

shore about low-tide mark. On the top of the coffin-lid are erected tall flags, and the figures of men playing gongs, shooting guns, and gesticulating wildly to frighten away evil influences from the sleeper. Sometimes the platform is erected on the shore above high-water mark, and near it is stuck in the ground a tall bamboo full of palm-wine; and suspended over a bamboo rail are bunches of sweet potatoes for the use of the dead man's *Nitu*. When the body is quite decomposed, his son or one of the family disinters the skull and deposits it on a little platform in his house, in the gable opposite the fireplace, while to ward off evil from himself he carries about with him the atlas and axis bones of its neck in his *luon*, or *siri*-holder."

This interesting account is full of implications whose fuller meaning we will perceive hereafter. The use of the skull and of the talisman bone should especially be noted for their later importance. For skulls are fundamental in the history of religion.

Cases like these readily pass into the practice of Mummifying, more especially in dry or desert climates. Even in so damp a tropical country as New Guinea, however, D'Albertis found in a shed on the banks of the Fly River two mummies, artificially prepared, as he thought, by removal of the flesh, the bones alone being preserved with the skin to cover them. Here we have evidently a clear conception of death as a serious change, of a different character from a mere temporary absence. So, too, Mr. Chalmers says of the Koiari people in the same island, "They treat their dead after this fashion. A fire is kept burning day and night at the head and feet for months. The entire skin is removed by means of the thumb and forefinger, and the juices plastered all over the face and body of the operator (parent, husband, or wife of the deceased). The fire gradually desiccates the flesh, so that little more than the skeleton is left." But mummification for the most part is confined to drier climates, where it is artificially