

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Biological Aspects of Race

The Unesco Courier

Philippine Studies vol. 15, no. 1 (1967): 182–186

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

have duties and obligations to the government and to their neighbors. In this spirit, assistance given them is not "charity"; rather its purpose is to help them integrate themselves into the modern and changing world here in the Philippines.

FORMATION OF AN ASSOCIATION

Many individuals have been working alone with little help and little success for the advancement of the various cultural minorities. The members of the Sagada and Zamboanga Conferences proposed the formation of a permanent association of these people and others interested in the achievement of the same aims. Such an association would provide both moral support and greater effectiveness. It would provide a clearing house for information and opportunity for the discussion of mutual problems and solutions. As a non-political organization, it could exert pressure on other agencies. Furthermore, funds and grants for surveys, studies, and projects might be made available to such an association.

National Conference

A national conference is planned in the near future to discuss ways to implement the suggestions of the Sagada and Zamboanga Conferences. The proposed association will be formed at that time. We hope and pray the national conference and formation of the association will be a success.

JOHN RICH

*Biological Aspects of Race**

The undersigned, assembled by UNESCO in order to give their views on the biological aspects of the race question and in particular to formulate the biological part for a statement foreseen for 1966 and intended to bring up to date and to complete the declaration on the nature of race and racial differences signed in 1951, have unanimously agreed on the following:

1 All men living today belong to a single species, *Homo sapiens*, and are derived from a common stock. There are differences of opinion regarding how and when different human groups diverged from this common stock.

* Reprinted from *The Unesco Courier*, April 1965 (18th year), pp. 8-11.

2 Biological differences between human beings are due to differences in hereditary constitution and to the influence of the environment on this genetic potential. In most cases those differences are due to the interaction of these two sets of factors.

3 There is great genetic diversity within all human populations. Pure races—in the sense of genetically homogeneous populations—do not exist in the human species.

4 There are obvious physical differences between populations living in different geographic areas of the world, in their average appearance. Many of these differences have a genetic component.

Most often the latter consist in differences in the frequency of the same hereditary characters.

5 Different classifications of mankind into major stocks, and of those into more restricted categories (races, which are groups of populations, or single populations) have been proposed on the basis of hereditary physical traits. Nearly all classifications recognize at least three major stocks.

Since the pattern of geographic variation of the characteristics used in racial classification is a complex one, and since this pattern does not present any major discontinuity, these classifications, whatever they are, cannot claim to classify mankind into clear cut categories; moreover, on account of the complexities of human history, it is difficult to determine the place of certain groups within these racial classifications, in particular that of certain intermediate populations.

Many anthropologists, while stressing the importance of human variation, believe that the scientific interest of these classifications is limited, and even that they carry the risk of inviting abusive generalizations.

Differences between individuals within a race or within a population are often greater than the average differences between races or populations.

Some of the variable distinctive traits which are generally chosen as criteria to characterize a race are either independently inherited or show only varying degrees of association between them within each population. Therefore, the combination of these traits in most individuals does not correspond to the typological racial characterization.

6 In man as well as in animals, the genetic composition of each population is subject to the modifying influence of diverse factors: natural selection, tending towards adaptation to the environment, fortuitous mutations which lead to modifications of the molecules of deoxyribonucleic acid which determine heredity, or random modifications in the frequency of qualitative hereditary characters, to an extent dependent on the patterns of mating and the size of populations.

Certain physical characters have a universal biological value for the survival of the human species, irrespective of the environment. The differences on which racial classifications are based do not affect these characters, and therefore, it is not possible from the biological point of view to speak in any way whatsoever of a general inferiority or superiority of this or that race.

7 Human evolution presents attributes of capital importance which are specific to the species.

The human species, which is now spread over the whole world, has a past rich in migrations, in territorial expansions and contractions.

As a consequence, general adaptability to the most diverse environment is in man more pronounced than his adaptations to specific environments.

For long millennia, progress made by man, in any field, seems to have been increasingly, if not exclusively, based on culture and the transmission of cultural achievements and not on the transmission of genetic endowment. This implies a modification in the rôle of natural selection in man today.

On account of the mobility of human populations and of social factors, mating between members of different human groups which tend to mitigate the differentiations acquired, has played a much more important rôle in human history than in that of animals. The history of any human population or of any human race, is rich in instances of hybridization and those tend to become more and more numerous.

For man, the obstacles to inter-breeding are geographical as well as social and cultural.

8 At all times, the hereditary characteristics of the human populations are in dynamic equilibrium as a result of this inter-breeding and of the differentiation mechanisms which were mentioned before. As entities defined by sets of distinctive traits, human races are at any time in a process of emergence and dissolution.

Human races in general present a far less clear-cut characterization than many animal races and they cannot be compared at all to races of domestic animals, these being the result of heightened selection for special purposes.

9 It has never been proved that inter-breeding has biological disadvantages for mankind as a whole.

On the contrary, it contributes to the maintenance of biological ties between human groups and thus to the unity of the species in its diversity.

The biological consequences of a marriage depend only on the individual genetic make-up of the couple and not on their race.

Therefore, no biological justification exists for prohibiting inter-marriage between persons of different races, or for advising against it on racial grounds.

10 Man since his origin has at his disposal ever more efficient cultural means of non-genetic adaptation.

11 Those cultural factors which break social and geographic barriers, enlarge the size of the breeding populations and so act upon their genetic structure by diminishing the random fluctuations (genetic drift).

12 As a rule, the major stocks extend over vast territories encompassing many diverse populations which differ in language, economy, culture, etc.

There is no national, religious, geographic, linguistic or cultural group which constitutes a race *ipso facto*; the concept of race is purely biological.

However, human beings who speak the same language and share the same culture have a tendency to inter-marry, and often there is as a result a certain degree of coincidence between physical traits on the one hand and linguistic and cultural traits on the other. But there is no known causal nexus between these and therefore it is not justifiable to attribute cultural characteristics to the influence of the genetic inheritance.

13 Most racial classifications of mankind do not include mental traits or attributes as a taxonomic criterion.

Heredity may have an influence in the variability shown by individuals within a given population in their responses to the psychological tests currently applied.

However, no difference has ever been detected convincingly in the hereditary endowments of human groups in regard to what is measured by these tests. On the other hand, ample evidence attests to the influence of physical, cultural and social environment on differences in response to these tests.

The study of this question is hampered by the very great difficulty of determining what part heredity plays in the average differences observed in so-called tests of overall intelligence between populations of different cultures.

The genetic capacity for intellectual development, like certain major anatomical traits peculiar to the species, is one of the biological traits essential for its survival in any natural or social environment.

The peoples of the world today appear to possess equal biological potentialities for attaining any civilizational level. Differences in the achievements of different peoples must be attributed solely to their cultural history.

Certain psychological traits are at times attributed to particular peoples. Whether or not such assertions are valid, we do not find any basis for ascribing such traits to hereditary factors, until proof to the contrary is given.

Neither in the field of hereditary potentialities concerning the overall intelligence and the capacity for cultural development, nor in that of physical traits, is there any justification for the concept of "inferior" and "superior" races.

The biological data given above are in open contradiction to the tenets of racism. Racist theories can in no way pretend to have any scientific foundation and the anthropologists should endeavour to prevent the results of their research from being used in such a biased way as to serve non-scientific ends.

Prof. NIGEL BARNICOT, Department of Anthropology, University College, London (U.K.).

Prof. JEAN BENOIST, Director, Department of Anthropology, University of Montreal (Canada).

Prof. TADEUSZ BIELICKI, Institute of Anthropology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Wrocław (Poland).

Dr. A. E. BOYO, Head, Federal Malaria Research Institute, Department of Pathology & Haematology, Lagos University Medical School, Lagos (Nigeria).

Prof. VICTOR V. BUNAK, Institute of Ethnography, Academy of Sciences, Moscow (U.S.S.R.).

Prof. CARLETON S. COON, Curator, The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa. (U.S.A.).

Prof. GEORGI F. DEBETZ, (Chairman of the meeting), Institute of Ethnography, Academy of Sciences, Moscow (U.S.S.R.).

Mrs. ADELAIDE G. DE DIAZ UNGRIA, Curator, Museum of Natural Sciences, Caracas (Venezuela).

Prof. ROBERT GESSAIN, Director, Centre of Anthropological Research, Musée de l'Homme, Paris (France).

Prof. SANTIAGO GENOVES (Vice-Chairman of the meeting), Institute of Historical Research, Faculty of Science, University of Mexico (Mexico).

Prof. JEAN HIERNAUX (Scientific director of the meeting), Laboratory of Anthropology, Faculty of Sciences, University of Paris (France); Institute of Sociology, Free University of Brussels (Belgium).

Dr. YAYA KANE (Vice-Chairman of the meeting), Senegal National Centre of Blood Transfusion, Dakar (Senegal).

Prof. RAMAKHRISHNA MUKHERJEE (Vice-Chairman of the meeting), Research Professor of Sociology, Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta (India).

Prof. BERNARD RENSCH, Zoological Institute, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster (Federal Republic of Germany).

Prof. YAKOV Y. ROGUINSKI, Head, Chair of Anthropology, Moscow University (U.S.S.R.).

Prof. FRANCISCO M. SALZANO, Institute of Natural Sciences, Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil).

Prof. ALF SOMMERFELT (Vice-Chairman of the meeting), Honorary Pro-Rector, Oslo University (Norway).

Prof. JAMES N. SPUHLER (Vice-Chairman of the meeting), Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan (U.S.A.).

Prof. HISASHI SUZUKU, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Science, University of Toyo (Japan).

Prof. J. A. VALSIK, Department of Anthropology & Genetics, J. A. Komensky University, Bratislava (Czechoslovakia).

Dr. JOSEPH S. WEINER, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, University of London (U.K.).

Dr. VSEVOLOD P. YAKIMOV, Director, Institute of Anthropology, Moscow University (U.S.S.R.).