

ETHNOLOGICAL NOTES.

No. 3.*

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(Plates ix-x.)

Aboriginal Pebble-Axes.

The "improvised axe," "pebble-axe," or "pebble-chopper" is fairly plentiful on the coastal middens of certain parts of New South Wales and Victoria.¹ They are, however, not restricted to the seaboard, typical examples having been ploughed up some thirty miles from the sea. Probably they range still further inland, but because of their apparent unimportance have been passed over, or thought to be of accidental origin. These implements are sometimes disregarded by the ordinary collector, because of their obviously elementary technique. Kenyon² not only recognized them as a normal type, but considered them as being in the line of development of the normal ground axe.

The opportunity is now taken of figuring and describing a score or more, of varied technique, from different localities on the coast and the immediate hinterland. There are two forms of this elementary implement. The greater number are flaked at the ends, while others, though rarer, are similarly treated on the side; the latter³ type conform more to the title of pebble-choppers, because of the technique employed. Both types are flaked from one side only, which process brings about a more or less sharp cutting edge. Their use is conjectural,⁴ for, though the normal ground axe is found in association with them, one cannot assume that they were made and used for the same purposes. This is another example of the problem associated with aboriginal stone implements, where the flaked and ground varieties are found side by side.⁵

As implied in the name, these implements are made from water-worn pebbles. Whether these were brought to the coast from the rivers or derived from beach shingle is not known; it is possible that they were obtained from both sources. In addition to igneous material, fine-grained sandstone, quartzite and quartz-felsite were used. The petrological determinations⁶ which are included in this article are based on lithological characters only; for precise identifications thin sections would be necessary.

* Numbers I and II were published in RECORDS OF THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, Vol. xvi, No. 5, 1928, p. 241, and Vol. xvii, No. 8, 1930, page 348.

¹ Found also in Tasmania, *vide* J. S. Falkinder.

² Kenyon, A. S.—*The Victorian Naturalist*, xliii, February, 1927, p. 284.

³ These are common on the North Coast of New South Wales, *vide* C. C. Towle.

⁴ Horne says they were used for "detaching the molluscs." *Victorian Naturalist*, xxxviii, 1921, pp. 48-53.

⁵ *Cf.* Spencer, *The Arunta*, London, 1927, pp. 536-7.

⁶ Stones identified by T. Hodge-Smith.