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WAMPUM AND ITS HISTORY.

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The use of a circulating medium to facilitate commerce by simplifying the awkward devices of barter, is supposed to indicate a considerable advance towards civilization in the people employing it. On this score the North American Indians ought to stand high in the list of barbarians, since they possessed an aboriginal money of recognized value, although it had no sanction other than common custom. This money was made from sea-shells, and was known by various names, of which one has survived popularly—wampum—to designate all varieties of shell beads and money.

Sea-shells, indeed, seem to have commended themselves for this purpose to widely different peoples. The great circulation which the cowrie-shell (Cypraea moneta) attained in tropical Africa, India and the South Sea islands, will occur to the reader. It was once the coin of those regions in trading with the savages to the exclusion of everything else; and ships going after cargoes of ivory, palm oil, sandal wood and similar products, were obliged first to provide themselves with cargoes of cowries, at Zanzibar or some other port where they could be bought.

All that was required to turn a cowrie into a coin was to find it and punch a small hole in it. But the American money was a distinct advance upon this, since it was a manufactured article. In addition to the exertion of securing the mollusk's shell, there was a large expenditure of labor in fashioning the bead which acted as a coin. Lindstrom (in Smith's History of New Jersey) says an Indian's utmost manufacture amounted only to a few
pence a day; and all writers enlarged upon the great labor and patience needed to make it, especially at the South. Hence the purchasing power of a wampum bead was far in advance of that of a cowrie, the dentalium of the Pacific coast, or any other unwrought shell used as money; and this form was probably an evolution from the use of single small shells, which still prevail to some extent on the western shore of the continent. Many small fresh-water shells, suitable for stringing and unsuited for ornamental purposes, have been found in mounds and graves in the Mississippi valley, and many archaeologists believe that these were employed as the currency of the tribes of that region; it is very probable, but there seems to be little or no positive evidence (of record), that such was the case.

The very earliest accounts of North America show that this money was in common and widespread service among the natives as far north as the Saskatchewan, and westward to the Rocky mountains. Among the far western tribes, who obtained it after a succession of barterings through races living between them and the coast, the beads came to be considered rare and precious, and were devoted almost wholly to ornament; but everywhere east of the Mississippi their circulation commonly as a buying and selling medium seems well assured. The evidences of this are derived not only from the accounts of early visitors to the tribes of the interior, but from relics abounding at their village sites and in their graves.

The Pacific coast had a shell-money of entirely different character from that of the Atlantic side of the continent, but I defer reference to it until later. The eastern money consisted of elongated beads of two colors, white, and purplish or brownish black.

The white variety was most plentiful and of inferior value. It was commonly made from the large univalves, *Sycotypus canaliculatus* and *Fulguir carica*, whose pear-shaped, coiled shells are sufficiently alike to be easily confounded under the vernacular terms "periwinkle," "winkle" or "conch." But sometimes other material was used. Thus the "New England's Rarities" discovered by John Josselyn, gent., reads: "A kind of coccle of whose shell the Indians make their beads called wampumpeage and mohaicks. The first are white," etc. This is an exception. Roger Williams wrote in his "Key": "The New England Indians are ignorant of *Europe's coyne.* * * Their owne is of two
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sorts; one white, which they make of the stem or stock of the Periwinkle, which they call Meteauhok, when all the shell is broken off." Again he says: "Their white they call Wampum (which signifies white)." Loskiel, however, tells us that wompom was an Iroquois word "meaning a muscle." The wampum made from the periwinkle was distinguished in law as late as 1663 in Rhode Island, and in 1679, Wooley, describing New York, says of it: "They [the Indians] make their White Wampum or Silver of a kind of Horn, which is beyond Oyster-bay"—a phrase that certainly would not apply to a bivalve.

It appears certain, then, that the coiled, univalve, periwinkle shells (they are from six to ten inches in length) were largely used for this inferior grade of currency. It was only necessary to take out one or two small sections of the central column of the spire and smooth the edges; the hollow core made them natural beads. Smith's "History of New Jersey" (1765) informs us that this was precisely the plan followed, for it relates that "the white wampum was worked out of the inside of the great conques into the form of a bead, and perforated to string on leather." Still earlier testimony comes from the southern coast. Thus Beverly, in his "History and Present State of Virginia" (1705), records that the riches of the Indians there consisted of "Peak, Roenoke and such-like trifles made out of the Cunk Shell. Peak is of two sorts, or rather of two colors, both are made of one Shell, tho' of different parts; one is a dark Purple Cylinder, and the other a white; they are both made in size and figure alike." The same author also mentions a poorer kind of money yet, "made of the cockle shell, broke into small bits with rough edges, drill'd through in the same manner as Beads, and this they call Roenoke." Other authorities corroborate this and prove what I have been led to enlarge upon—the fact that the conchs were used mainly for the white money,—because the popular idea has been that all the shell money was made from the valves of quahaug.

This bivalve is one of the commonest mollusks on the shore of eastern America south of Cape Cod. It is a thick, somewhat globose shell which buries itself in the sand under pretty deep salt water. The Indians gathered it alive by wading and feeling with the toes or by diving, and ate the animal with great gusto; it remains, indeed, an article of extensive sale in all our markets under the name of round or hard clam or quahaug, the scientific name being Venus mercenaria.
Toward the anterior end of the otherwise white interior of each of the valves of this mollusk's shell is a deep purple or brownish-black scar indicating the point of muscular attachment—fishermen call it the "eye." This dark spot was broken out of the shell by the Indians, and formed the material of their more valuable coins. In descriptions of it we meet with a new list of terms and additional confusion. It was worth, on the average, twice as much as the white variety; and the latter was frequently dyed to counterfeit it. Moreover, Loskiel is authority for the statement that the natives of the New Jersey coast "used to make their strings of wampum chiefly of small pieces of wood of equal size, stained either black or white." These were held far inferior to shell-beads of either color; but I know of no other example of this species of counterfeiting or substitution.

In New England Roger Williams describes this superior money as follows: "The second is black, inclining to blue, which is made of the shell of a fish which some English call Hens, Poqua'ufoc." This money, he says, was called "Suckäuwooch³ (Sücki signifying blacke)." Josselyn gives mohaicks as the Connecticut word. Among the Dutch on the Hudson river (and frequently elsewhere) seawant was the usual term, and they spoke of it as black or white. There the various shades of blue, purple and dull black found separate names, but made no change in value. In notices of it among the early writers, whose carelessness is apparent, the words wampum, wompam, wompom, wampampege, wampumpeage, wampeage, peage, peag, wampum peak, mohaicks, suckauhock, seawan, seawant, roenoke, ronoak and others occur. Seawant appears to have been properly a generic term indicating any and all kinds of shell money; wampum was often used thus and is now so used altogether; but originally it seems to have meant the white beads alone, while the words peag (in its various forms), suckauhock and mohaicks represented the black. In Beverly's "Virginia," however, this is precisely reversed, which leads us to believe that the author made a mistake; southern writers unite in making peak generic, while roenoke² is a word unknown at the North. All of these terms are misspelled derivatives from roots meaning

¹ Misprint for suckauhock.
² Roanoke (a small kind of beades) made of oyster shells, which they use and pass one to another, as we doe money (a cubites length valuing six pence)." Hariat. (1614), p. 41. For "a bushel" of these Powhatan sold his daughter.
"shell," and the Indian names for the Venus show their close affinity with the group. "Porcelain" was a Dutch appellation.

Some of the methods of making this finer sort of bead-coin are interesting. "Before ever they had awle-blades from Europe they made shift to bore their shell-money with stone." This was around Narragansett, and in the shell-heaps along the New England coast are hidden these old flint awls of prehistoric design, which may have been spun in some cases by a small bow such as jewelers employ at present. In Virginia Beverly found that both sorts of peak were "in size and figure alike and resembling the English Buglas, but not so transparent nor so brittle. They are wrought as smooth as glass, being one-third of an inch long and about a quarter in diameter, strung by a hole drilled through the center." Lawson describes the drilling, "which the Indians manage with a nail stuck in a cane or reed. Thus they roll it continually on their thighs with their right hand, holding the bit of shell with their left; so in time they drill a hole quite through it, which is very tedious work, but especially in making their ronoak." Brickell (1737) is worth reading on this point also.

The coinage, so to speak, of this shell-money was, therefore, a work of patient labor, and there was no fear of increasing the supply beyond the demands of trade by the worth of one deerskin, since a savage would rarely make a single bead more than sufficed for his immediate necessities. It was a true medium of exchange—real currency. All the early accounts speak of it as "riches" and "money" and "current specie." "This," says Lawson, "is the money with which you may buy skins, furs, slaves, or anything the Indians have; it being the mammon (as our money is to us) that entices and persuades them to do anything and part with everything they possess except their children for slaves. As for their wives, they are often sold and their daughters violated for it. With this they buy off murders; and whatsoever a man can do that is ill, this wampum will quit him of, and make him, in their opinion, good and virtuous, though never so black before."

The Delawares in fact had a tribal treasury of wampum, out of which were paid the expenses of public affairs. At certain feasts a great quantity of it was thrown upon the ground to be scrambled for by the youngsters—carnival fashion. Hired servants at these feasts or anywhere else were paid in wampum.
It followed as a matter of course that the shrewd first traders who came to New York and New Jersey should adopt this currency which all the natives were accustomed to, receiving it as pay for their merchandise. They used it to buy pelttries of the Indians. Thus wampum quickly became a standard of values, the currency of the colonists to a great extent in their transactions with each other, and even a legal tender.

Though the beads were often used separately, the ordinary and approved manner was to string them upon the sinews of animals or upon cords, which might or might not be woven into plaits about as broad as the hand, called wampum belts. The length of these strings varied, but in the North about six feet was found the usual quantity computed by the Indians, and hence the fathom became the unit of trade. In the Carolinas, according to Lawson, the strings were measured in cubits, "as much in length as will reach from the elbow to the little finger."

The Indians themselves were particular as to quality and size of the beads, for upon the elegance of its finish (speaking scientifically, the amount of labor and time it represented) depended its value. "When these beads are worn out," says Lindstrom, an engineer in New Jersey in 1640, "so that they cannot be strung neatly, and even on the thread, they no longer consider them as good. Their way of trying them is to rub the whole thread full on their noses; if they find it full and even, like glass beads, then they are considered good, otherwise they break and throw them away. Their manner of measuring their strings is by the length of their thumbs; from the end of the nail to the first joint makes six beads."

Seeing that profit and wealth lay in the possession of wampum, the burghers, as the easiest way of getting rich, began to make it. With their tools of steel this could be done very rapidly; but with the loss of the painstaking care with which the Indian wrought, came a loss of value, and the wampum very soon began to depreciate. To widen their market it was carried to New England. Considering the many references to it, and the undoubted fact that it was made there aboriginally as well as southward, I am at a loss to understand Gowan's statement that "the use of wampum was not known in New England until it was introduced there in October, 1627, by Isaac de Razier, who was acting as a sort of amity-treaty commissioner from the New Netherlands to
Plymouth Colony. He carried wampum thither and bought corn. To this introduction the pious Hubbard attributes all the wars which ensued between the Puritans and the Indians. "Whatever were the honey in the mouth of that beast of trade [the Dutch?] there was a deadly sting in the tail," he wails out, with much more to the same purpose. The authority for Gowan's statement is probably an intimation in Nathaniel Morton's "New England's Memorial" (1669), p. 67, followed by the remark that "Sundry unworthy person's" sold firearms to the Indians for it.

It was during the administration of William Kieft that the wampum currency was of greatest importance in New York. Washington Irving, in his Knickerbocker History, Chapter vi, gives a humorous account of it and the troubles to which it gave rise. Kieft began by endeavoring to flood the colony with this Indian money, which the Indians were content to take in exchange for their peltries, but which of course had no intrinsic value. Says the veritable Diedrich:

"He began by paying all the servants of the Company and all the debts of the government in strings of wampum. He sent emissaries to sweep the shores of Long Island, which was the Ophir of this modern Solomon, and abounded in shell-fish. These were transported in loads to New Amsterdam, coined into Indian money and launched into circulation.

"And now for a time affairs went on swimmingly. * * * Yankee traders poured into the province, buying everything they could lay their hands on, and paying the worthy Dutchmen their own price—in Indian money. If the latter, however, attempted to pay the Yankees in the same coin for their tin ware and wooden bowls, the case was altered; nothing would do but Dutch guilders and such like 'metallic currency.' What was worse, the Yankees introduced an inferior kind of wampum made of oyster-shells, with which they deluged the province, carrying off in exchange all the silver and gold, the Dutch herrings and Dutch cheeses; thus early did the knowing men of the East manifest their skill in bargaining the New Amsterdammers out of the oyster, and leaving them the shell.

"It was a long time before William the Testy was made sensible how completely his grand project of finance was turned against him by his Eastern neighbors; nor would he probably have ever found it out had not tidings been brought him that the Yankees had made a descent upon Long Island, and had established a kind of mint at Oyster bay, where they were coining up all the oyster banks.

"Now this was making a vital attack upon the province in a
double sense, financial and gastronomical. Ever since the council
dinner of Oloff the Dreamer, at the founding of New Amsterdam,
at which banquet the oysters figured so conspicuously, this divine
shell-fish had been held in a kind of superstitious reverence at
the Manhattoes; as witness the temples erected to its cult in every
street and lane and alley. In fact it is the standard luxury of the
place, as is the terrapin at Philadelphia, the soft crab at Baltimore,
or the canvas-back at Washington.

"The seizure of Oyster bay, therefore, was an outrage not
merely on the pockets, but the larders of the New Amster-
damers; the whole community was aroused, and an oyster crusade
was immediately set on foot against the Yankees. Every stout
trencherman hastened to the standard; nay some of the most cor-
pulent Burgomasters and Schepens joined the expedition as a
 corps de reserve, only to be called into action when the sacking
commenced."

A valiant army under Stoffel Brinkerhoff having marched to
Oyster bay, routed the English there, "and would have driven the
inhabitants into the sea if they had not managed to escape across
the sound to the mainland by the Devil's Stepping-stones, which
remain to this day monuments of this great Dutch victory over
the Yankees." This done—

"Stoffel Brinkerhoff made great spoil of oysters and clams,
coined and uncoined, and then set out on his return to the Man-
hattoes. A grand triumph, after the manner of the ancients, was
prepared for him by William the Testy. He entered New Am-
sterdam as a conqueror, mounted on a Narragansett pacer. Five
dried codfish on poles, standards taken from the enemy, were
borne before him, and an immense store of oysters and clams,
Weathersfield onions, and Yankee 'notions' formed the spolia
opima; while several coiners of oyster-shells were led captive to
grace the hero's triumph.

"The procession was accompanied by a full band of boys and
negroes performing on the popular instruments of rattle-bones
and clam-shells, while Antony Van Corlear sounded his trumpet
from the ramparts.

"A great banquet was served in the Stadthouse from the clams
and oysters taken from the enemy; while the governor sent the
shells privately to the mint and had them coined into Indian
money with which he paid his troops."

To check the evil effects of this "inflation," a law was passed
in the New Netherlands, in 1641, prohibiting the acceptance of
anything but fine, polished strung wampum, except at five for one
stiver, while the polished was worth four for a stiver. These were
echoed in Connecticut by enactments that no seaman should be
paid or received except "strunge suitably, and not small and
great, uncommonly and disorderly mixt, as formerly it hath beene." In
Massachusetts "wampam-peag" was legal tender (Act of 1648) for all debts less than forty shillings, "except county rates to the
treasurer," the white at eight for a penny and the black at four
for a penny. This remained the law till 1661, but wampum served as money there long subsequent, as it did everywhere else.
It would be impossible to get at the volume in circulation, but
values are accessible. These remained substantially those I have
mentioned until 1673, when the true wampum had become very
scarce, owing to the hoarding of it by the Indians and its dispos-
al to remote tribes. The Dutch council, therefore, issued an
edict enhancing its legal value twenty-five per cent. Such an
action as this the red man could not in the least comprehend.
Adair says they had a fixed value for every bead, and "bought
and sold at the current rate, without the least variation for circum-
stances either of time or place; and now they will hear nothing
patiently of loss or gain, or allow us to heighten the price of our
goods, be our reasons ever so strong." This was a sad case for
an Indian trader!

Nearly a century passed and still the shell-money held a firm
place in colonial trade, all along the coast. That observant
traveler, Dr. Kalm, who visited and wrote about the American
settlements in 1748, has much to say of the profits of trading
through this medium in Indian goods. "The Indians," he notes,
"formerly made their own wampums, though not without a deal
of trouble; but at present the Europeans employ themselves
that way, especially the inhabitants of Albany, who get a consid-
erable profit by it." This last fact is also mentioned by the Re-
verend Burnaby, who further saw it made by white men on Staten
Island.

It is only a little later, indeed, that Jacob Spicer, the most
prominent man in Cape May county, New Jersey, advertised to
barter goods "for all kinds of produce and commodities, and par-
ticularly for wampum, offering five dollars reward to the person
making the largest amount of it. "He succeeded in procuring a
quantity of the wampum, and before sending it off to Albany [cf.
antèa] and a market, weighed a shot bag full of silver coin and
the same shot bag full of wampum, and found the latter most val-
uable by ten per cent."
At this time and later, wampum was valued both as ornament and money by the Canadian Indians. Kalm saw it among the Hurons and also below Quebec. So slow, in fact, were the red-men to relinquish this currency, that wampum continued to be fabricated until within fifty years in several towns of New York State (chiefly at Babylon, Long Island) to meet the demand for it by western fur-traders. Glass beads were substituted at a very early day, but although they were acceptable to the savages everywhere as a trimming, they never acquired the significance and circulation as money, enjoyed by the genuine beads of shell.

Though with the tribes of the central region of North America, commercial transactions were all a matter of barter, and the standard of value, if any existed, varied with the especial local commodity, like buffalo-robés on the plains, blankets among the Navajoes and Puebloans, or otter-skins in Alaska, yet the coast tribes of the Pacific had a true money when white men first became acquainted with them.

This currency seems to have been confined nearly or quite within the present boundaries of the United States and British Columbia, and it comprised a variety of forms, one of which in the northern and another sort in the southern part of this area, approached in solid and widely recognized value the substantial wampum.

The northern and most celebrated of these varieties was the *hiqua*, *hikwa*, *hiaqua* or *ioqua*—for all these forms of the Chinook jargon word are found. *Hiqua* consisted of strings of the shell of a mollusk (*Dentalium*) called by conchologists "tusk-shells." These were gathered off the shores of Vancouver's and Queen Charlotte's islands by prodding into the sea-bottom a long pole with a spiked board at the end, upon the points of which the slender shells were caught. None were quite two inches in length, many much smaller; and among all the Indians north of the Columbia river, the unit of measurement was a string of about a fathom's length, or as much as could be stretched between the extended hands of the owner. The larger the size the greater their value; forty to the fathom was the standard, fifty to the fathom being worth scarcely half so much. Early in the present century a fathom was worth ten beaver-skins in dealing with the whites in Oregon. With the advent of the Hudson Bay Company's traders, the *hiqua* disappeared to a great extent, and values
were reckoned in blankets, as is now the case in many parts of Alaska and Arctic America.

South of the fur-trading posts, however, this money survived to a much later date, and is even yet to be seen in certain remote districts. "Those aboriginal peddlers, the Klikitats," and other Columbians, carried it to southern Oregon and to the Klamath region year after year, whence it spread through all Northern California, receiving there a new name, allo-cochick, and an alteration of estimate. The northern measure between the extended finger-tips was discarded on the Klamath river for a string scarcely half that length. Among the Hupas, still further southward, the standard became a string of five shells. Nearly every man had ten lines tattooed across the inside of his left arm about half way between the wrist and the elbow; in measuring shell-money he drew one end over his left thumb nail, and if the other end reached to the uppermost of the tattoo-lines, the five shells (ten years ago) were worth $25 in gold, or even more. Only one in ten thousand would reach this distinction, so that the ordinary worth of a string was ten dollars. "No shell is treated as money at all," says Mr. Powers, "unless it is long enough to rate as twenty-five cents. Below that * * * it goes to form part of a woman's necklace. Real money is ornamented with little scratches or carvings, and with very narrow strips of thin, fine, snake-skin wrapped spirally around the shells; and sometimes a tiny tuft of scarlet woodpecker's down is pasted on the base of the shell." These marks manifestly were designed to give the money some sort of sanction—make it represent somewhat the labor put upon the beads with which it had to compete.

For south of the Eel river, and thence throughout all Central and Southern California, the staple currency was a shell-money resembling the eastern wampum. Hiqua and allo-cochick were simply shells of some rarity, ground at the tip sufficiently to admit of being strung. The háwok and üllo of California were carefully manufactured and represented a real cost of labor and time, though they had no intrinsic value. The two were of different shape and value.

The first-named, háwok, was of least worth, standing in the place of the white wampum of the East or our silver. It consisted of circular disks or buttons from a quarter of an inch to a whole inch in diameter, and of the thickness of the shell from which it was cut. For this purpose a heavy bivalve was chosen,
and broken into discoidal fragments. These pieces were then ground smooth and polished by rubbing on blocks of sandstone, which often had to be brought from a long distance to the maker's rancheria. This finished, a hole was bored through the center with a wooden, flint-tipped drill forced to revolve very rapidly by a buckskin string which wound upon it, unwound and rewound itself in an opposite direction, through the incessant vertical movement of a loose cross-bar in the operator's hand. These hiwok disks were then strung upon sinews, or on cords made of milkweed fiber, but the strings were not of invariable length, though beads of like size must be put together. The very best of this was worth twenty-five cents apiece ten years ago; but the smallest always went by the string. This white bead-money was (and to a certain extent still is) the great medium of Indian trading among themselves.

Their gold, so to speak, the ullo, is made from the shell of the abalone (Haliotis) and chiefly from the red species (H. rufescens). These shells are cut with flints into oblong, keystone-shaped pieces from one to two inches in length, according to the curvature of the shell, and a third as broad. Two holes are drilled near the narrow end of each piece, and they are thus strung edge to edge. "Ten pieces," wrote Powers, "generally constitute a string, and the larger pieces rate at $1 apiece, $10 a string; the smaller in proportion, or less if they are not pretty. Being susceptible of a high polish this money forms a beautiful ornament, and is worn for necklaces on gala days. But as money it is rather too large and cumbersome, and * * * [it] may be considered rather as jewelry."

A third sort of money, very rarely seen now-a-days, was fabricated on the islands off the southern coast and on the adjacent mainland. This was called kol-kol, and was made by grinding off the apex of the univalve shell of Olivella biplicata until a cord could be passed through. It was slightly esteemed.

Further south all these forms of shell-cutting disappear in their capacity of money, retaining value only as ornaments; so that their use in trade south of California belongs under the head of barter. Thus Bancroft notes of the natives of Sonora: "Pearls, turquoises, emeralds, coral, feathers and gold were in former times part of their property, and held the place of money."

There seems to have been an immense amount of this regular money, hiqua, allocochick, hiwok and ullo on the Pacific coast;
Powers thinks an average of $100 worth to each male Indian would not be too large an estimate for California at the time of its discovery by the Spaniards. This portion equals the value of two grizzly bear skins, or three ponies, or the price of two wives. However it was not equally distributed any more than are riches in civilized communities—a point for communists to consider.

The shore tribes were the coiners of this money and jealously guarded their privileges. With it they bought skins, arms and implements from the dwellers in the Coast Range, where grew animals and materials not to be obtained along the beach. The mountaineers, in turn, disseminated it far in the interior, where finally the beads were prized and worn as ornaments, and ceased to circulate. Moreover, an enormous waste and destruction was always going on (a fact also true of the Atlantic coast) owing to the practice of propitiatory sacrifices, and the widespread custom of burying or burning all the wealth with each man (or noted woman) who died. Thus the demand was always greater than the supply, and a high value maintained. It is astonishing to read how shrewd and thrifty the Indians were in respect to this shell coinage. When Americans grew numerous and began to manufacture large quantities of the hawok, of course its value declined; moreover, with the partial civilization of the Indians, a new sentiment crept in, and some strange changes in primitive social economy followed.

At present the younger English-speaking Indians scarcely use it at all, except in a few dealings with their elders, like wife-buying, or for gambling. A young fellow sometimes procures it as an investment, laying away a few strings of it, for he knows that he cannot squander it at the stores; whereas if he really needs a few dollars of current cash he can always "negotiate" his shells with some old Indian who happens to have gold or greenbacks. Americans speculate in it here and there to advantage, working upon the clinging love the aged savages retain for the wealth of their youth. These old men save all of it they can possibly acquire, and hoard it like veritable misers, only on great occasions letting their women-folk wear any as jewelry. This hoarding is not so much miserly greed, however, as it is a religious notion, since to their minds the shell-money is the only thing worthy to be offered upon the funeral pyre of any famous chief or departed friend, or sent along with their own souls into the spirit-world.