

## CHAPTER I

## TANNA

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS  
AND MEASUREMENTS

THE TANNSE is usually a fine specimen of the human animal, although of a less robust type than the native of some other parts of Melanesia, notably Fiji (Erskine, p. 16). The population of the island is increasing, and the latest census of the Government Agent shows something under 6000 souls. Whenever a ship arrives it is easy to believe that the population is dense, for the presence on the beach of large numbers of men and children, as well as women, suggests a thickly peopled area. Captain Cook found the island heavily populated in the part where he landed, and about the middle of the last century Erskine noted the large numbers that assembled when the arrival of a ship created general excitement (p. 303). In this particular Tanna is in strong contrast to its neighbouring islands, north and south, where one is impressed, even on steamer day, with the scarcity of natives on the beach.

The average height of 54 adult males on the east coast in the vicinity of Whitesands is 1638 mm. (min. 1518, max. 1803); 9.3 per cent. are of short stature<sup>1</sup>, 64.8 per cent. are medium, 14.8 per cent. are tall, and 11.1 per cent. are very tall. On the west coast in the vicinity of Lenakel the average of 133 adult males is 1648 mm. (min. 1489, max. 1804); 13 per cent. are short, 55 per cent. medium, 21 per cent. tall, and 11 per cent. very tall. The measurements taken at Lenakel on the west coast are from men covering a larger territory than those taken at Whitesands on the east coast. The former cover a radius of about eight miles from Lenakel, the latter of perhaps five miles from Whitesands, though, in both cases, there are a few men from further afield. The differences between the east and west coasts do not appear to be significant, as there is a greater proportion of short as well as a greater proportion of tall and very

<sup>1</sup> Statures of 1480–1580 mm. are considered as short, 1580–1680 mm. as medium, 1680–1720 mm. as tall, and those over 1720 mm. as very tall.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45556-6 - The Southern New Hebrides: An Ethnological Record

C. B. Humphreys

Excerpt

[More information](#)

tall men in the west. For the entire 187 the average height is 1645 mm.; 11·76 per cent. are short, 57·75 per cent. are medium, 19·25 per cent. are tall and 11·24 per cent. very tall.

The hair is woolly and often quite long. The coastal folk wear it sometimes closely cropped and there are evidences of wavy hair like that of the European on the east coast of the island. Captain Cook noted this on some Futunese whom he observed while he was ashore on Tanna (2nd ed. II. p. 78<sup>1</sup>), but this is found occasionally among the Tannese themselves. Curly or wavy hair is also found in several Melanesian islands, especially in the Loyalty Islands<sup>2</sup>. The hair of the Tannese is inclined to grow long and luxuriantly, if it is allowed to do so. The bushmen have an elaborate manner of dressing the hair, which is such an important part of Tannese culture that it will be described later in detail. Among the coastal folk it is often permitted to grow long on the top of the head and is sometimes dyed with lime to make it golden or blonde in colour. The normal colour is dark brown, never absolutely black, with variations through all the shades, from a very dark to a very light, dark brown. Gray (1899, p. 127) calls it sometimes chestnut brown, and says it is invariably woolly.

The eye is almost always dark and, among all the males measured, only two occur with very dark eyes. The eyes of all the others are very much alike in colour. No evidence of colour-blindness occurred among the 187 males examined, and the missionary on the east coast with twenty-five years of experience in looking after the health, as well as the souls, of the Tannese, has never had a case brought to his attention.

The skin colour has more variety, and of the 187 men examined, 13 per cent. have a skin colour that is very dark brown, 66·3 per cent. have a dark brown and 20·7 per cent. have a light brown, varying from a shade just one degree lighter than the average to extremely pale brown. This agrees with Gray's statement that no Tannese has a coal-black skin, but it is not

<sup>1</sup> In references to Captain Cook's Journal the 2nd ed. will be referred to unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>2</sup> See Finsch, O., "Die Rassenfrage in Oceanien," *Verh. d. Berliner Ges. f. Anthr., Ethn. u. Urgesch.*, bound with *Z. f. Eth.* 14, 1882, p. 164; see also Haddon, A. C., *The Races of Man*, Cambridge, 1924, p. 123.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45556-6 - The Southern New Hebrides: An Ethnological Record

C. B. Humphreys

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## AN ETHNOLOGICAL RECORD

3

possible to accept his definition of the skin colour of the darkest members of the community. "Sooty black" (1899, p. 127) they are not, most certainly. The skin is often soft and satiny and sometimes quite free from hair on the body; again, a man is covered, on the breast, under the arms, around the pubes and sometimes on the back, with short woolly hair or "down," as it is called by Erskine (p. 306). The proportion of smooth skin to extreme hairiness seems to be about the same as in European males.

Gray (1899, p. 128) detects a differentiation between the bodily odours of the males of different islands. With the continual visits on the east coast of canoes full of Aniwan's it is a simple matter to test this question, but in spite of repeated attempts to discover a variation between Tannese and Aniwan's in this strong characteristic of all Melanesians, it is impossible to report any differences at all.

The average cephalic index<sup>1</sup> of the 54 males measured on the east coast of the island is 79.1, which shows a tendency to the broad-headed Polynesian rather than to the primitive, long-headed Melanesian type. As stated above, these men come from an area not more than five miles from the mission station of Whitesands. But, as all are mission boys, this means that some at least must have come originally from villages further inland. Gray (1892, p. 648) found people in every district from all parts of the island, but there is no evidence now that those who came from the interior villages originally are more long-headed than their coastal fellow islanders. This tendency to brachycephalism is interesting and suggestive. Of the 54 men, one has an index of 86.1, and the lowest is 72.1.

Taking 77-82 as the range for mesocephaly, the percentages of cephalic index are:

	East Coast	West Coast	E. and W.
Dolichocephals	22.9	31.2	27.1
Mesocephals	57.5	47.8	52.6
Brachycephals	19.6	21	20.3
	100	100	100

On the other (west) side of the island the average index for the 133 adult males is only a little lower than on the east coast,

<sup>1</sup> See Keane, p. 137, footnote 4.

being 78.6. Here the highest is 89.1, and the lowest 69.9. The average for the total of 187 males measured is 78.7. The brachycephalism on the east coast is what one would expect, for there has always been a decided Polynesian influence there, but it is somewhat astonishing to find it stronger on the west coast. This bears out Speiser's statement that the culture of the entire island is almost pure Polynesian. Admitting that the outward appearance of the population would lead one to think otherwise, showing, as it does, so many Melanesian characteristics, he insists that it has little in common with the northern people of the group. He suggests (1912, p. 464) four elements in the inhabitants of Tanna, viz. smaller Melanesian type, typical Melanesian, early Polynesian, and late Polynesian. The probable explanation of the uniformity of the cephalic index on the two coasts is that, although the Polynesian influence came primarily from the north-east—Tonga and Samoa, where the brachycephalic type prevails in a marked manner<sup>1</sup>—the mixture with the original Melanesian elements was very general throughout the island, especially in the coastal areas. In an island no larger than Tanna it would be difficult for an aboriginal people to hide themselves as completely as they have been able to do in New Guinea and the larger islands of Indonesia and the Philippines.

Taking 79–84 as the range for euryprosopy, 84–88 for mesoprosopy and 88–93 for leptoprosopy, the percentages of facial index are:

	East Coast	West Coast	E. and W.
Hypereuryprosops	9.8	3.3	6.5
Euryprosops	21.2	18.3	19.8
Mesoprosops	33.3	32.5	32.9
Leptoprosops	21.3	31.1	26.2
Hyperleptoprosops	14.4	14.8	14.6
	100	100	100

The average facial index of the 54 males on the east coast is 85.8, which is almost the mean for mesoprosopy, the maximum being 98.2 and the minimum 73.1. On the west coast the average for the 133 males is 87.5, maximum 101.7, minimum 74.3. The total average for 187 males is 87.1.

The nasal index is also interesting, for the east coast average of the 54 males of whom measurements are recorded is 77.4

<sup>1</sup> See Dixon, p. 383.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-45556-6 - The Southern New Hebrides: An Ethnological Record

C. B. Humphreys

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## AN ETHNOLOGICAL RECORD

5

with an individual maximum of 106.6 (excluding two cases of nasal deformity, 3 and 7), and a minimum of 52.2, while the 133 measurements taken on the west side show an average of 73.4, with a maximum of 99.1 and a minimum of 52.4.

Taking 70–85 as the range for mesorrhiny the percentages of nasal index are:

	East Coast	West Coast	E. and W.
Leptorrhines	27.4	32	29.7
Mesorrhines	46.2	56.2	51.2
Chamaerrhines	26.4	11.8	19.1
	<hr/> 100	<hr/> 100	<hr/> 100

As far as can be learned there is only one half-caste in the island, a boy, perhaps seven or eight years of age, rather poorly developed, but without noteworthy characteristics.

## THE SOUTHERN NEW HEBRIDES

*Tanna Measurements. All males over 18*  
East Coast. 1 to 54 inclusive

Name	Height	Head		Facial Height	Bi-zy. Breadth	Nasal		Indices		
		Length	Breadth			Height	Breadth	Cephalic	Facial	Nasal
1. NALAVAS ...	1663	190.4	143.5	99	132	45.7	45.7	75.3	75	100
2. JACK ...	1699	194.3	157.4	121.9	142.2	45.7	45.7	81	85.7	100
3. NANUA ...	1681	193	149.8	100.3	137.1	34.2	41.9	77.6	73.1	122.2
4. KUMELU ...	1600	185.4	142.2	111.7	134.6	38	40.6	76.7	83	106.6
5. PUSAI ...	1577	193	149.8	119.3	134.6	48.2	40.6	77.6	88.6	84.2
6. KAKO ...	1803	191.7	151.1	116.8	142.2	45.7	43.1	78.8	82.1	94.4
7. NAURA ...	1587	198.1	149.8	109.2	144.7	38	44.4	75.6	75.4	116.6
8. KAIUTI... ..	1706	205.7	157.4	120.6	132	48.2	46.9	76.5	91.3	97.3
9. KUK ...	1727	200.6	162.5	119.3	154.9	55.8	43.1	81	77	77.2
10. LAPEAI ...	1701	203.1	149.8	116.8	147.3	50.7	45.7	73.7	79.3	90
11. LOHMANI ...	1635	193	152.3	121.9	139.6	53.3	48.2	78.9	87.2	90.4
12. NAHIEF ...	1605	184.1	154.9	116.8	146	50.7	38	84.1	80	75
13. MAHU ...	1676	193	149.8	118.1	142.2	57.1	45.7	77.6	83	80
14. KURIN ...	1681	200.6	144.7	123.1	144.7	55.8	45.7	72.1	85.1	91.8
15. IAU ...	1732	185.4	152.3	126.9	134.6	50.7	38	82.1	94.3	75
16. IABATU... ..	1612	187.9	142.2	121.9	139.6	63.4	41.9	75.6	87.2	66
17. NAKUALUMAN ...	1727	193	157.4	129.2	144.7	60.9	40.6	81.5	98.2	66.6
18. NOAL ...	1619	187.9	154.9	142.2	147.3	50.7	48.2	82.2	87.9	95
19. KOTIAMA ...	1574	198.1	154.9	111.7	144.7	71.1	48.2	78.2	77.1	67.8
20. NALAU ...	1752	193	157.4	127.1	152.3	60.9	40.6	81.5	90	66.6
21. NANUA ...	1587	193	147.3	121.9	142.2	58.4	38	76.3	85.7	65.2
22. NAMAKA ...	1720	196.8	154.9	126.9	144.7	53.3	38	78.7	87.7	71.4
23. REWA ...	1650	193	149.8	124.4	147.3	50.7	40.6	77.6	84.4	80
24. NAMUSI ...	1669	200.6	154.9	142.2	149.8	63.4	48.2	77.2	94.9	76

AN ETHNOLOGICAL RECORD

25. MOLIAKI	...	1606	180.3	149.8	121.9	144.7	53.3	38	83	84.2	71.4
26. TARAWAI	...	1625.5	195.5	147.3	124.4	144.7	60.9	40.6	75.3	85.9	66.6
27. IAKAVI ...	...	1581	193	144.7	121.9	137.1	50.7	43.1	75	88.8	85
28. KUOKAREI	...	1657	193	154.9	121.9	149.8	57.1	43.1	80.2	81.3	75.5
29. KATOA ...	...	1631	195.5	151.1	121.9	142.2	57.1	38	77.2	85.7	66.6
30. POITA ...	...	1650	185.4	157.4	120.6	139.6	58.4	31.7	84.9	86.3	64.3
31. KUONIAMUK	...	1600	180.3	144.7	133.3	139.6	60.9	43.1	80.2	95.4	70.8
32. MAITI ...	...	1562	193	162.5	137.1	144.7	58.4	43.1	84.2	94.7	73.9
33. WAMIHI	...	1600	187.9	147.3	121.9	149.8	58.4	35.5	78.3	81.3	60.8
34. NILUA ...	...	1625.5	180.3	144.7	119.3	142.2	55.8	43.1	80.2	83.9	77.2
35. KAMITI	...	1600	189.2	157.4	139.6	152.3	55.8	43.1	83.2	91.6	75.5
36. LABUHU	...	1536	182.8	144.7	116.8	134.6	58.4	48.2	79.1	86.7	82.6
37. MAIMAI	...	1625.5	191.7	142.2	132	139.6	63.4	38	74.1	94.5	60
38. KAPUNEN	...	1581	182.8	157.4	132	147.3	58.4	43.1	86.1	89.6	73.9
39. KAUKU ...	...	1612	187.9	149.8	126.9	139.6	58.4	40.6	79.3	90.9	69.5
40. PUSI ...	...	1625.5	190.4	147.3	121.9	139.6	53.3	44.4	77.3	87.2	83.3
41. IAKOLI ...	...	1581	194.3	157.4	114.2	147.3	63.4	39.3	81	77.5	62
42. AMUA ...	...	1587	184.1	149.8	119.3	140.9	58.4	39.3	81.3	84.6	67.3
43. IHUA ...	...	1631	190.4	154.9	124.4	139.6	55.8	40.6	81.3	89	72.7
44. NAIVA ...	...	1517.5	187.9	146	119.3	142.2	58.4	29.2	77.7	83.9	60
45. NERUA ...	...	1644.5	182.8	139.6	110.4	139.6	50.7	38	76.3	79	75
46. TIRU ...	...	1645	194.3	151.1	126.9	142.2	55.8	46.9	77.7	89.2	84
47. NIAVIA ...	...	1638	195.5	157.4	135.8	144.7	58.4	45.7	80.5	93.8	78.2
48. IAO ...	...	1706	190.4	154.9	125.7	149.8	53.3	44.4	81.3	83.8	83.3
49. KALUATAV	...	1600	187.9	144.7	120.6	142.2	55.8	29.2	77	84.8	52.2
50. NUMANAULA	...	1625.5	193	157.4	132	149.8	63.4	40.6	81.5	88.1	64
51. NANUA ...	...	1676	194.3	152.3	132	148.5	71.1	40.6	78.4	88.8	57.1
52. KAAS ...	...	1682	195.5	149.8	124.4	162.9	55.8	39.3	76.6	84.4	70.4
53. NILAUS	...	1650	187.9	156.2	126.9	152.3	50.7	41.9	83.1	83.3	82.5
54. POITA ...	...	1695	185.4	154.9	128.2	152.3	60.9	38	83.5	84.1	62.5

## THE SOUTHERN NEW HEBRIDES

*Tanna Measurements. All males over 18 (continued)*

West Coast. 55 to 187 inclusive

Name	Height	Head		Facial Height	Bi-zy. Breadth	Nasal		Indices		
		Length	Breadth			Height	Breadth	Cephalic	Facial	Nasal
55.* ISAAC ...	1730	191.2	149.2	129.6	136.8	59.5	41	78	94.7	68.9
56. PERCY ...	1730	188.5	156.8	136.5	152.5	59.5	41	83.1	89.5	68.9
57. CAPTAIN ...	1641	178	155	135	144.5	63.8	39.5	87	93.4	61.9
58. ALEC ...	1555	181	152	115.5	139.8	57.5	39.8	83.9	82.6	69.2
59. JIMMIE...	1717	177.5	150	113.5	137.5	59.6	43.5	84.5	82.5	72.9
60. KARIKO ...	1595	187	147.5	120.5	135	54.5	42	78.8	89.2	77
61. BILL ...	1598.5	182	160	107	138.5	55.5	41	87.9	77.2	73.8
62. TOM ...	1646.5	186	144.6	115.6	138	60	44	77.7	83.7	73.3
63. CHARLIE ...	1662.5	194.8	147.6	119.5	140.5	58	49.8	75.7	85	85.8
64. SAM ...	1715	186	146.6	113.5	140.5	50	41.5	78.8	80.7	83
65. NALAUAS ...	1706	192.5	141	112.6	145.4	56.4	41.5	73.2	77.4	73.5
66. KATAINA ...	1740	181.4	152	132	138.2	59.5	39	83.7	95.5	65.5
67. TAVO ...	1628.5	190.5	150.5	123.5	146.6	53	41	79	84.2	77.3
68. LOB ...	1706	194	154.6	123	142.8	60	46.5	79.6	86.1	77.5
69. NAMEL... ..	1646	191.7	148	113	139	62	45	77.2	81.3	72.5
70. IAMA ...	1587	177.2	145.5	117	138.5	59.5	40	82.1	84.4	67.2
71. KWAROM ...	1617	191	149.5	125.5	139	61	32	78.2	90.2	52.4
72. NAURI ...	1686	198	149	113.2	136	54	39	75.2	83.2	72.2
73. SIAKA ...	1636	183.6	148.5	122.5	140.5	60	39	80.8	87.1	65
74. SIAKA (2) ...	1686	199	144.6	124	148	53.5	41	72.6	83.7	76.6
75. IRU ...	1628.5	180.5	146.6	119	146.5	59	37	81.2	81.2	62.7
76. BUKEI ...	1560	189	152	131.6	141.5	62	44	80.4	93	70.9
77. LALULU... ..	1611	188	155.4	124.4	150.5	62	53	82.6	79.4	85.4

\* 55 to 64 inclusive all West Coast Tannese. Measurements taken on Eromanga.



## AN ETHNOLOGICAL RECORD

9

78. KOATA ...	...	1489	197	152.5	110	148	54.5	41	77.4	74.3	75.2
79. IATA ...	...	1710	195	155.2	128.5	147.4	55	45	79.5	87.1	81.8
80. NAKOHMA	...	1667	197	149	127	145	63	47	75.6	87.5	74.6
81. SIKOT ...	...	1684	195	145	113	137.5	50.5	40.5	74.3	82.1	80.1
82. IASU ...	...	1662	193	145	117	135.5	52	49	75.1	86.3	76.9
83. IASU ...	...	1574.5	187	152	123.5	161.5	63	38.5	81.2	76.4	61.1
84. KEKOB...	...	1616	186.5	153.4	121	146.4	61	38.5	82.2	82.6	63.1
85. KAPABA	...	1691	193	145	115.5	140	55	45.5	75.1	82.5	82.7
86. NATUMAN	...	1638	186	154	128.5	144	64	41	82.7	89.2	64
87. NELBIN	...	1645	181.5	140	122	138.5	51	45.5	77.1	88	89.2
88. LOAUA ...	...	1645	193	143.4	122.4	137.5	57	45	74.3	89	78.9
89. IARUEL...	...	1591	201	153	120	148	60	39	76.1	81	65
90. KAIPAL	...	1587	194	156	126	147.5	60	47	80.4	85.4	78.3
91. HARRY ...	...	1641.5	190	153	126	149.5	61	49	80.5	84.2	80.3
92. KIEL ...	...	1715	187.5	142	114	134	54	42	75.7	85	77.7
93. TAVO ...	...	1676	193	153	122	147	56	45	79	82.9	80.3
94. KAUT ...	...	1798	199.5	157.5	136.3	156	67	46	78.9	87.3	68.6
95. MANGAU	...	1636	196.5	147	133.3	149	60	42	74.8	89.4	70
96. IARAMANOK	...	1624.5	195	157	145.5	143	69	44	80.5	101.7	63.7
97. IAUTUNG	...	1705.5	203	156	142	153	69	40.5	76.8	92.8	58.6
98. IARUELI	...	1667	183.4	151	118	138.2	55	42	82.3	85.3	76.3
99. IAUAK ...	...	1597	198	151	121	145	60	45	76.2	83.4	75
100. KALIA ...	...	1720	185	143.5	124	139	55	44	77.5	89.2	80
101. KAPALU	...	1804	195	138	126	137.5	57	44	70.7	91.6	77.1
102. LAVA ...	...	1616	196	156.5	134	144	67	46	79.8	93	68.6
103. IAMUS ...	...	1654.5	200	154	120	148	52.5	39	77	81	74.2
104. IAUAI ...	...	1719	186	151	131	142	54	37	81.1	92.2	68.5
105. IARUELI	...	1616	204	151	129.5	153	62	51	74	84.6	82.2
106. IHUA ...	...	1681	187.5	150	124.5	145.5	55	49.5	80	85.5	90
107. IAMONIK	...	1656	200	147	120	139	55	43	73.5	86.3	78.1
108. TAMURO	...	1600.5	184	151	116	144	57	47	82	80.5	82.4
109. IARUELA	...	1612.5	202	157	132	140	57.5	40	77.7	94.2	69.5

*Tanna Measurements. All males over 18 (continued)*

West Coast. 55 to 187 inclusive

Name	Height	Head		Facial Height	Bi-zy. Breadth	Nasal		Indices		
		Length	Breadth			Height	Breadth	Cephalic	Facial	Nasal
110. NERABO ...	1623	194	151	135	145	60	40	77.8	93.1	66.6
111. SAUBER ...	1656	190.5	160	124	147	60	44	83.9	84.3	73.3
112. IAVINIAU ...	1658.5	186	150	120.5	138.5	53.5	44	80.6	87	82.2
113. NOKLAUNG ...	1723	199	145	123	144	58.5	43	72.8	85.4	73.5
114. IATA ...	1641	190.5	141	123	136	60.5	47.5	74	90.4	78.5
115. SIUO ...	1565.5	188	153	133	145.5	62	41	81.3	91.4	66.1
116. KAPEN ...	1514	199	147	137	143.5	57	46	73.8	95.4	80.7
117. IAYAHA ...	1665	204	160	136	152	68	43	78.4	89.4	63.2
118. NILAU ...	1623	195	150.5	128.5	146	52	47	77.1	88	90.3
119. KASAOU ...	1600	179	148	136.5	142	68	44	82.6	96.1	64.7
120. IANUKEL ...	1622.5	199	151	123	139.5	57.5	40	75.8	88.1	69.5
121. IAMAOK ...	1596	195.5	150.5	120	150	60	46	76.9	80	76.6
122. NAMUL ...	1665	198	146	129.5	140	57	50	73.7	92.6	87.7
123. HEDOWET ...	1748	188	146	119	135	61	40	77.6	88.1	65.5
124. TAVIN ...	1590	200	148	126	141	59	45.5	74	89.3	77.1
125. NAGEBOK ...	1502.5	175	147	115	141	53.5	45	84	81.5	84.1
126. SIMON ...	1732	195.5	152	135	147.5	66	45	77.7	91.5	68.1
127. IAUNUM ...	1629	192.2	155	130	148	54	48	80.6	87.8	88.8
128. NIKOLO ...	1565.5	191	134	115	129.5	56.5	42	70.1	88.8	74.3
129. MALINO ...	1768	198	151	137.5	144.5	64	47	76.2	95.1	73.4
130. MAI ...	1616	187	147	123	142	55	39	78.6	86.6	70.9
131. IELAMI ...	1631.5	188	144.5	131.5	140.5	63	44	76.8	93.5	69.8
132. IAUS ...	1651.5	183.5	150	145	145	62	41	81.7	100	67.7
133. DEES ...	1715	191.5	151.5	140.5	144	65	47.5	79.1	97.5	73