

On the Physical Types of the Shoshonean-Speaking Tribes

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The racial history of the Indian tribes of the so-called Shoshonean linguistic area is one of the least known of the continent. This is reflected by the paucity of published data from this vast area, which extends from the northern part of the Great Basin to the coast of southern California. Like most other areas this one has had a complex history despite the fact that the cultures found in it are as a whole relatively simple. This has not been brought out in connection with the published data on skeletal material from this area, and for this reason needs clarification.

When Hrdlicka published the second section of his *Catalogue of Human Crania*,¹ he included a section dealing with the skulls of Shoshonean tribes, and on the basis of a series of twenty-six male and fourteen female skulls from this area postulated a Shoshonean type. Having excluded the crania of individuals of Shoshonean-speaking tribes of southern California and Hopi crania, he then describes this type (p. 101) as follows:

1. The tribes of this group, as far as represented, show a fairly uniform type.
2. This type is characterized by—
Mesocephaly;
Low to medium height of the vault;
Medium face, orbits, and nose.
3. The type is not far from the Algonkin, but differs from this by a perceptibly lower vault.

Further on, after describing the crania of California tribes (p. 127), we find the statement that this type appears to be practically identical with that of the Shoshoneans. A Shoshonean-Californian type is thereby established, which, however, still excludes the Hopi, who are considered with Pueblo groups of the Southwest.

Next we may consider the linguistic basis for such a grouping, and whether it is affected by the extension of the stock. Since the establishment of the physical type, the evidence of comparative linguistics has shown that the Shoshonean grouping on the order of a stock must be abandoned. A more inclusive category, Uto-Aztecan has taken its place, including such languages as Luiseño, Cahuilla, Serrano, Tübatulabal, Pima-Papago, Hopi, Ute-Southern Paiute-Chemehuevi-Kawaiisu, Shoshoni-Comanche-Gosiute-Wind River-Panamint, Mono-Bannock-Snake-Northern Paiute, and Nahuatl. Hyphenated names indicate a single

¹ Hrdlicka, Ales. *Catalogue of Human Crania in the United States National Museum Collections*. The Algonkin and Related Iroquois; Siouan, Caddoan, Salish and Sahaptin, Shoshonean and Californian Indians. Proceedings of the United States National Museum, 69, 92-101, Washington, D.C., 1927.

language; intermediate groupings, that is, the grouping together of a number of these languages within the stock, have not been made as yet. In other words, Luiseño and Tübatulabal of southern California may be less closely related to each other than Tübatulabal to Nahuatl. Formerly Luiseño and Tübatulabal were grouped together as Shoshonean, while Nahuatl was considered a language of a separate linguistic stock—Nahuatlan.²

At first glance it would appear that there should not be any fundamental objections from the physical side to this extension, thus making a linguistic stock and physical variety almost coterminous, especially since races of an older dolichocranial stratum are to be found along the western side of the continent from British Columbia to Central America. In fact, von Eickstedt³ suggests such a grouping under the name Margid race. One would soon find, however, that such wide pooling of material would be of little use in detailed historical reconstruction of the relationships and movements of prehistoric groups of this region. Practically all differences would disappear in non-existent averages which would be meaningless in wider comparisons with the Fuegid and Lagid varieties of South America. To the north within the Shoshonean area, Sylvid admixture is found extending to the Pacific coast. This is swamped by a later overwash of the southward expanding Pacifids,⁴ giving rise to the Prairids to the east, and sending offshoots such as the Apache and Navaho far to the south. This Pacifid expansion also makes itself felt in northern California—a fact that is ignored by Hrdlicka in classifying all California crania into a single type—and appears as a hybrid type among northern Shoshoneans. Older Centralid elements were evidently swept along by the Pacifids, later to become settled in central California, and as Hopis in Arizona. The oldest element, represented by the California Mission Indians, differs widely from the Centralids and Pacifids and may not be too closely related to the Pima, Papago, and extinct tribes of Lower California. In Mexico the originally Margid Aztecs, whose closest relatives may have been the Tarascans from a racial point of view, became extensively mixed with Centralid Toltecs. Thus through various contacts with surviving older groups or expanding later ones, each tribe has a little different racial history which has to be examined individually in the light of archaeological data. It follows from this that the application of a linguistic name—Shoshonean—to a variety of Man would be misleading, and Hrdlicka's median values for nearly all averages suggest a too inclusive nature of his grouping. Until more is known of the composition and relationships of this larger group, I would retain for it the term Margid variety, an appellation that has no linguistic or cultural connotations.

² Thomas, Cyrus and John R. Swanton. *Indian Languages of Mexico and Central America and Their Geographical Distribution*. Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 44, Washington, D.C., 1911.

³ Von Eickstedt, Egon. *Rassenkunde und Rassengeschichte der Menschheit*, Stuttgart: F. Enke Verlag, 1934, p. 709.

⁴ *Ibid.*

Lastly I would like to indicate in a few words how the prehistoric skeletal material from Catlow Cave No. 1 fits into the above sequence of types. This cave in which Cressman⁵ discovered a skull which promises to be of some antiquity is located in Harney County, Oregon, and hence in the northernmost part of the Shoshonean area. For this reason Cressman as well as Hrdlicka, to whom the skull was submitted for description, compared the specimen with known Shoshonean ones.

In this report Hrdlicka did not use the term Shoshonean type but substituted "oblong-headed West Coast strain." Hooton, to whom the skull was submitted for study later, in general concurs in that he identifies it as being of the Basket-Maker type of the Southwest. At the end of the report Cressman gives a table of measurements of adult male "Shoshonean" crania from the U. S. National Museum collections. These already represent a number of varieties: Piegan and Blackfeet which probably are predominantly Sylvid; Steins Mountain, which may be Pacifid, Centralid, or Prairid; and the rest probably predominantly Margid. The exact identification as to variety of the Steins Mountain skull and a series from Blitzen valley, Oregon, which is also appended to the report, is not possible as neither height measurements⁶ nor morphological attributes are listed. Nevertheless, despite of the heterogeneous nature of the U. S. National Museum series there are enough Margid skulls among them to indicate the difference between Margids and such a series as that from Blitzen Valley. This difference is of about the same order as that between the skull from Catlow Cave No. 1 and the Blitzen Valley series—a divergence which Cressman notes in his comments.

⁵ Cressman, L. S. *Archaeological Researches in the Northern Great Basin*. Carnegie Institution of Washington, Publication 538, Washington, D.C., 1942, 141-143.

⁶ Neumann, Georg. *American Indian Crania with Low Vaults*. *Human Biology*, 14, 178-191 (1942).