Book Reviews

Primitives and Very Primitives

Man the Hunter. Based on a symposium, Chicago, 1966. Edited by RICHARD B. LEE and IRVEN DEVORE, with the assistance of Jill Nash. Aldine, Chicago, 1968. xvi + 416 pp., illus. $6.95.

In April 1966, some 75 scholars from many parts of the world met at the University of Chicago for an intensive four-day symposium on current research among primitive hunting-and-gathering peoples. Sol Tax of the University of Chicago conceived the symposium and chaired the sessions, and Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore of Harvard presented important papers and edited this report.

The aim of the symposium was the presentation of the recent efflorescence of ethnographic data on hunter-gatherers in the company of scientists who were interested in discussing further issues. These issues were essentially theoretical and methodological considerations related to the major problem of reconstructing Paleolithic cultural characteristics from the ethnographic data recovered in modern times.

No definite conclusions resulted. Discussants mostly disagreed, as might have been expected, since there has been so little prior consideration of the arguments: in our century academic anthropology had virtually outlawed this kind of approach—that extant stages of culture could be useful in thinking about extinct ages—for this was a fundament of the rationale of 18th- and 19th-century cultural evolutionists.

Although more problems emerged at the meeting than solutions, this may be taken as a sign of increased sophistication about hunting-and-gathering society. Also, many of the conclusions were negative; that is, many well-worn assumptions were shown to be simply not true. But this too must be considered a sign of increased sophistication.

The problems are complex but not necessarily insoluble. A primary issue has to do with the unrepresentativeness of the sample of modern hunters. These hunters do not inhabit the range of favorable habitats that Paleolithic peoples occupied. Another problem is that many hunting societies have regressed, broken down, or otherwise been drastically altered after contact with modern civilizations. This argues that simple comparison of cases or statistical treatment would be inappropriate means for an extrapolation back to the Paleolithic. More ethnology and, especially, more historical research need to be done.

The negation of some old assumptions about hunters was an important feature of the symposium. For example, there is no universal—or even usual—practice of defending of specific hunting territories. Second, hunting by males is usually of less significance to subsistence than the foraging after wild plants by females. Third, and probably the biggest surprise, is that normally hunting-and-gathering is not so precarious an economy as we have always thought. Lee shows that even the Bushmen of the Dobe region of the Kalahari Desert, an area we have typically assumed to be one of the world's most unproductive, actually are relatively well-fed—and with no great expense in effort or time. Life there is *not* nasty, brutish, and short.

All in all, this seems to have been a surprisingly good symposium. One suspects that much of the success should be measured in the stimulation of the actual "meeting of minds." This could be ascertained only individually and introspectively in some kind of before-and-after comparison, and of course it would not be in evidence in this report. However, the book can stand on its own. It is not engrossing reading from beginning to end—it is impossible to edit out all redundancy and triviality—but there are many segments that will be edifying for anyone at all interested in the quality of the life of *very* primitive peoples.

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Life in Arid Regions

Desert Biology. Special Topics on the Physical and Biological Aspects of Arid Regions. Vol. 1. G. W. BROWN, JR., Ed. Academic Press, New York, 1968. xviii + 638 pp., illus. $29.50.

This is the first of two volumes in which the editor attempts to draw together the scattered literature concerning desert biology. Brown has assembled a group of authors who can present their specialties with authority. This volume includes comprehensive surveys of the geographic sources, the special geologic features, and the limnology of deserts, but largely it consists of chapters on special features of desert animals and plants. It is intended as an introductory survey at the beginning graduate level.

The book begins and ends with excellent essays. Cloudsley-Thompson introduces the desert community through a narrative of a day's excursion near Khartoum. He is instructive and entertaining as he cuts across traditional disciplinary and taxonomic boundaries to present the distinctive viewpoint that is the science of desert biology. The last essay, a particularly fine consideration of man in the desert by D. H. K. Lee, concludes that a healthy man given adequate water and food can cope with all natural desert situations. However, there is an increasing dependence on technology for survival in the desert. This carries the danger that disruption of services could leave a large and unprepared populace to deal with the rigors of the desert; the consequences could be disastrous.

The reviews on plants, by A. W. Johnson on the evolution of western North American desert vegetation and J. A. McCleary on the biology of desert plants, confront broadly the problem of adaptation to the desert. In view of the overall structure of the volume, more space could have been allotted to the biology of desert plants.

In spite of the authority of each of the essays, the volume as a whole lacks coherence. Although the geographers, geologists, and botanists have been able to generalize the features of deserts and their inhabitants, the common responses of animals to temperature extremes, aridity, periodicity, and low diversity of life forms unfortunately are not drawn together. Nor is convergence in form and function by diverse groups in response to desert conditions specifically covered. These weaknesses derive largely from the decision to structure much

of the book along systematic lines, with chapters treating reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals, and, in the next volume, arthropods and fishes. A further loss is that in some cases the systematic accounts are incomplete; for example, for desert mammals only temperature regulation is treated. A newcomer to the field will have to search from chapter to chapter and delve deeply into the references to uncover the general features of adaptation to the desert by animals.

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Psychopathology

The Epidemiology of Depression. CHARLOTTE SILVERMAN. Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1968. xx + 188 pp., illus. $7.50.

The title of this book seems simple, but neither of the terms in it is sharply definable. Depression can denote a normal emotion, a symptom, a syndrome, or a phase of a disease: it ranges from grief to manic-depressive psychosis. How the term is used depends on the user's view about psychopathology and classification, on which there is perennial dispute. Silverman sides with the angels.

Epidemiology, no longer restricted to the study of communicable and epidemic diseases, is now used in extended senses, ranging from Greenwood's "study of the mass-aspects of disease" to the American "study of the distribution and determinants of disease prevalence in man." Definitions mostly agree in indicating that it is concerned with groups or populations in relation to their environment, and that it is essentially characterized more by its methods than by its subject matter or uses. This is evident in such diverse fields of epidemiologic study as lung cancer, coronary occlusion, and mental disorder—chronic conditions of multiple etiology. The last of these has received much epidemiological attention during the last 30 years.

The World Health Organization, recognizing the demands—and the pitfalls—that beset psychiatric inquiry of this sort, commissioned an admirable guide in D. D. Reid's "Epidemiological Methods in the Study of Mental Disorders" (*Public Health Papers* No. 2, 1960). Silverman's comprehensive review of a narrower field offers guidance to all who have to explore an untidy but extensive literature (much fomented by the support given to symposia by the pharmaceutical industry). It is the outcome of a larger epidemiologic project embracing all mental disorder, in which she was engaged when she was chief of the relevant branch of the National Institute of Mental Health.

Because of her broad interpretation of what epidemiology comprises, Silverman traverses the whole field of depression, under the familiar heads—classification, diagnosis, morbidity trends, prevalence and incidence, suicide, social and ethnic factors, response to treatment, heredity, biochemical and endocrine anomalies, associations with somatic diseases, and psychodynamics. It is legitimate to shelter all these under the hospitable umbrella of epidemiology, but the amount of space allotted to such aspects as heredity and psychodynamics seems unduly generous in this context. Elsewhere, however, the detailed exposition of findings is balanced and does justice to the relative importance of the papers cited. Unfortunately, in the papers cited there is a conspicuous gap, due entirely to the fact that of the 358 references only three are to publications in a language other than English. Consequently there is no mention of such outstanding contributors as Johannes Lange or, more recently, Jules Angst or H. J. Weitbrecht.

Silverman is under no illusion regarding the present state of our knowledge. Depressions, she declares, are poorly defined, very variable in intensity and form, responsive to available treatment "in a non-specific way, if at all, and they vary in outcome over a vast spectrum. . . . Their etiology remains obscure. Knowledge and theory about them have not advanced very much beyond the level of clinical description." This excessively gloomy appraisal of the current state of affairs is not lightened when she contemplates what epidemiological studies have accomplished. Using morbidity surveys, chiefly, as the medium of investigation, they have cast up hypotheses, but these "hypotheses about the nature, course and consequences of depression . . . have remained largely untested." This weakness she attributes to the directing of effort toward unduly narrow objectives. She advocates a closer concern with natural history, prospective investigations into causation, and better selection and grouping of samples of population for retrospective studies.

The proposals she puts forward for future research do not break any fresh ground or show how the intrinsic barriers to productive inquiry into causes and prevention can be cleared away. They do, however, suggest a useful approach to the consideration of suicide, treating it as the mortality component in the spectrum of depressive illness: longitudinal studies of the "natural history" of depression would in suitable populations have suicide as their "definitive outcome event."

This book is a useful review of a large amount of published material. It could with advantage have selected and evaluated much of it more critically, and there are some surprising slips (for example, the Hutterites are alleged to have been completely free from mental disorder at the time when Eaton and Weil studied them, whereas in fact these investigators reported that "psychoses and other forms of mental disorder were found to occur with regularity in the Hutterite population"). But in the main Silverman has produced a serviceable guide, doing justice to the solid work carried out in a number of countries, as well as to the rather heated conflicts about classification and diagnosis.

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History of the Neurosciences

The Human Brain and Spinal Cord. A Historical Study Illustrated by Writings from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century. EDWIN CLARKE and C. D. O'MALLEY. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1968. xiv + 926 pp., illus. $25.

Anyone who has attempted to track down primary sources in the history of the neurosciences, particularly in English translation, will appreciate the monumental task undertaken by Clarke and O'Malley in compiling this source book. As they themselves point out in their preface, preparation of an anthology such as this involves difficult problems of selection. "At each stage individual preferences are likely to intervene and hence criticism [is] courted."

Apart from the general frustration one feels with any source book because of the brevity of its excerpts, however, this reader can find few grounds for criticizing *The Human Brain and Spinal Cord*. Faced with the vast range of subjects pertinent to the development of neuroanatomy and neurophysiology,