

ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES

BY ARTHUR E. ROBINSON.

A reputed British hammered natural copper spearhead

AT various places on the earth's surface natural copper (free from impurities) has been found until comparatively recently, when visible supplies became exhausted. As far as I am aware none of the weapons or implements found in Britain was made from native metal. It is possible, however, that native copper was found in Europe and China at an early period. There is reason to believe that in mediæval times natural copper was found in the Zambesi and Congo valleys where it was worked by natives who exhausted the supplies. Native copper weapons and implements were made by local tribes from metal found near the great American lakes when the first white men reached that region. Mr. Rickard has dealt with the manufacture of metals from the earliest times from the historical and scientific points of view. Those who desire more complete and technical information should consult his work, *Man and Metal*.

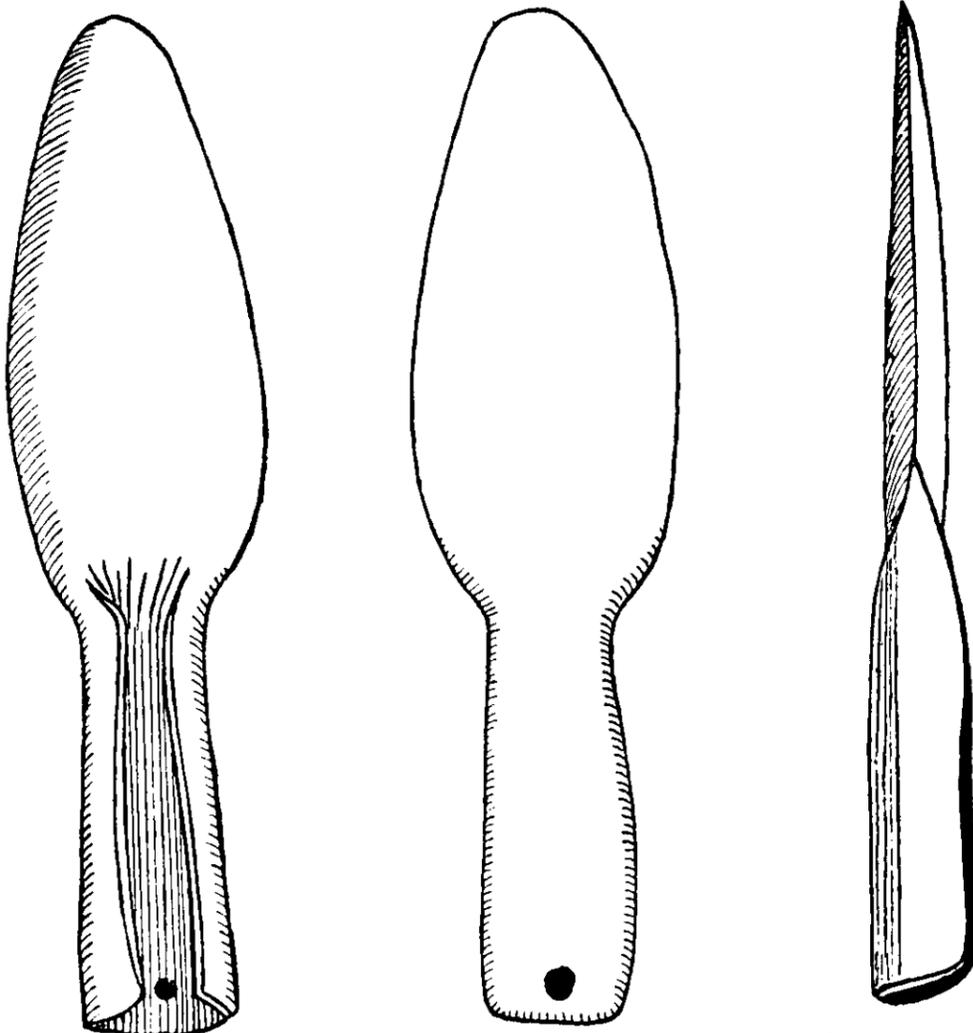
As the result of inquiries which I addressed to him, Dr. Sheppard, the Director of the Hull Museums, kindly sent me a copper spearhead which had been described to him as British, but which he considered foreign. It is of an unusual type and is figured in the accompanying sketches. It will be noticed that the socket for the shaft has been formed by hammering together the lower portion of a copper plate from which the spearhead was formed. These plates are hammered from nuggets or pieces of the copper nuggets. Tanged spearheads were easier to make and tanged spearheads and arrowheads are found in use in Africa to-day.

Mr. Adrian Digby of the British Museum informs me that the Hull spearhead was manufactured in America. It is identical with types made by North American Indians from the native copper found in the Lake Superior district. I understand that there is no similar specimen in the British Museum but there is one in the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford.

The temperature required for casting iron is so great

that natives in Africa adopt three distinct processes before they obtain iron suitable for forging. This iron is worked and tempered until it resembles steel. In the present writer's opinion the copper spearhead illustrated represents a transition stage from the stone and metal tanged spear to the socketed varieties. A tentative genesis in an abbreviated form is shown in the attached diagram. There was some difference in the methods of manufacturing iron and copper. Iron was heated and forged, and copper was hammered cold, unless cast.

I trust that all who are interested in the subject and may see this somewhat sketchy note will publish details of any hammered copper native implements which they may have seen in Africa or elsewhere as there are definite lacunæ in the transition from neolithic culture to that of iron in our present records of African culture.

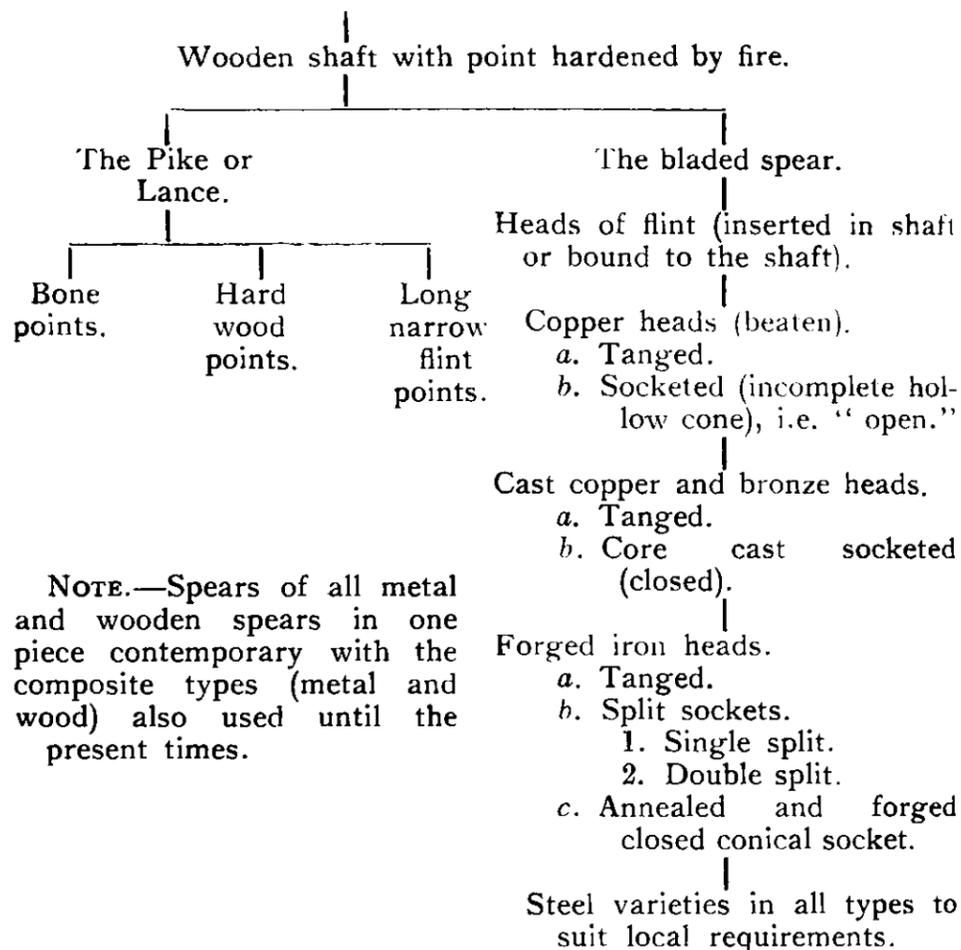


HAMMERED NATIVE COPPER OPEN SOCKET SPEAR-HEAD.

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THE GENESIS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPEAR.

Sapling, branch or thick reed.
(Invention of fire.)



NOTE.—Spears of all metal and wooden spears in one piece contemporary with the composite types (metal and wood) also used until the present times.

NOTE.—Illustrations of open socket (Hull type), closed socket and tanged choppers of forged iron with some spear-heads and an arrow point found at Verulamium in Roman strata will be found in Dr. and Mrs. Mortimer Wheeler's report (No. XI), recently published by the London Society of Antiquaries.

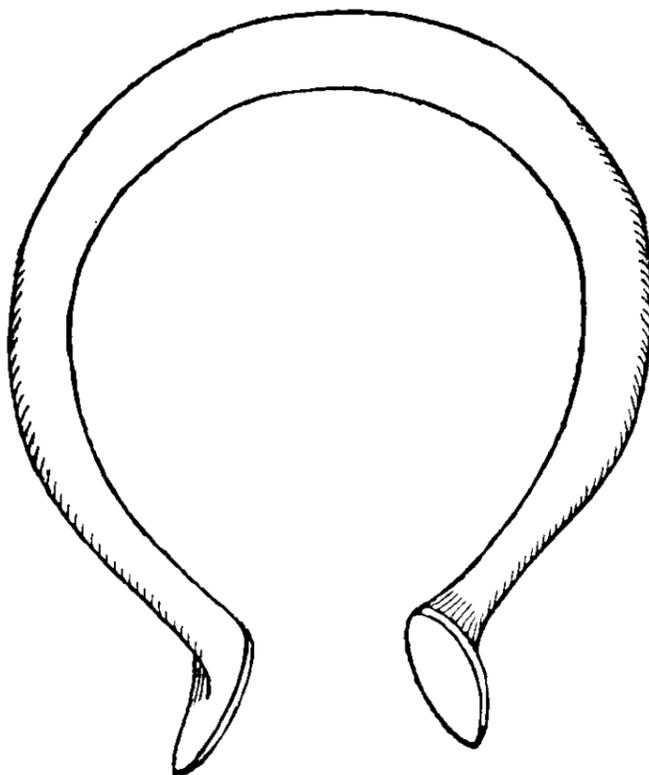
The tanged spear-head is the earliest form in metal. Iron spears with a tang and stop of an obsolete type were found in association with an open socket hoe in the caves near the deserted ancient copper mines at Dar-en-Nahas, Dar Fur, Sudan. They were illustrated by me in *Man* (December, 1933, page 203).

Antiquities or African Currency?

Most of my readers have seen specimens of the Celtic or Roman copper necklets (and anklets) which are sometimes described as torcs. The gold torc was worn only by chieftains, but the bronze torc

was adopted by the Romans as a sign of valour from the Celts and granted for meritorious action in Britain and elsewhere. Various designs have been found. A small kind found in Britain has been described as ring money. Those I saw at Llandudno were too small for anklets and were coupled in a group of three when excavated. They were uncoupled for cleaning however.

Until recently the staple exports from Europe to West Africa were gin, hammer flint muskets painted red, powder horns of medieval patterns, brass and iron rods, beads and cotton goods. All these articles were in use as currency as trade was by barter. About 1850 the trade in native products (through the suppression of



NOTE.—It is obvious that the flattened ends cause this anklet to be worn more comfortably than the ordinary bent piece of brass or iron rod. The ends of these frequently cause sores, and natives may be seen with rags tied around them or in rare cases they are suspended from the knee.

The similarity in pattern between the Celtic and the African manufactures is very remarkable, but I should not like to say that it is evidence of Roman or Celtic culture in Africa.

slavery) developed very much. The trade became very profitable and traders penetrated further inland. At that time certain tribes had a token currency consisting of hammered copper anklets which were manufactured from trade copper rods or copper smelted locally. An enterprising trader noticed these currency anklets and had some made in England which he imported as trade goods; in the same way Greeks and Indians imported modern replicas of Maria Theresa dollars into Abyssinia. My father went to the West Coast in 1870 and at that time some hundreds of these copper anklets had been imported from England. When I was a boy the traders had debased the copper with an adulteration of iron and zinc and these anklet tokens were cast in Birmingham. There are specimens of this native African currency in the British Museum.

A few years ago I was making inquiries regarding imitated Roman coins. An antique dealer asked me if I knew anything about British ring-money. I stated that I did not, but would like to see any specimens. Imagine my surprise when some bronze anklet currency rings were produced. The prospective seller to the dealer claimed that they were part of a hoard of a dozen or more. As the archæological history of the find was not conclusive I advised the dealer not to buy them except for a few pence.

I leave it to my readers to decide whether any more specimens which they may see for sale are "Brummagem jewelry" or "historical archæological treasures."