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## SOME UNUSUAL IROQUOIS SPECIMENS

By M. R. HARRINGTON

WHILE gathering ethnological material among the Canadian Iroquois in the summer of 1907, the writer was fortunate enough to secure, besides a fair typical collection of ceremonial paraphernalia, weapons, games, costume, and domestic utensils, a number of unusual specimens, the description of which may prove of interest to students of Iroquois culture. As in the case of the Delaware material described in a previous article,<sup>1</sup> which



FIG. 9. — Oneida wooden bowl.

was collected during the same season, the majority of these specimens may now be found in the collection of Mr Erastus T. Tefft of New York, who furnished the photographs for this article not otherwise credited. Only approximate measurements of the Tefft speci-

<sup>1</sup> Harrington, *Vestiges of Material Culture among the Canadian Delawares*, *American Anthropologist*, 1908, N. S., X, no. 3, pp. 408-418.

mens can be given, however, the collection being in storage and, for the present, not accessible.

The old wooden bowl illustrated in figure 9 is perhaps the most striking object in the collection. It is oval in outline, with a length of perhaps fourteen inches, and seems, judging from the curling grain of the wood, to be made from a burl, perhaps of black ash or elm. Its chief claim to interest lies in the carved handles, of which there are two, one at each end, rising from the nearly horizontal rim. Each handle represents the upper portion of two human figures standing side by side, the arm of the left-hand figure in each case being thrown affectionately about the neck of its neighbor to the right. The eyes are represented by white beads imbedded in the wood. Although one of the heads is missing and the bottom somewhat decayed, this specimen remains the best bowl of Iroquois origin yet seen by the writer. It was purchased from the Oneida near St Thomas, Ontario, who claimed that it had been brought by the late chief Snagalis from the old home of the Oneida in New York state.

Another fine but simpler old burl bowl, also obtained here, is oval in outline with the rim rising in graceful points at either end, resembling the form prevalent among the Delawares and eastern Chippewa. The Mohawk near Deseronto, Ontario, sold me a still better specimen of the same kind, said to have been brought from the Mohawk valley, while a round burl bowl for the peach-stone dice game was procured from the Onondaga near Syracuse, New York. I mention these burl bowls especially on account of their rarity among the Iroquois, whose bowls for domestic use are generally long, tray-like, and of soft wood; while their round gambling bowls, although made of hard wood, seldom show the use of a burl as material.

The theory that the modern "gunstock" war-club with its steel blade is descended from the prehistoric hafted celt receives support from the discovery of the mounted celt, shown in figure 10, *a*, in the hands of an old Cayuga named Thomas Davy, at Six Nations reserve, near Brantford, Ontario. The old man claims that this "tomahawk" once belonged to his father, and that it is very old. He painted it black a few years ago, he told me, to preserve it from

the dry-rot which had attacked the handle. The celt itself is of the thin flat variety frequently picked up on New York Iroquois village sites, while the handle seems also of old type, although its exact age would be difficult to determine. A similar, but newer specimen, also from the Cayuga of Six Nations reserve, is the war dance club shown in figure 10, *b*, into which a prehistoric flint blade

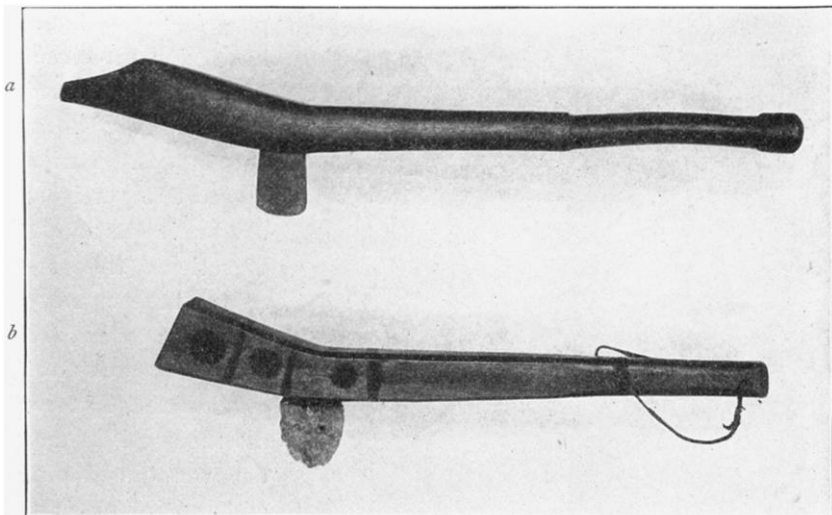


FIG. 10. — *a*, Cayuga mounted celt; *b*, Cayuga war dance club.

has been fastened. Clubs of this type with steel blades or deer-horn spikes are still occasionally seen among the Six Nations.

Witchcraft is still widely credited by the Iroquois, who believe that the sorcerers can transform themselves into animals—hogs, dogs, and especially owls, in which form they sally forth on their unholy nocturnal errands. These amazing transformations are effected by means of a mysterious chasm or “witch medicine” known in Cayuga as *otko<sup>o</sup>’tra’* or *ûtgo<sup>o</sup>’tra’*. Two of these were obtained from the heirs of the late James Jamieson, a Cayuga. They consist of bits of woody root, one, the larger and older, being about an inch and a quarter long by half as thick, with the surface fairly covered with tiny carved faces of men and animals; while the smaller, about half as large, bears but one carved face. They are

provided with deerskin covers, and are kept in a special deerskin bag. (See fig. 11).

Among James Jamieson's effects was also a photograph of one of his family — a son, I believe, — lying dead. Sewed fast to the cardboard all around the picture of the corpse were dozens of tiny

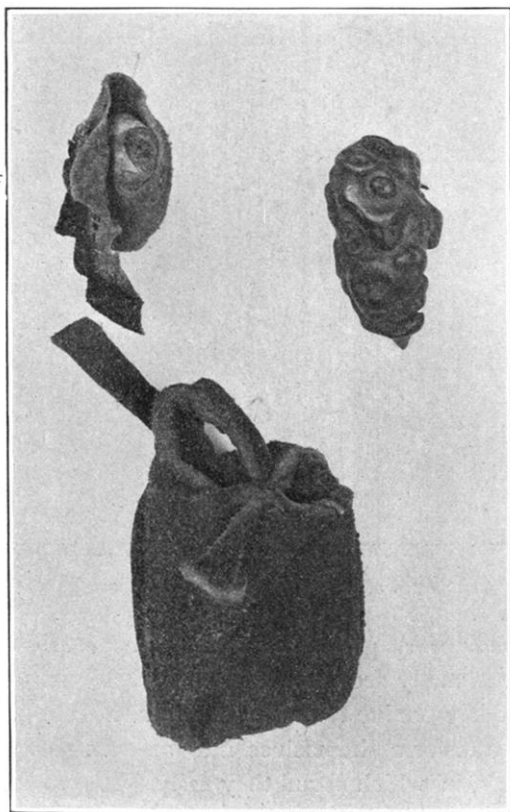


FIG. 11. — *a*, Cayuga "witch medicine"; *b*, Deerskin cover for same; *c*, Smaller "medicine" in cover.

human figures carved from what appeared to be bone, but which on closer examination proved to be made from date-stones. I tried my best to get from the Jamiesons an explanation of this grotesque little mystery without success, so finally decided not to buy the figures, as their origin and use were in doubt, and their material certainly not Indian. But when I later told Chief John A. Gibson what I had seen, he informed me that certain Indians were sometimes favored by the mythic dwarfs known as Stone-rollers<sup>1</sup> who appeared

to them in dreams and promised them aid and protection on condition that they would carve little figures to represent their pygmy race, which must be carefully cared for and "talked to" from time

<sup>1</sup> Converse, Myths and Legends of the Iroquois, *Bulletin 125, N. Y. State Museum*, 1908, p. 101 et seq.

to time. This may have been the explanation of the date-seed figures.

Also connected with dreams are the miniature dugout canoes, three or four inches long, of which several specimens were secured. Some being, apparently a water-sprite, whose name and characteristics were not made clear to me, appears to an Indian in a dream, giving warning of danger by water, but promising protection if a little canoe be made and kept, and tobacco burned in his honor at intervals. In similar fashion a little beadwork disk with a center of wampum represented to its owner the promise of the sun, given in a dream — a promise of protection and aid.

That games were sometimes played in obedience to dreams is exemplified by a set of plum-stone dice purchased from Lucy Pierce, a Cayuga, at Onondaga Castle, New York. Mrs Pierce informed me how she had been promised good health in a dream if she would make plum-stone dice and play with them from time to time. It should be noted here that while peach-stone and bone dice are frequently found today on the Iroquois reservations, plum-stone dice are very rare.

A similar belief is found among so-called Seneca in Oklahoma, where certain individuals hold games of lacrosse or Indian football at intervals in response to dreams, for the benefit of their health. At these games the "patient" provides a feast for the crowd and is supposed to receive benefit from the dream-spirit who is pleased by the game.

Before visiting the Six Nations reserve I had obtained but three types of masks from the Iroquois; large wooden masks, called *ha'do'wi'* in Onondaga, used in the rites of the "False-face Society"; miniature masks of wood or stone kept as health charms, called *goya'danu'na*; and another large variety known as *gaji'sa'*, made entirely of corn-husks and used by the Husk-face Society.

But on reaching the Onondaga of Canada, I found besides these "familiar faces" a variety entirely new to me — a mask known as *ow'ē'ga gaji'sa'*, "wooden bushy-head" which, although made of wood, belongs to the Husk-face Society and is classed as a *gaji'sa'*. In appearance its connection with the Husk-faces is shown only by its encircling fringe of shredded husk representing

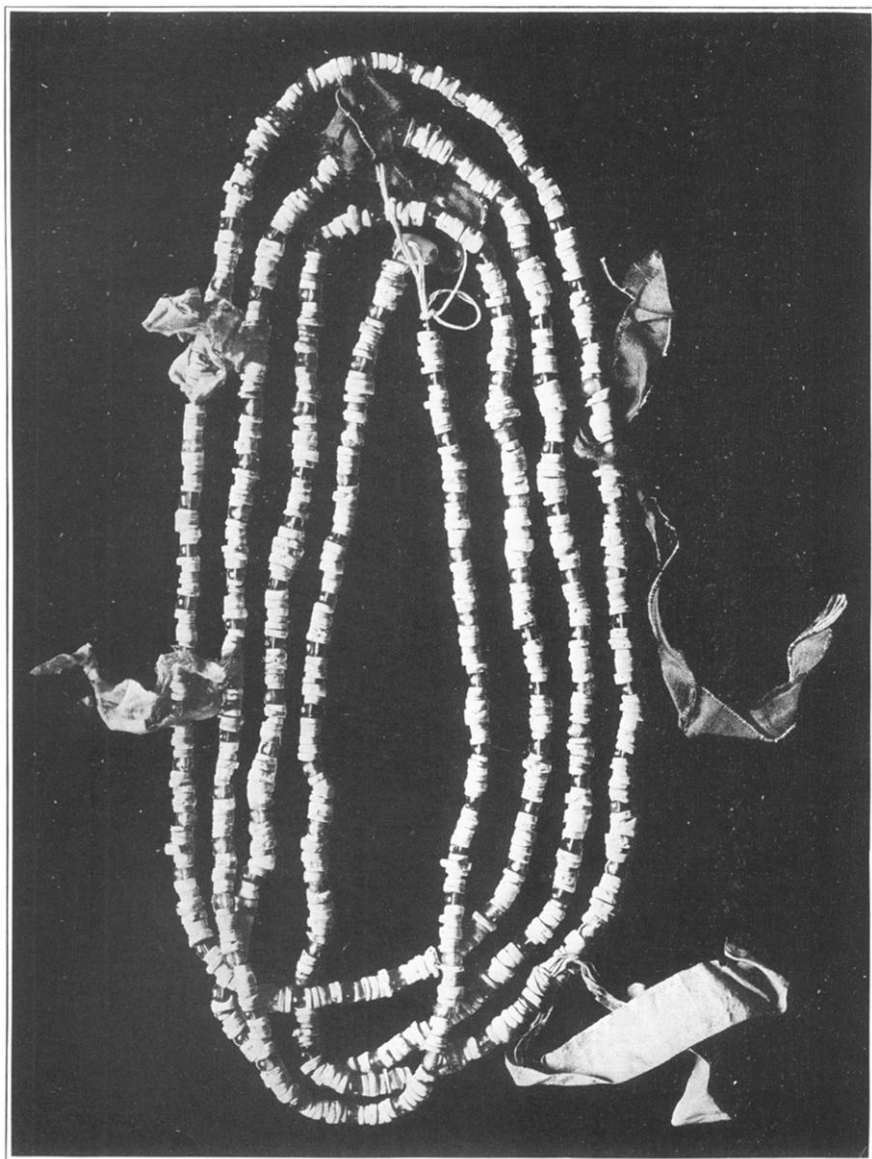
hair. It differs however from the common wooden mask, or *há'do'wí'*, in that it is carved to represent a normal human face, not distorted and hideous, while the painting is confined generally to a round spot of red on each cheek. It is considered more powerful than the ordinary Husk-face.

Chief John A. Gibson informed me that a peculiar rattle bought from the Cayuga, made by attaching a bunch of deer-hoofs and phalanges, each on a separate string, to a short wooden handle, is intended for use by the Little Waters Medicine Society<sup>1</sup> in a dancing ceremony and feast for the "renewal of membership"; but is not used at the night song, the only rite of the Little Waters with which I had previously been familiar. I had purchased a similar rattle from an eastern Chippewa shaman at Walpole Island, Ont., but had never before seen one among the Iroquois.

The few remaining Indians of Tutelo blood on Six Nations reserve are so assimilated with the Cayuga with whom they live that it will not be out of place to mention them here. Of their old tribal culture there remain only a few words of Tutelo speech, and a remnant of their dances, songs, and ceremonies, while among ceremonial objects the Tutelo wampum alone remains different from that of the Iroquois. These archaic beads, known to the Cayuga as *ganu<sup>n</sup>gwi'ya'*, are flat thin fragments of some shell, probably marine, roughly ground into the form of irregular disks about a quarter of an inch in diameter and perforated (pl. VII). They are usually strung in the form of a necklace, with glass beads interposed at intervals, and decorated with gay ribbons, for use in the Tutelo adoption ceremony.

If a Tutelo family lost a member and wished to adopt an outsider to take the place of the deceased, they took material for a costume to the home of the person selected, whose family made it into clothing, which was returned to the mourners. On the night of the feast held in honor of the dead this costume was put on the person to be adopted, and the necklace, *ganu<sup>n</sup>gwi'ya'*, placed about his neck in token of his change of tribe, to be worn until morning, when the feasters dispersed to their homes.

<sup>1</sup> Parker, Neh Ho-noh-tci-noh-gah, the Guardians of the Little Waters, a Seneca Medicine Society, in "Iroquois Myths and Legends," *Museum Bulletin 125, N. Y. State Museum*, 1908, p. 149 et seq.



TUTELO WAMPUM



Since my visit to Six Nations reserve there is, I understand, but one string left among the Indians, the owner of which, Mrs Husk, "refuses to sell at any price," as she keeps it to rent to other Tutelo when needed. One of the three strings I collected is now in the Tefft collection, one in the collection of George G. Heye, Esq., and one in the New York State Museum, which already had a portion of a similar string, the origin of which was not known.

PAWHUSKA, OKLAHOMA.