

Chemists engaged in the study of polycyclic compounds will find this volume invaluable.

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Sexual Behavior in Western Arnhem Land. Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, No. 16. Ronald M. Berndt and Catherine H. Berndt. New York: Wenner-Gren Foundation, 1951. 247 pp.; 24 plates. \$4.00.

This monograph, by Mr. and Mrs. Berndt, and edited by Ralph Linton, on the sexual behavior of North Australian aborigines, is an important and impressive ethnographic report. That the authors speak with an authority based upon intensive and extended field research is clear. Throughout the monograph their generalized statements of social behavior are illustrated and substantiated by a wealth of detail. The reader gets the impression that the details have been judiciously selected from a much larger fund of experience that could have been exploited had this seemed desirable.

The report contains information on a wide range of social activities related in one way or another to sexual behavior. Considerable attention is paid to the social structure and its concomitant regulation of sex partners. Religious and ceremonial activities are portrayed in great detail, with particular reference to implications for reproductive processes. An especially interesting section is devoted to what the authors call "Gossip Songs." These are relatively recent compositions that relate in song form personal incidents in social life. Most of the songs concern the behavior of lovers and married people, and these are the ones illustrated in this report.

A somewhat disappointing section to this reviewer is the one in which the authors discuss sexual experience in the life cycle. The material is sketchy and lacks the wealth of detailed documentation characteristic of other sections. This may be explained in part by the rather curious attitude expressed by the authors in their introduction. They state (pp. 16-17):

What does not particularly concern us here is the sexual act itself—the accentuation of the erotic content of activity, or the actual resultant physical and emotional pleasure; in the same way, the swallowing of a piece of food is of minor and purely personal consideration when taken in conjunction with the wider importance and social associations of food.

To state our thesis briefly: the sexual act and the accompanying erotic play are incidental and personal, while the events leading up to, surrounding or resulting from this subject, and the institutions involved, are of general social importance to the community.

To be sure, sexual activities are personal, and so are such activities as eating, talking, and sleeping. But it is on the basis of observations of and/or hearsay about personal activities that an ethnographer builds a picture of the social customs and institutions that characterize a society. It is certainly of utmost importance to relate sexual behavior to other aspects

of culture, but this does not imply ignoring the sex act. Nor, in fact, do the authors themselves comply wholly with their self-imposed restriction. Much valuable descriptive material on sexual behavior proper is to be found in the report. The point is simply that it could have been an even more useful study for many readers had the authors not striven to maintain an essentially fictitious dichotomy between personal and social activities.

Perhaps the most significant lesson of the monograph for future field work is the demonstrated advantages of having a man and his wife cooperate in the investigation. The advantages of such teamwork stand out prominently in the study of reproduction and sexual behavior. But they are probably of considerable importance in the study of any aspect of human behavior and culture.

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Finite Matrices. W. L. Ferrar. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1951. 182 pp. \$4.00.

Interest in the theory of matrices has spread far and wide in the past few decades, but until recently very few texts were available in this field. Since the war many writers have been at work fulfilling this need. *Finite Matrices* is one of the latest in the post-war crop.

Various portions of the theory were included in an earlier work by Ferrar entitled *Algebra*. The author's aim in the present text is to complete the theory in such a way as "to make the argument simple and straightforward," so that it "can be read with reasonable ease." A fair measure of success in this purpose has been attained. On almost every page it is clear that the author was seeking out the difficulties in the subject and looking for lucid presentations. This makes it all the more surprising to find very often, in definitions, theorems, and proofs, that he lapses into a conversational style in which meanings are merely suggested rather than stated explicitly and accurately.

The definition of linear dependence (given by suggestion after treating only the case of three vectors) is wrong in that it requires a linear combination to vanish with at least two coefficients not zero.

The greatest drawback of the book as a text is the broad knowledge of matrix theory it initially assumes. This includes the theory of rank, the Cayley-Hamilton theorem, and the reality of the roots of a Hermitian matrix, for all of which the reader is referred to the author's *Algebra*. It is clear that *Finite Matrices* can be used as a text only on condition that the students have first had a course in Ferrar's earlier text.

After an introductory chapter summarizing the assumed results, the book gets down to work with a chapter on equivalence. One preparatory chapter then leads to the major topic of collineation (similarity) in which the method employed for the most part is the use of suitable pairs of elementary transformations.