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Ancient stone implements in the Santāl Parganas.—By REV. P. O. BODDING,
[*Mohulpahari, Santāl Parganas.*]

[Received 14th March, 1900: Read 7th November, 1900.]

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[With four Plates.]

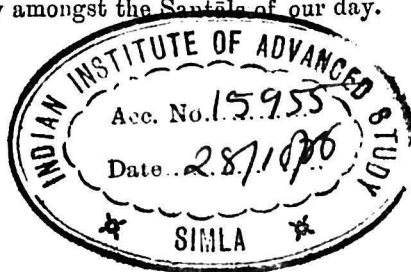
Ancient stone implements seem to be more common in India than was thought some years ago. They had not, so far as I remember, been noticed before 1865. Since that time they have been found in many places, and at one place, *viz.*, in Mirzapur, the remains of what was apparently a regular factory for them have been found (*vide* Mr. Cockburn's paper in the *Journal A.S.B.*, Vol. LXIII, Part III, No. 1, 1894).

By a mere chance I got to know some four years ago, that stone implements are found in the Santāl Parganas. Before that time I had heard the Santāls say that the destruction wrought by lightning was caused by means of stones hurled down, and that such stones had various forms, especially axe-shaped; but I did not give the matter any attention at the time. Afterwards I happened to stumble over it in this way. I had a stiff neck, and had called a Santāl to shampoo me; while he was doing this, I had a book by Captain Forbes on the languages, etc., of Burma, and in it found a short chapter on shoulder-headed celts with a picture of one. I showed the picture to the Santāl, simply asking him, "What is this?" He took a long look at it and at length said "It is a *ceter dhiri*" (i.e., *lit.* "a stroke-of-lightning stone," "a thunderbolt.") His answer roused my attention, and on reading about the belief common in Burma and elsewhere, that ancient stone implements are believed to be thunderbolts, it dawned upon me that there might after all be something in what the Santāls said about thunderbolts. On my further questioning him whether he had himself seen any thunderbolts, he told me he had, and that they were found here and there in the villages. I asked, "Did he think it was possible to get any?" "Yes, perhaps," he replied, "but the Santāls believe them to be a great medicine against this and that, so they will not readily part with them."

After this I commenced to make investigations, and have been able to get a good many "thunderbolts." Not being an expert, I cannot speak much about the archæological side of the matter, and shall here mostly confine myself to saying a few words about the part which these stone implements play amongst the Santāls of our day.

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As already remarked, the Santāls call them *ceter dhiri* or “thunderbolts.” When a Santāl sees a tree split, animals or people wounded, holes dug in the earth, etc., all done by lightning, he draws the conclusion, that to effect this the lightning must have a special implement; how could it otherwise be accounted for? When I have made the objection that such a stone, if hurled down by a stroke of lightning, must be crushed to atoms, they have answered, that such might very well happen and has probably indeed often happened, as few “thunderbolts” are found, and by having a look at some of them, it could be seen that they had been rather damaged (those namely of which pieces had been chipped off at the time of manufacture); besides which they are blazing hot when coming down. I have then explained to them that these implements belonged to ancient peoples who did not know and use iron or other metals, and had to use such stones for their work, and that there are still people among whom such implements are used. “Well,” they replied “the Sāhibs are very wise, and the thing may not seem altogether impossible; but we have had so many proofs of their excellent qualities that, all things considered, it is safer to keep to the old belief.”

When the lightning strikes anything, the “thunderbolt” is believed to go down into the earth. If anybody wishes to get the bolt, he must, as quickly as possible, fetch some *kañji* and pour it over the place where the lightning has struck. *Kañji* is sour stale rice water, an abominably smelling stuff, which is sometimes kept for years and is used for various purposes. It is used as food for pigs and to fatten buffaloes; it is employed as a vehicle for different kinds of native medicines for both external and internal use, and it is believed to quench fire caused by lightning, which according to Santāl belief water is incapable of doing. It is probably this last supposed virtue which has caused it to be used for the purpose mentioned. As soon as *kañji* is poured on the place, the further penetration of the bolt into the earth is believed to be stopped, according to some “authorities,” because the *kañji* quenches the fire of the bolt.

There are probably very few who have undertaken this experiment. I have one stone implement, which, according to what the owner told me, had been found in this way by his father about thirty yards from a tree which the lightning had struck. The man may, of course, have happened to find the stone in the way described; but as he was an *ojha* (i.e., a native medicine man), it is more likely he had found the “bolt” somewhere and had performed the digging, etc., in order to make people sure of the supernatural qualities of the stone.

Strokes of lightning are of such common occurrence in this district, that any stone implement found may easily be connected with

such an accident, the more so as they have often been found near places where lightning is known to have fallen.

As mentioned, the Santāls attribute great virtues to these stone implements, and therefore price them highly; I have heard of one which the owner would not part with for less than fifteen rupees, which is as much as it would take him four or five months to earn. They believe that a house where such a "thunderbolt" is kept is proof against lightning. The idea underlying this belief is not quite clear to the Santāls; some say it is so because the lightning (*i.e.*, the deity)* considers its work done where such a bolt is found; others think, that such a bolt has in itself a power sufficiently strong to avert any new stroke of lightning.† This last would be in harmony with the idea underlying the medicinal properties ascribed to the "thunderbolts." It is on account of these properties that they are most prized, and their supposed medicinal value is astonishing.

The "thunderbolt" is specially brought into use, when a woman is in labour. As a rule childbirth is easy with these children of the forest; I have thus not unfrequently seen women walking about some two hours after having brought a child into the world; but sometimes the labour may be hard and prolonged. In such cases, when the woman, who does the work of the midwife, does not see her endeavours have immediate success, she will frequently call upon the husband to fetch an *ojha* with a "thunderbolt," or the "thunderbolt" itself. It may be made use of in three ways, which, however, may be combined.

* Although the Santāls have got the idea from the Hindus that lightning, especially the thunderbolt, is the effect of Rāma shooting with his bow, this must be said to be only a poetical fancy with them; God is considered the giver of rain and the originator of all natural phenomena.

† Other means used by the Santāls to insure protection against lightning are to wear toe-, ankle-, and finger-rings, bracelets and other ornaments of metal, mostly iron, which have been made or generally only commenced (for it is sufficient if the material has been hammered a little) under incantations during an eclipse of the moon; these are believed to protect the wearer. During a thunderstorm many are in the habit of putting an arrow with an iron head up into the roof, or of throwing an axe out through the door, at the same time holding the breath (this is most essential). If a thunderstorm is accompanied by hail, they strew cottonseed in the court-yard in addition to throwing the axe out. If any body happens to be out of doors during hail- and thunder-storms, he is believed to be secure, if he keeps an arrow aslant pointed upwards against the clouds from which the thunderbolt or hail may be expected.

The Santāls have, of course, no idea what lightning really is, and believe all the measures mentioned to be most effective safeguards; but, although frightened by lightning or rather by thunder, they do not as a rule think much of using their "protectors."

One is to rub the thunderbolt against a stone, generally that on which they grind their spices, having first poured water on this. The water, which will contain some small part of the "bolt," is then given to the woman to drink. Another way is to keep the "bolt" above the head of the woman and pour water over it in such a manner that it flows down on her forehead and face. The third way is to put the stone into the eaves just outside the door; and care must be taken that the person performing this operation holds his breath.* They have a strong belief that this performance will secure immediate delivery.

Water in which a "thunderbolt" has been rubbed or placed—it seems to be sufficient if it has only been in contact with this kind of stone,—is used also in other cases, both externally and internally, *e.g.*, in cramps, against boils and carbuncles and against a certain pain in the back which the Santāls believe is caused by witches. The idea underlying these cases is clear enough: the irresistible power of lightning to split objects and drive away all resistance is supposed to have been imparted to and to be latent in the thunderbolt. As a curious analogy it may be mentioned that shot or balls, fired from a gun and afterwards found, are believed to possess the same virtues and are employed in the same manner.

A more practical use, to which these stone implements are put now-a-days, is to sharpen the country-made razors on them. Many of the stones I have got bear very visible marks of having been used both for medicine and as hones.

Stone implements are, of course, not used by the Santāls of the present day, and have not been used within the recollection of their traditions. It may, however, be mentioned that they and other jungle tribes, when wishing to procure a stick or when stealing trees from the forest—a thing which they think is their absolute right,—occasionally beat some hard kind of stone, *e.g.*, quartz, into the form of a wedge and with it manage to fell small trees. The sound of a blow with such an implement on a tree is naturally not heard so far as the blow of an axe, and, if anybody should come across them in the act, there is no axe to testify against them. That, however, regular stone implements have been unknown to them for ages, is sufficiently shown by the name they have given and the origin they have ascribed to the stone implements that they have found.

* This last precaution is absolutely necessary for the desired effect of the application of this kind of "medicine." When a thunderbolt is not procurable, twigs of certain trees may be used for the same purpose and in the same manner. I suppose this holding of the breath is meant to secure the efficacy of the remedy by keeping it free from any defilement from extraneous influences.

The number of stone implements that I have been able to get amounts to a little more than fifty; if a regular investigation were made, probably a much greater number might be procured. I have bought them from people living round here, and they have mostly been found in this vicinity, partly by occasional digging or ploughing, and partly on the surface, one in a river bed, another somewhere in the forest, others in cleft rocks, etc.; some have been found within the last two years, others some time ago by people still living or known. A few of them are "heir looms" which have been brought away from their earlier home (in Mānbhūm, Singbhūm and Hazāribāgh), and about the finding places of which nothing is known.

The localities where the stone implements have been found, so far as I have been able to ascertain, have no peculiarity which could suggest anything like ancient burial grounds or the like. This will not, however, say much, as the tropical rains, especially in a hilly country, soon efface all marks of mounds. I have seen one mound which in form curiously resembles the tunnels I have seen in Norway; but yet it is only a common mound. Some of the stone implements are, however, of such a form or material, that they may possibly have been votive-stones, and this would presuppose burial places. I have not had the opportunity of making any further investigations in this respect. I ought in this connexion to mention that I have not been able to find anything like memorial stones or cromlechs. Some days ago I went to look at a place called Rāmgar where the Santāls say remnants are to be found of a fortress built by Rām and Lakṣmaṇ (*i.e.*, the heroes of the Rāmāyaṇa). What they consider remnants of a wall I found to be a common geological formation, with which man had nothing to do.

The implements are made of different kinds of stone, such as flint, porphyry, basalt and other hard kinds, mostly abundant in this district; many of them have been so impregnated with smoke and oil combined, that, in spite of all rubbing and washing, it is impossible without breaking them to make out the material that they are composed of.

In size they vary very much; some of them are so small, that it is difficult to understand how they could have been put to any practical use, and they appear on account of their sharp edges never to have been used; these I take to have been votive-stones. Others are of the size of a hatchet, two or three are rather big, specially one (No. 2) which weighs about 2·5 kilogr., and measures 26·5 centimetres in length. This last one was found some ten years ago and, on account of its form and some black rings in the stone, had been worshipped as Mahādeb. Some of them have a beautiful form and polish (so has this

22 P. O. Bodding—*Stone implements in the Santāl Parganas.* [No. 1, big one), others have only the edge polished. I have not been able to find any perforated stone.

Most of them must have been weapons or tools of some kind or other, axes, hammers, arrowheads, etc. The one mentioned above as found by an *ojha* may have been a dagger (No. 10); it is reported to have been double the length of what it is now; constant use for medicinal purposes has diminished it. A few seem to have been agricultural implements; these have their edge, not in the middle, but oblique like that of a chisel (as are the shoulder-headed celts, compare Mr. Peal's paper, on Eastern Nagas, *Journal A.S.B.*, Vol. LXV, Part III, No. 1, 1896, with Plate No. II). This is the case in Nos. 22, 41 and 42 in the plates. A few have their thin sides made flat, one with a small notch (No. 53) on both sides, hence something similar to the shoulder-headed celts. Of these I have not been able to procure any, so they may possibly not be found in this district; it was, however, remarkable that the Santāl, as mentioned above, recognized a picture of such a stone as a *ceṭer dhiri*.

If the people were questioned about "thunderbolts," I suppose such stones would be procurable from many places in India.

The plates, of which there are four, are made from photographs, and the objects are about half their natural size (exact proportion, 12 to 26.5).



Plate-I.

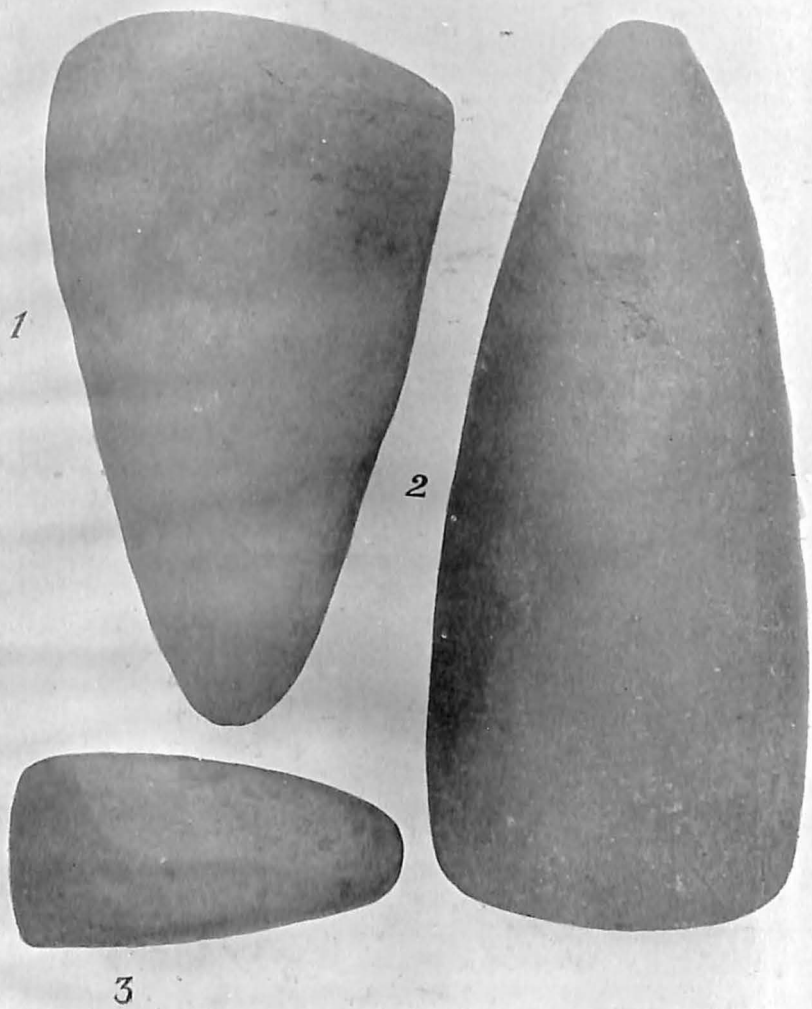


Plate-II.

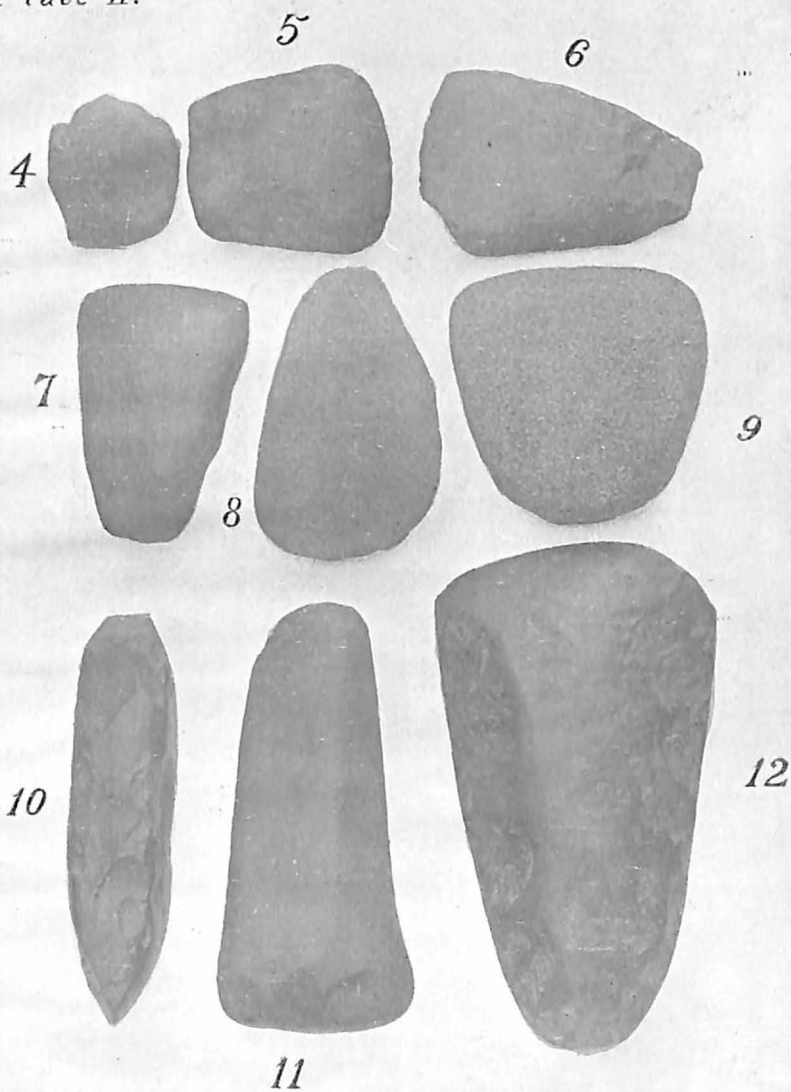


Plate-III.

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