

Person: piercing ears.

The earlobes of a boy or girl were not pierced until the subject was 12-14 years old. The operator was usually a member of the family, either on father's or mother's side, but this was not essential. The instrument used was a skewer-like piece of wood, called Kangeri (make-curl) because it was used also for teasing the hair into curls. This was generally made of pemphis-wood and so could be sharpened to a very fine, hard point. Early morning was the time for the operation.

The operator sat facing the subject. As a pad to support the lobe of the ear, he used the half of a nimoimoi, a very young coconut, just developed, and not more than an inch in diameter. He began on the right ear. Holding the "pad" in his left hand, he inserted it behind the lobe so that the latter lay on its flat surface and was turned towards him. Then he pierced the flesh with the Kangeri. Immediately withdrawing the instrument, he then ^{introduced} ~~inserted~~ a stalk of smooth grass in the puncture, and left it there. The same process was repeated on the left ear, the pad being held now in the right hand of the operator.

In the evening, the stalks of grass were removed, hot water being used to soften the clotted blood. It was also recognised that the fomentations had definite curative properties. When the grass had been taken out, it was

replaced by slightly thicker stalks. On the following morning, exactly the same thing happened; and so on, morning and evening every day, the grass being thickened at each sitting. When the largest size of grass had been reached, the stalks of the leaves of the benigibing (*Barringtonia butonica*?) in ascending thickness were inserted; and when the limit of these was arrived at, young babai (*Calladium* sp.) stalks were employed.

This process gradually distended the lobe until in about three weeks' time the aperture would receive a stalk about as thick as the thumb. This was the size generally recognised as the normal standard by the Gilbertese.

The lobes of the patient's ears were probably sore and festering at this point. Healing methods were now used. Leaves of the mao (*Scaevola Koenigii*) were picked and their midribs removed; they were then rolled into cylinders of the requisite size, i.e. a thumb's thickness, heated at the fire and inserted in the apertures. The fomentations of hot water were continued morning and evening, when these were replaced by new rolls.

When the outside edges of the wounds became clean, but still a little rawness remained within the ring, the cylinders of mao leaf were replaced by rolls of manibwebwe, which is the ^{glossy} sundried skin taken from the underside of a pandanus leaf. A week or so after this the ear would be healed.

Those who wished to have larger apertures

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could proceed from this point. The process of enlargement by the "wet" or unhealed method was never carried farther than that above described. Any further distension must be effected by working on the healed lobe.

It is said by the natives that some (but only a few) lobes healed "soft"; that is to say they were free of fibrous lumps in the tissue. But the majority of lobes contained as a rule one such tumour, called Korän, which must be removed before further distension could be achieved. The method of removal was to cut down to the Korän with a piece of shell, making the incision inside the ring of the aperture; with a piece of coconut riblet the fibrous lump was then fished up and exposed; and cut away with the shell. After this the lobe was simply stretched gradually by inserting articles of increasing size. The limit of size was usually considered to have been reached when the loop of the lobe could just be taken over the top of the ear. In this way it was carried when not in use.

No magico-religious rituals or beliefs appear to be connected with the piercing of the lobe. The old men of today, most of whom have this personal adornment, consider it simply as a practical means of beautifying the person. Both men and women used it, no particular size being reserved for one

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or other of the sexes. Any object which appealed to the aesthetic taste of the native might be worn in the aperture. On Butaritari I saw (1922) an old man carrying in one lobe his pipe and in another a small red fish. Most generally seen as ear ornaments among the elder people are rolls of golden-yellow pandanus leaf burnished with scented oil, and the sweet smelling sheath of the pandanus bloom. Rosettes and ornaments made of the pith (uto) of the scaevola shrub were commonly used in the past.

There seems to have been no method of joining together the ends of a ruptured lobe.

Beauty Treatment: for children

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- (1) On the day after birth the cheeks were pinched gently with a piece of stiff grass to form dimples (nanangone) at the corners of the mouth.
- (2) The nose was gently pinched and studied upwards on either side every day for about two years in order to make it thin. Flat noses were not liked.
- (3) The child was held with its body away and the feet on its mother's chest, and encouraged to push with its feet to make the legs and thighs fat.
- (4) The finger-tips were pinched to make them taper.
- (5) Lips were lifted and pinched so as to point, flat (loban) lips being disliked.
- (6) The pelvis of girls was massaged to make it broad.
- (7) Everything possible was done to promote pubic hair. Women without was called beangenge, iku or katemaraz, and the condition was felt to be so shameful that some were known to have refused to be delivered of children and to have died as a consequence. Pubic hair was, however, kept short.
- (8) Incision was formerly unknown, and was introduced by Gilbertese who had returned from the Mission School at Kusaie. It later became rather popular.
- (9) The prepuce was sometimes pierced on its upper side for wearing a plug during pre-uptal love-making; or a feather might be inserted as a vaginal tickler during intercourse.