

Antiquity

VOL. XXII No. 87

SEPTEMBER 1948

Editorial Notes

SINCE the war ended remarkable things have been happening across the Atlantic, almost unnoticed here. The Department of Anthropology in the University of Chicago has instituted a course of instruction in anthropology which in boldness of sweep far surpasses anything of the kind previously attempted—covering nothing less than the history of man and of civilization. The course is accompanied by mimeographed books, the Syllabus itself and two fat volumes of Selected Readings. Last and more important of all is a series of specially printed maps. We received all these publications quite a long time ago, and we apologize both to the authors and to our readers for the delay in noticing them. That has not been caused by any lack of interest, but rather by the somewhat overwhelming effect produced by them. They are not the sort of things one can read through at a sitting and of course are not produced for that purpose, but as educational aids. They represent the culminating point of a process which began with the birth of anthropology itself as a branch of science. The unit of study is not national or racial but human. Anthropologists have always claimed as much for their field, but their practice, in education, has often lagged behind their precepts.



Summarizing in our own words the scope of the Syllabus as outlined in the Introduction we may say that it is concerned with the development of our species and its varieties out of more generalized primate ancestors; the invention, spread, and modification of tools and social institutions; and the addition to early culture of those more complex techniques and institutions which make up what we call civilization. Anthropologists, working along several different lines, have arrived at conclusions about the time, place and cause of these events. The course is concerned with these conclusions—both those which are well established and those which are only hypothetical—and with the methods by which they have been attained. These methods are those disciplines generally labelled physical anthropology, archaeology, linguistics, ethnology, and social anthropology.



The outlook is essentially modern—that is to say, students are required to familiarize themselves with the results of the best recent work in each subject. That means in practice that they must read those books in which the discoveries—i.e. facts, not theories—of recent years are described. Amongst books which are basic and to be read right through are prescribed Professor Gordon Childe's *What happened in History* (1942), Dr Grahame Clark's *Archaeology and Society* (1939) and Professor Daryll Forde's *Habitat, Economy and Society* (1934). Of fundamental importance is the transition from hunting and collecting to food production. Due regard is paid to the influence of environment. The attitude to the old controversy about the respective rôles of race and culture is admirably objective, even to the extent of reprinting amongst the Selected

ANTIQUITY

Readings (Series I) a chapter from the arch-heretic Gobineau, one of the cultural ancestors of Nazi racial delusions.

These Selected Readings form a most useful adjunct to the Syllabus. Neither of these volumes, it is stated, is properly a 'source book'. They are simply collections of those items of basic readings referred to in the Syllabus that are not available in any other form in numbers sufficient for student needs. The difference between Series I and II is that the first volume contains lithographical reproductions of printed articles, while most of those in II have never been printed. All the articles are very well worth reading, and in reprinting them the University has earned the gratitude of others besides those for whom they were primarily intended.

The maps are original creations of the first rank. Being the first of their kind they will be developed and improved and these attempts may one day be looked back upon as crude and primitive. They may contain errors which future research will eliminate. In other words they will suffer as all pioneer work suffers when others (who are not pioneers) improve it and when its pristine originality is forgotten. There are three. The first is a useful index-map (scale about $1/7\frac{1}{4}$ M) of 'important sites in the range of the earliest village cultures from the Aegean to the Indus'; it is clear and adequate, but calls for no special comment. The second (about $1/36$ M) covers the Old World and shows the spread of the food-producing economy from five possible independent centres. The date at which food-production first appeared is shown by isochronic lines. These are an ingenious invention which show 'equal dates' exactly as contours show equal heights and isobars equal pressure. The five centres are (1) Near Eastern (c. 7000 B.C.) extending from Egypt round the Fertile Crescent to Iran: (2) North West African, whose existence (c. 4000 B.C.) is still hypothetical: (3) Chinese (c. 3500 B.C.): (4) Indian (c. 2500 B.C.): (5) Malaysian (c. 2000 B.C.). While all competent authorities will agree that the practice of producing food (instead of catching or collecting it ready-made) must have spread in some such way as this map shows, there will be differences of opinion about routes, dates, and centres. These irregularities will be ironed out by the scientific excavation of key-sites in Asia and Africa. We expect for instance that the bulge made by the isochrones to include Anau and no more is largely artificial, due to the accident that Anau is the most easterly site here that has been properly excavated; and that it will eventually be extended much further east to include the rich riverain and deltaic regions of Tejen and Merv. In this piedmont—itsself bigger than ancient Mesopotamia—a French map marks dozens of *tells* (here called *tepis*), none of which has ever been excavated. At the eastern end lies Balkh. It is quite the most promising virgin region left anywhere in the world.

The third is a sequence of twelve maps of the whole world, on three sheets of paper; it is called 'Time, Space and Man', and shows the world from 225,000 years ago, the time of the most extensive pleistocene glaciation, to A.D. 1900—optimistically called 'One World'. The physical background indicates glaciers and deserts. Areas occupied by food-collectors and food-producers are distinguished by appropriate symbols. Others are used to show loose trading integration, centres of political power, centres of intellectual aesthetic achievement and centres of both. The limits of empires are marked by an enclosing line (adapted for overseas empires). Highly industrialized areas are shown by cross-hatching. In the margin is a short article posing certain questions which the

EDITORIAL NOTES

maps do not answer, but for the solution of which they provide some of the data. We should have liked (granted the necessary permission) to have reprinted the whole of this article, but the latter part would have been unintelligible without the maps themselves which for technical reasons alone we could not attempt to reproduce. The descriptive text will be found on pages 77 to 90 of the Syllabus (Part I). Interspersed throughout the Syllabus are references to the best that has been written on each period, region and aspect; and it concludes with a bibliography of 27 pages, in which we are pleased to find many articles which have appeared in *ANTIQUITY*. The books and articles written by Professor Gordon Childe and Dr Grahame Clark occupy nearly a whole page.



Such is the scope and content of this course. Those who have mastered it may claim to be well educated in the most modern and enlightened sense, for there are few aspects of human culture that are not touched if only tangentially. A rather surprising lacuna is religion, another is the tangled skein of kinship, exogamy and the like. But we should be the last to deplore such omissions. More serious is the absence in the bibliography of such names as Schliemann, Flinders Petrie, Evans (John and Arthur) and Pitt-Rivers. A course that includes archaeology but ignores such great pioneers as these is open to criticism in that respect—and Pitt-Rivers was also an anthropologist. Language may be responsible for the fact that only one item by Breuil is mentioned, and only two items in any foreign language—one each in French and German out of a total of about 450. North Africa is recognized as a key-region, but Gsell does not appear and Vaufray only once. Zimbabwe is not anywhere referred to, and neither Maciver's excavations nor those of Miss Caton-Thompson are mentioned. Nor are the standard books of Maciver and Peate on prehistoric Italy cited. A shifting of emphasis from the later to the earlier history of mankind is welcome and was overdue; but the balance must nevertheless be preserved.



A rather strange omission is air-photography—all the more strange in view of the fact that the first anthropological air-photographs were taken and published by Americans (see *ANTIQUITY* XIII, 1-2, Plates I and II). Air-photography is certainly as important a technique in anthropology and archaeology as others, such as dendrochronology and the annual increment method, both of which are discussed.



One last criticism is not perhaps strictly one of the course itself as here presented. One wonders to what extent field-work and museums are involved? Without direct physical contact with one's subject—such as the handling of specimens, and the inspection or excavation of an ancient site—there is the risk of mental indigestion. The course deals (quite properly) with much highly theoretical matter. The present writer has found that a few weeks or even days spent in a primitive village is better than much reading. But the approach must be individual, not collective. The ideal museum to have in the background of this course would be not unlike the imaginary one portrayed by the present writer many years ago (*Man and his Part*, 1921, Chapter 18); one may now take the credit of having then placed it in America.



All these publications can be obtained from the Chicago University Book Store: The Syllabus (\$2.00), Selected Readings I (\$1.00), Selected Readings II (\$4.00), The Maps (\$1.00).