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Ethnological Notes on the Motu, Koitapu and Koiari Tribes of New Guinea.

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scarcely any physical characteristics common to the natives of the Andamanese and the New Hebrides.

Mr. WHITMEE : In reply to the remarks of Mr. Wallace, Mr. Keane and Professor Flower, I may say, I have retained Malayo-Polynesian out of respect for Baron W. v. Humboldt, and because it is in use ; otherwise Indo-Pacific would doubtless be the better term. I am prepared to accept Melanesian, or any other name which may commend itself to ethnologists ; but I must except “Mahori,” which I think I could never accept. The brown Polynesians (Sawaióri) I do not regard as a mixed race ; they are the purest of the whole family. Those in North-West Polynesia (Tárapon) are mixed, quite a hybrid people. The blacks cannot be put under one term if it is to imply any close connection. The Australians are very different from the others. Negrito-Polynesian, if used, would be simply a convenient geographical name for the blacks of this region. But I am not prepared strongly to press the adoption of that name.

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The following communication, entitled “Ethnological Notes on the Motu, Koitapu, and Neighbouring Tribes of New Guinea,” was contributed by the Rev. W. G. LAWES.

ETHNOLOGICAL NOTES *on the* MOTU, KOITAPU *and* KOIARI  
TRIBES *of* NEW GUINEA. By Rev. W. G. LAWES.

THE following paper is intended to be a sequel to one by Dr. W. Y. Turner on the “Ethnology of the Motu” which was read before this Institute and published in the Journal for May 1878. The information contained in it has been gathered during three years’ residence (from December 1874 to December 1877) at Port Moresby.

I would repeat the caution given by Dr. Turner in his paper in reference to the size of New Guinea and the necessity of specifying with exactness the district about which statements are made and information given. This caution is more important in reference to the people than to the country ; the diversities of race and tribe are so numerous. An illustration of this may be found in the fact that twenty-five different languages are certainly spoken on the 300 miles of coast extending from Yule Island to China Straits. Many of these are, of course, dialects, but they differ from each other as much as those spoken on the different islands of Polynesia.

Port Moresby is in lat. 9° 30’ S. and long. 147° 10’ E., it is the centre of the Motu district which extends 18 miles to the east, and 30 miles to the west.

My knowledge of the Motu tribe is the greatest, but as Dr Turner has treated of it so fully in his paper, I shall simply

supplement his statements by a few respecting the Motu and then proceed to the Koitapu and Koiari tribes.

In reference to the tatooing of the women.

There is but little variation in the pattern and style, but this seems to arise rather from inability to design new, than from any special attachment to the old. They were glad to get new patterns from some of our printed calicoes and other English designs. They attach great importance to the tatooing as a means of enhancing beauty. A woman lighter than usual is esteemed handsome, principally because the tatooing shows up so much better on the lighter skin.

The Kerepunu women at Hood Bay are tatooed, and there is no essential difference in pattern from that of the Motu.

Some of the men are tatooed across the chest and forehead; but in their case it is a decoration of honour. It means that the wearer has shed human blood, or in plain English, that he is a murderer. It is the ambition of every young man to get tatooed. Raids were sometimes made on small villages along the coast for the simple purpose of killing some, that the young men may come back and be tatooed. It was no uncommon thing to hear men quarrelling, and one saying to the other, "Who are you that you should talk? Where are your tatoo marks? Who have you killed that you should speak to me?"

The tatooing is done by marking the pattern on the skin with lamp-black and water, and then puncturing the skin by lightly tapping a thorn on it. The whole of the pattern is gone over in this manner, and but little pain or inflammation seems to result from it.

A system of *taboo*, such as that which prevails in Polynesia is practised by the Motu. The fruit of a tree, for instance, is tabooed by plaiting a cocoanut leaf round the trunk. When a man is taboo, he lives apart from his wife, and his food is cooked for him by his sister. It is worthy of note that a man is taboo after handling a dead body: generally for three days, during which time he does not touch food with his hands. At the end of that time he bathes and the taboo ends. On a variety of occasions and things the taboo system comes in practice.

The belief of the Motu respecting their dead is that the Tirava, or spirit, goes away out to ocean space (Taulu), which seems to be their Hades, and then to Elema, where he feasts on sago, and rejoices in plenty. Elema is the district about Freshwater Bay where the Motu go once a year for sago, and which is to them a paradise of plenty and animal enjoyment. Similarly at Kerepunu (Hood Bay), the spirits of the departed go to the mountain tops where they feast and chew betel-nut *ad libitum*. In each

case it is the district whence their choicest food in the greatest quantity comes.

A woman died at Port Moresby just before I left. When the body was laid in the grave, the husband threw himself on it and quietly sobbed out his grief. After a while, his friends attempted to lift him off, but he said, "Stop a minute." He then put his mouth to her ear, whispered for a minute or two, and then allowed them to remove him. He asked her not to be angry with them because they could not give her a share of their feasts, and when they should go inland hunting, or to sea fishing, that she would watch and protect them.

The legends of a people are often helpful in tracing their origin.

The Motu have a legend of the origin of fire amongst them which is as follows :—

Our ancestors used to eat their food raw or cooked in the sun. One day they saw smoke at Taulu (*Taulu*—ocean space). The dog, the snake, the bandicoot, a bird and kangaroo all looked and exclaimed, "Smoke at Taulu," "Smoke at Taulu," "The Tauluites have fire. Who will go and fetch us some?" The snake went, but the sea was rough and he soon came back. The bandicoot tried and he returned. The bird started but the wind was strong and he could not fly, so he came back. Then the kangaroo went, but he had to return. Then the dog said, "I'll go and fetch the fire." He swam until he reached an island. He landed, saw a fire and women cooking; they said, "Here's a strange dog, kill him, kill him!" But the dog seized a burning firebrand by the unburnt end, and jumped into the sea. He swam back, the people watching him from the shore as he came nearer to the land with the smoking firebrand. He landed, and the women rejoiced to have fire, and women came from other villages to buy it of them. Soon after the dog landed, the other animals were jealous and abused him. He ran after the snake and he went into the earth, in a hole. The bandicoot did the same. The kangaroo went to the mountains, and there has been enmity ever since between the dog and the other animals.

I now pass from the Motu to the Koitapu. The Koitapu are now for the most part to be found living at one end of the Motu villages, although preserving their distinctness and separateness. They are also to be found in little groups of a few houses, a little way inland, or on a hill overlooking the sea, all through the Motu district.

In *physique*, there is but little difference between the Koitapu and Motu. The typical Koitapu man is slightly darker in colour than the Motu, though by no means so dark as the coast tribes

to the west of Yule Island. The hair is frizzly, not woolly, the forehead is perhaps more receding than in the Motu.

The principal differences between the Motu and Koitapu, are the following:—

*Language.*—This is essentially different from the Motu and all the coast dialects. It is closely allied to the language spoken by the Koiari or mountain tribes, but differs from Malayan or Malayo-Polynesian. In a vocabulary of 250 words which I collected, there are only 12 words which have any affinity for coastal dialects or Malayo-Polynesian, and these are probably borrowed from Motu, or *vice versâ*.

The word for “spirit” among the Koitapu is the Polynesian “Tua.”

*Food and Cooking.*—The second marked difference is in their food and mode of cooking. Their bill of fare is more extensive than that of their neighbours. They add to it, birds, snakes, lizards, dogs, cuscus, echidna, and some kinds of ants. The Motu natives are careful and nice in their diet. The Koitapu will eat anything they can get their teeth through. The Koitapu mode of cooking is the same as that prevalent in Polynesia, viz.: with hot stones, and also by roasting. A light framework of sticks is erected, the meat is placed on, and a slow fire kept up beneath until the meat is dried rather than roasted. This plan is generally adopted when they are out hunting and wish to preserve large quantities of meat to take home. The Motu mode of cooking by boiling in earthenware vessels is largely practised; but this is a borrowed custom.

*Ornaments.*—In these they are distinct from Motu and coast tribes.

The breast-plate or charm is spoken of as “kepore” by Dr. Turner, and mentioned among Motu ornaments. It belongs to the Koitapu, and though worn sometimes, and prized by the Motu, is not of Motu origin. This ornament seems to be worn by aborigines of very different parts of New Guinea. It is described at Humbolt Bay, on the north coast, by the “Challenger,” and is also found at Orangerie Bay on the south-east coast. It is a charm as well as an ornament, and when held between the teeth, is supposed to strike terror into their adversaries, and to give the wearer victory over them.

The lupu or feather head-dress is also a Koitapu ornament, and seems to be very widely distributed over New Guinea.

The nose is pierced as in the Motu, but the nose stick is less commonly worn.

The long mop of hair, the young men’s pride, is often confined in a piece of thin cloth made from the bark of the paper

mulberry, and sometimes in a hair net, made expressly for the purpose.

*Weapons and Manufactures.*—The weapons used by the Koitapu are the stone club and spears. The bow and arrow is not used by them, but is confined to the coast tribes. The spears are made of one piece of wood, and are often very carefully carved. All the cutting tools are of stone and shell.

The Koitapu make mats quite different to those on the coast and resembling the common Chinese matting. To them also is assigned the knowledge of making the netted bag, now common on the coast. This is made also by some of the tribes in Australia. It is the only case in which I have seen an Australian article in New Guinea.

The Koitapu do not know the art of making pottery, except in a very few cases where it has been learnt from the Motu.

The Koitapu are hunters, not fishermen. They possess no canoes and have nothing to do with the sea; but they excel in hunting the kangaroo and wild pig, and are superior to the Motu in the chase. They barter large quantities of kangaroo meat to them for fish, &c.

Without presuming to express an opinion on the difficult question of the races inhabiting South-East New Guinea, I have been led to believe that the Koitapu and Koiari are the aborigines of this part, while the coast tribes are settlers, and probably of Malayan origin. The coast tribes, while the conquerors of the others and their superiors, have yet a superstitious fear of the Koitapu and Koiari. Any calamity befalling them is attributed to the power of these inland tribes. Many of the Koitapu are shrewd enough to take advantage of this, and by assuming supernatural power, extort large presents from the Motu.

In 1876 an expedition left Port Moresby and neighbouring coast villages, to get sago from the west. As they were returning, the sea became rough and they were obliged to throw a good deal overboard to save their frail canoes from total wreck. A tribe from Hood Point had been waiting for a share of the sago, and were angry at the small quantity; but instead of venting their anger on the tribe who had been unfortunate, they laid in wait outside the Koitapu village and killed the first man who passed. This was done, they said, to revenge their bewitching the canoes and making them unfortunate.

They are supposed to be able to prevent rain from falling. Last year was one of prolonged drought. A Koitapu village was said to have been the cause, and a party of Motu ultimately went to wreak their vengeance on the poor fellows living in that village. Some eight or ten were killed, and as the drought

had long continued, rain soon followed this murder and confirmed the natives in their superstitious belief. Disease among the Motu is always attributed to evil spirits. No man is thought to die of disease, but is killed by Vata, the prince of evil spirits. The Koitapu are supposed to possess power over these. The first thing a Motu man does when anyone belonging to him is dangerously ill is to go to a man, or oftener a woman, of Koitapu, with large presents that they may loose the power of the evil spirit over the sick man. In some cases the woman comes and sucks the seat of pain in the patient and pretends to extract from it little pellets of fibre or stones, &c. The custom is precisely the same as that described by Sir J. Lubbock in "Origin of Civilisation," pp. 27, 28.

The Motu are afraid to go out at night for fear of ghosts. The Koitapu have no such fear, but often travel inland at night. The coast tribes fear the gods of the land, and in case of calamity appeal to the owners of the soil to propitiate the gods, or wreak upon them their vengeance in revenge for what they have suffered.

There are many indications that the Koitapu are now but a small remnant of what was once a numerous and powerful tribe. The natives of both races say such is the case. The many deserted sites of villages with skulls and bones here and there support this statement. Between the coast tribes who have driven them inland, and the Koiari or mountain men, their ranks have been decimated. They now live for the most part alongside the Motu villages, but always distinct from them. Inter-marriages, however, take place between them. During the hunting season it is quite common for them to camp inland for many weeks at a time, coming down to the coast occasionally to visit their houses and barter their kangaroo meat.

Closely allied to the Koitapu are the mountain tribes called Koiari.

These inhabit the mountains at the back of the Motu and Koitapu district, and consist of a number of scattered tribes. They are inferior in *physique* to the Motu, and generally to the Koitapu, but are more numerous than either. They are generally small in stature, dark in colour, and dirty in their persons and habits. Their hands and feet are remarkably small. They are much more hairy than the Motu. Many of the men have beard and whiskers. They seem, however, to present great differences: some seem to resemble some of the Australian tribes; a noticeable feature in others is the hooked nose spoken of by Mr. Wallace as characteristic of the true Papuan; others have quite a Chinese appearance; while others might lead one to fancy that New Guinea was the refuge of the ten lost tribes.

The villages of Koiari are built on the ridge of a hill, and generally command a view of all the approaches to it. The houses are built on piles, raised 5 or 6 feet above the ground, while in almost every village is one house high up in a tree. One deserted village, named Moumile, which I visited, consisted largely of tree-houses. One tree contained four houses at different heights, the highest being quite 60 feet from the ground. Ladders of rattan cane and vines led up to these.

The Koiari, like the Koitapu, are great hunters, and descend often to the plains to hunt the kangaroo and pig. Their language is very similar to the Koitapu, the difference being only dialectal.

They cook their food the same as the Koitapu. They fetch their water in bamboos. They cultivate the soil and fence in the gardens, but with split wood placed longitudinally, instead of upright, as the Motu. Their gardens in the ravines and gorges of the hills are very fruitful. Tobacco is cultivated, and forms an article of barter with the coast tribes. They have a custom in smoking similar to that of drinking healths. They sit round the fire, and having filled their bamboo pipe, shout out a name before they take their whiff. In my case I was their guest, and had given them some foreign tobacco, and they wished to honour me. They shouted as they took the pipe "Misi Lao kuku e!" (Mr. Lawes tobacco, oh!) and "Misi Lao biaki" (Mr. Lawes' our friend). Far into the night were to be heard the shouts of "Misi Lao kuku e."

The women of the Koiari seem to be more degraded than among the Motu and Koitapu, and polygamy is more common. We were shown just outside a Koiari village the newly-made grave of a wife of the chief. He had two wives; this one displeased him, and he immediately speared her to death. I was told that this was no uncommon case.

The treatment of the dead differs from that of both Koitapu and Motu. When a chief or any one of importance dies, the body is not buried, but laid out in the house. In the village of Kininimu, which I visited, several such proclaimed themselves to the least sensitive nose as we walked through the village. A chief whom I knew, and visited 18 months before, had died, and was in the house next our tent. After sunset, the young girls of the village sat round, and sang extempore songs in a low plaintive key which sounded among the hills pathetic and beautiful. We were told that this was done every evening. After a few weeks the body is placed on a platform of sticks up a tree in an exposed position. A fire is lit underneath and between the smoke of that and the rays of the sun, the body soon becomes perfectly dry. We saw one or two with the knees tied up as when sitting, while the parchment-like skin had split on the skull, showing one half white



and the other brown. When they have become thoroughly dry and fall to pieces, the bones are wrapped up in a bundle and hung in the house where the man lived, or in a tree close by. Two skulls from these bundles may be seen in Dr. Rolleston's collections at Oxford. The mode of salutation with the Koiari is peculiar. When I arrived at one of their villages, a chief, whom I knew, put one of his arms round my neck, and began fumbling about at my throat. I wondered what he wanted, but presently found that he was feeling for my chin. They salute their friends by chucking them under the chin.

The Koiari, in common with all the tribes in this part of New Guinea, are chewers of betel-nut. It grows on their mountains plentifully, and is much coveted by the coast tribes, with whom it is an article of barter for cocoa-nuts which do not grow in the interior.

These mountain men are very anxious to get salt. They never go down to the coast without taking back bamboos full of sea-water, and sometimes staying long enough to boil it down and take it back in a solid form. One of the most acceptable presents I could take to these inland villages was a little salt. They would eat it alone or chew it with ginger or their betel-nut.

In concluding this paper, I may state that I had intended comprising in it an account of another tribe, the Kerepunu, at Hood Point and Bay, but the length of this led me to reserve it. It is at the disposal of the Institute, if at some future time it would be of use or interest.

In connection with our mission on New Guinea, we have now a larger number of stations occupied along the coast, and for myself and colleagues I may express our willingness and pleasure to contribute in any way we can to the interests of science or commerce. A large number of Polynesians are associated with us in our work, and it is worth noting that the pioneers of civilization and Christianity on New Guinea are the children of savages and cannibals in many respects worse than those in New Guinea to-day.

#### DISCUSSION.

Professor FLOWER said that he was sure that all present would join in thanking Mr. Lawes for his interesting communication, and also for the promise of future additions to our scientific knowledge from himself and other members of the mission to which he belonged. He hoped that besides the valuable contributions they were making to our information about the manners, social condition, and language of the interesting people they worked among, they would also endeavour to obtain more evidence of their physical

characters, especially as shown by their skulls. The single specimen exhibited was not sufficient to draw any general conclusions from with safety, but as far as it went, it was of importance, as it showed (as might be expected from the evidence), somewhat mixed characters, though on the whole, most inclining to the Melanesian type, so much so that he would have no hesitation in saying (even before he had seen the photographs exhibited) that the individual to whom it belonged had hair of a frizzy, if not quite frizzly character.

Mr. A. R. WALLACE said, that he had seen much of the Papuans of the north-west of New Guinea, and had read almost all that had been written about the natives of the south-east part of the island, and he considered it proved that the latter were a mixed race; intrusions of brown Polynesians, and perhaps of the natives of some of the Melanesian islands, having occurred in successive waves, probably from a remote antiquity, thus producing the various mixtures of type, and relics of Polynesian and other customs. There was also said to be an undoubted Polynesian element in the language of the Motu and other coast tribes. With regard to the Papuans themselves, he believed they formed a very well marked and distinct, though variable race, occupying the greater part of New Guinea; and that the failure of Professor Flower in his search after a Papuan type of skull arose from paucity of materials.

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Captain HAROLD DILLON, F.S.A., exhibited some flint implements from Canada and the United States of America.

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NOTES on SKELETON found at CISSBURY, April, 1878.

By GEORGE ROLLESTON, M.D., F.R.S., V.P.A.I., &c.

AT page 431 of Vol. vii of the "Journal of the Anthropological Institute," May, 1878, will be found a short account by Mr. J. Park Harrison of the discovery of a second skeleton in the Cissbury Flint-works. This discovery was made at the end of March of that year, and having myself been engaged in the investigations carried on at Cissbury in 1875 (*See "Journal Anthropological Institute,"* Vol. v, Jan., 1876, General Lane Fox, "Excavations in Cissbury Camp," pp. 357 to 390, and Vol. vi, 1876, pp. 20 to 36), I was sufficiently interested in Mr. Harrison's discovery to visit the scene of his operations on April 5, 1878.

On arriving I found that the skeleton had been carefully removed and committed to the guardianship of Dr. C. Kelly, the Officer of Health for the District, and now Professor of Medical Jurisprudence at King's College. To him, as to Mr. Harrison, my best thanks are due, for the information