

THE ORIGIN AND ANTIQUITY OF AMERICAN INDIANS

BY PAUL S. MARTIN

Assistant Curator of North American Archaeology

Field Museum is noted for its comprehensive and excellent exhibits relating to the American Indians. In viewing these there must be many visitors who wonder whence came the American Indian, and when. While there is no written history on this subject, there have been reams of speculation on the origin and antiquity of the Indian, and an examination of the available facts and theories makes possible what seems to be a reasonably correct conclusion.

Anthropologists have designated three grand divisions of humanity: the Caucasoid, the Negroid, and the Mongoloid. Most of the smaller sub-divisions of racial types belong to one of these. The majority of anthropologists agree that the American Indians are a branch of the Mongoloid division. This does not mean that they are Chinese in origin, but rather that they and the Mongolians both sprang from an original proto-Mongoloid stem or ancestry.

This quite well-known theory is still open to question, but it may be supported by an explanation of how it was reached. In distinguishing one race from another the anthropologist relies upon accurate recorded observations and measurements of certain physical characteristics, such as length and breadth of head and face, size of the nose, distance between the eyes, and the stature. In addition, careful studies are made of the color of hair, skin and eyes; the shape of the hard palate, certain teeth, and the hair, in microscopic cross-section. No single trait may ever be used in differentiating one race from another—observations of many must be made. To state that because an individual has prominent cheekbones he is Mongoloid would be unsound and as likely as not incorrect.

The correlation of a mass of such detailed data as has been indicated above, however, has led to the conclusion that the Indians should be classified as Mongoloid, and it is now generally agreed that they came to the New World in a series of small, dribbling migrations via Bering Strait.

In regard to the length of time man has inhabited the New World we enter a realm where there are fewer facts to guide us. It is often claimed that man lived in North America during the Ice Age (about 25,000 to 50,000 years ago). But as yet not a single fragment of a skeleton of a Neanderthal type has been found. The most ancient skeletal remains that have as yet come to light have been correctly classified as Indian, and they differ in no important way from those of the modern Indian.

If, then, man did not live in America during the last Ice Age, when did he arrive? The only acceptable answer to this question in the light of present knowledge is arrived at by considering the pre-history of the Old World. We know that approximately 8,000 to 10,000 years ago, barley, rice, millet, and wheat were cultivated, and cattle, pigs and sheep were domesticated there.

Since it seems fairly well established that the Indians came from Asia, it seems reasonable to expect that they would have introduced some or all of these plants and animals into the New World. But until the arrival of the Europeans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, at which time these plants and animals were introduced, not a single one of them had been used, or even

known, in the New World. Therefore, it is reasonably safe to assume that the migration to the New World was prior to the development of agriculture and husbandry and after the recession of the last glacier. In consequence the conclusion is logically reached that the date of the entry of the American race into the New World was probably between 10,000 and 25,000 years ago.

BLACKJACKING FISH TO CATCH THEM

BY KARL P. SCHMIDT

Assistant Curator of Reptiles

Probably most people remember being told in childhood that the way to go about catching a rabbit, squirrel, bird, or other small animal was "first to put salt on its tail." Then, too, there is the story about the man who reputedly made a fortune by advertising in agricultural papers: "Send one dollar for sure method of killing potato bugs and other pests." Thousands of farmers are said to have sent this man their dollars, in exchange for which they received a printed slip of paper reading: "Take two shingles. Place potato bug on one, and strike with the other."

To the fisherman accustomed to matching his wits against such game creatures as bass and muskellunge, the idea of going after a fish with a rock, and stunning it into unconsciousness to catch it may seem as ridiculous as salting the rabbit's tail or exterminating insects with shingles. However, this method of fishing is successfully employed by Indians in Central America.

During a collecting expedition in Honduras, I was located for some time at the mouth of the Santa Ana River. This is a mountain stream and its bed is strewn with rocks. During low water we found it almost impossible to employ even a small seine. The fish were shy and took refuge under the rocks at the slightest alarm, which made it impossible to catch them with a dip net. The fish poisons used by the natives in many parts of tropical America were unknown in this region.

An Indian girl from Salvador showed us the novel method of catching fish by stunning them, which, she said, was well known to the Indians of mountainous districts in Salvador. It consists in wading the stream armed only with a dish pan, in which the fish are to be placed. On approaching a pool, one observes under which of the larger rocks the most promising fish hide. Taking a stone about as large as one can easily raise over one's head, one throws it with as much force as possible on this rock. The concussion stuns even the larger fish, which probably lie with their backs in contact with the rock, and apparently it is transmitted to the water beneath the rock sufficiently to stun the smaller ones. It is important to turn over the rock at once, or to feel under it, before the fish recover. Small fish as well as large ones are taken.

The chief kinds of fish in the Santa Ana River were a small silvery characin called "sardinas" by the natives, several species of the sunfish-like cichlids, and a small catfish.

When we had only a few hours to spare, in the central highland of Honduras, we were able to collect fish by this method from a mountain brook. While it requires both patience and effort, I believe that it occasionally affords an invaluable supplement to the methods available for the collection of fishes for scientific purposes, as well as for the frying pan.

JANUARY GUIDE-LECTURE TOURS

Conducted tours of exhibits, under the guidance of staff lecturers, are made every afternoon at 3 P.M., except Saturdays, Sundays, and certain holidays. Following is the schedule of subjects and dates for January:

Week beginning January 2: Monday—New Year's holiday, no tour; Tuesday—Animal Groups; Wednesday—Philippine Hall; Thursday—General Tour; Friday—South America.

Week beginning January 9: Monday—Prehistoric Life; Tuesday—Java, Borneo, Sumatra; Wednesday—Indian Costumes; Thursday—General Tour; Friday—Primitive Musical Instruments.

Week beginning January 16: Monday—Animal Life in Cold Lands; Tuesday—Crystals and Gems; Wednesday—Plant Families; Thursday—General Tour; Friday—Egypt.

Week beginning January 23: Monday—Bird Habitat Groups; Tuesday—Primitive Metal Workers; Wednesday—Plants of Economic Value; Thursday—General Tour; Friday—The Mound Builders.

Week beginning January 30: Monday—Shields and Weapons; Tuesday—Chinese Arts.

Persons wishing to participate should apply at North Entrance. Tours are free and no gratuities are to be proffered. A new schedule will appear each month in FIELD MUSEUM NEWS. Guide-lecturers' services for special tours by parties of ten or more are available free of charge by arrangement with the Director a week in advance.

Gifts to the Museum

Following is a list of some of the principal gifts received during the last month:

From School of Forestry, Yale University—57 herbarium specimens, Colombia; from Companhia Ford Industrial do Brasil—23 herbarium specimens with accompanying wood specimens, Brazil; from Desert Laboratory—47 herbarium specimens, Arizona and Mexico; from Dr. Forrest Shreve—an Ephedra bush, Arizona; from Michigan State College—23 wood specimens, Philippines, Chile, and United States; from William J. Chalmers—large quartz geode, Illinois; from B. E. Dahlgren—7 specimens diamonds in matrix, 15 specimens exenite, 5 miscellaneous minerals, Brazil; from Frank Von Drake—69 specimens minerals, ores, and fossils, New Mexico; from A. T. Newman—30 limonite concretions, Wisconsin, and 4 sand-calcite concretions, South Dakota; from N. H. Seward—2 meteorites and a fire opal, Australia; from Col. Theodore Roosevelt—999 shells, Philippine Islands; from Elm Place School—a bird skeleton and a sharp shinned hawk; from Miss Bertha Cramer—an old squaw duck skin, Illinois; from Walter A. Weber—skeletons of a kingfisher and a white-winged scoter, Illinois; from John M. Simpson and A. Watson Armour III—3 topi and 3 gnu, Tanganyika, Africa; from Stuart L. Thompson—100 beetles and 4 bugs, Canada; from John G. Shedd Aquarium—a hawkbill turtle; from Dr. H. F. Strohecker—30 grasshoppers and 4 katydids, Georgia; from Misses N. V. and R. W. Haynie—435 butterflies and 9 moths; from Mrs. Frank O'Connell—a small boa; from E. Brundage, Jr.—120 insects, Illinois, Michigan, and North Carolina; from John T. Pirie—a red-shouldered hawk, Chicago area.

NEW MEMBERS

The following persons were elected to membership in Field Museum during the period from November 16 to December 15:

Associate Members

Edward L. Glaser, Cornelius J. Groot, Mrs. Olive Beaupre Miller.

Annual Members

Mrs. W. E. Burch, Joseph F. Chelius, E. K. Collison, Dr. Clinton A. Elliott, Lawrence A. Groot, Robert J. Hart, Frank J. Herlihy, Mrs. George H. High, Al Jourdan, L. B. Logan, Miss Mabel McKay, James Dougan Norris, Charles W. Schwede, John A. Williamson.

Mastodon Teeth on Exhibition

An exhibit of the teeth of North American mastodons, comprising specimens from the jaws of animals of various ages from baby mastodons of a few months to animals fifty or more years old, is to be seen among the collections in Ernest R. Graham Hall (Hall 38). The specimens are from a bog near Minooka, Illinois, in which many of the animals became mired and died.



Schmidt, Karl Patterson. 1933. "Blackjacking Fish to Catch Them." *Field Museum news* 4(1), 4-4.

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