

## Notes and News

### *Man in Africa.*

THIS year's presidential address to the Royal Anthropological Institute, delivered by the Rev. E. W. Smith, is of especial interest to readers of *Africa*, and that not only for the obvious reasons suggested by its title, 'Man in Africa'. In taking, as he put it, an 'ecumenical view' of his theme, Mr. Smith covered a range of subjects far wider than is usually associated with anthropology. Yet his reminder to his audience, that anthropology means 'talking about man', constitutes not only a justification of himself but a positive counsel to its practitioners.

In his lecture Mr. Smith surveyed the whole field of scientific research in Africa in its relation to our understanding of African man as he is and has been, summarizing the results already achieved and indicating in what direction future developments may throw light on the special interests of the anthropologist. His plea is for more, and more systematic, study, not only of those questions whose answers can be immediately translated into action, but also of those in which increased knowledge will contribute more, or at any rate more obviously, to the general Science of Man than to the solution of particular political or economic problems. Now that anthropology has been found to have a practical application, there is a real danger that its services to science may come to be subordinated to its services to government or business—since research has to be paid for, and those pay most readily who see the prospect of an immediate return.

Mr. Smith's lecture is a valuable corrective of this point of view. If, in touching on our inadequate geographical knowledge of Africa, he stressed the relevance of such knowledge to the improvement of native diet and the even more pressing problems of erosion and the tsetse fly, he also discussed at length the archaeological discoveries which in the past twenty-five years have proved conclusively the existence, previously denied, of a Stone Age in that continent. He reminded us that we can learn from geology the environmental conditions in which Pleistocene man lived 'and how far these were favourable to migration'.

The mention of migration at once suggests the contact of cultures. In the past few years, and largely through the influence and assistance of the International African Institute, a concentrated attention has been directed upon the problems of modern Afro-European contact whose results must be invaluable, not only in laying bare the maladjustments from which African society is suffering as the result of this contact, and suggesting remedies, but in their bearing on a wide range of theoretical questions. The relative facility with which some cultural elements are adopted, the tenacity with

which some are retained, the apparently opposite reaction of different cultures to the same innovation, the motives underlying deliberate imitation of the dominant culture, the wave of conservatism that has arisen in one non-European society after another after a period of eager assimilation of new ways—all these phenomena have implications far wider than the specific difficulties of the peoples among whom they are observed.

The analysis of situations where contrasted standards come into violent conflict must throw into particularly strong relief those motives which constitute the ultimate problem of all study of social behaviour; it is here, perhaps, that the student of culture contact, seeking, like the student of any other phase of human history, for the universal elements in the particular phenomena before him, will be most richly rewarded.

But if the type of culture contact which is taking place at the present day is in many respects unique, it is not, even in Africa, the first occasion on which one society has borrowed elements from another, and Mr. Smith reminds us that the history of such contact in the past is another field in which scientific research should add much to our knowledge of Africa. Too much indulgence in fanciful conjecture, too ready insistence that every point of resemblance was proof of a common origin, has brought the study of historical diffusion into disrepute at the very time when that of modern diffusion is arousing so much interest. Yet we cannot ignore the fact that migrations have taken place in Africa; that invasions, conquests, and trade have meant a constant process of cultural interaction; that in some cases artefacts can be found in widely separate areas which resemble one another too closely in detail to be the product of coincident inventions. In order to reject the diffusion of the bifid prow from Melanesia it is not necessary to ignore reliable evidence, where it is obtainable, which can help to fill out the story of a process which we know to have existed. Mr. Smith made some interesting remarks on the value of native traditional history, where it can be sufficiently checked by corroborative material, and on the conclusions to be drawn, in the linguistic sphere, from the words which are common to a great number of African languages.

The emphasis constantly laid on the need of co-ordinating the results achieved by the different sciences is particularly important. It is not enough that from time to time some individual with the 'ecumenical approach' should inquire of all the scientists in turn what point they have reached and put the results together, even in so admirable a form as this. The scientists themselves should know where their work impinges on a neighbouring field, and should explore the borderlands together. Mr. Smith mentioned the experiment in co-operation between anthropologists and dieticians described in a recent number of *Africa*;<sup>1</sup> elsewhere he called for 'archaeologists versed in functional anthropology'.

<sup>1</sup> Raymond Firth, 'The Sociological Study of Native Diet', *Africa*, vol. vii, no. 4, 1934.

The development of scientific research in Africa is a subject of especial interest at this moment in view of the inquiry being conducted by the African Research Survey into its present position and future needs. One may hope that its future will be planned from the ecumenical point of view. (*Communicated by* DR. L. P. MAIR.)

### *The Study of Acculturation.*

Recognizing the importance of the study of acculturation, and the varying points of view from which the problem has been approached, the Social Science Research Council of America, early this year, appointed the undersigned as a Committee to analyse the work on the problem already done, to study the implications of the term 'acculturation', and to explore new leads for further investigation. After a number of meetings, the following outline was drawn up as a first step toward clarifying the problem and to serve as an aid in the classification of studies already made.

The work of the Committee will be facilitated, and its final report the more complete, if its members have knowledge of as many of the studies of acculturation now being carried on as is possible. To this end, the tentative outline which has been drawn up to help to organize its work is presented with the suggestion that information concerning acculturation studies now in progress be sent to the Chairman, or any member of the Committee, at the addresses indicated below. It will be particularly helpful if, in sending such material, the extent to which the data do or do not fall in with the categories set up in this outline might be indicated. It is expected that the results of the Committee's work will be made available to persons who communicate with it. The file of their names, and of the problems on which they are engaged, will also be available for the exchange of information and methods.

### *Outline for the Study of Acculturation*

#### I. Definition.

'Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into direct and continuous contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups.'

(NOTE : Under this definition, acculturation is to be distinguished from *culture-change*, of which it is but one aspect, and *assimilation*, which is at times a phase of acculturation. It is also to be differentiated from *diffusion*, which, while occurring in all instances of acculturation, is not only a phenomenon which frequently takes place without the occurrence of the type of contact between peoples specified in the definition given above, but also constitutes only one aspect of the process of acculturation.)