



# THE DIAGRAMMATICS OF 'RACE'

VISUALIZING HUMAN RELATEDNESS IN THE  
HISTORY OF PHYSICAL, EVOLUTIONARY,  
AND GENETIC ANTHROPOLOGY,  
CA. 1770-2020

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## 4. Prichard's Third Edition of *Researches* (1836–47) and Nott's and Gliddon's *Types of Mankind* (1854)

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James Poskett (2015) has shown that *Crania americana* instantiated a transatlantic network. Prichard communicated with Morton and displayed Morton's skull lithographs for *Crania americana*, which he received from Morton himself, at a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS). Prichard also tried to promote the book. In return, Morton dedicated the 'foreign edition' of *Crania americana* also to Prichard and presented the book as part of the same enquiry (Prichard to Morton, 23 August 1839, 17 February 1840, Morton Papers APS). Through Prichard, Morton was even made an honorary member of the Aborigines' Protection Society. Prichard hoped to secure financial and institutional support for what he, too, had recently come to call 'ethnology'. He wanted a section for it in the BAAS and he received some money for printing and circulating a questionnaire for travelers and others to gather information on the 'races of man' (Combe to Morton, 7 December 1839, Morton Papers APS). In the questionnaire, Prichard referred to the importance of the skull to distinguish 'races'. At the same time, he dismissed phrenology in his review of *Crania americana*, which competed with his ethnology for recognition (Prichard 1841; Poskett 2015; 2019, 78–114).

However, in view of Prichard's third edition of *Researches* that was published in five volumes between 1836 and 1847, these observations are surprising. Prichard may have paid more serious attention to physical

anthropology, especially craniology, than before, as Poskett (2015, 269) notes. The first volume of the third edition contained nine lithographic plates of skulls and a new chapter on national forms of skulls (Prichard 1836, 275–321). Nonetheless, the entire oeuvre was again one big argument for monogenism that demonstrated the similarities and overlap between the human groups making up the single human species (Prichard 1836–47). Even in the chapter on national skull forms (Chapter 5), Prichard maintained that also the so-called characteristics of the 'Black African race' were found in the other varieties and that it did not approach the ape any closer than other 'races'. Still harboring esthetic concerns, he emphasized that there were many exceedingly beautiful Black African people. Furthermore, he continued to reject the facial angle and the claim that there were constant differences in cranial capacity between 'races' – the very two measurements Morton most relied on.

Rather, Prichard followed Blumenbach in favoring the comparative holistic method; he recommended that the trained eye study different skulls that were aligned from all sides. This approach made him distinguish the symmetrical/oval skull forms mostly found in Europeans and western Asians from the narrow/elongated/prognathous forms mostly found in 'Black nations'. He thereby introduced the description 'prognathous' that would become central, under which he also subsumed the "new" 'Oceanic types' described by Garnot and his colleague René Lesson as discussed at the end of Chapter 3 (Prichard 1836, 298–302, quote on 298; Lesson and Garnot 1826, 113–15). Prichard's skulls looked rather artistic than objectivistic, which might be exemplified by the plate showing his third, pyramidal, broad-, or square-faced skull form, typical among others of the 'Turanian' variety (Prichard's alternative term for the 'Mongolian') given in Figure I.14. The skulls' esthetic appearance that makes them seem somewhat imprecise, or unscientific as judged by Morton's standard, contrasts with the diagrammatic element Prichard introduced into the lithograph. It showed the triangle between the zygomas (cheekbones) and the apex of the forehead: "[...] the lateral projection of the zygomas being so considerable, that if a line drawn from one to the other be taken as a base, this will form with the apex of the forehead a nearly triangular figure" (Prichard 1836, 282).

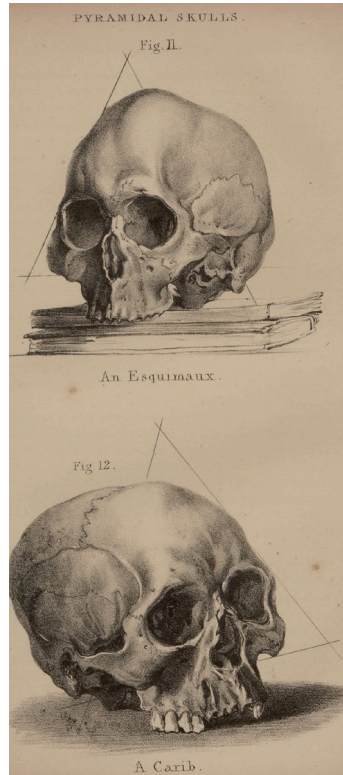


Fig. I.14 “Pyramidal Skulls”. James Cowles Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind*, 3rd ed. (London: Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, 1836), Vol. I, figs. 11 and 12, p. 306. Public domain.

Figure I.14 gives the impression that the triangles had been rather clumsily added to an artistic drawing already in place. It seems that Prichard barely gave in to a diagrammatic anthropology, but certainly not to a metric approach. Rather, he instrumentalized Morton's *Crania americana* to support the notion that the Indigenous peoples of the Americas were of one stock (although Prichard included the Arctic peoples), without discussing Morton's 'polygenism' (Prichard 1847). This understanding is corroborated by Prichard's popular *The Natural History of Man* of 1843, in which he doubted that the physical traits, and, in particular, those of the skull, were the most durable, rather attributing the three main skull shapes to particular ways of life from hunting to nomadism and civilization (105–109). Again deconstructing physical racial anthropology (109–122), he denied that its methods

were adequate to establish genealogies, which was better achieved with research into other characteristics such as affinities in language. It was the unity of the human mind, in the end, that furnished clear evidence “that all human races are of one species and one family” (546).

It was after Morton’s death that his work was most emphatically embraced, particularly by his friends Nott and Gliddon, in whose hands Morton’s polygenism became vocal, and it was Morton’s *Crania aegyptiaca* of 1844 that proved most amenable to their polygenist cause. In 1851, Nott and Gliddon gained access to Morton’s correspondence and writings, and they used it to produce the expensive volume *Types of Mankind* of 1854, with its 360 woodcuts, which they dedicated to their father of anthropology (ix). At this moment, the politics of the new anthropology became unambiguous. In his introduction, Nott emphasized the importance of the new science’s findings for the denunciation of philanthropic arguments against slavery, which was the object of heated controversy at that time (Nott and Gliddon 1854, 49–61). In the US, polygenism was part of the unrest that preceded the Civil War. In 1820, pro- and antislavery factions were fighting in Congress; consequently, the Missouri Compromise was enacted to give them equal power in the Senate. This led to the secessionist agenda of the Confederacy. Between 1836 and 1844, petitions against slavery were prohibited before the House of Representatives, which meant a setback for abolitionists (Keel 2013, 8). Morton’s *Crania aegyptiaca* (1844) had sold well, also to proslavery intellectuals; *Types of Mankind* (1854) was highly successful and appealed to some racist southerners (Fabian 2010, 107, 111). In the volume, Nott actually bragged that Morton’s crania atlases had even played their role in the issue of slavery as it appeared in the negotiation with Great Britain over the annexation of Texas. The books gave the American Secretary of State ammunition in his support for the institution in denying the perfectibility and equality of all human kinds (Nott and Gliddon 1854, 50–51).

In his contributions to the book, Nott meant to show that progress had only come about through ‘Caucasians’. According to his devastating verdict, Black Africans never approached civilization, and the monuments of Peru and Mexico were nothing compared to the achievements of ‘Caucasians’ from the Egyptians up to the modern Anglo-Americans. Nott claimed that Morton had proven how deficient

'other races', especially Black Africans, were with respect to brain size. Morton's work was also introduced as proof that in the 4,000 years since the Egyptian monuments, Black Africans had remained the same and remained slaves. Progress, Nott declared, had largely been due to the war between 'races', to the 'superior races' who migrated into the territories of the 'stationary ones' and seized their lands. He argued that the replacement of 'lower by higher races' was a law inscribed by the creator. Nott also overtly attacked Prichard and his 'false theory' of monogenism, although he conceded the latter's great achievement in bringing into being ethnology. Since the knowledge from Egypt and Morton's work, however, in Nott's estimate all such views of human unity and equality had become obsolete. To Nott, the 'great human races' were separate creations; they in fact constituted separate species each of which had its own place of origin and comprised original subdivisions (Nott and Gliddon 1854, 49–297, 372–465; further on Nott, see Erickson 1986; Keel 2013).

However, *Types of Mankind* is a confusing and also rather confused volume. Although ostensibly building an edifice to Morton's physical anthropology and containing excerpts from Morton's manuscripts, it does not add much in this respect. If anything, it has more in common with Prichard's approach, for the long Part II and III by Gliddon are an engagement in philology and with different chronological traditions, and are thus part of a more traditional scholarly style (Nott and Gliddon 1854, 466–716). Gliddon tried to figure out to which ethnicities and geographical regions the authors of the Old Testament had referred, and arrived at the conclusion that Genesis 10 only engaged with 'Caucasian' descent. The sons of Noah had all been 'Caucasian'. The authors had known nothing of Ethiopia or sub-Saharan Africa, only about Egypt, and they had been unacquainted with Asia proper and the Americas. Finally, in accordance with the subtitle *Or, Ethnological Researches, Based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and upon Their Natural, Geographical, Philological, and Biblical History* the larger part of the illustrations in the book are reproductions of art.

Nonetheless, there is a section on the comparative anatomy of the 'races' written by Nott that contains skulls and skull series taken from other works like Morton's (Nott and Gliddon 1854, 411–65). However, Nott commented on the drawing of 'the cranial types of mankind' that

is given at the end of the section on craniometry (reproduced here as Figure I.15) as follows:

If, as we have reiterated times and again, those types depicted on the early monuments of Egypt have remained permanent through all subsequent ages – and if no causes are now visibly at work which can transform one type of man into another – they must be received, in Natural History, as primitive and specific. When, therefore, they are placed beside each other (*e.g.* as in Figs. 336–338) such types speak for themselves; and the anatomist has no more need of protracted comparisons to seize their diversities, than the school-boy to distinguish turkeys from peacocks, or pecaries [*sic*] from Guinea-pigs. (Nott and Gliddon 1854, 456)

Thus, in the end, Nott revealed his intuitive approach to the question of ‘human races or species’, a deep-rooted knowledge, or what we would call prejudice, about their relative worth and appropriate station in life – no need for elaborate measurements. Yet, while thus seemingly depreciating Morton’s grand aim of objectifying racial anthropology with a plethora of instruments and measurements, Nott’s series of skulls (reproduced as Figure I.15) worked to the same purpose as Morton’s diagrams. Morton had transformed Blumenbach’s horizontally overlapping skull characters of the five human varieties into static numbers diagrammatically separated in hierarchical order. Nott’s inert series ‘from the Caucasian skull down to the Black African skull’, too, counteracted Camper’s and Blumenbach’s dynamic and experimental diagrammatic approach of types that morph into each other: Nott explicitly declared it impossible that anything “can transform one type of man into another”. His static and racist diagram is one that denies humans a common genealogy (Sommer 2023a, 21–25).<sup>1</sup>

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1 Nott and Gliddon also cooperated on *Indigenous Races of the Earth* (1857), which contained a contribution on “The Cranial Characteristics of the Races of Man” (203–352) by James Aitken Meigs and a tableau-foldout describing the ‘knowledge’ about the ‘54 human types’ that, among other things, provided facial angles and internal capacities below drawings of skulls mostly from Morton’s collection. It stood in the diagrammatic tradition represented by Saucerotte’s synopsis reproduced here as Figure I.13.



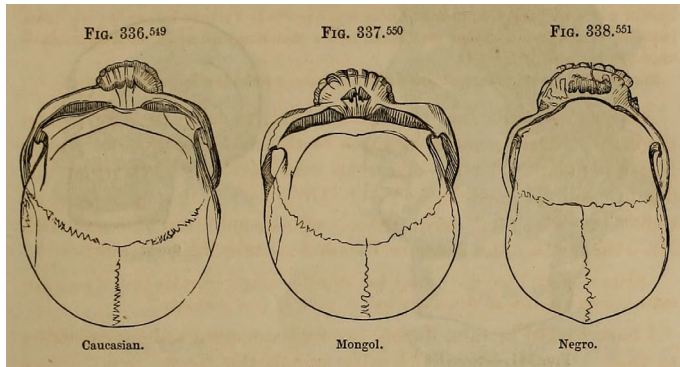


Fig. I.15 Inert skull series. Josiah Clark Nott and George Robin Gliddon, *Types of Mankind* [...] (Philadelphia, PN: J. B. Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1854), figs. 336–38, p. 457. Public domain.

