At the time of their discovery, the north-western coast of Venezuela, especially the peninsula of Paraguana (east of the Gulf of Maracaibo), and the islands of Aruba, Curaçao and Bonaire, were inhabited by an Arawak-speaking tribe, the Caquetío. They were agriculturists and excellent navigators (Hernández de Alba, 1948). According to Hartog (1953) at least two pre-Columbian groups inhabited the Netherlands Antilles: one, which mainly left shell-heaps behind it, and another, later group which lived not only on sea products, but also from agriculture. It is not known whether this means that two separate groups were actually present together, as was the case in the Greater Antilles, where, at the same period, the fish-eating Ciboney (García Valdés, 1948) were succeeded by Arawak agriculturists. The remains may also indicate the cultural evolution of a cave-dwelling population of hunters, fishermen, and fruit and root-eaters into agriculturists, as Fewkes (1914) suggests.

Apart from records of rock paintings, the earliest mention of which occurs as far back as 1836 (Wagenaar Hummelinck, 1953), the first archaeological investigations were carried out by Father A. J. van Koolwijck in the second half of the nineteenth century. The specimens he collected are present in the National Ethnological Museum at Leiden; they were studied by Leemans (1904) and by de Josselin de Jong (1918). The human skeletal remains excavated by van Koolwijck were described by Koeze (1914). A new appraisal of the latter material may be found in the paper on 'Indian skeletal discoveries in Curaçao and Aruba' by Wagenaar Hummelinck (1959), in which the writer endeavours to give an historical survey of our scanty knowledge of Netherlands Antillean palaeo-anthropology.

To which 'race' did these Indian people belong? In order to obtain a basis for answering this question, a definition of the word 'race' must first be given. A human race may be defined as a subdivision of mankind distinguished from other subdivisions by a difference in the frequency with which certain physical features occur. The bodily features concerned are those which are determined by heredity, and are not, or at least not greatly, modifiable by environmental influences. For instance, head form is determined mainly by heredity, but weight is modifiable by nutrition to such an extent that it is useless as a means of identifying race. Stature, on the other hand, may also be modified by environ-
mental influences but not to such an extent as to render it a useless criterion.

It is obvious that a race diagnosis should be based on as many criteria as possible. The foregoing makes it clear that 'race' is a physical concept. It therefore follows that the name 'Caquetio', which merely points to an Arawak-speaking tribe, and the names 'Arawak' and 'Carib' which designate languages, are not a serviceable basis for a racial classification. In general, cultural – i.e. environmentally determined – characteristics are not racial criteria; a certain group of people may more or less develop its culture within a given time-span without changing its physical features. There are undoubtedly instances in which culture may lead to a behaviour pattern which produces an isolating mechanism (Shapiro, 1956). The genetic isolation produced in this way may after a given time, lead to the formation of new 'races'. In view of the cultural affinities between the territory under discussion and Venezuela, this possibility can be dismissed.

Geographical boundaries may also lead to isolation, if they form barriers which cannot easily be crossed. This has certainly not been the case here. It should be remarked that the word 'race' is usually only applied to large subdivisions. In the present article subdivisions of the entire group of American aborigines were made on the basis of the above-mentioned definition of race.

The bodily characteristics – i.e. the physical anthropology – of the Indian inhabitants of the Netherlands Antilles, whether as regards skeletal features of extinct groups or descriptions of the living, are unknown, apart from what is to be found in the abovementioned article by Koeze (1904), which, however, gives us no information of importance on the subject. In view of their close geographical proximity, and the cultural affinities already mentioned, it may be expected that the inhabitants of the northwestern part of Venezuela, and those of the Netherlands islands off its coast, were closely related, even in pre-Columbian times. Fig. 15 shows the distribution of somatological groups in the northern part of South America, the Lesser and Greater Antilles and part of North America, according to Imbelloni (1938).

Imbelloni (1938) grouped together the Indians of the Greater and Lesser Antilles, Venezuela, the Guyanas, and the Amazon drainage area under the heading 'Amazonid'. The physical features of this group, as described by him, and summarized by Newman (1949), are: short to medium-tall stature (in the north