

## THROWING-STICKS FROM MEXICO AND CALIFORNIA.

BY

OTIS T. MASON.

In the report of the National Museum for 1884 I published a short paper on the Eskimo "throwing-sticks" in the Department of Ethnology. The object of the article was to show how the methods and problems of natural history are applicable to the products and apparatus of human industry. Here we had a homogeneous people in blood and language, occupying a zoölogical area which we call hyperborean, and stretching out to cover Labrador, Greenland, all Arctic Canada, and the shores of Alaska, from the Mackenzie district all around to Mount St. Elias. It was with genuine pleasure that the author afterwards received from Dr. Seler, Mr. Murdoch, Dr. Stolpe, Dr. Uhle, Mr. Bahmson, Mrs. Nuttall, and Dr. Mortillet their own later contributions upon the same ingenious implement, with the acknowledgments that their publication was stimulated by the "Eskimo paper."\*

In Science, for October 30, 1891, I gave a brief description, without figures, of an example secured for me on Lake Patzenaro, Mexico, by Capt. John G. Bourke, U. S. Army. The apparatus was bought by this gentleman from a hunter, and may now be seen in the U. S. National

---

\* *Altmexikanische Wurfbretter*, von Dr. Ed. Seler, *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, Bd. III, 1890; The history of the throwing-stick, which drifted from Alaska to Greenland, by John Murdoch, *Am. Anthropologist*, July, 1890; *Ueber altmexikanische und südamerikanische Wurfbretter*, von Dr. Hjalmar Stolpe, in Stockholm, *Internat. Archiv f. Ethnog.*, Bd. III, 1890; *Ueber die Wurfhölzer der Indianer Amerikas*, von Dr. Max Uhle, *Mittheil. der Anthropol. Gesellsch. in Wien*, Bd. XVII, n. F., VII, 1887; *Ueber südamerikanische Wurfhölzer im Kopenhagener Museum*, von Kristian Bahmson, *Internat. Archiv f. Ethnog.*, II, 1889; Mrs. Zelia Nuttall, in a paper read before the Woman's Anthropological Society in Washington, entitled "The Atlatl or Spear-Thrower of the Ancient Mexicans, *Arch. and Ethnol. Papers of the Peabody Museum*, I, No. 3; *Les propulseurs à crochet modernes et préhistoriques*, par Adrien de Mortillet, *Rev. Mensuelle de l'École d'Anthropologie de Paris*, I, 15 août 1891.

Museum. The thrower is 2 feet 3 inches long, and has two finger-

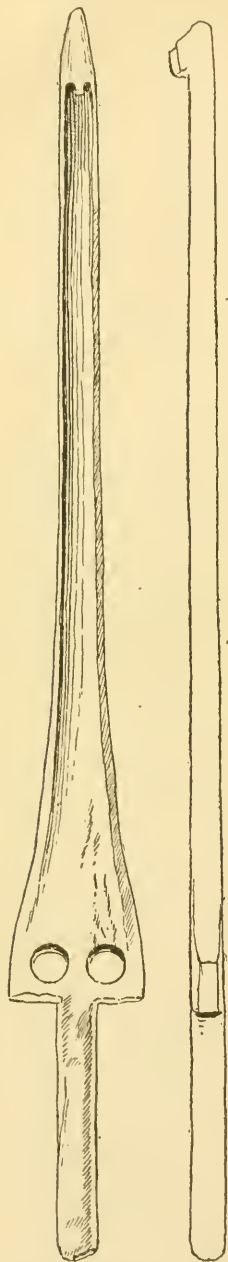


FIG. 1 a, b. Patzenaro throwing stick. U. S. Nat. Mus., Cat. No. 153020. (Capt. J. G. Bourke, U. S. A.)

holes projecting, one from the right and one from the left side. In my paper on the Eskimo stick no case of two finger-holes occurs, and the only example in which a finger hole projects from the side at all is from Point Barrow. Since the publication, however, another specimen comes from Cook Inlet. In Dr. Stolpe's paper is the exact counterpart of the Bourke specimen, only the latter has no ornament and is a practical every-day implement for killing ducks. The spear-shaft is 10 feet long, of slender cane, and has a hole at the after end for the hook of the throwing stick. The gig consists of three iron barbs, for all the world like those on the Eskimo trident for water fowl.

Mr. Charles H. Read read a paper on the 10th of March, 1891, before the Anthropological Institute, London, being an account of a collection of ethnological specimens found during Vancouver's voyage in the Pacific Ocean. Among the illustrations (*J. Anthrop. Inst.*, Vol. XXI, PL. XI, Figs. 1, 1a) occurs the picture of an *atlath*, 5 $\frac{7}{8}$  inches in length, the shortest of which we have any record. The description given by Mr. Read is as follows:

"Spear-thrower of moderately hard, light colored wood, pierced with two holes for the first two fingers. The hook is made of a piece of bone, rudely shaped. The whole seems to have been once covered with red color, now almost worn away. From the bone hook to the projection at the broad end of the implement is a shallow channel, as is usually found.

This would seem to be the 'Santa Barbara throw-



FIG. 2. Patzenaro duck-spear. U. S. Nat. Mus., Cat. No. 153020. (Capt. J. G. Bourke, U. S. A.)

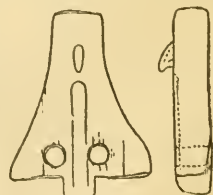


FIG. 3. Vancouver throwing stick. British Museum. (C. H. Read.) *J. Anthrop. Inst. Lond.* 1891, pl. XI.

ing-stick' of the MS. catalogue, both from its similarity in work to the

other Santa Barbara specimens, and from the fact that the other throwing-sticks in the collection correspond with their respective numbers in the catalogue."

Accompanying this specimen in the same plate is a harpoon bearing the following description (Fig. 2, Pl. XL): "Spear with loose head."

Now this Vancouver specimen is identical in every point with the one from Lake Patzenaro excepting its length, and points at this moment to the most northern limit of the type, with fingerholes on either side. Anyone familiar with the apparatus will see at once that it will fit either the right or the left hand, while the northern type will fit only one hand, usually the right.

In Pl. XVII of my former paper two very interesting old specimens are described from the

Tlingit or Kolos-

FIG. 4. Vancouver retrieving spear. British Museum. (C. H. Read.)



FIG. 5. Tlingit throwing stick. British Museum. (C. H. Read.)

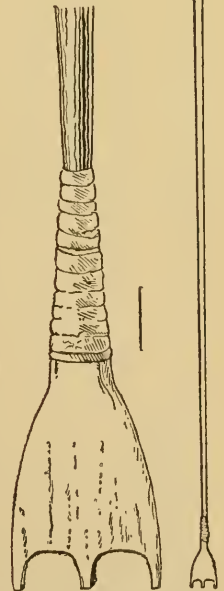


FIG. 6. Bird and fish harpoon staff, Makah Indians, Washington State. U. S. Nat. Mus., Cat. No. 72752. (J. S. Swan.)

chan area about Sitka. One of these is figured in Ensign Niblack's monograph (Smithsonian Report, Part II, 1888, Pl. XXVII, Fig. 157). These specimens are very old, are covered with totemic devices, and represent a decayed art passed into its mythic stage. Similar apparatus is shown in Mr. Read's paper (Pl. XL, Figs. 3 a, b, c, d, e).

In this connection attention is drawn to a device for throwing a bird or fish spear found along the west coast of the United States, which slightly recalls Mr. Read's specimen. It consists of a flat piece of wood with notches for two fingers, and it is attached to the end of a long spear shaft. Historically this is not known to be either parent or descendant of the Vancouver example, but being found half way between Monterey Bay and the Tlingit area it raises one of those inquiries which stimulate further research.