

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EXPLORATIONS IN
TENNESSEE, PP. 305- 360**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649330492

Archæological Explorations in Tennessee, pp. 305- 360 by F. W. Putnam

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

F. W. PUTNAM

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EXPLORATIONS IN
TENNESSEE, PP. 305- 360**

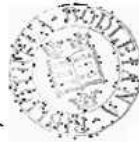
ARCHÆOLOGICAL
EXPLORATIONS

IN

TENNESSEE.

BY

F. W. PUTNAM.



[From the Eleventh Annual Report of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology
and Ethnology. Cambridge. 1878.]

SALEM:
PRINTED AT THE SALEM PRESS.
1878.

ARCHÆOLOGICAL EXPLORATIONS IN TENNESSEE.

By F. W. PUTNAM.

During the month of September, 1877, as stated in my general report (p. 203), friends in Nashville tendered to me such facilities for archaeological research in central Tennessee as enabled me to make extensive explorations in several localities, the results of which are briefly recorded in the following pages.¹

My first examination of the ancient stone graves, which are so numerous in the state of Tennessee as to form a marked feature of its archæology, was in the prehistoric cemetery on Zollicoffer Hill. It was soon found, however, that the graves at this place had been so much disturbed as to make any work done here rather unsatisfactory as to results. The building of Fort Zollicoffer on this hill was probably the first cause of disturbance of the cemetery, while its easy access from Nashville has recently led many curiosity hunters to the spot.

One of the graves at this place had been opened by a friend a few days before my visit, and in it he had found the remains of what he believed to be a mother and child. The few bones he collected and kindly gave me, however, showed conclusively that

¹Prof. JOSEPH JONES in his elaborate and interesting work, "Explorations of the Aboriginal Remains of Tennessee," Smithsonian Contributions, No. 236, 1873, gives much valuable information about the archæology of the state, and describes and figures many articles found in the graves. In this report I do not intend to enter into a discussion of the facts, but simply to give the results of my own explorations in Tennessee. This limitation is also advisable for the reason that large collections, made under my direction, have been received from the state since the close of the year covered by this report, which will be referred to in the next Annual Report. I must, however, state that it was most gratifying to me on reading Prof. Jones' work, which, though dated 1873, was not received at Cambridge until October, 1877, after my return from Tennessee, to notice how our similar explorations had led to the collection of nearly identical material, and the corroboration I had obtained of many of the facts which Prof. Jones has so well presented; although, as would be expected from two persons having nearly identical material in hand, but looking upon the evidence furnished from different stand points, I am forced to differ from him in some of his conclusions, particularly so in regard to the evidence of syphilis prevailing in this old nation of Tennessee. Undoubtedly very many of the human bones show the results of disease, but it may be that the disease was not syphilis, and that other diseases affect the bones in a similar manner.

while those belonging to the adult had been long buried, and were probably those of the body for which the grave had been made, those of the infant were on the contrary of a much later date, and were evidently of a child that, not many years ago, had been placed in this old grave, which was near the surface and formed a handy place for burial. This fact is mentioned simply to show the caution with which such examinations must be made in order to secure trustworthy results.

One grave which I opened at Zollicoffer Hill, though only a few inches under the surface, had escaped former disturbance. This grave was formed of six slabs of stone on one side and five on the other, with one slab at the head and one at the foot; forming a grave five feet eight inches in length, inside measure, and six feet outside. The average width being eighteen and the depth sixteen inches. The side stones were unevenly broken to dimensions of eight to fifteen inches in width, by about twenty inches in depth and two, or three inches in thickness. The two stones forming the head and foot of the grave were larger than those on the sides. All these stones extended a few inches below the floor of the grave, which was made by placing thinner and smaller pieces of stone in such a manner as to form a level bottom to this cist. Five slabs of stone, larger than those used on the sides, rested on the nearly even edges of the upright stones, and, slightly overlapping, formed the cover or top of the grave.

Further examinations in other localities showed that all the stone graves were made after this plan, the only variation being in the size of the stone slabs and in the dimensions of the graves. Any rock was used that could be easily detached in slabs of convenient size. That most common to the localities I visited was limestone and sandstone.

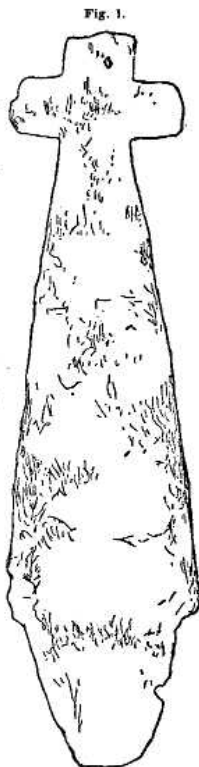
In the grave I have described the body had been laid on the back and extended at full length, occupying nearly the whole length of the grave, showing that the person when living was about five feet, five inches in height.

From many measurements of the graves taken during my explorations, I am convinced that the people buried in these stone graves in Tennessee were of ordinary stature. Occasionally a grave seven feet, and even of eight feet in length was found, but in such cases there was always a space of several inches between the bones of the feet and the foot-stone, and between the skull and the head-stone.

In the grave specially mentioned above, the only articles found were fragments of two vessels of clay, which had been placed in the centre of the grave, and a pointed implement made of deer's horn (11830).

In another grave of the same character and about the same size, located by the side of the first, and also with the covering stones in place, the remains of the skeleton of an adult were found, and with it, in about the centre, on one side of the skeleton, were the fragments of an earthen dish. On the breast of this skeleton was the ornament of copper here figured of its actual size (Fig. 1). The cross-like form of this ornament may give rise to the question of its derivation; and had any article of European make, such as glass beads, brass buttons, etc., so common in Indian graves subsequent to contact with the whites, been found in any one of the hundreds of graves I opened in Tennessee, I should consider the form of this ornament the result of contact with the early missionaries; but, from the total absence of articles denoting such contact, I think it must be placed in the same category with the "tablet of the cross" at Palenque, and be regarded as an ornament made in its present form simply because it was an easy design to execute and one of natural conception.²

The ornament is evidently made from a piece of native copper hammered and cut into shape. The small perforation at the upper border still contains a fragment of the string by which the article

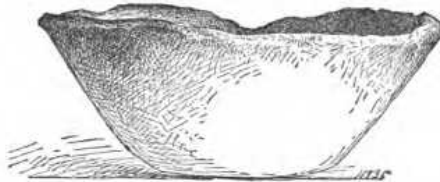


11832
Ornament of Copper,
from grave on Zollicoffer Hill.
Natural size.

² Prof. Jones mentions finding the cross represented in several instances upon articles of shell and of copper found in the graves he examined, and has discussed the question of its origin. *I. c.*, p. 77.

was suspended, preserved by the action of the copper; and on one surface of the copper are slight evidences of its having been in contact with a finely woven fabric, thus showing that this ancient

Fig. 2.



Dish from grave on J. M. Overton's place. 4.

people, who were well advanced in the ceramic art, also possessed the knowledge of weaving.

On the large estate of John M. Overton, Esq., eight or nine miles south from Nashville, there was formerly an extensive cemetery, and many graves are still to be found about the hill on which stands Mr. Overton's hospitable residence, known as the "Traveler's Rest." At this place Prof. Joseph Jones obtained many of the articles which he has described and figured in his valuable work.

Fig. 3.



Ornament of Shell from grave on J. M. Overton's place. Natural size. (1817.)

It was my good fortune to receive the kind attentions of Mr. Overton during a short visit to this interesting locality, and thanks to Mrs. Overton, and her gardener, Mr. Edward Cross, I was made the recipient of several very valuable specimens which had

been taken from graves on the place, and also had an opportunity to open two graves myself, from each of which I secured pottery, and from one a cranium.

One of the articles of pottery (11835) is here represented, of one-half of its diameter (Fig. 2). This is a well-made, rather thick dish, without ornamentation, and was found by the side of the skull.

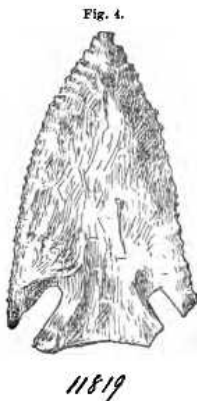
A short time before my visit, a stone grave was removed by Mr. Cross, and in it were found two interesting articles which he gave to me. One of these is a highly polished discoidal stone, two and a half inches in diameter and one and one quarter thick, made of white quartz (11818); the other is the shell ornament here represented, of actual size (Fig. 3).

This ornament is made from a large marine shell, probably a *Busycon*, and is symmetrically carved on the slightly concave surface as shown in the figure.

The four heads of birds, resting on the rectangular central figure, are represented by simple incised lines. Two holes near the edge of the disk indicate that the ornament was suspended.³

Mr. Cross also gave me a spear, or arrow-point of jasper with serrated edges (11819), which is represented, of actual size (Fig. 4). This flint-point was found while cultivating the land in the vicinity of the graves, and with two polished celts (11816), presented by Mrs. Overton, were probably once enclosed in graves which had been destroyed in former years.

In connection with the shell ornament found in the stone grave



Flint-point from Mr. Overton's place. Natural size.

³Since this was sent to press there has been received at the Museum from Mr. E. Curtis, half of a shell disk found on the surface in Humphreys Co., Tenn. This shell disk has carved upon it figures identical with those on the one described above from Overton's farm. The two localities are between 70 and 80 miles apart and at both places the number of stone graves indicate large settlements. Can these carved shells be regarded as totems? Several distinct patterns are now known, of each of which two or more examples have been found.

on Mr. Overton's place, I give the following illustration (Fig. 5) of a similar ornament (11801) which was given me by the venerable Col. J. D. Morgan, of Nashville, in whose possession it had been for some time. Col. Morgan was not certain that this ornament was taken from a stone grave, though the probability is that it was so found in the immediate vicinity of Nashville. This disk is made from the shell of *Busycon*, and is larger than the one given me by Mr. Cross. Figure 5 represents this ornament,

Fig. 5.



Ornament of Shell from Nashville. 4.

of one-half its diameter, and will give a better idea than words of the design carved upon it. Like the other, it has two holes for suspension.

Prof. Jones has described and figured (p. 43, figs. 7 and 8) a shell disk, found in a stone grave on the banks of the Cumberland, opposite Nashville, the carving on which is identical in

its design with that on the one here figured, the only difference being in the number of circles in the two groups. In Prof. Jones' specimen the outer ring contains fourteen circles, and the inner nine, while in our specimen there are thirteen and six respectively. The central spiral figure is the same in both.⁴

Many of these carved disks of shell have been found in the graves and mounds of Tennessee and Missouri, and, with the identity of the associated pottery from the two localities, go far to prove the unity of the people, notwithstanding some slight differences in burial customs.

On the farm now owned by Miss Gertrude Bowling, about four and a half miles southwest from Nashville, were five burial

⁴In relation to this central figure Prof. Jones has ventured, on p. 137 of his work, a comparison between what he calls the "Symbolic divisions of the circle by the ancient stone grave race and mound builders of Tennessee," and the "Chinese figure Taijeh."