



### **PENIS ORNAMENT ADMIRALTY ISLANDS**

A very rare and fine penis ornament or mana, The outside of the shell is superbly engraved with complex geometric motifs. The inside of the shell is cut away to provide the space needed for the insertion of the glans and the shell shows extensive patination due to age and prolonged use.

Admiralty Islands, Bismarck Archipelago, PNG, Melanesia.

White Cowrie (Ovula ovum) & black pigment.

7 x 3,9 x 3 cm.

19/20th century.

Similar examples are in the collections of the Ethnologisches Museum, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin now in the Humboldt Forum ; the Übersee Museum, Bremen, and the Linden Museum, Stuttgart.

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« The men do not always wear this loin cloth. When they do not wear it, their only clothing is a shell (Ovulum ovum) on the penis, so worn usually that its narrow mouth nips and flattens the penis behind the glans. The inner whorls are cut out, but not so as greatly to widen the mouth. When the bark cloth is on, the shell is usually carried in a small bag hung round the neck. If they do not show the penis bare there appears to be no sense of indecency, and boys wear the cloth before they assume the shell. »

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« Neither Carteret nor Hunter mentions the penis shell. It was recorded for the first time by Labillardière and de Rossel. Only adult men capable of bearing arms wear the shell, which is put on only for war expeditions and war dances. The fact that it was worn when paddling out to ships was probably based on the expectation that it might come to a fight with the foreigners; or, in some cases where during dance movements the Europeans would focus on the shell, as did Miklucho-Maclay and the Hamburg Expedition in 1908 in Lō' nū, it signalled an intent to sell the shell. The penis shell is a white Amphiperas shell (Ovulum, Bulla ovum) whose internal spiral is cut out, while the natural opening is enlarged only slightly, or not at all; but not so much that the glans can easily be inserted. To put on the shell, the foreskin is pulled over the glans and jammed with it into the shell opening. In some men only part of the corpus cavernosum can be accommodated within the opening, while Moseley saw only the foreskin covered in a man with a well-developed penis. Labillardière observed several cases of penile ulceration among penis shell wearers, which he believed was due to pressure from the shell's narrow opening. Moseley did not observe any such manifestations, but he did emphasize that wearing the shell had to be extremely uncomfortable for the wearer, and he mentions a case of marked flattening of the glans by the shell. Thilenius found, besides not-inconsiderable elongation of the penis by the heavy shell, urinary obstruction, probably brought about by temporary paralysis of the bladder muscles, a conditional reflex of the mistreated glans. Krämer observed that one man, who was trying in vain to remove his penis shell for the dance, leapt into the water and was then able to remove the shell without effort. Perhaps this can be traced to an erection, which was otherwise unnoticed during a dance. Those who removed their shell, immediately put on a tapa binding, according to Labillardière's observation. On the other hand, others who had no binding with them removed the shell without thinking. Moseley too noted that the men hastily reclothed themselves. When the shell is not worn on the penis, it is placed behind the ear for temporary storage. Bühler noticed this in 1932, often among young girls (!) especially at major dance festivals. Men carry the shell also in a small plaited pouch on their chest or beneath their armpits. The pouch is readily adorned with bright beads on strings like a net, and also hung along the lower edge with bead tassels and scraps of trinket. Only Moseley saw the penis shell worn under the T-binding, in the vicinity of Nares Harbour. The shell, even when it is not worn as a penis shell and serves other purposes such as canoe decoration etc, is called māna or maná in Pāpītālāi; mā' nā on Hā' ūs; mī'ne or māna in Lō' nū; māna on Pī'tilu, Lāmbū' tjo, Pónam, and in Tau' ī; and mǎnĕ in Buao. On Pāk it is called djāmĕ'; while in Pātū' sī and Mbū' nāi it is called emena according to Buhler; and in Buboi and on Pónam mana. Few penis shells are undecorated. On the curved outer surface most are completely covered

in cross-hatched, incised patterns; and after a few wearings, these stand out darkly against their white background because of the dirt that gathers in them; or they are deliberately blackened from the start with soot or pyrolusite. They are composed of vertical and horizontal bands, triangles, star-shaped figures, curved lines ending in spirals, diamonds, scratched lines with angular branches (a degenerating lizard pattern?) and figurative representations of fish or crocodiles with Palaquium tassels. There is a predominant tendency towards an arrangement of the individual parts into series between lines. Triangular drawings are called ĩnīn on Pāk, and parallel lines added to their points, boiná. A penis shell was observed on Pāk in 1908 boasting a short bead cord with two possum teeth in each of two holes in its lower half. The penis shell is worn by all Mānus and Mātānkō' l (except for the named villages in Lā'

lā and Pă'rá, in Boao(??) on Pāk and Nō' ru). Parkinson mentions it among the Ūsiāi, and in 1908 a penis shell was obtained from the Ūsiāi in Kětyē'. Since only adults are allowed to wear the shell, 10-12 year-old boys among the Mǎnus of the south coast of the main island put on a hollowed-out nutshell as a substitute, in order to practise the penis shell dance. »

« Penis shells, neck ornaments, and painting serve as war decoration; as weapons: spears, throwing arrows, daggers and, very rarely, obsidian axes. »

« Dance feasts are, as a rule, held from dusk to midnight or until the moon goes down. People consider the state of the moon when choosing the time for a dance feast. The penis shell is worn for the war dance of the Mǎnus and Mătănkö' l, as it is for war expeditions. An additional dance decoration is a yellow-black woven belt and a battle ornament worn on a band on the backs of the warriors<sup>1039</sup>. Their bodies are also painted red and white. The dancer holds his spear in the fingers of his right hand, enclosing it "in the manner of a quill pen" so "that the tip points upward, with the shaft on the outside of the slightly bent forearm, and the butt of the spear close to the ground". One or several slit drums give the dance beat. This is usually performed by the two oldest men. Initially the dancers, several side by side in lock-step, proceed in swaying, running steps around the drum or around a fire. Schnee on Kōmū' li saw them thrust the arm with the spear away from themselves, accompanied "by abruptly-staccato vocal high-pitched cries". Thilenius, departing from this, describes how the music suddenly cut out, and the men on Fedarb rose up on their toes and made a movement as though they wanted to fling their spears away. They all stretched their bodies and uttered a long drawn-out "iō" as soon as their right hand stretched up as high as possible. While doing this, the spear lay horizontally in their hand. Then, a new dance phase follows. All the dancers stand still, bend their knees slightly and, by rapid backward movements of the pelvis, set the penis in motion so that the penis shell flies to and fro. According to Schnee the arms are outstretched and they expel a muffled bellow. In flinging the penis it seems to be that it moves right, left, up, and towards the perineum and, where possible, describes a circle. After this phase the running steps are re-introduced and the dance restarts from the beginning. With each repetition, the movements become increasingly rapid and the cry, which resembles the war cry, becomes ever louder. Klink saw the men with spears in their hands initially gazing upwards, dancing in a line, on the spot, without any commotion. Suddenly the drum began a frenzied beat and, with a loud cry, bedlam erupted among the dancers who stamped the ground with their feet. The penis shell, probably not mentioned by Klink but accepted by him as present, was set in motion by this. The drum suddenly broke off and the peaceful dance began again until the noise broke out once more. A similar dance is also performed without spears and without signs of war. People are satisfied simply to replace the T-binding by the penis shell, but still retain the everyday adornments. In this dance, there are also changes of direction around the drum with rapid steps, with a shaking of the lower body, while standing with slightly bent knees. Miklucho-Maclay saw the penis shells "dance upwards and then downwards, or rotate like a wheel around an axle". As a final movement he saw that the shell was hidden between the legs. In 1908 on Pónam the penis was seen mainly thrown high and then clamped between the legs, but there was also a sideways movement. The dancers kept their arms out, sloped obliquely downwards. The dancers always stand side-by-side in a line when swinging their penis. Erection does not occur during the penis shell dance, but the shell's movements appear to cause pain. On Pónam several dancers broke away, and took the shell off. They turned their backs towards the spectators while doing this, so as not to let them see the exposed penis. Only adult men fit to bear arms take part in the penis shell dances, although on Pónam and among the Mǎnus of the south coast of the main island<sup>1043</sup> women and children may watch. On the other hand, dancers from Hărăngān wanted women who happened to be in the vicinity by chance, to go away before beginning the dance. Among the Mǎnus from Pă'rá and the neighbouring villages, 4–5-year-old boys are already beginning to practise the movements of the penis when dancing, while bigger boys, from 10 to 12 years old, practise with a nutshell as a substitute for the mussel shell. The penis shell dances are called mǎna, like the penis shell itself. They take place as a war dance on celebratory occasions, such as the greeting of guests and, without weapons, on a trading occasion begun with pomp between two related groups. Penis shell dances are also presented without weapons for the amusement of strangers - particularly in the neighbourhood of gardens and trading posts such as Kōmū' li, Pāk, Pónam, and Nō' ru. After a death

no dancing can take place until a ceremony of closure has taken place, including the eating of pork. People from Hǎřǎngǎn, who found themselves in this situation refused to dance on their own island, but performed without hesitation on Nō´ ru. Among the Ŭsiái, for example in Kětyē´, the penis shell is similarly familiar as a dance ornament, although no such dance has been portrayed among them. »

« Hunter found no clothing among the men. Labillardière, who was approached by men wearing penis shells, saw on the other hand that having removed the shells, they then hastily put on a tapa binding. Other men who had no tapa binding with them, removed the shell but without any appearance of shame. Moseley, too, saw that the men having removed the penis shell immediately re clothed themselves. Also, in 1908 on Pónam men when removing the penis shell had concerns about allowing the naked penis to be seen, and turned away when removing the shell. For the dance itself, women and boys are allowed to watch on Pónam and the south coast of the main island. On Nō´ ru dancers from Hǎřǎngǎn wanted the women present to go away, because they did not want to exhibit themselves before them with the penis shell. However, this seems only to be contingent on the discretion of foreigners, for whom on Nō´ ru, Kōmǔ´ li, etc. penis shell dances are performed from time to time. The penis shell dance is admittedly regarded as something out of the ordinary and with a sexual emphasis, in contradiction to the conventions of everyday life, however people probably experience little shame in it. Only the disapproval of the Europeans (or also their acclaim) allows the obscenity to come fully into the consciousness of the men. To the untainted perception, covering of the glans with the penis shell seems to suffice; however, the denuded penis appears to be offensive. Elsewhere the men are always clothed. »

#### **Literature:**

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