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ON THE ANCIENT INHABITANTS OF THE CANARY ISLANDS.

By THOMAS HODGKIN, M.D.

Read before the Society 21st May 1845.

I have no pretension to be able to solve the ethnological problem presented by the uncertainty which exists as to the origin and affinities of the ancient inhabitants of the Canary Islands; yet I trust that a few observations and reflections bearing on this subject may not be uninteresting to the members of the Ethnological Society, although I am not prepared to say whether my remarks are more likely to lead to the solution of the question, or to serve truth in the opposite direction, by preventing the adoption of erroneous inferences.

It is many years since the inspection of Guanchee mummies induced me to believe that the ancient inhabitants of the Canary Islands were a diminutive people. It was, however, only a passing observation, which led to no particular inquiry at the time. It happened, however, that at the same period I was examining many of the animal productions of Northern and Southern Africa, in conjunction with my friend Dr Knox of Edinburgh; and we were both of us impressed with the many points of resemblance between these productions in the remote parts of the Continent. The notorious fact of the existence of a once numerous, though now greatly reduced, race of diminutive human beings in the south of Africa—the Hottentots and the Bushmen—seemed to find their counterpart in the obscure, and, undoubtedly, in part fabulous, relations of Troglodytes, formerly supposed to exist towards the north-east of the Continent. I could not avoid associating these two points with the former existence of a small race in the islands of the western coast of the same Continent. I merely noticed the coincidence, without attempting to pursue any inquiry into the subject, or even supposing that materials could be collected subservient to the investigation.

At a somewhat later period, having occasion to classify a considerable collection of human skulls, including specimens from various parts of the globe, those of Africans, and their

descendants, naturally formed a distinct group. This group, however, required arrangement within itself, which might either consist in subdivision or gradual transition. In some respects the latter appeared preferable, and more accordant with the facts which were before me.

Though the African skulls, generally, may be regarded as elongated, and possessing that peculiar character which Dr Prichard has called *Steino-bregmic*, and Prognathous, as respects the form and position of the alveolar processes, there are marked differences as respects the form of the forehead and other parts of the cranium. In some the os frontis rises almost vertically from the supraorbital ridges, and being comparatively flat in front, makes a more prompt and decided turn towards the temples than is to be found in almost any other skulls. From the forehead, thus almost vertically formed, the upper part of the head recedes more horizontally than in those African skulls in which the opposite character of forehead is most conspicuous. An admirable specimen of a head thus formed had struck my attention in the cast of a Mosambique Negro, preserved in the Museum of the Garden of Plants, in Paris; and I found this form to prevail, I believe, without any exception, in the skulls which came from the same part of Africa. In some instances, the forehead, though vertical, was very low; but we see the same form elevated in the beautiful and capacious forehead of *Leo Africanus*, a learned Negro, also from the eastern part of the Continent.

In those skulls which exhibit the type which may be regarded as the opposite to that which I have just described, the forehead recedes as it rises, and, in many instances, a similar direction is continued to the posterior part of the head, producing, as Dr Knox has justly remarked with respect to some African heads, a great height from the meatus externus to the vertex. The forehead recedes laterally as well as superiorly, not only causing the turn of the temples to be less marked, but rendering the frontal protuberances, which are very conspicuous in the former type, little, if at all, perceptible in this. Skulls of this description belong, as far as I have been able to make out, to the natives of the western coast of Africa, and are not only remarkable for the comparatively large size of the bones of the face, but are often throughout of great

thickness and weight. An example of this kind of head is, if I am not mistaken, exhibited in the antique statue of a Negro in the act of stooping, and which is commonly called the knife-grinder. The striking peculiarities of these heads are exaggerated in American caricatures, in which, contrasted with the fine foreheads given to the Whites, they seem designed to suggest the idea that they are scarcely human.

The skulls of Caffres present a form of forehead which is intermediate between the extremes which I have now described, the lower part of the forehead being vertical, the frontal protuberances being conspicuous, and the sides of the forehead not so much bevelled off as in the Western heads. I was, therefore, induced to believe that there was a gradual transition from the most striking examples of the first type, by way of South Africa to the Western coast, where the opposite type is the most strongly marked. I communicated these views to my friend Antonius D'Abbadie, when he was preparing himself to become an African traveller, and who, whilst devoting much of his time to the exact sciences, was not regardless of ethnographical characteristics. Circumstances having led him to visit Brazil, before his proceeding to Africa, he paid special attention to the African race imported into that country. The Portuguese, as is well known, have derived their slaves from the Western, as well as from the Eastern coast of Africa. The observations of my friend not merely tended to confirm the localities which I have assigned to forms, but on one occasion he was enabled to correct a mistake which referred an individual to the West coast, who, on more careful inquiry, turned out to be derived from the East, as A. D'Abbadie had insisted that he must have been. It is, however, highly probable that many exceptions may be met with, since it is well known that Africans pass from one part of the continent to another, making journeys occupying several months. Not only individuals, but groups may possibly be found to clash with the distribution, in the main correctly conjectured; and the Ethnography of Africa, when more completely filled up than is at present the case, may furnish examples analogous to the existence of Slavonic families in the South of Europe.

I much regret the want of observations and information

regarding the heads of Northern Africans. Independently of the northern parts of Africa having been, from a very remote period, in great measure, inhabited by Caucasian families, which, in the lapse of ages, may have sufficiently blended themselves with their African neighbours to have effected some personal changes, it seems pretty certain, from the descriptions given by modern travellers, as well as from delineations and descriptions of great antiquity, that the strictly African type which has prevailed in Northern Africa, is not precisely the same with that which is now to be found either on the east or the west coast, or in Southern Africa. I shall not be greatly surprised, if, in purely physical characters, there should hereafter be discovered, as in other zoological productions of the country, an approach to those characters which are met with towards the Cape.

The difficulty of the inquiry into the origin of the ancient inhabitants of the Canary Islands, is increased by the circumstance, that the African relations with the Canary Islands, in remote ages, would, in all probability, have been with the Northern tribes, of which, unhappily, too little is known. From the statues and drawings made by the ancient Egyptians, and which have been preserved to the present time, it would appear that there existed in the north of Africa a large proportion of individuals possessing the intermediate character between the Caucasian variety and that of the Negroes. The colour, which is not to be strictly relied upon, is a sort of swarthy red; the lips are thick; the eyes are full, and the nose somewhat flattened; yet these features, as contrasted with those of the Negro, are far more delicate and regular: the hair is not frizzled; and, in males, the chin is furnished with a beard of some length. Major Denham has described a people, still to be found in the northern parts of Africa, distinguished alike from the Caucasian Arabs who live near them, and from the numerous Negro tribes with which they are brought into contact by the slave-dealers, who collect their captives from various parts of the Continent. Their complexion is described by the Major as reddish, and his pen and his pencil alike suggest the resemblance between this people and the ancient race before alluded to.

I regret that I have been unable to examine skulls, either ancient or modern, belonging to this group. Differing, as they do, from both of the forms of the Negro head which I have already described, and yet, for reasons which I shall presently glance at, to be regarded as a strictly African, rather than as an outlying Caucasian branch, it would be very interesting to search for some peculiarity of conformation characteristic of the Ethiopic variety in all its subdivisions. If such a peculiarity exist, I have not at present any positive idea as to what it may be. There is, however, a peculiarity which, I think, I have noticed in all skulls of truly African Negroes. The *ossa nasi* are nearly parallel to each other, especially at the upper part, which confers a breadth as well as flatness on the bridge of the nose. I think that the nasal processes of the superior maxillæ, and the *ossa unguis*, have somewhat corresponding modifications. I am unable to say whether the Galla skulls present these peculiarities; but with the dark complexion of the skin there is so marked a difference between the form of their features and those of other African tribes, that it seems impossible not to infer so strong an admixture from another stock, as to account for the deviation from the common rule, if it exist. In the darkest Blacks of the Indian Archipelago and of New Holland, the former having woolly hair, and the latter not, the peculiarity of the African *ossa nasi* is not met with, so far as I have been able to discover; but in the Australian Blacks, I have noticed, in the *os frontis*, a remarkable form in the outer part of the orbit, giving great breadth and flatness to that part of the forehead.

As I have already stated, the observations which I have just offered have been made with sole reference to physical character, without any bias from philological or genealogical data. That local influences, as well as parentage, may produce some visible effects on the physical form, can hardly be doubted; but it seems highly probable, that the local influences are not only by far the more limited, but that they will be found, when carefully investigated, to be of such a nature that they may be taken into account, when the characteristics of family or variety are under consideration.

In the valuable pages of my friend James M'Queen, we have

had thrown before us a condensed abstract of the distribution of African tribes ; and the light of history, from the most distant period to the present time, gave us a hasty glance at their ascertainable ties of kindred. The striking points became obvious, but the details demand and merit closer and prolonged inspection.

From our friend Dr Latham we have repeatedly had a lucid exposition of the fact, that languages differing widely as to the words of which they are composed, may be so similar, with respect to their grammatical construction, that the philologist could not hesitate to unite them in a common group. If I am not mistaken, the African languages constitute one of the best marked and circumscribed of these groups ; and I am glad to be able to add to the value of the necessarily meagre paper which I am offering on the present occasion, the results of Dr Latham's examination of the fragments of the ancient language spoken in the Canary Islands. You will, doubtless, be led to infer from them, as I had previously done from an inquiry respecting the stature of the Guanchees, that the Canary Islands have been visited by different branches of the African stock, prior to their invasion by the Spaniards and Portuguese, who in a short time have extirpated all living traces of the races which preceded them. We have, therefore, merely a few dry bones and scanty remains of nascent civilization to aid in the solution of the ethnological problem which I announced in the commencement of this paper.

It is well known, that the race which formerly inhabited the Island of Teneriffe resembled the ancient Egyptians in this particular, that they carefully preserved the bodies of their dead, having recourse to processes by which decomposition was retarded. There was also some resemblance in the destination of the bodies so prepared, as they were placed in regular order, in the erect posture, in dark and secluded chambers expressly devoted to this purpose, although the Egyptians reared those gigantic structures, to which Martial has applied the term of *barbara miracula*, and thus obtained sepulchral chambers which were altogether artificial ; whereas the Guanchees took advantage of the natural caverns which their volcanic

region offered them in ample numbers. The cave-temples and tombs of Upper Egypt sufficiently evince that even in this particular a resemblance existed.

The inspection of Guanchee mummies brought from the caves of Teneriffe to enrich anatomical collections, contrasting, by their small dimensions, with those of Egypt, had strongly impressed me with the idea that the extinct inhabitants of the Canaries must have been a people of rather diminutive stature, resembling, in this respect, the Hottentots of Southern Africa, and some of the past, if not of the present, inhabitants of the eastern part of the same continent.

It was with considerable surprise, that I observed that this idea of the stature of the Guanchees was by no means borne out by the historical account of this people, left on record by the European conquerors of those islands, or their immediate successors. Our learned countryman, Dr Prichard, when treating of the Guanchees, in connection with those African races to which they evidently belong, speaks of them as of considerable stature, and great bodily power.

Sabin Berthelot, Secretary of the Geographical Society of Paris, and a member of the Ethnological Society of that city, in a paper presented to the last named Society, has given an elaborate account of this people, compiled from a great variety of early authorities, which abounds with notices of the extraordinary bodily power of this people; and the indications which he gives of their physical character, are not at all consistent with their having been a small race of men.

Edrisi states, that an expedition from Lisbon, in the commencement of the twelfth century, found the natives of the Canaries possessing barks, living together in houses, and under the command of a king; that they were men of high stature, reddish-brown complexion, but indubitably of a White race, since they had long hair. Their women were of extraordinary beauty. In 1341, they were again visited by the Portuguese and Spaniards. Most of the inhabitants were then nearly naked; yet they possessed houses, well-built, of hewn-stone and strong wood-work. They had strong vigorous limbs, but were not remarkably tall. It is said that they were "Satis domestici, ultra quam sint multi ex Hispanis." The

Chaplains of Bethencourt, the contemporaries of the first conquest, which took place early in the sixteenth century, thus expressed themselves:—"Go all over the world, and you will not find finer or better formed people. They have great capacity, if they had but instruction. Their women are very beautiful, and wear their hair tied in tresses behind. This people are of high stature; they can scarcely be taken alive, for they run like hares."

Cadamosto, who relates that some of the islanders were occasionally taken and sold as slaves, says, "that they ran and bounded among rocks and precipices with the lightness of goats, and their leaps were beyond belief; that they had also great strength of arms, and that they could throw with the greatest precision." He adds, "I hence conclude, that this race of men is the most skilful and active in the world."

Viana, who published in 1604, says, "*Les Guanches étaient des gens vertueux, honnetes et braves; en eux se trouvaient réunies les plus belles qualités: magnanimité, adresse et courage, formes athlétiques, force d'âme et de corps, fierté de caractère, noblesse de maintien, physiognomie riante, esprit intelligent et dévouement patriotique.*"

Though it is recorded by the Chaplains that they had strongly-built houses and fortifications, it is believed that many of the inhabitants took advantage of the several caverns which abounded in the country, and lived as troglodytes. The natives of a part of Fortaventura, were remarkable for the height of their stature. The natives of Ferrol are said to have been of middle stature; those of Gomer resemble them in this respect, but are renowned for their strength and activity, which was particularly shewn in the address with which they avoided missile weapons.

The Guanchee females are also said to have been remarkable for their strength and courage. When the Spaniards had landed at Tzacorte, Guarinfanta opposed them. At first she was obliged to fly by their number; but she deceived them by a feigned flight, and retracing her steps, seized one of them and carried him off, and was about to throw herself over a precipice with him, when eight soldiers overpowered her. The women of Palma were, for the most part, of manly courage,

and raised themselves to a par with men by their strength and bravery. It is worthy of remark, that the women of this and some other islands, were unable to suckle their children, and had recourse to goat's milk and artificial means.

The Haouarythes of Palma were large and robust. There was nothing unpleasant in their countenances, and their features were regular. Their Prince Mayantigo, was called "portion of heaven," on account of his beautiful countenance.

Galindo has described the gymnastic exercises most in vogue amongst the people of Fortaventura. Two men held a long spear by its extremities, raising it as high as possible over their heads, whilst their companions had to leap over it. The islanders were so active at this game, that they could take three successive leaps over as many lances, placed parallel to each other, at different distances.

The Guayres or Councillors of the Canaries were chosen from amongst the most noble and brave. The names of some of these have been preserved, and their actions recorded. Of one of them, Adorgama, it is said, "This Canarian Hercules brought down, with a single throw of a stone, a palm-branch, which he had taken for his aim, on one of the loftiest date trees. It is well known, that their strong large leaves are capable of resisting the stroke of an axe. He could wrestle for two hours together without taking rest; and no one was found able, with both hands, to prevent him from carrying a vessel filled with water to his lips, without spilling a drop, or cause his hands to shake whilst he was drinking. In a single combat with one of the most valorous warriors of Telde, he happened to fall under his antagonist; but he, at the same time, compressed him so forcibly in his arms, that his bones broke, and he was obliged to beg for quarter. This powerful athlete was taken prisoner, after having his thigh run through with a spear, by the General Juan Rejon. He was sent to Seville with other prisoners, where his extraordinary strength was the admiration of the Spaniards."

Mummies.

The Guanchees had the art of embalming, and their mummies were prepared in a manner somewhat similar to that of

the Egyptians. Some were placed in coffins, others were wrapped in sheep's and goats' skins. They were placed in caverns in almost inaccessible situations; some in erect posture, others reclining. Mention is made of one of an aged woman, which was placed in a bent position, with her knees drawn up, like those of Peruvian mummies. The mummies of the Guanchees exhibited considerable differences as to the care and expense bestowed in their preparation, both as to the character of the covering, which was sometimes raw, at other times tanned; sometimes single, and at other times extending to six envelops, sown together with admirable workmanship.

Having some very intelligent friends residing in the Canaries for the benefit of their health, I took advantage of the opportunity to correspond with them on the subject of the ancient inhabitants of those islands. They found that the traces of their former existence were, to a great degree, obliterated; and of the mummies, formerly so numerous, not a single specimen was to be obtained.

My friend C. Smith, however, kindly exerted himself, and succeeded in obtaining portions of three or four skeletons. All of these, even granting that they belong to individuals of the female sex—which was probably the case—are evidently the remains of individuals of small stature.

As I had hitherto merely observed, without measuring, I was desirous of putting the question to the test of actual measurement, and I was pleased to find that this could be applied to a considerable number of specimens. The result of this inquiry I shall now offer in a tabular form. As there has been no picking and selection in bringing together these data, it may very fairly be supposed that they will furnish a tolerably accurate idea of the average dimensions of the race to which they belong.

A male Guanche in the College of Surgeons.

	Feet.	Inches.	
Height,	4	10	
Breadth of os frontis,	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	
Arm,	2	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	
Radius,	0	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	
Femur,	0	15	
<hr/>			
Guanche,	4	6.3	Garden of Plants.
Do. male,	4	10.6	do.
Do. female,	4	7	do.

	Inches.	
Femora of different Guanches, . . . }	14 $\frac{8}{8}$ }	} Sent to Dr H. from Teneriffe.
Part of a small Cranium, . . . }	14 $\frac{4}{8}$ }	
	15 $\frac{1}{2}$ }	
A small Cranium, Dr More's collection.		
Radius and hand, larger size, do.		
Entire body, dried, weighing only 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb.—Blumenbach.		

Measurement of Ossa Femoris, not Guanche :

	Inches.		Coll. Surg.	Inches.
Littlejohn, . . .	22			17 $\frac{1}{2}$
O'Brien, Coll. Surg.	22 and a frac-	tion.	do.	17 $\frac{1}{2}$
do.	22		do.	17 $\frac{1}{4}$
do.	19	Small,	do.	15 $\frac{7}{8}$
do.	18	A Peruvian,	do.	15 $\frac{1}{2}$

The result of this investigation has rather tended to confirm my previous impression that, in former times, a small race of men existed in the Canary Islands; and as there is, at the same time, no reason to doubt the general accuracy of those authors who wrote from personal observation, and whose statements bear out the description adopted by Dr Prichard and Sabin Berthelot, it becomes a matter of curious ethnological speculation and inquiry, how these conflicting evidences are to be reconciled. That which suggests itself as the most plausible is, that the Canary Islands have, at different epochs, been occupied by tribes or nations of men presenting different physical characters. So far from there being any thing extraordinary in such succession, it is known to have taken place in several other parts of the globe. The numerous sepulchral mounds and tumuli, and other remains, extensively, if not numerous, spread over the northern portion of the Old Continent, attest the former existence of a race differing in their physical as well as their social character and degree of civilization from the population now possessing the same territory, and even from those whom history, in some instances, teaches us to have more recently preceded the existing stock. The parallel case which I have just suggested with respect to the Canary Islands, is only offered as a conjecture tending to the removal of an apparent difficulty; and I am aware that it must be by no means easy to apply any test by which to confirm or weaken its probability.

The vocabulary of the language spoken by the inhabitants of the Canaries at the time of the conquest, so far as it has

been preserved, indicates that this people were closely connected with the Berbers; and several points of resemblance, both in disposition and customs, have been pointed out in confirmation of this received connection. In addition to the points of correspondence, it would be desirable to discover and indicate those of difference. So far as I am aware, the Berbers were not in the habit of embalming their dead. We may, therefore, not unreasonably suspect that the Berbers who passed over to the Canary Islands did not take this practice with them, but rather adopted it from another people who preceded them, and whose process of embalming, whilst strikingly resembling that of the ancient Egyptians, was yet accompanied with the same particulars, indicative of a no less remarkable difference, which makes the Guanchee mummies hold a character intermediate between those of Egypt and those of Peru. It is rather remarkable that there had apparently been a falling off in the art of making mummies, and that a practice of inferior character was in use at the time when the island became known to the Spaniards. The state of civilization seems likewise to have been of rather an anomalous character. Temples, houses, progress in some of the arts, and the state of society divided into classes, seem to be the token of advanced civilization with which the semibarbarous character observable in other particulars, is strangely contrasted. I may mention, more especially, the practice of going in a state almost approaching to nudity, which appears to have been very common. The girdle, forming a deep fringe of numerous threads, constituted a garment altogether characteristic of savage life. I regret that I do not at present see any clew to the satisfactory solution of the question; but whilst the philologist may possibly detect in the vocabulary of the Guanchees words so distinct from those of the Berbers as to indicate that mixture of different races had at one time taken place, the careful examination of the few relics which have been preserved, and more especially of the mummies which are to be found in many collections, may admit a ray of light where none at present is to be seen. A careful investigation of the original sources of information would, in this, as well as in many other ethnological inquiries, be very important.

PHILOLOGICAL COMMENTS BY DR LATHAM.

Such evidences respecting the origin of the Guanches as was to be drawn from their language, was known to the early Spanish historian of the Canary Isles, and to his English translator, Glas. It was also known that the language of the islands of Fortaventura, Lanceroto, Ferro, Palma, and Gomera, were akin to the Canary Proper. The Teneriffe language, however, was made an exception. This was stated to stand alone. The six others were compared with one of the languages of Northern Africa, viz., the Shillah dialect of the Berber; and with this they were found to coincide to the amount of about twenty words out of eighty, or one-fourth. Since then the affinities between the Guanche languages on one side, and the Berber on the other has been recognised by Hornemann, Adelung, Ritter, Prichard. Quite lately, however, the author of a paper in the Journal of the Geographical Transactions has demurred to the received opinions. He brings much evidence to prove that the languages of the different islands were mutually unintelligible. He also objects to treating the six languages as one, and making the comparison with them *en masse*.

Now languages may be mutually unintelligible and yet have a close ethnographical relationship; as is the case with the English and German, the Dutch and Danish, &c. On the other hand, the comparison of languages in groups is one of the most legitimate processes in philology. Hence it is with great truth that the editor of the journal in question dissents, in a note appended to the article, from the objections of the writer.

The Berber language is the language of the whole of Northern Africa with the exception of the Arabic. It is spoken on the coast of the Atlantic, and on the confines of Egypt; in the Oasis of Siwah, in Fezzan, Tunis, Tripoli, Algiers, and Morocco; and it is known under the various names of Showiyah, Amazirgh, Shillah, and Ertana. It is the mother-tongue of the Algerine Cabyles, and of the Tuaricks of Sahara. It was the ancient language of Numidia and Mauritania; and was probably spoken in its older stages, by Jugurtha and Masinissa.

Of late years it has justly been looked upon as one of the most important languages in Ethnography.

Such is the family to which the languages of six out of seven of the Canary Islands belong.

The isolation of the Teneriffe tongue is rather apparent than real. Of its vocabulary we have but thirty-nine words ; of which only fifteen are the names of common objects.

<i>English</i>	cloak	<i>English</i>	knife or sharp stone
<i>Teneriffe</i>	ahico	<i>Teneriffe</i>	tavonas
<i>Shillah</i>	tahayck	<i>Lancerota</i>	taffiaque
<i>English</i>	butter	<i>English</i>	God
<i>Teneriffe</i>	oche	<i>Teneriffe</i>	guarirari
<i>Ferro</i>	aculan	. . .	aquayareran
<i>English</i>	milk	<i>Canary</i>	gayres—senator
<i>Teneriffe</i>	ahof	<i>Shillah</i>	rugan—ruler
<i>Canary</i>	aho		
<i>Lancerota</i>	alo		
<i>Shillah</i>	agho		
<i>English</i>	goat		
<i>Teneriffe</i>	ara		
<i>Canary</i>	aridaman		

The general affinities of the Guanche or Canary languages (the Teneriffe being included) are, of course, those of the Berber tongues in general.

Respecting these the present writer unwillingly differs from several distinguished philologists. It is not his opinion that the Berber tongues have a place with the Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, and Æthiopic languages, in the great Semitic class. He inclined to connect it rather with the true Negro languages, (or the African Proper) ; although his *data* for so doing are deficient in fulness and definitude. Finally, he believes that the Tibboo language has been improperly connected with the Berber tongues, and consequently, through them, with the Guanche.

The word *Faccan* = *priest*, if connected with the Arabic *Fakir*, is remarkable ; inasmuch as it indicates the probability of the population of the Canary Isle having left the Continent of Africa subsequent to the Mahommedan conquest.

Over and above the regular vocabulary of Glas, isolated words (such as the name of the various kinds of fish) are to be found in his work. The numerals, moreover, and a few other words, occur, from other miscellaneous sources, in the paper of the Geographical Transactions.