

CALIPERS AND PATIENCE EXTRACT A STORY FROM SKULLS

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ONE of the few benefits of war was a revision course of our geography, and names long forgotten were revived in connection with naval strategy and major sea battles. So it was with the New Hebrides on account of their commanding position in the Western Pacific.

But, thanks to Jack London and other writers of romances of the South Seas, the geography of the Pacific had not been quite forgotten. The thrills of hurricanes, of pearl

portant data, and little attention is paid to the measurements of an individual skull.

Before recording measurements, the skulls are divided according to the localities where they were collected; then follows a division by sex. The males are distinguished by heavier brow ridges, larger mastoids, and stronger muscular attachments at the back of the skull. The male skull is usually thicker than the female, and it needs to be if the owner is to survive primitive warfare with stone clubs. Incidentally, a few skulls

and Australian aborigines, the anthropologist searches for evidence. Where did these Pacific peoples originate? What were their lines of migration? And was there a mixture of races, languages and cultures?

Years ago, the study of languages was relied upon as a hopeful solution of these problems. But scientists now realize that languages mix readily through trade and warfare, and the evidence afforded by the presence of foreign words is not a reliable guide to past wandering and mating. The Polynesians had no written language, but their priests kept verbal records of sea voyages, and of family trees (genealogies) for many generations. The deductions from such evidence are that the original home of the Polynesians was near northeast India, and that they voyaged through the Pacific in the period A.D. 500-1400.

But for Australian aborigines and Melanesians verbal records are meager, and there is not even a guess at the date of their entry into the Pacific. The natives of Australia, a non-Negro people with wavy hair and heavy brow ridges, seem to have been isolated in Australia for a long period. Their languages have so far shown no structural relationship to languages outside the Australian continent, though further study may establish some connection.

The research technique followed in this Museum first takes cognizance of the average measurements and general appearance of Negro skulls of Africa; and the same kind of data are recorded for skulls of native Australians. Exactly the same kind of measurements and other observations have been made on 429 adult Melanesian skulls.

From Museum records and those published by other institutions there accrues a vast amount of statistical data which gives the following main results:

There are groups of skulls from New Guinea and Solomon Islands (Melanesia) that are strongly Negroid and many average measurements come close to those for African Negroes. Skull measurements for Melanesians show clearly a Negro and an Australoid mixture in the western Pacific.

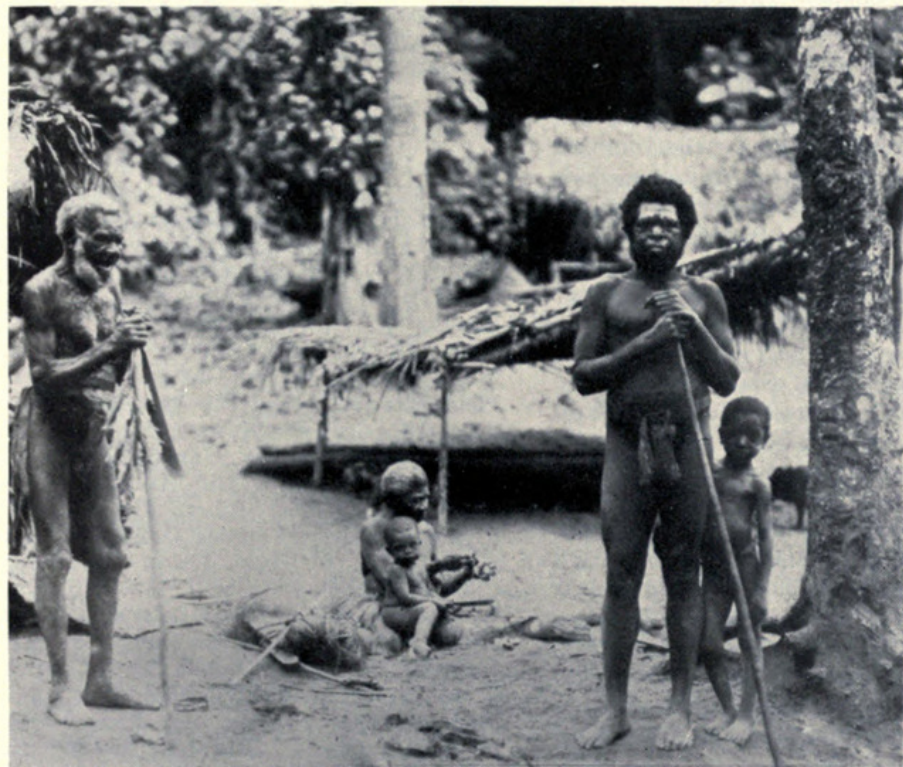
In New Britain, local groups of Melanesians indicate by their general appearance and skull measurements both Negro and Australoid migrations.

Cranial measurements afford scarcely any evidence of racial crossing between Polynesians and Melanesians.

The skulls of Ambrym Island (New Hebrides) are the subject of research in a recent Museum publication.* They show some affinities to Negro skulls of Africa, but heavy brow ridges and sloping foreheads make them more akin to Australians.

The craniometrist emphasizes the importance of his research because he feels that skull characters are the most reliable indication of the presence and mating of different racial types.

* See "Scientific Publications," p. 7.



VILLAGE
SCENE:
AMBRYM
IN THE
NEW
HEBRIDES

Some
Melanesian
types
studied by
Dr. Hamby
as told in
accompanying
article

diving, and of contacts ashore with the cannibals and head hunters of New Hebrides and other islands were familiar to many readers.

During the recent war, the Museum received from Lieutenant Commander W. E. Guest decorated ancestral skulls and a sacred effigy of a distinguished person of the New Hebrides. But the interest of this Museum in the ethnology of Melanesia goes far beyond current events to the period 1909-13. At that time the late Dr. Albert B. Lewis, then Curator of Melanesian Ethnology and leader of the Joseph N. Field South Pacific Expedition, made a large collection of human skulls in New Guinea, Solomon Islands, New Britain and New Hebrides. More than 400 of these are adult, in excellent condition, and undecorated, facilitating accurate measurements.

It would be natural to inquire what interest there might be in making such measurements. The process of recording dimensions, angles, and internal capacity of the brain-box is tedious; so also is the calculation of averages. Averages are the im-

indicate a knowledge of primitive surgery in removing fractured bone that pressed on the brain.

When the average measurements for the sexes have been worked out, the scientist is able to study sex ratios of the various traits. These generally show the female skull to be appreciably smaller than the male. But we must not argue, because the feminine brain-box is on the average smaller than that of her consort, that the latter has superior intelligence. The craniometrist has enough worry with instruments and technique without setting such a controversy in motion. The fact is that the smaller brain is correlated with the smaller body weight. Nature places emphasis on *quality* of brain matter rather than on quantity. So when we say that the average skull capacity (brain-box contents) is greatest for the white race, next for the Mongolians and Polynesians, and lowest for the Negroes and Australian aborigines, the obvious snap judgment must be avoided.

In his desire to know something of the remote history of Melanesians, Polynesians,



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