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INDIAN NOTES AND MONOGRAPHS

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A SERIES OF PUBLICA-
TIONS RELATING TO THE
AMERICAN ABORIGINES

BLADED WARCLUBS FROM BRITISH GUIANA

BY

MARSHALL H. SAVILLE

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ENGRAVED WARCLUB WITH STONE BLADE

BLADED WARCLUBS FROM BRITISH GUIANA

BY MARSHALL H. SAVILLE



SEVERAL types of wooden warclubs were formerly relatively common among the tribes of British Guiana. They were called *tiki* by the Carib people, and Drim Thurn, writing about forty years ago, states that "they are probably no longer made, and are carried more as ornaments than for use. They are made of hard heavy wood, and are often highly ornamented, being covered with a pattern formed by engraving and filling the lines thus made with a white earth, brightly polished, and neatly bound with large quantities of red or white cotton from which fringes and streamers, tasselled with bright-colored feathers, hang loose.

Originally, apparently they differed in shape according to the tribe which made them; but these differences, as in so many other similar cases, seem now to be somewhat lost, and most of the various forms of *tiki* may be seen in possession of any one of the tribes. The commoner forms are three in number. One is four-sided; that part which is grasped in the hand is square, but from that point the sides gradually curve outward, the one end much more than the other, until they are abruptly cut off and end in both directions in flat surfaces at right angles to the sides. This form appears to have been appropriated by the Macusis." After describing various other types of these clubs, he states, "From specimens existing in English and European museums, derived from Guiana and the neighboring parts of South America, it would appear that these clubs were occasionally made yet more formidable by the addition of a stone axe-blade, or in later times a similar blade of iron, which was occasionally fixed into the

side." He says later that "the few that are still to be found in the possession of Indians are wholly of wood. But there is a tradition that these used to be made more formidable by the addition of a stone blade."¹ The extreme rarity of wooden clubs with stone blades embedded in the wood is shown by the fact that im Thurn, who spent nearly five years in British Guiana before writing his book, and had exceptional opportunities for collecting, was able to secure only a single specimen of this character.

Bernau² illustrates one of these warclubs in a plate with other Indian weapons, but gives no account of it (see our fig. 1). An early description of these warclubs in Dutch Guiana, based on observations made from the years 1772 to 1777, is given by Captain Stedman,³ who writes: "I must not forget that every Indian carries a club, which they call *apootoo*, for their defence. These clubs are made of the heaviest wood in the forest; they are about eighteen inches long, flat at both ends, and square, but heavier at one end

than the other. In the middle they are thinner, and are wound about with strong cotton threads, so as to be grasped, having a loop to secure them round the wrist, as the sword-tassels are used by some

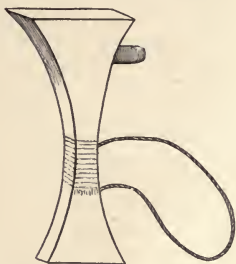


FIG. 1.—Warclub from British Guiana (after Bernau).

cavalry. One blow with this club, in which is frequently fixed a sharp stone, scatters the brains. These are used by the Guiana Indians like the tomahawk by the Cherokees, on which, besides other hieroglyphical figures, they often carve the number of persons slain in battle. *The*

manner of fixing the stone in the club or apootoo is by sticking it in the tree while it is yet growing, where it soon becomes so fast that it cannot be forced out: after which the wood is cut, and shaped according to fancy." On the plate opposite page 406 Stedman illustrates one of these clubs with a stone blade which we here reproduce as fig. 2.

Warclubs with stone blades were also formerly in use among the Indians of French Guiana, for Barrere illustrates a specimen which shows a tau-shaped blade mounted in a long, slender, round handle, and writes (p. 174), "Ordinairement c'est le Capitaine, avec les principaux & toute le jeunesse, qui marchant en corps d'armée, bein munis de leurs arcs, flèches, boutous, haches de pierre, & autres instrumens de guerre." The illustration of a mounted stone axe is



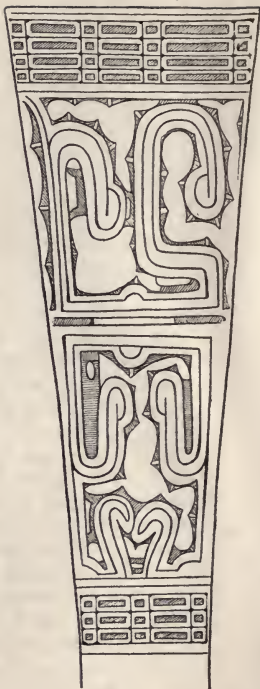
FIG. 2.—
Warclub from
Dutch Gui-
ana (after
Stedman).

shown in fig. 5 of his plate, facing page 168.

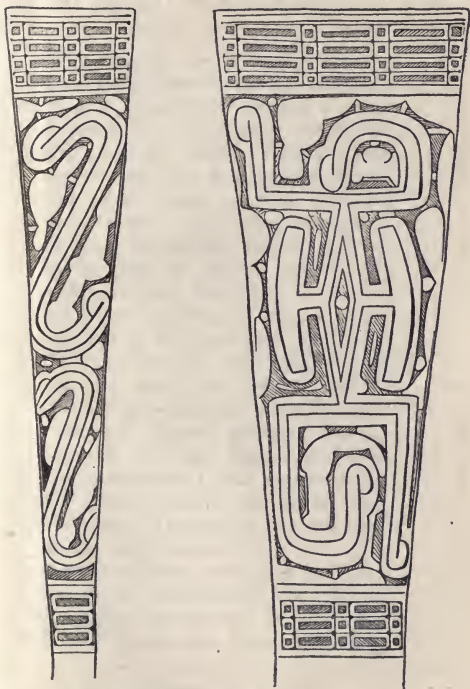
In the Handbook to the Ethnographical Collections of the British Museum, published in 1910, are illustrated (p. 281) two warclubs with stone blades. Both have cord-wrapped handles, and one appears to be engraved.

The Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, is exceedingly fortunate in possessing two examples of this type, and a third specimen with an iron blade, all received by the generous gift of Harmon W. Hendricks, Esq., a trustee of the Museum. These are illustrated in the accompanying plates. The most interesting weapon is that shown in pl. I, which is made from a close-grained, dark-reddish wood, well-rubbed down and polished; it is $16\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, the upper part of the four sides of the rectangular expanding club being covered with the delicately engraved design shown in pl. II. There are at present no traces of pigment filling the lines. Around the handle, the part to be grasped by the

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ENGRAVING ON THE FOUR SIDE



THE WARCLUB SHOWN IN PLATE I

hand is covered by a tightly-wound, coarse cotton thread, and in addition there is a woven cord forming a loop tied loosely in such a manner as to be placed round the wrist. A stone blade of the petaloid type, so commonly found in the West Indies, projects $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. from the wood. It is a hard, compact, black stone resembling diorite, and is identical with the greater number of petaloid celts from Porto Rico.

The second example, illustrated in pl. III, is $17\frac{1}{2}$ in. in length, and the stone blade projects $2\frac{1}{4}$ in. This specimen is not carved, but it is polished, and is made from the same kind of wood as the first example. It has a wrapping around the handle, with two tassels of many cotton strands, and a wrist loop made of coarse threads loosely twisted on the opposite side. The blade is of a greenish stone, not so hard as the other.

The last specimen, illustrated in pl. IV, is also of the same kind of wood, and is polished but not carved. It is 16 in. long, and has an iron blade projecting

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	<p>1$\frac{5}{8}$ inches from the club. It also has a wrapping around the handle, with a loop, and two long strings hanging from the opposite side.</p> <p>The specimens of Guiana warclubs in the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, were procured in London and were unquestionably collected many years ago. It is doubtful if at present any weapons of this type are to be found in British Guiana. The expedition of the University of Pennsylvania Museum under the direction of Dr W. C. Farabee, during the long time spent in the country collected no specimens of this type. The writer has seen several other examples of this class in European museums, but they must be considered as among the rarest ethnological objects from South America.</p> <p>It is interesting to compare the style of mounting of these British Guiana warclubs with those from the West Indies. In the writer's study of Monolithic Axes and their Distribution in Ancient America⁵ will be found an illustration of the</p>
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only known example, from the Antillean area, of a petaloid celt still in the original wooden handle. A number of monolithic stone axes are figured, and, as in the celt in the wooden handle, all show the poll of the blade protruding through the handle, which is rounded; whereas the handles of the British Guiana examples are squared, and the celts are imbedded in the handles, and probably do not extend more than half the distance through the wood. The socket into which the stone blade of the club shown in pl. I is fixed, is squared, and the celt seems to be held firmly in place by a coarse gum. The specimen illustrated in pl. II is sunk into the wood by a socket cut to the shape of the stone blade, and fits closely. Both blades, however, fit so tightly that they cannot be removed without injury to the specimens.

In our study cited above⁶ we figure two monolithic axes from the province of Santa Marta, Colombia, in which the poll-end of the blades are represented as embedded in the handle, and not passing

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through. These blades, however, are not of the petaloid type, and the same is true of the stone axes embedded in wooden handles from the Guaiqui Indians of Brazil, which have been illustrated by von Ihering.⁷

NOTES

1. im Thurn, E. F., *Among the Indians of Guiana. Being sketches chiefly anthropologic from the interior of British Guiana*, pp. 298-300, 425-426, London, 1883.
2. Bernau, J. H., *Missionary Labours in British Guiana*, London, 1847.
3. Stedman, J. G., *Narrative of a Five Years Expedition Against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam in Guiana, on the Wild Coast of South America*, vol. i, chap. xv, pp. 396-397, London, 1796.
4. Barrere, Pierre, *Nouvelle Relation de la France, Equinoxale*, Paris, 1743.
5. Saville, Marshall H., *Monolithic axes and their distribution in ancient America*, *Contributions from the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation*, vol. II, no. 6, pl. II, 4, New York, 1916.
6. *Ibid.*, pl. v, nos. 1, 2.
7. von Ihering, Hermann, *Os machados de pedras dos Indios do Brasil e o seu emprego das derrubadas de Mato*, *Separado da Rev. do Inst. Hist. de S. Paulo*, vol. XII, 1907, fig. 2-3.



WARCLUB WITH IRON BLADE

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