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Meetings

Ethnic Minorities around the World

Discrimination, segregation, and persecution and the groups affected by such actions were the timely topics discussed at the two-part symposium of the Anthropology Section (H) at the Philadelphia AAAS meetings (27 December).

With the possible exception of Kenneth Clark, the panelists agreed that the predominant external variables controlling most ethnic minority situations are not psychological or even cultural, in the ideological sense, but are factors based upon concrete economic and political conditions. Clark, however, preferred to view the Negro-white situation in the United States primarily as a clash between American values and social realities. This clash he regards as rooted in the historical situation which produced the contemporary white population of the United States as a collection of minorities, many of whom immigrated to this country to escape persecution or to seek a better economic status. Despite its ideals of equality, Clark feels that American society is rigorously class divided; intense competition between social segments provides a special role for Negroes, whose outcast status automatically supplies the larger hierarchical society with a "bottom rung" but in so doing does so at the terrible and mounting cost of total alienation of the Negro population.

Although they did not discuss the subject, the participants implicitly accepted a definition, proposed by Wagley and Harris, which regards a minority as an endogamous descent group whose members are subject to persecution, segregation, or other discriminatory action; its size may vary from a few members to a mathematical majority, as in Mozambique. Most of the minorities considered at this session were comprised of impoverished, economically marginal populations, such as the aboriginal Australians, represented by the Tiwi; the Canadian Eskimo; and the American Indian, represented by the Winnebago. The last group presents an interesting case because it is beginning to achieve effective political combination which is enabling it to press its demands. However, half a world away, in Portuguese Africa, the growing political awareness

of the people of Mozambique and Angola is not leading to amelioration of the conditions of colonial rule, but, if anything, is leading to increased repression and further limiting of opportunities for the members of the numerically dominant but politically and economically weak minority. Mondlane, in presenting this information, corrected the widely held view that Portuguese colonial relations are different and special. Though frequently couched in nonracial terms, discriminatory conditions prevail which are comparable to the worst offered by South Africa. This general theme was also treated by Harris, who has done research both in Mozambique and Brazil. Addressing himself to the latter, he showed that race relations could be readily subsumed under the rubric of class relations. One of the most interesting of his points has to do with the contrast between the estimation of race in the United States and Brazil. This country is fairly rigorous in applying the rule of descent; the child of one Negro parent, whatever the race of the other parent, is always considered basically a Negro. In Brazil racial identification is made on the basis of a combination of criteria, some having to do with individual phenotype and others with cultural characteristics, such as occupation. In the United States we are accustomed to think that siblings must be of the same race. Harris showed that in Brazil it is quite possible for two brothers to be considered of different race, even by the people among whom they were born and raised.

The question of the relationship between minority group status and racial discreteness (visibility) is often obscured because many of the most dramatic minority-majority situations feature clear-cut physical differences between the populations. Donaghue is studying this problem under conditions which enable us to begin to hold constant the fact of obvious racial difference. He showed that the 2 to 3 million Japanese who are known as Eta, and who are physically indistinguishable from non-Eta Japanese, are subjected to discrimination of a distinctly racist kind; they are depicted in the larger society by stereotypes and myths resembling nothing so much as the racial stereotypes in the United States. Cases such as those of the Eta and the Chinese in Southeast Asia, where "racism" exists in the absence of racial differences, throw doubt on the notion

that physical differences are in any sense the cause of discrimination and prejudice.

Skinner noted certain kinds of minorities whose positions in society are rather different from most of those mentioned or implied so far. These comprise enclaves of alien ethnic population, the major portion of whom are involved in commerce or industry and many of whom fare well economically though they are rarely able to translate this success into political security or power. Such groups include some of the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia and groups of Africans living in West African cities amid dominant populations of different ethnicity. The similarity of the social problems faced by these widely separated groups was noted. At the root of their presently exacerbated situation is the ending of colonial rule. When the new nations attain independence, there frequently develops a parallel attempt to build up an indigenous commercial and industrial group slated to replace the older population which performed these functions—a population that was often an alien minority developed and maintained by the colonial forces. However, in lieu of complete replacement of such groups, the new government seeks to obtain their loyalty; for the alien group this often means forswearing old identities and allegiances and adopting new citizenship.

MORTON H. FRIED

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Forthcoming Events

April

27. American Soc. for **Experimental Pathology**, Atlantic City, N.J. (K. M. Brinkhous, Dept. of Pathology, Univ. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

27. Clinical and Diagnostic Aspects of **Enzyme Multiplicity**, colloquium, Ghent, Belgium. (R. J. Wieme, Laboratory of the Medical Clinic, Pasteurdreef 2, Ghent)

27-28. American **Psychosomatic** Soc., 20th, Atlantic City, N.J. (APS, 265 Nassau Rd., Roosevelt, N.Y.)

27-2. American **Ceramic** Soc., Pittsburgh, Pa. (C. S. Pearce, ACS, 4055 N. High St., Columbus 14, Ohio)

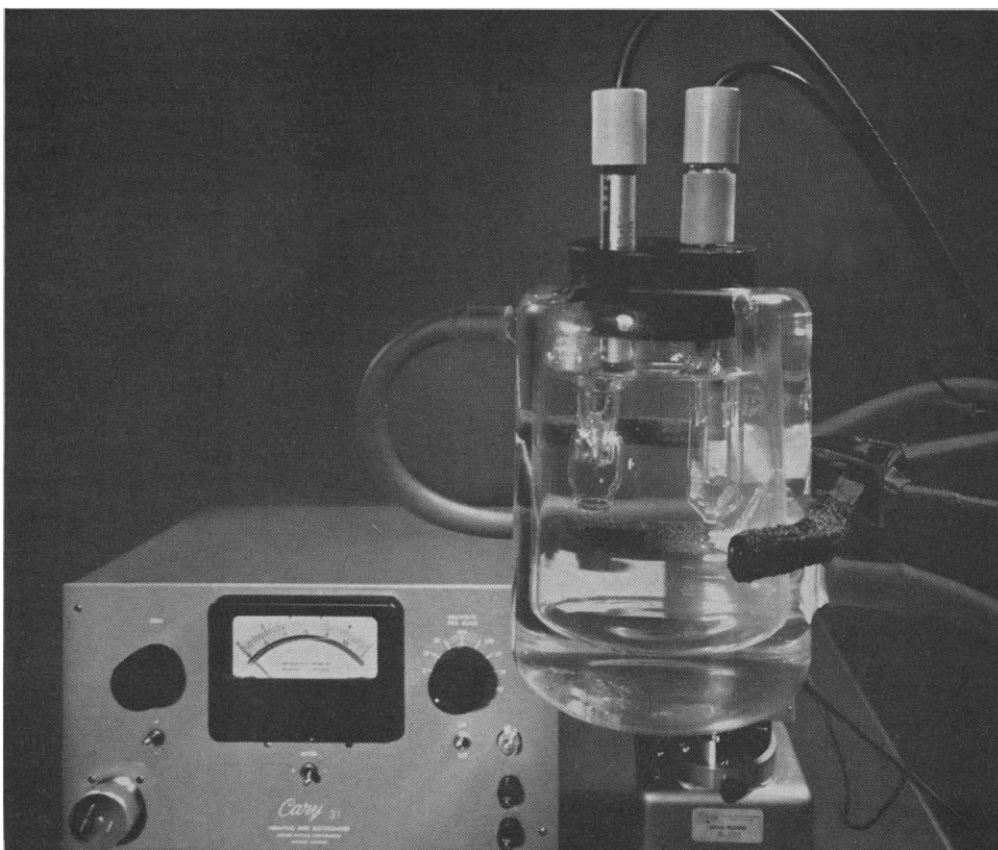
28-3. American Assoc. of **Cereal Chemists**, Minneapolis, Minn. (C. L. Brooke, Merck & Co., Rahway, N.J.)

28-29. **Electron Beam Technology**, 5th intern. symp., Boston, Mass. (J. R. Morley, Alloyd Electronics Corp., 35 Cambridge Pkwy., Cambridge 42, Mass.)

29-30. **Combustion** Inst., Western States Div., San Diego, Calif. (G. S. Bahn, 16902 Bollinger Dr., Pacific Palisades, Calif.)

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