

## 77. SOME PREHISTORIC WOODEN OBJECTS FROM SAN NICOLAS ISLAND

Robert F. Heizer

### ABSTRACT

Specimens collected in 1880 from San Nicolas Island, one of the Channel Islands of California, have remained undescribed in the American Museum of Natural History. Although exact data as to the circumstances of collection are lacking, the perishable nature of these wooden specimens leads one to suspect that they were preserved in a cave, possibly the abode of the last of the native inhabitants of the island, who was removed in 1853.

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In September, 1940 Nels C. Nelson advised A. L. Kroeber in a letter that there were a number of interesting undescribed objects from the Santa Barbara region in the collections of the American Museum of Natural History. Kroeber referred the letter to me, and in response to my inquiry Nelson, in a letter dated September 14, 1942, sent me photographs and information on the several wooden objects which are shown here in Plate 1 and Figure 2.

The wooden dipper (Pl. 1h and Fig. 2b-d) is made of redwood (Sequoia sp.), and may therefore be presumed to be of Californian manufacture. The material was probably derived from a piece of driftwood. It was collected in 1883 by Cyrus Barnard on San Nicolas Island. The handle is broken, and its present dimensions are: length, 36 cm.; maximum width, 17 cm.; height, 5.5 cm. The rim varies from 3/8 to 1/2 inch in thickness. The interior bowl measures 26.5 by 15 by 4.5 cm. The circumstances of its occurrence are not recorded, though its excellent state of preservation argues for its having been preserved under favorable conditions. The X-shaped incisions, of which there is one at the base of the handle and three on the bottom, presumably are seats for abalone shell inlays. This specimen is catalogued as T-17474 in the American Museum of Natural History.

The three wooden handled flint blades shown on Plate 1 may be accurately labeled as knives. The first (Pl. 1e) has a total length of 25 cm. The heavily weathered handle is lenticular in cross-section and has a narrow closed excavation (not slot) to hold the chipped blade which is identified

as quartzite. This piece was recovered from San Nicolas Island by A. W. Barnard in 1880, and is catalogued as T-12179 in the American Museum of Natural History.

The second specimen (Pl. 1f) has a total length of 19 cm. (AMNH T-12176). The smooth wooden handle is lenticular in cross-section, and like the one just described, has been excavated for insertion of the blade which is made of chalcedony. The blade is held in place with asphaltum mastic. It was collected from San Nicolas Island in 1883 by Cyrus Barnard.

The third knife (Pl. 1g) has a length of 22.5 cm. The blade (identified doubtfully as of dark gray, laminated basanite) is set with asphaltum into an excavated hole in the end of the handle. It was (AMNH T-12171) collected in 1883 by Cyrus Barnard from San Nicolas Island.

It is unfortunate that no further details of the finding of these specimens have been recorded. The native population of San Nicolas Island, consisting of seventeen or eighteen survivors, was forcibly removed in 1836. One woman was left alone on the island for eighteen years. One account of her solitary life on the island refers to a "good-sized cave in which she took up her abode," and it may be that this cave provided the protective conditions for the pieces collected by Barnard in the 'eighties and described here. Indeed, the wood-handled flint knives and the ladle may have been made and used by the old woman of San Nicolas Island for all we know.

## 78. SOME PREHISTORIC BULLROARERS FROM CALIFORNIA CAVES

Robert F. Heizer

### ABSTRACT

Archaeological specimens of bullroarers from two cave localities in Southern California are described. This is supplemented by comments on the function and wide ethnographic distribution of bullroarers in California.

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In the course of some years of intermittent reading of the extensive literature on California Indians, I have jotted down notes on the occurrence of various customs, beliefs, and artifacts. Such notes often prove