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Notes on Red Feather Money from Santa Cruz Group New Hebrides

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## NOTES ON RED FEATHER MONEY FROM SANTA CRUZ GROUP.

## NEW HEBRIDES.

(Read before the Congress International des Sciences Anthropologiques et Ethnologiques,  
August, 1934.

By H. G. BEASLEY in collaboration with F. L. JONES.

SANTA CRUZ has a population of some 1,200 inhabitants, while Vanicoro, the seat of Government, has to-day about 60 resident natives. The island, however, is of some importance since it is the port of entry for the whole group, and all vessels must obtain their clearance papers from this port. In recent years much of the land is leased by a timber firm which recruits temporary labour from the adjacent islands, including the Solomons, for the purpose of cutting the Kauri wood. Actually the natives are not very willing workers as usually they can make enough to pay the annual twenty shilling head tax by diving for Trocus shell. The presence of this Company will ultimately tend to Europeanise the whole group.

Having had access to the fourteen articles previously printed, and having read and compared them carefully, I feel that the subject is badly in need of revision. All perpetuate the mistake made by Codrington in 1891 as to the species of the bird which supplies the feathers, and one authority states that these coils were "war belts"; unwittingly he was half correct in describing them as belts—a point to which reference will be made later.

As far as can be ascertained there are not more than two dozen of these coils—of all sizes and stages of dilapidation—preserved in museums and private collections to-day. This small number of specimens is rather remarkable since these coils are still made by a number of bush natives, but one must remember that the Santa Cruz Group is but a small part of the New Hebrides, and was rarely in the past visited by people who were interested in making collections. The area covered by the use of these coils is, however, not confined to the Santa Cruz Group proper, but also extends to the Duff and Wilson Groups and the Reef Islands, and the native name varies correspondingly. To-day Santa Cruz Island is the sole source of this currency, although the birds were formerly caught in all the islands, and the feathers brought to Santa Cruz for barter.

Codrington, as far back as 1891, is the first to comment upon this peculiar currency, but his identification of the bird as the parakeet, *Trichoglossus Massena*, is incorrect, and unfortunately has been copied by all subsequent writers. Recently, however, Mr.

Jones was able to send me a parcel of the skins which have been definitely identified by the authorities at the South Kensington Museum as *Myzomela cardinalis*, a honey eater. (Plate XXIII, No. 2).

The first red feather money or “tau” is said to have been made by a man named Metali; it differed from that made to-day in that the plates were coarser and less feathers were used. According to legend he was as a lad working in the garden when he observed one of the birds stuck to a branch, which was doubtless that of the paper mulberry, from which the sap, through some injury, had flowed and caught the bird in the same way as is done artificially to-day.

Apart from the fact that he became a stone axe maker, all history of Metali is lost, and no information is available as to the period when the old type of shell money gave way to the red feather money. It is remembered, however, that the earlier form of feather money was not so elaborate, that the red plumage was not so extensively used, and the finish not so perfect. Since however the memory of a native is short, the absence of historical data may not imply any considerable lapse of time: a native will only say that it goes back a very long time. According to tradition shell money was used formerly, and, since examples of this are made still, it would seem that the two were in circulation at the same time. It is, however, probable that this shell currency was found to be of too small value for large transactions such as the purchase of canoes, or women, or the payment of fornication fines. While shell money is almost indestructible and only needs re-stringing from time to time, feather money is of a much more perishable nature, and the life of a coil would be restricted in a tropical climate, although alleged by natives to last over 150 years. In spite of the statements of former writers that the old worn pieces, destitute of all feathers, were the most highly prized, enquiries on the spot prove that, as the coil became dilapidated and the feathers worn away, so in proportion did the value decrease. Actually I have never seen a coil of the highest value in such a state of dilapidation, while on the other hand I do not recall seeing one of the small coils in any condition but that resembling an old worn leather strap.

It is recorded that the small coils were used as ornaments, and on occasions were placed on graves, while at the communal dances it was customary for the visitors to deposit coils of “tau” with the host as a guarantee that the hospitality would be returned, and the guests were careful to return these coils to the inviting village. Funeral ceremonies in the Reef Group were at one time accompanied by a tearing up and scattering of the feathers of a coil of “tau” on the part of a near relative of the deceased; the remains were, however, later picked up and used to decorate the dance sticks. To-day such an occurrence would not take place owing to the scarcity of material and the consequent rise in value.

In structure each unit of feather money is composed of a long belt formed of fibre rolled over two strong cords and two weaker middle cords as a base. This belt throughout its whole length is composed of tile shaped overlapping scales of dove feathers, and these

scales have again attached to their upper surfaces delicate red feathers, while on the underside of an example in Berlin, and on another unfinished piece in the Cranmore Ethnographical Museum, is to be seen an interlaced pattern of black raffia (Fig. 1). The ends are bound with pieces of palm leaf and braided cord work running to a point which terminates in bunches of fibre, and two cords which are themselves fastened to the spirals of bark on which the coil is wound. Attached to the coil are pigs' teeth and certain stones which have a religious signification, and are said to be worth more than the money itself. Most of the coils seen by European travellers were so old that the feather trimming had become dark or invisible, and the pieces resembled old leather belts.



FIG. 1.—PATTERN ON  
THE BACK OF "TAU."

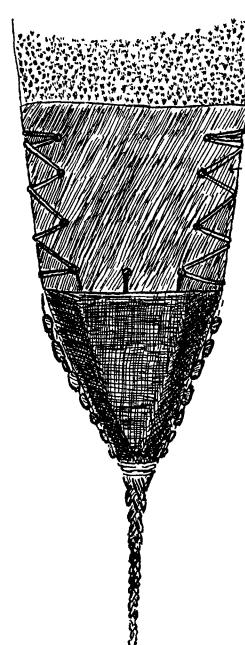


FIG. 2.—SANTA CRUZ.  
DETAILS OF THE FINISH OF THE ENDS OF "TAU."

According to Codrington it is said that smaller pieces were in use for daily needs, replacing the former shell money as the price of a bride. The reader would gather from this that small lengths were cut from the coil, which is obviously impossible, since each coil is a separate unit and properly finished off at the ends, and is most certainly not an endless ribbon from which pieces can be cut off at the owner's fancy. Speiser in his great work on the New Hebrides has a very interesting note that opens the way to some consideration of the origin of these feather coils; he mentions that in earlier times, before the introduction of feather currency, a form of shell money was in vogue, and this is further substantiated by Graebner. Speiser's final remarks that this feather money forms an example of the transition from human body decoration to actual money are most interesting and quite justified by my own findings, which are based not on local research but on comparative investigation.

If a coil of this currency is unrolled it will be found to be about 30 feet (10 metres) long and wound in a double spiral, so that both ends are towards the interior of the coil and are therefore not visible in the ordinary way. An examination of the ends shows that they have been treated alike, in that the feathers cease and the end beyond tapers gently to a point from which extends a cord of fibre; also that these ends are somewhat elaborately finished, being overlaid with thin plates of turtle shell with in some cases a few cowrie shells fixed to the upper surface, while at the extreme end of each cord is a circular drum<sup>1</sup> of bark rolled on itself. Now it is very obvious that this elaboration of detail, representing an unnecessary amount of work, which is not seen unless unrolled, is carried out for some particular purpose, and to those of us who have comparative series of specimens it is not difficult to select from a number of Melanesian bead belts a series of types which clearly correspond in the method of finishing to the ends of these coils. Fig. 2 illustrates the actual end finish of one of these currency belts, together with comparative examples from such localities as the Carolines (Fig. 3), Ontong Java (Fig. 4), and an old time belt of shell money from Santa Cruz (Fig. 2), and in each case it will be noticed that the treatment is the same.

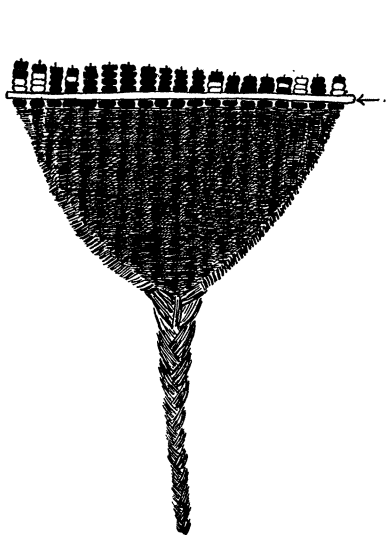


FIG. 3.—CAROLINE GROUP. *Ruk*.  
END OF A BODY BELT.

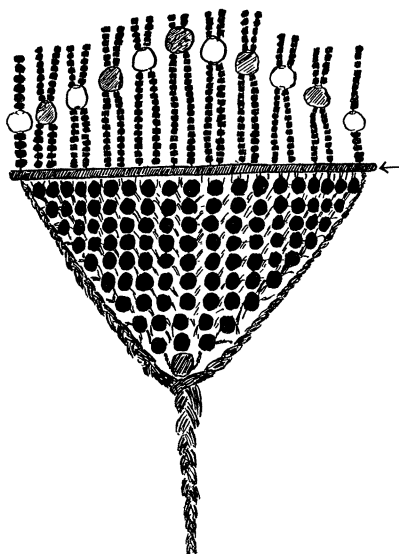


FIG. 4.—ONTONG JAVA.  
END OF A BODY BELT MADE OF RED TRADE BEADS.

From the foregoing and the fact that body belts are well known in Melanesia and parts of Micronesia, it may be deduced that “tau” originated not as currency but as a belt for personal adornment, and that, in order to raise its ultimate purchasing value, the length, and possibly the breadth, were increased, retaining always the original idea that it was intended to serve as an ornament. Bearing in mind the presence of the bark

<sup>1</sup> Native names : *Nonea*, *Bonu*.

bands in the interior of the currency coils, but attached at some distance from the ends, it is possible to make still further deduction as to the "belt origin" and to suggest that the bands themselves are a survival of the old bark belts, and that formerly the red feathers were used to embellish the belt, but later were for convenience of manufacture incorporated in the separate band. The belt was increased in size to enhance the prestige of the wearer, and finally, being accepted as a medium for exchange, was developed into the type of coil shown in Plate XXII.

Among what might be called the bye-paths of ethnology in the Pacific, occurs in numerous cases the appreciation in the native mind of the colour red. This is particularly strong in Polynesia, less so in Melanesia, and diminishes still more, although still present, in Micronesia, while outside this area its occurrence extends through Asia to Egypt. In Polynesia the colour of the gods was red, and consequently, the colour of the chiefs, who were the embodiment of the gods, was also red. Nature, however, is not over-fruitful in producing this colour, although in some localities it occurs in the soil as oxide of iron. The feathers of birds and the leaves of trees were, therefore, almost the only sources of supply. In Melanesia, Croton bushes are invariably planted round graves, whilst the favourite colour for decorating "in Memoriam" crania is also red. Bearing in mind the wide appreciation of this colour, it becomes apparent that some part at least of the esteem placed on these currency coils arises from some latent mental complex originally due to the appreciation of "red" as an attribute of the gods, rather than from a supposed commercial value.

Jennings, writing in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. xxviii, 1898, gives a general account of this currency. He is quite correct in his statements, but they do not carry us much further. It is evident that he has had access to several specimens, and his general description is good. He mentions that the wrapped bundles are invariably kept in a woven bag, but none of these outer coverings has come to light, and he probably meant the ordinary fibre strips commonly used. He comments on the high esteem placed on them by the natives, and the fact that they are rarely seen. He says:—"When being displayed by the fortunate possessor, they are loosely wound round a bamboo supported horizontally on two posts, and rarely is anyone but the owner permitted to handle them. (Plate XXIII, No. 4, Plate XXIV, No. 1). The coils are usually kept with other valuables of a perishable nature upon a platform over a fire, the smoke and heat affording a protection against damp and insects." The Rev. W. O. Ferrall, of the London Missionary Society, states that this money is often kept in a special house situated away in the bush.

Rivers, in his "History of Melanesian Society" (vol. ii, page 386), has a short note on feather currency. He offers nothing which is not already recorded, and perpetuates error in describing the feathers as coming from *Trichoglossus Massena*. Rivers also states (page 387) that there is evidence that the use of feather money is due to the absence of material for making shell money, which is directly against all recent findings. No



references are given, so the statement is valueless, particularly since white shell money is still made on Santa Cruz side by side with "tau."

That this currency is of no modern introduction is proved by the considerable range of values ; there being no less than eleven variations in the monetary scale.

- I. *Nopamur*. (Red). No longer produced, since on account of its high exchange value it would be unwieldy. The width of the plate (*lendu*) would slightly exceed  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches, and only the most brilliant feathers would be used. *Nopamur* would contain some three thousand plates, representing the yield of red feathers from a thousand birds. Some idea, therefore, of the barter value of this highest denomination may be ascertained by the current values of to-day. For instance, in former times a single coil of this currency would readily purchase an ocean-going canoe thirty to forty feet long, and capable of carrying a ton of cargo. To-day a similar canoe would be paid for by four coils of the second class, so we have evidence that the first class was four times as valuable as the second. My informant states that he has only on one occasion seen a specimen of such high value, its peculiarities consisting of its size, that is, in the breadth of the plates, and also in that the red feathers are continued round the sides of each plate as well as the top. The length of such a coil would be not less than 36 feet.
- II. *Mar-Li* (Red) is manufactured at the present time. The width of the plates is two and a half inches, and the number would average about 1800.
- III. *Mar-Tu* (Red) is also manufactured at the present time. The width is less than No. 2, and by general agreement is gauged by the second joint of the first finger. The number of plates would average 1,100.
- IV. *Mar-We*. Red.
- V. *Mar-Alune*. Red.
- VI. *Mar-Ejame*. Red and Black.
- VII. *Mar-Elime*. Red and Black.
- VIII. *Mar-Etume*. Red and Black.
- IX. *Mar-Epueme*. Red and Black.
- X. *Mar-Naplu*. Red and Black.
- XI. *Puckay*. Black and a few red feathers. No examples are known to-day.

(The numbers IV—X were kindly contributed by Sidney H. Ray.)

Although there is no recognised number of plates in a coil, the second and third qualities would absorb the yield of from 400 to 600 birds, and only these qualities are produced to-day. At the present time on Santa Cruz only ten natives have the knowledge and skill to produce these two kinds ; they belong to the bush people, and their total output

does not exceed twenty coils per year. New coils are usually made to order, and a native desiring one would purchase the red plumage and take it to a recognised maker of the plates, “*Nap-La Bona*,” and attach the first row of red feathers “*Nunalier*”. In this state the plates are passed to a second worker who completes them by attaching a second line of red feathers, “*Nau-A-Da*”, taken from the crest of the bird. Payment is at the rate of 4s. per hundred plates to the first maker, plus 50 per cent. to the finisher, which sounds very modern and commercialised, but is the actual rate paid by my correspondent, Mr. Jones, who is a dealer in “tau” and has the raw plumage made up for him. He remarks that the natives can usually obtain their “tau” on more advantageous terms than he, that from the commencement to the finish of the coils is over twelve months’ work, and that the value of a second class coil is not less than £12.

The bird, *Myzomela cardinalis* (Plate XXIII, No. 2), is called by the natives on Vanicoro “*Mungau*”, on Santa Cruz “*Nuopla*”, and on the Reef Islands “*Mangoa*”, while two rarer varieties are known as “*Naviapu*” and “*Neluanuli*”, the former having rather better quality red feathers, and the latter a few white feathers intermixed. The size is that of a sparrow, and the plumage is black and glossy, the red feathers occurring only on the head and breast of the males and to a very small extent on the females.

The actual capture is carried out by hunters who, having fasted, make their way into the deep bush where the birds are to be found. Here they set up a number of perch traps “*Notarku*” (Plate XXIII, No. 1), which consist of an upright of bamboo up to six feet long (D), to which is bound a small branch (C). At the apex of this branch a few leaves may remain, but the base is bare and coated with a sticky substance, “*Bee*”,<sup>1</sup> which is carried in the shell of a bivalve (*Battissa*) wrapped in a banana leaf (Plate XXIII, No. 3). On the top of the bamboo is set a live male bird secured by a string running down the inside of the bamboo upright. The whole contrivance is neatly made and provided with a wooden hook, “*Ning-Ninblu*”, so that it can be easily hung from the branch of a tree, while the hunter buries himself in leaves. Other birds are soon attracted by the whistling and fluttering of the decoy, and after a preliminary flight often alight on the gummed perch and are caught. Sometimes a dummy decoy is used and the whistling imitated by the hunter; alternatively, the bird, which is a heavy sleeper, may be simply picked from its roost, but this is not common. The fortunate hunter may thus capture twenty birds a day, although ten and even five is more common, and with his bag he will return to the village, where the birds are killed and plucked as soon as possible: they are not usually liberated for a second crop as it is said that they would be too shy to be caught again, and that this would lead to shyness in younger birds.<sup>2</sup>

The natives who capture these birds are not concerned with the manufacture of “tau”, since the loose feathers are themselves an article of trade. For this purpose the

<sup>1</sup> Obtained from the prop roots of a tree called “*Nombaloli*”.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. W. O. Ferrall, of the London Missionary Society, cites an instance of a man coming into the village with the live birds attached to his belt and liberating them after plucking.



pluckings from fifteen to twenty birds are placed in a half coconut shell wrapped in a piece of pandanus or other watertight leaf; on occasions the coconut shell may be replaced by leaves, and these parcels of loose feathers may be then bartered for food, etc., to anyone who proposes to possess a coil of "tau". It is only when this individual has accumulated sufficient stock that he proceeds to have the feathers made up into plates of the desired width, and takes them to the money maker. The art of manufacture is usually a family matter, and descends from father to son, while others desiring this knowledge pay a fee for instruction amounting to a coil of the third or fourth grade, or in native barter eighty to one hundred baskets of coconuts of 41 lbs. each, or twenty to twenty-five rolls of turmeric. Individuals possessing this knowledge receive a certain amount of respect, and, in addition, command esteem in general matters of the community, but there is an entire absence of any religious association. The maker is invariably a bush man, as distinct from a coast dweller, and one can appreciate that, following what has occurred on many of the Western Pacific Islands, he represents an earlier stock than the present coast people, and one which has been driven inland by the inroads of later arrivals. Of the 1500 natives on Santa Cruz only ten were in 1932 conversant with this art, which will doubtless, as European influence increases, gradually die out. The necessary agreements having been reached as between the client and the maker of the plates, and the parcel of feathers having been handed over, the red feathers are sorted out, doubtless with extreme difficulty and considerable loss, since even in a closed room it is impossible to transfer these tiny plumes from one box to another without numbers floating away in the air. In conjunction with the red feathers there is also necessary a quantity of small brown parrot feathers which, stuck<sup>1</sup> together by their edges, form the plate or *lendu*, to which the red ones are stuck down with a vegetable paste called "*Nagali*", obtained from the tree called "*Nolepa*".

Since the eleven grades of this currency depend for their value not only on the freedom from the less valuable black feathers but also on the actual width of the plate, it is obvious that we here have a very highly-developed and specialised currency of great antiquity and probably originating in Santa Cruz. Now, since the width of the plate influences the value, it is necessary that a standard gauge should be recognised, and for this purpose a series of wooden objects of varying widths have been standardised under the name of "*Nopi*" (Fig. 6A), the flat surface on the side being used both as a gauge and a support in forming and pasting down the over-lapping pigeon feather plates, the feathers being handled with spatulae of wood or turtle shell, *Notare*. (Fig. 6, B. & C.) In the manufacture of these plates, as a distinct phase of preliminary construction, and not by any means the work of the official money maker, a separate fee is paid and, in some cases, it is the custom to incorporate with the red feathers a small white patch for every hundred plates, thus forming a record for final computation. Personally, I have never seen an example of this.

<sup>1</sup> The paste used for this purpose consists of fresh latex from the paper mulberry used in making tapa.

The actual apparatus used in manufacture is depicted in (Fig. 7), and on considering the layout one cannot help being struck by its similarity to a native loom. It consists in the main of two parallel cords,  $\frac{1}{8}$  in. thick, called "*Togasoli*", obtained from a tree called "*Nosoli*", and these are stretched between a stick four feet high firmly placed in the ground and a round post—usually a tree. The two parallel cords, on being pulled taut, are kept apart by a piece of bone having slits at each end, obtained from the wing of a bat, and it is these bone stretchers which act as gauges and determine the width of the finished "*tau*" and consequently its grade and value. It is curious

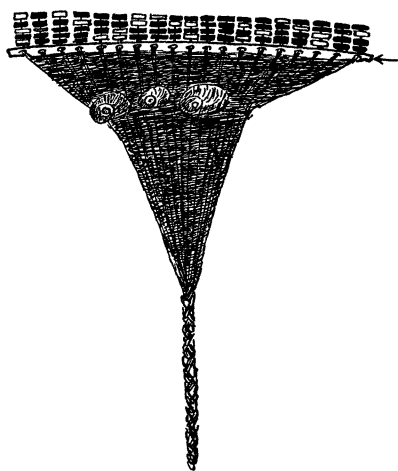


FIG. 5.—SANTA CRUZ.  
END OF A BODY BELT.

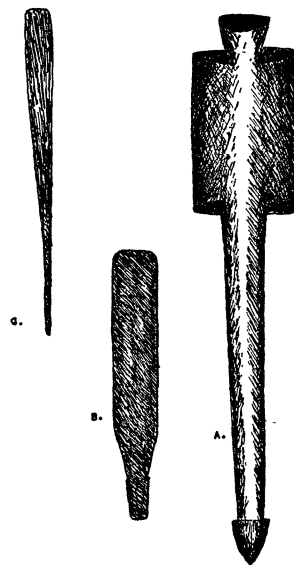


FIG. 6.—IMPLEMENTS USED IN THE MANUFACTURE:—  
A.—WOODEN GAUGE. "*Nopi*."  
B. & C.—SPATULÆ. "*Notare*."

to note that the operator commences midway along the parallel cords working towards one end, and when some six feet have been completed the money is detached from the two posts, and a fresh start is made towards the other end. In the process of attaching the plates the first one is placed against the bone stretcher between the two cords, and bound, first perpendicularly and then diagonally, with several lines of fine twine. The bone stretcher is then moved up slightly and a second plate introduced between it and the plate already fixed. The stretcher therefore acts somewhat in the manner of a weaver's sword, and this strengthens my feeling that the process may have been influenced by a knowledge of the loom, which is very well understood in this group. As the work proceeds and the "*tau*" gets longer, it is wound round the tree stump, and finally, to provide a solid base on which to wind the finished coils, neatly made bark rings, "*Nonea*", are provided and fixed to the ends by a short length of plaited fibre, and small plates of turtle shell are sewn on the end of the "*tau*" itself. Now, since these coils are only unwound at the times of sale, the occurrence of these end plates in conjunction with the bark

rings attached by fibre cords convinces me that in their early development they were intended to be worn as body belts ; ornaments and currency are invariably linked together and the transition is probable. To complete the coil, tassels of strung seeds and small shells are attached at intervals along the inner edge, so that when wound up they fall within the bark ring. These tassels end with pendants of teeth, slips of pearl shell or bone, and occasionally small bunches of human hair, all of which are luck charms.

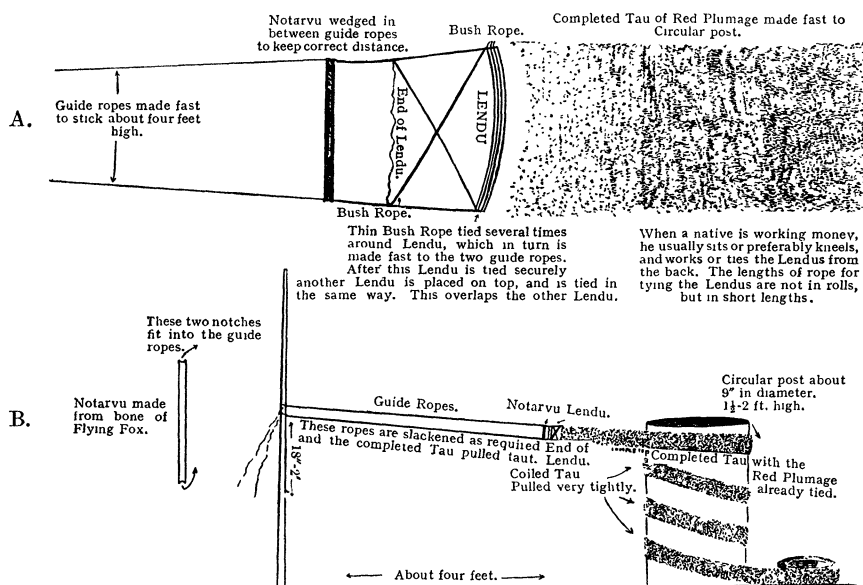


FIG. 7—"TAU."

A.—METHOD OF FIXING THE PLATES.

B.—GENERAL METHOD OF MANUFACTURE.

In a community where little or no privacy is possible, and a man's actions are known to all, it has been found that the space formed by the bark ring may act in some way as a primitive safe deposit for the owner's treasures, the more so since this "tau" seems to be the sole property of the men. A notable feature of the Santa Cruz Group is the custom of keeping tallies for a variety of purposes ; tallies recording the number of sharks and turtles caught ; tallies recording favourable transactions in feather money ; and lastly, fornication tallies, whereby some individuals preserve records of their successes with the opposite sex. The general make-up of these tallies, apart from notches, takes the form of knotted cords, each adventure being indicated by a single knot, or by a shell where there has been success with a chief's wife or the evasion of a prostitute's fee.

The annual output of the few remaining makers of feather money may be estimated at barely twenty coils a year, in which time one skilled worker would make five coils, provided that the feathers were plentiful and the demand good, but of late years the birds have not been much sought after since the local labour is more profitably employed in other directions. The loose feathers in the packets were formerly an important barter

medium, being exchanged by the people of small adjacent islands for such produce as mats, turmeric, bows, arrows, food, etc., and on occasions a coil which has been injured in any way may be pulled to pieces and the plates incorporated in a new coil. The owner however takes particular care of these coils, covering them with many superimposed strips of native cloth 3 in. to 6 in. wide and of sufficient length for the ends to overlap, but not to project beyond the sides. The strips themselves may consist of red trade calico, or any imported cotton fabric incorporated with the bark cloth, while specimens of fish net and an old shirt have been found. The outer covering in coils made for native use is invariably of bark cloth obtained from a tree called "*Nosoli*", of which one strip at least in each layer is provided with a length of cord serving to bind the whole together.



FIG. 8.—*Stretchers* OF BAT'S  
BONE "*Notarvu*."

Under tropical conditions material of such friable and delicate nature would not long stand the ravage of insects and the demands of the climate, but this has to some extent been overcome, and all old specimens clearly show that they have been hung in the smoke of the house, which acts as an excellent preservative. The natives attribute considerable age to these coils which, in spite of the necessarily fragile materials, seems to be justified, although 150 years is probably an exaggeration. It must be recalled that, except for the purpose of sale, they remain rolled up in many layers of coverings, but in two instances where the wrappers were passably sound the fibre cords were quite perished. Every native is not necessarily a judge of the value of this currency, which is governed by numerous factors; the red colour must be intense, and free from rubbed patches, and the actual weight must be small, since a heavy coil indicates dampness and consequent loss of elasticity. Of present-day values it is difficult to speak; the barter value of the only two grades made to-day—"Mar-Li" and "Mar-Tu"—in mint state, would be not less than twelve pounds in English currency. However, its not being in regular use makes comparison difficult, and much depends upon the eagerness between buyer and seller.

The principal functions of this remarkable currency are restricted on account of its great value, which eliminates all but transactions of the highest importance, such as the purchase of large ocean-going canoes, bride price, and fines for fornication. The first has probably almost ceased, but the second, since wives are valued possessions, continues, as well as the last. On Vanikoro a good wife was worth as much as a small canoe, that is, ten coils, possibly not all of first rate quality; whilst as one proceeds away among the outlying islands the price would drop to perhaps half. In the exchange of these coils, since each has no settled price, much delay is incurred, and a tremendous lot of haggling takes place; the least sign of wear is hotly discussed and depreciated by the prospective purchaser.

An order having been received by a maker and the details as to the quality of the “tau” required, and the remuneration to be paid, settled, gifts of foods are made at recurring intervals, together with a roll of somewhat worn money which is the actual fee paid for the manufacture. A skilful worker could complete two or three feet of a coil in a day’s work of twelve hours, a feat of energy that no native would undertake; in practice a coil would take up to twelve months to complete. When the coil is finished, a feast or further gifts of food are made to the maker; the value of these corresponds to a fifth or sixth quality coil. Strict honesty is observed by the money maker as to the full use of the customer’s plates (*lendu*), and on those learning the art certain rites and magic are performed by the teacher, such as rubbing the arms and hands of the pupil with leaves of particular trees.

The Rev. George West, of the Melanesian Mission, in charge of the Reef Group, writes as follows:—“This red feather money is used throughout the Group, and the whole life of the natives is wrapped up in it. It is used for the dowry in marriage, which consists usually of about ten coils piled one above the other; the lowest being the best quality, whilst those above towards the top of the pile are small worn coils of about the value of sixpence. It is also used for the purchase of food, canoes, pigs, and the payment of labour. Then there is the exchange of new coils of money which value from £10 to £15 right down to old and deteriorated ones to the value of 6d.: rolls are always being carried backwards and forwards, and to me this exchange is a gamble, but certainly much more interesting than our exchange, and unless a man is a good judge of their values, and also alert, he very soon gets taken in.”

“STRETCHERS” FOR FEATHER COILS. “*Nopo*.”

The last of the material objects connected with “tau” are those which for descriptive purposes I have termed “stretchers” (Plate XXV). I fear though that the use of the word is hardly correct, since its purpose is not as would be indicated; in fact the presence of these wooden objects, which vary considerably in shape, has not so far been accounted for. It is by no means invariable to find one of these stretchers wrapped in the bundle with the coils, but at the same time they can be obtained separately, which may suggest that they alone have survived the “tau” to which they formerly belonged, and in all cases of separate stretchers coming to my notice, age and wear is marked. These wooden objects are found loosely placed over the bark ring which forms the foundation of the “tau” when rolled up, and vary from a perfectly plain three-pronged stick, roughly squared on the under sides, to a nicely made flat piece of wood decorated on the top with a turtle or a shark in relief. The British Museum examples are unique in that they consist of a pair of flat boards decorated with tassels of seeds for use as charms, and have typical Santa Cruz painted motifs in black, white, and red. These stretchers also have been used as tallies to which reference has already been made, the method of recording being by notches, the meaning of which is understood only by the owner.



HEAD STICKS : *Ny-Ar-Po*.

In considering this feather currency in its widest aspect one naturally reviews the use of feather work in other localities. Actually there occur in these islands two articles of ornament which are decorated with these same feathers ; and these are the sole examples as far as my knowledge goes. The first consists of head sticks (Plates XXV, No. 2) which are worn in pairs, one on each side of the head, during dances, and by men only. Each head stick may be as long as 14 in., of which the feather part forms two-thirds, sometimes entirely red, at others with a band of black or a small tuft of white protruding from the top. The base on which the feathers are attached consists of a shaft of light pale wood, square or somewhat oval in section, but invariably ending in a point. When not in use, these sticks are kept in a rolled-up banana leaf. I regret that my information does not carry me further, but my correspondent writes me that the natives are very secretive and slow to disclose the inner history of many of their customs. Until quite recently these head sticks do not appear to have been represented in any museum.

The second use of red feathers occurs in connection with the dance sticks still in use. Again the Rev. George West is my authority, and his remarks refer only to the Reefs. From him I gather that, if a rich man dies and, during the exposure of the body prior to interment, the widow breaks up a coil of "tau" and throws the pieces about, members of the company present may pick up the fragments and use the red feathers to decorate their dance sticks, but no examples of these dance sticks have so far come to hand.

## EAR ORNAMENTS.

The illustration Plate XXIV, No. 3, shows a pair of ear ornaments, called, like the head sticks, *Ny-ar-po*. They are from Santa Cruz and consist of red feather work, with decorations of black and white feathers.

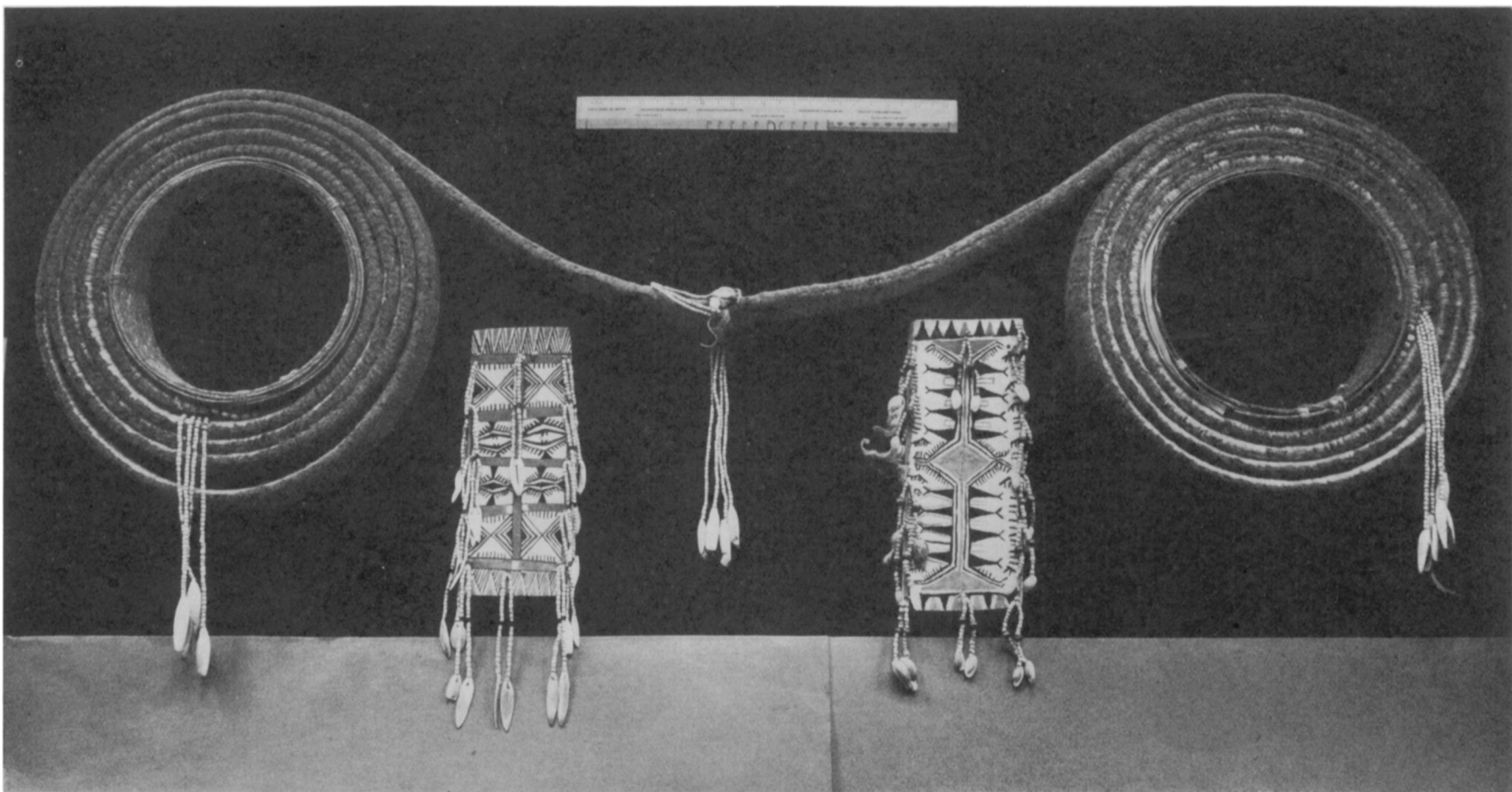
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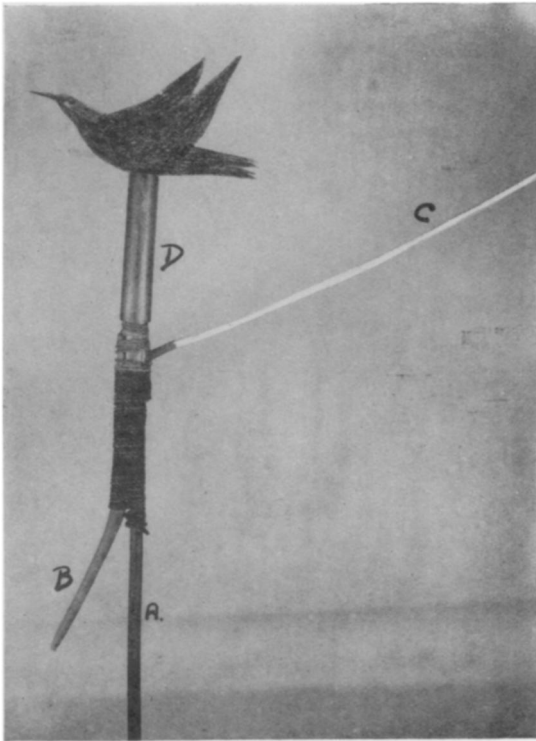
Since this paper was read in 1934 the following articles have come to my notice :—

- WAITE, E. R. "Records of South Australia Museum," vol. iii, No. 3, 1927.  
 HORNSHAW, B. L. *Mankind*. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Society, N.S.W., vol. 1, vi, 1932.  
 PYCROFT, A. T. *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, vol. 44, iii, 1935.

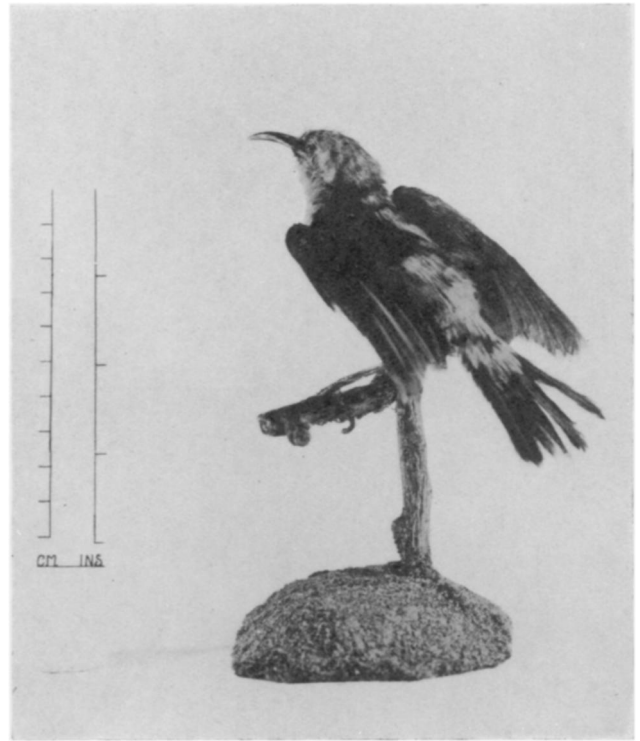




NO. 1.—COMPLETE COIL OF “TAU” (BRITISH MUSEUM) PARTLY UNWOUND, SHOWING THE INNER RINGS AND PENDANT CHARMS, ALSO THE STRETCHERS, TWO IN NUMBER, PAINTED WITH DESIGNS IN BLACK AND WHITE, ONE WITH A SHANK MOTIF.



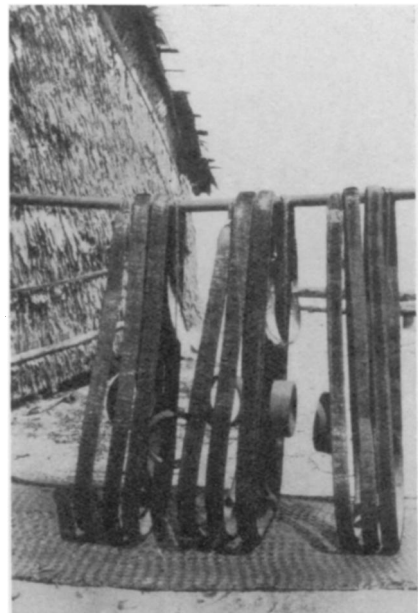
NO. 1. PERCH TRAP.



NO. 2.—THE MALE OF *Myzomela cardinalis*.



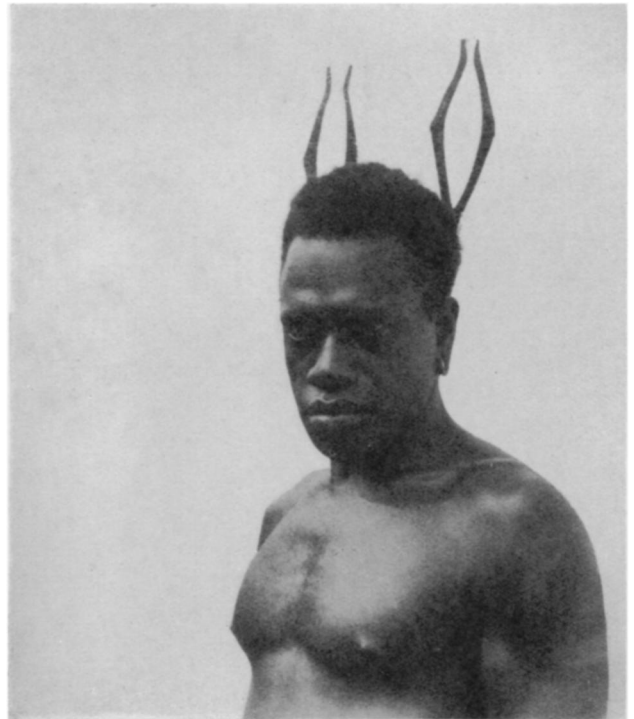
NO. 3.—BIVALVE, *Battissa*, AND BANANA LEAF WRAPPER CONTAINING "Bee."



NO. 4.—"TAU" FOR SALE :—THE TWO OUTER COILS ARE WORTH APPROXIMATELY THE CENTRE ONE. SANTA CRUZ. 1931.



NO. 1.—“TAU” DISPLAYED.

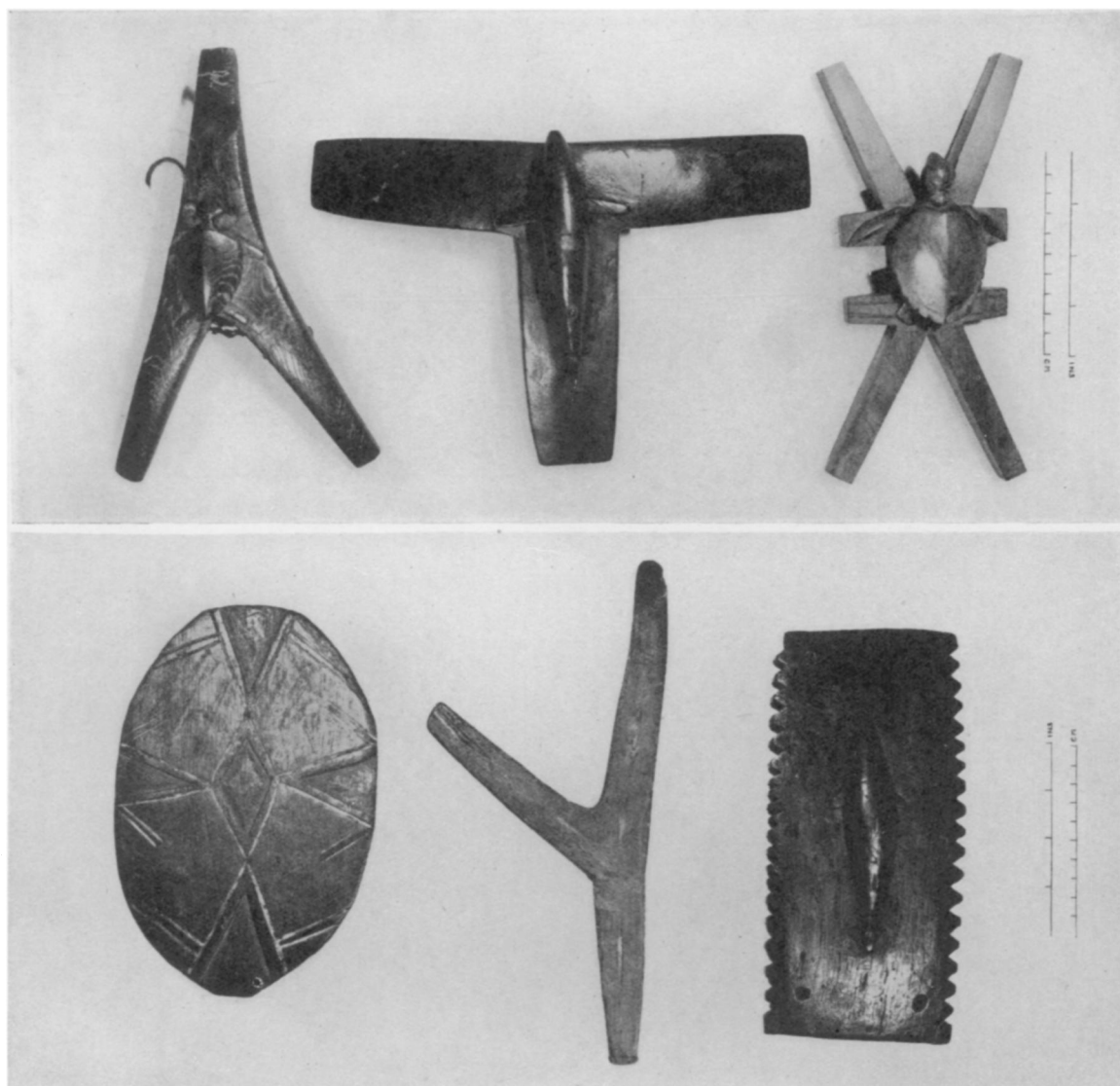


NO. 2.—MAN WEARING NYARPO.

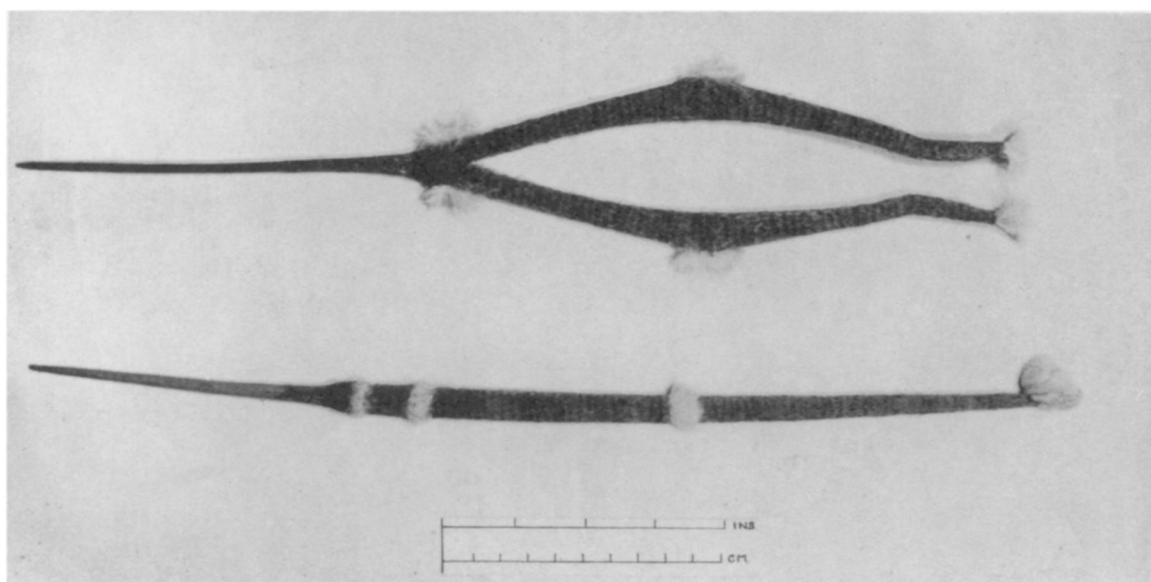


NO. 3.—SANTA CRUZ. EAR ORNAMENTS OF RED FEATHER WORK, WITH DECORATIONS OF BLACK AND WHITE FEATHERS. NATIVE NAME *Ny-Ar-Po*.





NO. 1.—STRETCHERS FOR THE COILS : *Nopo*, *Notarpu*, *Notarvu*.



NO. 2.—*Nyarpo*.