Anthropology
in the
BRITISH
SOLOMON
ISLANDS

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Since 1964 field research in the British Solomon Islands has been primarily concerned with ethnographic studies. Last winter's special exhibition "Sculpture from the Eastern Solomon Islands" (see Expedition, Vol. 10, No. 2) was one result of these. However, as the contemporary cultural picture in this part of Oceania has become much clearer in the past two decades, we have become increasingly more interested in the history of the peoples and cultures. Because this is an area of the world where non-literate peoples survived in the present century, history here is only the history of European discovery and political annexation. The history of the local peoples is preliminary—archaeology, that is. Consequently, when I found a number of promising archaeological sites during my last ethnographic field trip (1965-66), I excavated some of them as a preliminary step in what I hope will be a larger archaeological program in the years to come. In all, three small, shallow limestone caves and a midden were excavated on Santa Ana Island in the Eastern Solomons and another cave was dug on Guadalcanal Island in the Central Solomons.

The Santa Ana excavations revealed that this small island has been continuously occupied by man since before A.D. 140. The cave sites, which were probably used only as temporary shelters for fishing and marine collecting along the extensive reefs that ring the island, revealed increasing numbers of artifacts and shells and bones from edible seafood during this period. This may be an indication of a gradually increasing population. Pig bones were found throughout, indicating that the occupants had that domestic animal. The artifacts most frequently encountered were small blades of chalcedony (a flint-like stone) which had to be imported from the neighboring island of San Cristobal. These blades are clearly related to those from New Britain Island described in Expedition, Vol. 8, No. 3, by Dr. Jane Goodale. The other artifacts found in large numbers were volcanic stones fractured by fire. These stones are the same as are used today by the local people to heat their earth ovens in which most of their food is cooked. Other objects included blades of glass, clam shell for grating coconuts, whetstones of imported rock, and other objects of shell that are similar or identical to objects still made and used today.

The midden site yielded the same array of objects as were found in caves, plus a few more personal and household artifacts more closely associated with settled life in a hamlet (as contrasted with the specialized, temporary use of the caves). There are many more middens still to be excavated at some future date.

One of the most rewarding results of these small excavations was the discovery of a coarse, friable red pottery in the cave sites that dates between A.D. 140 and A.D. 675. Pottery is unknown on this island today; the people did not even recognize it as something man-made. However, pottery is known ethnographically some
five hundred miles away in the Western Solomons, about the same distance to the south in the New Hebrides, and farther to the southwest in Fiji. The location of this early pottery in the Eastern Solomons connects these pottery localities and at the same time establishes a cultural horizon that indicates a change in technology. Why the Eastern Solomon Islanders gave up their pottery over one thousand years ago is cause for some speculation.

Results of the excavation on Guadalcanal Island have not yet been fully analyzed, so only preliminary observations can be summarized here. Started by me and finished by Messrs. Tom Russell and James Tedder, both of whom are officers in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate Government, the site was located in the Pohn Valley of the north coast, a few miles west of the town of Honiara. It was along this coast and in these valleys that the Americans and Japanese were so long engaged in the World War II Battle for Guadalcanal.

Excavation of one of the shallow limestone caves on Santa Ana Island. Artifacts and other indications of human use were found in the sand floor to a depth of 33 cm. (7 ft. 9 in.). Charcoal taken between 70 and 139 cm has been dated A.D. 675; samples from other caves are dated earlier.

The Pohn Valley site was perfectly stratified into a series of superimposed occupation levels, each level clearly separated by layers of heavy rock that had fallen from the ceiling. The topmost level contained thousands of U.S. 45-caliber bullets, Japanese cartridge cases and ammunition boxes, a skeleton with which was associated a wallet containing pictures of two Oriental children, and other grisly reminders of the War. Twelve feet below, the lowest stratum contained no chalcedony chips, only intrusive sea shells, some of which might be crude artifacts, and charcoal. This charcoal has been dated at 970 B.C. Intervening strata showed an array of artifacts that gets increasingly varied by time, but no pot-
tery was found at any level. The total inventory of artifacts was slightly different from those found on Santa Ana Island. The contemporary cultures of the two islands are, likewise, slightly different. Thus the Polynesian site shows a nearly three thousand years of evolution of the local Guadalcanal version of Solomon Island culture.

In November and December 1967 Mr. and Mrs. Harry P. Whitney went to the Solomons to follow up on some of these preliminary archaeological findings. They located more promising sites, made surface collections of stone tools, and studied the still extant but dying ceramic techniques of the peoples in the Western Solomons. Their work will enable us to classify stone tools by local styles and to compare the pottery making techniques of the area where it has survived with that of the eastern islands where it was abandoned many generations ago.

Across the high coastal mountains of Guadalcanal on the isolated south coast was a locale of special ethnographic interest. Although this area was not fought over during World War II as was the north coast, its closeness to the battlefield completely upset local village life for several years. Also the incredible spectacle of two mechanical armies of strange origins from overseas locked in total war completely altered the conceptions that these peoples had of the world about them and their place within it. After the fighting was concluded and the armies had disappeared almost as mysteriously as they had arrived (leaving behind a wealth of material), the likes of which Solomon Islanders never imagined existed) there was general dissatisfaction and an outcry for change. A social movement combining political protest and millennium hopes for a richer life originated in another of the British Solomon Islands and swept across Guadalcanal. The British Government did all it could to cooperate with this movement and to redirect its goals toward established administrative objectives, but in the end the movement had to be forcibly crushed, because it had become insurrectionist. During 1956 on Guadalcanal a prophet named Motoo came to the island nation in the form of a better way of life. Reared from an ancient spirit of the island, this vision of a new life was to be a synthesis of the best of both worlds, and it boded that the peoples of the industrialized world possessed. Quickly Motoo's message and social programs designed to attain his vision swept across most of Guadalcanal to become a quasi-religious movement. The prophet's village of Makasikake became the headquarters for the movement. Changed considerably from the character of the first post-war protest movement, which became violent, the current movement stresses self-help through the pooling of local resources of all peoples of Guadalcanal for a number of ambitious economic and political enterprises. This in itself was a great innovation for a people whose traditional political life never extended beyond the consolidation of more than a few hamlets.

In 1964 I crossed the mountains to visit Moro and hear about this vision and programs. The following year Mrs. Glibbün Coker O'Connor, a graduate student at the University of Michigan, went to Makasikake to study the Moro movement in detail. She remained there by herself for a year and obtained one of the richest accounts of such a social movement among a non-literate people that has ever been recorded. Currently, Mrs. O'Connor is preparing this data for her doctoral dissertation.

Social movements of this kind have been exceedingly common in Oceania and other parts of the contemporary primitive world during the last century. They seem to become even more frequent as the thrust of civilization disrupts the traditional equilibrium of social life. Some of them are exceedingly mystic and supernaturally oriented; others, like the recent Mau Mau of Kenya, are violent; while others, such as the Moro Movement, are largely modern and economically directed. Most, however, are combinations and permutations of all these directions with varying emphases. In all their varied and unique forms these movements can be seen as social responses that seek, through new ideologies, to reestablish some kind of social coherence for people whose lives have been irrevocably shattered and disrupted by circumstances beyond their control. To the extent that social disorganization—although to the naive outsider they may appear to be chaotic—rather, they are abrupt attempts to give life dynamic new direction, a heightened sense of identity, and an enhanced meaning and purpose. In emerging nations these movements may become the vehicles out of which parochial tribal and linguistic identities are broaded into national images or even political parties. It has been through the careful study of such societies that as they existed in primitive societies, along with those recorded in our own and other historical traditions of the world, that modern anthropologists have been able to derive the full story of the evolution of humankind. Our knowledge of human life depends upon common ideologies. When, through progressive social change or through the collision of old and new ideologies, these systems break down, prophets and innovators arise with new doctrines and novel formulae for living. Out of these are forged revised ideological systems that become the bases for new periods of unity and stability.

In 1966 the University Museum and the Society of the Sigma Xi supported a three-week survey of the Atigun Valley in the eastern part of Alaska's Brooks Range. Aided by my wife, Annie, and one of my students, Victoria Graffstrom, I found over forty archaeological sites in this relatively unknown region. The eastern Brooks Range has long been considered as outside the occupational area of any historically known groups. To the contrary, it became obvious to us from our very first day there that the Atigun Valley had been as well used as any other part of the mountains. There was evidence not only of modern Eskimo and Indian occupation but also of occupation by a number of prehistoric groups as well.

Archaeological sites in the Brooks Range are often small with negligible content. Even worse, they seem all to be on the surface. All previous archaeological exploration in the mountains had not located a single site having a definite stratigraphic separation of prehistoric cultural debris. There are several reasons for this. The cold Arctic climate retards the normal processes of soil formation, and any type of deposition that might cover archaeological remains takes an exceedingly long time. Glacial gravel 10,000 years old appear almost as fresh and exposed as the day they were deposited. With sites on the surface the archaeologist has little trouble finding them, but the same phenomena which allow easy discovery will also result in a confusing mixture of artifacts when there are two occupations on the same spot. My brief report of the 1966 survey in the Spring 1967 issue of Expedition, mentioned that sites in one area of the Atigun Valley might well be stratified. These sites were found in extensive sand deposits along the Atigun River. Since a great number of subsurface artifacts had been found in windblown sand deposits, there seemed a chance that somewhere in the sand some deposits would be found directly over others. On the strength of our survey I was again given support by the University Museum, and received additional support from the National Science Foundation for a full summer's work in the Atigun Valley.

The crew of students from Bryan Mavor, Haverford, and the University of Pennsylvania arrived in Fairbanks in mid-June. We flew to the Eskimo village of Anaktuvik Pass where we would transfer from a large wheeled plane to a smaller one on floats for the final, short hop to the Atigun. I had planned on no more than two days for getting to our destination before the coming cold weather of 1967 changed that. The Brooks Range lakes, normally ice-free in early June were quite late in clearing. So much so that our stay at Anaktuvik was closer to two weeks waiting for the ice to clear. When we did move, our landing area was no more than a narrow ledge where the ice had drifted away from the shore. The lake wasn't