

A Tasmanian Stone Implement made from Bottle Glass

By

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PLATE I

In 1938, Mr. F. D. Maning found a Tasmanian implement at Kempton, Tasmania, which had been made from the base of a glass bottle of old-fashioned type.

The interest of this particular specimen is in the form of which it has been made to take. It is an irregularly shaped notched scraper 6.5 cm. in diameter with three indentations, the arc of each of which has a radius of approximately 6 mm. The implement has had much use, and, owing to the relative softness of the material, the cutting edges show abrasion marks due to friction of the glass against the wood which it has been used to trim. The diameter of the notch seems to indicate that it was used for the preparation of a spear or a thin, club-like object. The abrasions also tend to suggest that part of the work must have been done at the extremity of some weapon, like a club, where the wood is tapering to a point or is rounded off.

The important abrasions appear principally on what corresponds to the inner face (or flake surface) of the implement, and examination of their directions gives rather definite indications of the likely method of holding and using the implement. Indeed, it suggests that the inner face was opposed to the work and that the implement was drawn towards the worker.

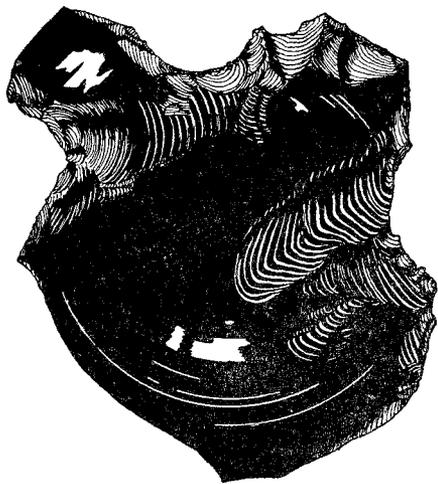
The few first-hand observations on record of the tool-using methods of the Tasmanians have indicated to us the likelihood that they used their stone implements without handles and without the aid of gum-hafting. The present example indicates that the stone itself was held very flatly against the material which was being worked, and that, in consequence, even notches which had become obtuse through constant re-sharpening could be used and be made to function efficiently.

Plate I, figs. 1 and 2, gives two views of the implement. Fig. 3 suggests the manner in which the implement was held while in use. The principal abrasive marks are indicated as they appear in association with two of the notches. The directions of abrasions suggest also that the implement was held at one time in the right hand and on another occasion in the left, the abrasions on the left-handed notch are rather less marked than those of the other. The third notch shows no signs of such abrasion, and may indeed have been freshly retrimmed just before the implement was abandoned.

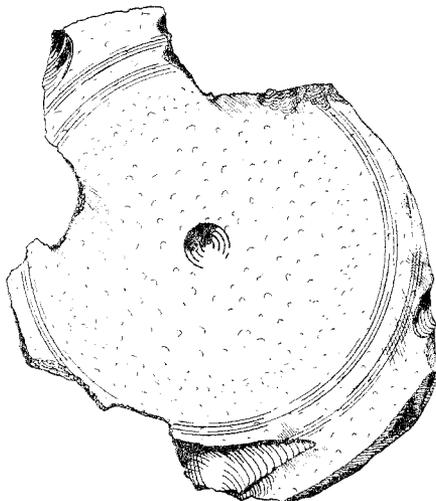
Abrasions on the outer or worked surface seem to have been caused by rubbing, and suggest the possibility that the surface of the work may have been smoothed with this implement.

The implement is of well-defined Tasmanian type, and the material used dates the making of it to somewhere within the last two centuries. It would be of interest if it could be ascertained whether the glass is such as was used in English bottles of the early nineteenth century or whether it could be attributed to Dutch or other voyages of still earlier times.

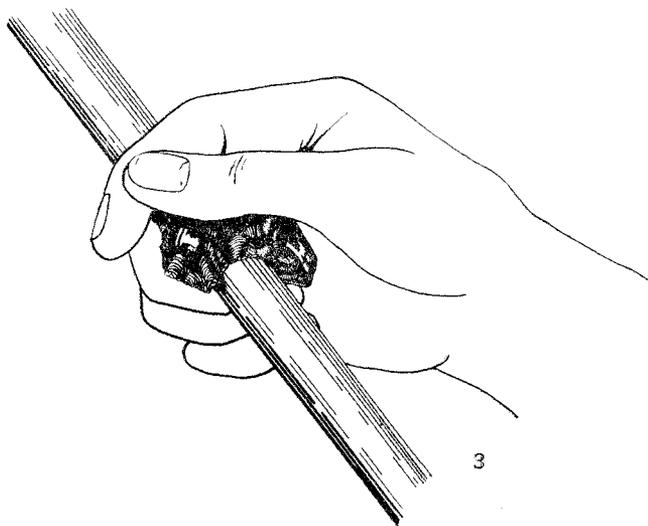
The specimen has been kindly lent by Mr. F. D. Maning to the Tasmanian Museum at Hobart.



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