of a central transverse band, the ornamentation is in the main similar to that just described.

These minor differences consist in most of the four lined bands being curved, and not bent to meet the adjacent ones. The distance between the bands is also greater, so that the diamond-shaped points of the other club here rather assume the character of short longitudinal ridges, and in the two lower links they are replaced by U-shaped forms. The links, of which there are four, are all double, while in the Museum specimen, as pointed out, there is only one of this kind.

* Maori Art, Part I., p. 11, 1896.

The transverse band near the centre of the design, referred to above (Fig. 4), is about three-quarters of an inch wide, and consists of a triangular pattern of closely placed lines. The style of this decorative band seems to be more characteristic of Fijian than of New Zealand ornamentation.

With regard to the origin of Maori ornamentation on Fijian articles, it is a matter of some difficulty to decide to what circumstances it is due.

Accepting the theory that Maori art is endemic, it having been evolved since the isolation of the Maoris from the rest of the world after the last great migration about the year 1350, and was not brought with them from their original home, it cannot be said that that found in Fiji represents the remnant of a type originally derived from a common source and distributed throughout many islands in the Pacific visited and colonized by the early Polynesians.

No intercourse, then, having taken place between the Maoris and other peoples of the Pacific since the evolution of their art, its introduction into Fiji can best be explained by attributing it to communication between the two places, which commenced with the European whalers and traders at the beginning of last century.

There is, however, a possible explanation which may refer its introduction into Fiji to earlier times, and which was suggested by pieces of a New Guinea canoe in the Museum, said to have been picked up on the coast of New Zealand. It is that, in like manner, a Maori canoe may have been driven out of its course and eventually stranded on one of the islands of the Fijian Group, where either the designs on the canoe were copied by the inhabitants, or the characteristic form of carved decoration was made known to them by some of its Maori survivors.

If by this explanation its origin can be referred to a period antedating the advent of the European, the fact may possibly be ascertained by the type of weapon, or some feature in the carving, differing from that of more modern times. There is nothing in the types represented by the two clubs under consideration, or in their condition, to suggest antiquity; and with reference to their ornamentation, I am not in a position to give an opinion as to any variation in the detail of the work which may offer a clue; but I believe Professor Dixon held the view that some such evidence of antiquity did exist in the Museum specimen. On the other hand, it may only mean that the ornamentation, used originally as a pattern, was of ancient design.

Failing proof of antiquity, it appears to me that the ornamentation most probably originated either by articles brought from New Zealand to Fiji by missionaries, traders, or whalers, or else by some of their Maori sailors decorating the weapons of the Fijians with the New Zealand patterns.

In this way the Maori type of ornamentation may have become known to the Fijians, and, perhaps, adopted by them at times, as offering a pleasing variation on their own well-known designs; but it is not even certain that its introduction can be put back as far as is suggested, and it may only date from about forty or fifty years ago, when a rapid influx into Fiji from the Australasian Colonies took place.

