

# America Discovered By Islanders

*Anthropology*

By EMMA REH STEVENSON

That America had commercial relationship with the Polynesian Islands before Columbus discovered America, is the theory of Dr. Paul Rivet, anthropologist and director of the Trocadero Museum in Paris, now in the National University at Mexico City as exchange professor.

A study of names of certain common objects and basic agricultural products show linguistic coincidences between Peru and Oceania. These are due, Dr. Rivet believes, not to a common tongue far in the background, but to a transmission of names along with the products from one continent to another.

Other evidence also points to relationships between the Pacific Islands and prehistoric America, such as folk legends and the finding of objects of undoubted Polynesian origin in America, reported at different times.

It has always been considered that the Pacific Ocean was impossible to cross until recent times. This belief has kept the theory of pan-Pacific relationships from being more widely adopted by ethnologists and geographers, Dr. Rivet said. Recent studies of mankind's seagoing history have, however, convinced him that the theory is not improbable.

The simplest form of primitive raft or boat gave man an advantageous means of transportation such as he did not evolve on land until much later. The tropical Pacific is generally calm, and historical and

archeological evidence indicate that the west coast of South America was a great maritime region. The Peruvian art of working metals was thus transmitted from South America to Mexico.

Many South American legends and traditions tell of the arrival of strangers from unknown lands, and among the Indians of the Pacific coast there were tales at the time of the Conquest of lands across the Pacific. A Peruvian legend tells of the arrival of a race of giants from the west who came in boats of wood and cane fitted with triangular sails, who landed at Point Santa Elena.

While Dr. Rivet believes that these legends were undoubtedly influenced by the discovery of large animal bones which were originally thought to be human, they have nevertheless a foundation of truth in the arrival of strangers from the west. There also exist tales of the invasion of Chile by pirates from the East Indian Islands, and there is a reference to Oceanic Negroes on the coast of Peru. According to a historical tale, the next to the last king of Peru, Tupac Inca Yupanqui, had organized an expedition to the Pacific Islands.

With these pan-Pacific contacts, Dr. Rivet believes many cultural elements were transmitted from one continent to another, and that it is only a question as to who gave and who received. That the coconut only existed in a small area on the Pacific side of South America is suggested by the records of the earliest Spanish Conquistadores, and no ref-

erence is made to its existence anywhere on the Atlantic side. While this suggests a late introduction of the coconut to America, the recent discovery of the plant in pliocene and pre-pliocene layers in New Zealand show that it was native to the Pacific Islands.

The origin of other products like the yam and the calabash, existing both in America and Oceania, with names linguistically related in both regions, are still in doubt. Dr. Rivet suggests a complete inventory and study of such cultural elements. Many questions could be explained by the theory of commercial relations between America and Oceania, he says.

In a study of the clothing, food habits, agricultural technique, domestic industries, music, arts, games, religious and social customs, Dr. Rivet finds so many coincidences that he is convinced that the pan-Pacific peoples learned and adopted a great deal from each other. He finds the poncho of the Argentine Indian repeated in the native dress of Pacific Islanders, the terrace methods of agriculture of Peru like those of Japan, and the use of musical instruments like that of the conch-shell and reed tubes common to Americans and Polynesians alike, as well as practically identical customs of preserving the heads of dead enemies and inlaying of teeth. He finds pan-Pacific peoples playing the same games, using the same sort of domestic implements, and preparing food in the same way.

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## Whooping Cranes in Louisiana

*Ornithology*

Two whooping cranes, lone representatives of a species almost as extinct as the passenger pigeon, were seen by Dr. E. W. Nelson, former chief of the U. S. Biological Survey, on a recent trip along the coast marshes of Louisiana.

A hundred years ago whooping cranes, five feet tall standing, and almost pure white, used to fly over the prairies at migration times in vast armies. The clamor rising from the trumpeting of the vast hordes, early naturalists tell us, was almost deafening. Now, thanks to their size, conspicuous plumage and commendable flavor on the dinner table,

they have virtually vanished.

Dr. Nelson declared, in a report to the Cooper Ornithological Club, that the Louisiana cranes were the first specimens he had seen in the field since 1870. At that time, he stated, eight and ten whooping cranes at a time might be seen hanging in the markets at Chicago, where they were considerably sought after by keepers of the larger restaurants.

According to local trappers, the pair seen by Dr. Nelson were the only ones in the region and had wintered in the marsh four successive years without rearing any young.

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## Spraying with Sea Water

*Phytopathology*

Sea water has a new role. The Agricultural Experiment station at Guam has found that it is a cheap and effective means of killing the countless insects that gather in the folds of young, partly opened leaves of trees and shrubs. Certainly there will be no difficulty about a source of supply of the new insecticide. Palm trees, especially, have been benefited by "showers" of several gallons daily.

Complete control of the scale insect infesting the coconut palm has been brought about, it is said, by the introduction of predacious lady bird beetles from the Fiji Islands.

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