

ON CIRCULAR AND SPIRAL INCISED ORNAMENT ON
AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL IMPLEMENTS AND
WEAPONS.

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(Plates i., ii.)

THE more or less rare occurrence of this form of sculpture on the implements and weapons of our Aborigines will probably render a notice of several instances interesting.

The late Mr. R. Brough Smyth remarked* many years ago that—"Curved lines are rarely seen. Any attempt to represent a curve in all the specimens I have examined has been a failure." Mr. Andrew Lang even made a more sweeping statement† when he wrote that the patterns used by the Australian Aborigines are such as can be produced without the aid of "spirals or curves or circles."

Of the incorrectness of this statement, no better example can be adduced than the circular incised figures seen on the "Bull-roarers" figured‡ by the late Mr. Edward Hardman, from the Kimberley District, N.W. Australia.

A very beautiful instance is represented in Pl. i., Fig. 1 and 2, all the more interesting because it is a stone implement, and the only one of its kind that has ever come under my notice. It consists of a flat pebble (in all probability) of indurated shale, long-oval in shape, and incised on both faces; five and six-eighths inches long, and three and three-sixteenths wide, but is fractured at the lower end. On one aspect (Pl. i., Fig. 1) is a nearly central figure consisting of incised circles arranged spirally within one another. The figure is generally very slightly longer than wide, the greatest or longitudinal diameter being two and fifteen-sixteenths inches. On the right hand side there are thirteen incised grooves, and on the left twelve, the grooves becoming slightly wider towards the circumferential one. Immediately above, on the same face of the pebble, are two smaller figures, the incised grooves, three in number in each case, being however simply concentric within one another, and not spiral. That on the right is half-an-inch in diameter, and that on the left five-eighths.

* Smyth; *Aborigines of Victoria*, i., 1878, p. 283.

† Lang; *Customs and Myth*, p. 279.

‡ *Proc. R. Irish Acad.*, i., 1888 (2), No. 1, t. 2, f. 4, t. 3.