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## Notes on a Type of Indian Burial Found in the Mid-Columbia River District of Central Washington

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and published his great treatise 1539-43. M. Servetus (1509-1553), Spanish physician who discovered pulmonary circulation of the blood; G. Fracastoro (1478-1553), Veronese physician who developed a rational theory of infection, and first named the disease syphilis; Paracelsus (1490-1541?), Swiss physician who placed pharmacy on a more scientific chemical basis, and probably discovered ether; N. Monardes (1512-1588) and F. Hernandez (1517-1578), Spanish physicians and botanists; and B. Eustachio (1520-1574), and G. Fallopio (1523-1562), young Italian anatomists, nearly complete the list of outstanding anatomists and physicians. During the sixteenth century the Plague (probably bubonic) was endemic in Europe; while measles and small-pox decimated the Indians of the New World.

A. Cesalpino (1519-1603), Italian after whom a genus of Brazil wood was named, was probably the greatest botanist of his age. Conrad Gesner (1516-1565), Swiss botanist and zoologist, published a catalog of plants in 1542. Leonhard Fuchs (1501-1566), German who issued "Historia Stirpium" in 1542; V. Cordus (1515-1544), encyclopaedist; and J. Bock (1498-1554), herbalist, were other leaders in this period of transition from herbalists to botanists. Georg Bauer (Agricola, 1490-1555), so-called "Father of Mineralogy," did the bulk of his research and publication 1530-55; and V. Biringuccio (1498?-1550?) published a treatise on metallurgy in 1540. The other sciences and arts were poorly represented in the 1540's.

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#### NOTES ON A TYPE OF INDIAN BURIAL FOUND IN THE MID-COLUMBIA RIVER DISTRICT OF CENTRAL WASHINGTON

JAY PERRY

A type of Indian burial that seems not to have been described either by early writers nor by those later making archaeological investigations along the middle Columbia River is one which I am calling the "cedar ring" burial.

It is so named because the first evidence of such a burial discovered is a circle or ring of cedar boards, exposed either by excavation or by erosion of the soil by wind. Many times this circle is nothing more than a brown discoloration in the gray soil, which could easily pass unnoticed. This circle is the exposed ends of cedar boards, set up on end, in a circular manner, to form the side walls of the burial vault.

When first exposed the top of this ring is from fifteen to eighteen inches in diameter, round though occasionally oblong. This gradually increases in diameter until the bottom of the grave is reached, from two and one-half to three and one-half feet lower. These cedar boards or sticks which formed the side walls of the burial then roughly form a truncated cone, two and one-half to three feet high, the base of which is from two to three feet across and the top from fifteen to eighteen inches. These side walls are made of boards and sticks one to

two inches thick and from two to seven inches wide, but are too badly decayed to show in what manner they were made.

Since the opening in the top is a rather small one through which to have placed an adult body, flexed though they were, one is puzzled to know just how the operation was carried on.

The writer believes that the burial might have been made by digging a hole the required size and depth, and then lining it with these cedar boards which probably did not reach to the surface of the ground. After the body had been placed the boards might have been leaned inward as far as the body would permit before covering with dirt, and the weight of the settling soil from the outside would have had a tendency to further crowd the boards inward as the space occupied by the body became displaced with dirt.

Generally there was nothing placed over this type of burial, and there is nothing on the surface to indicate where they are unless the top soil has been swept away by winds.

An exception to this statement would have to be made in the case of the graves found in the burial ground at the mouth of the Palouse River. Here, this type of burial was covered with large, more or less flat, basaltic rocks, weighing from fifty to one hundred and fifty pounds. These had been secured from a nearby rock slide, though occasionally stream-worn boulders had been used. Here also in one grave the writer observed, rocks were used in filling up the grave, so that they were encountered all the way down until the bottom was reached.

Also at this place one burial was found in which the body had been placed at full length, instead of flexed. In this grave an unusually large number of artifacts had been placed.<sup>1</sup>

This burial ground occupied a space approximately one hundred and fifty feet square. It had apparently been dug up in large part years ago by local whites. In only one grave observed by the writer was there anything except stone artifacts. This, the extended burial mentioned above, contained a heavy copper bracelet.

The cedar ring graves which had not been disturbed were in one corner of this burial ground. They were found by removing the top eighteen inches of soil where large rocks were encountered. Under these rocks, and even among them, cedar wood was found in the char-

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1. The artifacts found in this burial were: three small arrowheads, each about three-quarters of an inch long, all beautifully made, one of white agate and the other two of brown jasper; one two-inch reddish brown jasper knife; two fine jadeite celts, each about seven inches long, one a dark green and the other with a slightly yellowish cast; a fine sixteen-inch ceremonial mace or war club made of steatite and highly polished; a highly polished cylindrical pestle eighteen inches long, the top of this carved and somewhat resembling a snake's head, with four groups of deeply incised parallel lines below; a small cylindrical pestle about six inches long, made of native basalt rock, and broken in two pieces; a well-made cylindrical pestle which would have been about fifteen inches long if whole, the top which was broken off, was not found; a heavy copper bracelet of the kind found in this region.

acteristic ring form. In one place four graves were found so close together that they almost touched.

Adjacent to this burial ground (about three hundred feet distant) are evidences that twenty or twenty-five rock slide burials had been dug into. Surface indications there would lead one to believe this might have been done fifteen or twenty years ago, or more.

On Goat Island (the first island in the Columbia River below the mouth of the Snake River) most of these cedar ring burials lie in an area which has been covered up by drifting sands after the place was used as a burying ground. Here there are no surface indications, and only by removing two to four feet of wind-blown soil are they disclosed. Many of the skeletons lie six and seven feet under the present surface.

On Blalock Island these burials were made in an area that was apparently later used as a camp site. At least all the ground for several hundred feet both up and down the river is covered with broken rocks, mussel shells, and all the materials associated with camp sites in this locality. Here also the burials are placed very close together, many almost touching. Evidence points to these as being among the oldest of this type. The cedar ring is very indistinct and all that remains of the bodies is a discoloration of the soil. In very few of them are there any artifacts.

On Borgans Island (the second island in the Columbia River below the mouth of the Yakima River) burials have been made in historic times among those of cedar ring type and even on top of them.

There was apparently no regular system used in placing the body. The head may be placed in any direction, with the body lying on either side or on the back. In one burial observed a few miles above the mouth of the Snake River the body was erect.

The artifacts deposited had many times been broken before having been placed in the grave. They were usually placed on the chest, though they were also placed anywhere, even outside the cedar ring. No artifacts are found in the majority of graves. One was observed in which were five nice stone bottle-shaped pestles, varying from five to eleven inches in length.

The writer has observed this type of burial from Wahluke Ferry on the Columbia River to Blalock Island, a distance of one hundred and thirty miles, and up the Snake River for about sixty miles. How much farther, if any, they extend, he is unable to say.

*Kennewick, Washington.*