

ANTHROPOLOGICAL NOTES IN THE
SOLOMON ISLANDS

IN my last paper on the physical characters of the natives of St. Christoval and the neighbouring islands (NATURE, vol. xxvii. p. 607) I drew attention to the variation which was presented towards the opposite extremity of the Solomon group by the Treasury Islanders, of whom I considered the natives of the large adjacent island of Bougainville would prove to be a more pronounced type. My observations during 1883, which were confined, however, to the islands of the Bougainville Straits, and did not extend to the large island of that name, have confirmed the existence of this variation in the type of the natives at the western end of the group.

Proceeding at once to the comparison of the inhabitants of these two regions, I find that the most important distinction lies in the form of the skull. The cephalic indices obtained from forty head-measurements amongst the men of the islands of Bougainville Straits (Treasury Island, Shortland Islands, Faro Island) ranged between 76 and 85; three-fourths were included between 79 and 83 (inclusive); and the mean was 80.6. Of the same number of measurements amongst the men of St. Christoval, half produced cephalic indices between 75 and 78 (inclusive); the range was 69 to 83; and the mean 76.7. In the first region therefore brachycephaly may be said to prevail; in the latter, mesocephaly. But in addition to being more brachycephalous, the men of Bougainville Straits belong to a noticeably taller and more robust race, their average height being 5 feet 4½ inches to 5 feet 5 inches, as contrasted with 5 feet 3 inches to 5 feet 4 inches in the case of the St. Christoval natives. I should also add that the hue of the skin is of a darker shade, corresponding to numbers 35 and 42 of the colour-types of M. Broca. The character of the hair resembles that of the natives of the eastern islands of the group in being frizzly and bushy; but there is introduced among the populations of these islands in the Bougainville Straits an almost straight-haired element, to which further reference will be made.

The inhabitants of the islands just alluded to are also distinguished from those of St. Christoval and the eastern islands of the group in many of their arts and usages, to some of which I can here only just refer. Cannibalism is rarely if ever practised among the natives of Bougainville Straits: it is, however, frequent amongst those of St. Christoval. Polygamy is more prevalent in the former region, where Gorai, the powerful chief of the Shortlands, possesses between eighty and one hundred wives, and Mulé, the chief of Treasury Island, owns between twenty-five and thirty. The patriarchal and despotic rule of these chiefs must be contrasted with the little authority which belongs to the majority of the chiefs in the eastern islands. The women of Bougainville Straits manufacture a kind of unglazed pottery, employing for this purpose a wooden trowel, a large smooth pebble 3 to 4 inches across, and a ring-cushion of palm leaf; a rudely-shaped saucer is first made from a lump of the clay; and upon this the vessel is built up, strip by strip. A large number of the houses in the principal villages of Faro—an island in the middle of the Straits—are built upon piles. I should here refer to the greater prevalence amongst the natives of the islands in Bougainville Straits of the cutaneous disease—an aggravated form of “body-ring-worm”—to which I alluded in my description of the St. Christoval natives: four-fifths of the inhabitants of Treasury Island are thus affected; and half of the chief’s wives are covered with this disease from head to foot.

From frequent observation of the different modes of wearing the hair which prevail among the Solomon Islanders, I am of the opinion that their variety is to be attributed more to individual fancy than to any difference in the character of the hair. According to his taste, a man may prefer to wear his hair close and uncombed, when the short matted curls with small spiral give a

woolly appearance like that of the hair of the African negro. Should he allow his hair to grow, making but little use of his comb the hair will hang in ringlets 3 to 8 inches long—a mode more frequent amongst the natives of the eastern islands of the group, and best described as the “mop-headed” style. More often from a moderate amount of combing, the locks are loosely entangled and the hair-mass assumes a somewhat bushy appearance, the arrangement into locks being still discerned and the surface of the hair presenting a tufted aspect. The majority of natives, however, produce by constant combing a bushy periwig in which all the hairs are entangled independently into a loose frizzly mass, the separate locks being no longer discernible. These four styles of wearing the hair—the woolly, the mop-like, the partially bushy, the completely bushy—prevail with both sexes, the fashion varying in different islands of the group. I am inclined to view the mop-headed style as the natural mode of growth, it being the one which the hair would assume if allowed to grow uncombed and uncut. The Solomon Islander unfortunately makes such a constant use of the comb that one rarely sees his hair as nature intended it to grow. When, however, a man with bushy hair has been diving for some time, the hairs, disentangling themselves to a great extent, gather together into long narrow ringlets—nature’s *coiffure* of the Solomon Island native.

Amongst the natives of Bougainville Straits the hair is coarser and of a darker hue, corresponding to numbers 34 and 49 of the colour-types of M. Broca; whilst the lighter hue of the hair of the St. Christoval natives more accords with numbers 35 and 42. The diameter of the spiral when measurable varied between 5 and 10 mms.—its usual range throughout the group; but on account of the practice of combing it was often difficult to measure it with any accuracy. Here I may allude to the almost straight-haired element which has been infused among the inhabitants of Bougainville Straits. The individuals thus characterised have very dark skins, which for want of comparison might be termed black; the hue, however, nearly agrees with colour-type 42 of M. Broca; the hair, which is even darker, corresponding with types 34 and 49, is almost straight, often erect, and giving the person a shock-headed appearance; whilst it may in some instances tend to gather into curls of a large spiral. I was unable to detect any constant change in physical characters accompanying this variety in the growth of hair. The general colour of the iris amongst the natives of Treasury Island may be described as a deep muddyy-violet, approaching nearest to number 11 of the colour-types of M. Broca.

The relation between the lengths of the upper and lower limbs in over thirty individuals was fairly constant, the mean intermembral index being 68. A steady index, giving a mean of 33.4, indicated the proportion of the length of the upper limb to the height of the body; but the corresponding index which my measurements gave for the lower limb was somewhat variable, and the mean 49.2 is therefore not so reliable.

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ON THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE ASCIDIÆ
COMPOSITÆ

COMPOUND ASCIDIANS should undoubtedly be studied in the fresh condition. This becomes evident to any one who, after having admired the graceful forms, gorgeous colouring and transparency of tissue exhibited by the living animals on our western and southern coasts, or in such a favoured spot as the Chausey Archipelago, seeks in vain for these or any other beauties in the leathery repulsive-looking masses usually exhibited in a collection of Tunicata.¹ And it becomes painfully impressed upon one when working through a large collec-

¹ There are exceptions: some few species retain both form and colour fairly well when preserved.