

sun dance are far from adequate to permit the full delineation of these developmental processes. The desideratum is a more precise knowledge of the function of the innovating individual, of his cultural equipment, the character of his milieu, and the extent of his contribution. . . . It is doubtful that data of this nature can now be obtained for the sun dance, but it is equally a requisite for any other study of cultural development. In fact, the consciousness of this is evidenced by the transformation of ethnographic works in recent years from presentations of culture as static, standardized products to their description as fluctuating, variable forms.”²¹

²¹ Ibid., p. 522.

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CHAPTER 31

Acculturation:
 Cultural Transmission in Process

THE terms acculturation and diffusion have been used by anthropologists since the last decades of the nineteenth century. J. W. Powell employed *acculturation* to mean culture-borrowing as early as 1880. While the earliest use of *diffusion* has not been established, it is interesting to note that, as late as 1899, we find Boas writing of the *dissemination* of culture.

Shortly after the turn of the century, *diffusion* captured the stage, and *acculturation* was used rarely, if at all. Because the attention of students was fixed on establishing the fact of borrowing, diffusion studies, in effect, came to be the analysis of the distribution of particular cultural traits and complexes. We have seen how the realization grew that such studies could only be effective up to a point, and that students seeking to understand the dynamic phases of the processes involved turned for their materials to the analysis of cultures where change was actually to be observed. For such researches, the designation *acculturation* (or, in England, the phrase "culture-contact") studies came to be used.

The problem of defining the word *acculturation* and delimiting the scope of work to which the term can be applied came to the fore about 1935. At this time, a definition of acculturation was presented by a committee of the Social Science Research Council as part of a Memorandum designed to act as a guide in acculturation research. This definition and its accompanying delimitation of the field received wide acceptance and was employed in orienting many acculturation studies. It reads as follows: "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups." The reservations in the "note" appended to this statement show that the need to distinguish the term from others in use did not go unrecognized. "Under this definition," it says, "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 types of contact be-

tween peoples specified in the definition given above, but also constitutes only one aspect of the process of acculturation."¹

Within five years of the publication of this definition, however, two of its three authors had entered reservations to its phrasing. In one instance, it was cogently indicated that, "the definition makes no attempt to specify the nature of the phenomena which are to be treated as a part of acculturation." The determinants under this definition, it was here pointed out, are "a) the particular situation under which the phenomena are present, and b) a suggested rather than clearly indicated limitation of the field of those phenomena which seem to be the results of a particular situation." The limitations imposed by the phrase "continuous first-hand contact" were also indicated—that of distinguishing "first-hand" from other contacts, and of delimiting "continuous" from intermittent relationships.²

The other critique was directed against the use of the phrase "groups of individuals." "It can be assumed, . . ." states this critique, "that where contact between cultures is mentioned a certain human contact must be taken for granted as the only means by which culture can spread from people to people or from generation to generation. Yet, while it is desirable to emphasize that culture is no mystical entity that can travel without its human carriers, it is also true that it is not a simple matter always to know when 'groups of individuals' are in contact. . . ."

An instance cited to make this point can be quoted. This example is taken from the South Seas island of Tikopia. Here "certain elements of European culture, especially in the fields of material culture and religion," have been "effecting an invasion of aboriginal patterns." The question is then raised: "Is the visit of the mission boat once or twice a year, and the work of a single missionary (a native of another island and not himself a European!) to be regarded as an acculturating force? Certainly this person is not a 'group of individuals,' nor can it well be maintained that recurring visits of those on the mission boat constitute 'continuous' contact."³

This reservation received later documentation from work among the Hausa of Northern Nigeria. This people, who live on the line of contact in West Africa between Mohammedanism and pagan religion, have effected a synthesis of these beliefs that affords highly significant materials for the study of cultural dynamics. "The main impulses which converted the bulk of the Hausa to Mohammedanism," we are told, "proceeded, not from Arab traders or elements of the white population of North Africa, but from the Negroes of the central Niger region in the West Sudan. This proselyting activity was carried out . . . by small parties or single individuals who either departed or became absorbed in the native population." A further point of importance in this discussion appears. "Because of this absence of prolonged contact with large bodies of other Moslem peoples, the essential acculturative agent has been the books in which Mohammedan teachings are contained. Amalgamation of Mohammedan and aboriginal belief has thus occurred as the end-

¹ R. Redfield, R. Linton and M. J. Herskovits, 1936, pp. 149-50.

² R. Linton, 1940, pp. 464-5.

³ M. J. Herskovits, 1938a, pp. 11-12.

product of a process in which the native learned men, known as Malams, have adapted what they found in sacred texts to the native situation, retaining much of pagan culture at the same time, by fitting it into a Moslem framework."⁴

It is evident that neither duration nor intensity of contact can provide adequate criteria for differentiating acculturation from other mechanisms of cultural change. Here, as in many other instances where questions of definition enter, the problem of distinguishing between alternative terms must be held subsidiary to the need to analyze the facts in the most effective manner. Our concern is primarily with the processes of cultural change, and only secondarily with classifying the situations in which change occurs. From this point of view, it makes but slight difference whether a given case of cultural transmission is to be termed acculturation or diffusion. Only insofar as the circumstances in a particular instance affect the kind of reception accorded a given innovation do these circumstances, as such, come to be of consequence to us.

Terminology, however, is an essential tool in research, and terms must be as clear as possible. The distinction between the two designations can best be drawn on the basis of usage, rather than from the rigid delimitation of circumstances. We shall distinguish these designations, therefore, in terms of methodological considerations. Over the years, diffusion has come to mean the analysis of similarities and differences between existing nonliterate, and in this sense, nonhistoric, cultures. In such studies, the contacts that presumably took place between the peoples involved have had to be reconstructed, and the reshaping of the borrowed elements have had to be inferred from the variations in their forms as manifest in one culture after another. Acculturation, on the other hand, has most often been applied to the instances where transmission of cultural elements could be more fully documented, being thus susceptible of study on the spot, or by the use of documentary data, or both. In summary, then, diffusion, in these terms, is the study of *achieved cultural transmission*; while acculturation is the study of *cultural transmission in process*.

This usage rests on a real methodological distinction, wherein the difference between observation and inference are paramount. Diffusion studies, from this point of view, assume that contacts have taken place between peoples because of the similarities observed between their cultures at the time they are studied. The reconstruction of the processes by means of which transmission was made effective, as has been seen, must be a matter of inference, forced on the student by the nature of his materials. This was the case in the study of the Plains Indian Sun Dance cited in the preceding chapter. The studies of Wissler, who plotted the patterns of moccasins over the Plains and adjoining culture-areas, or Hallowell's researches into the regional variations in bear ceremonialism throughout northern North America and Asia give us a sense of how given cultural elements or complexes of elements were reworked as they moved from one tribe to another,

⁴ J. Greenberg, 1941, p. 52.

or how a given complex incorporated varied elements as it was taken up in one tribe after another. Yet how all this happened, when it occurred, where it originated, and by whom the change was brought about, in such studies remain only for conjecture.

In acculturation studies, however, the historic facts are known or can be obtained. In most cases, acculturation research deals with contacts in the contemporary period. The conditions antecedent to the contact can thus be discovered, the pre-contact cultures of the peoples party to it can be ascertained, and the present condition of the cultures set down. In some cases, even the personalities involved in influencing the acceptance or rejection of varied elements can be reached. Where documentation is necessary, the welding of ethnographic and historical materials is merely a matter of cross-disciplinary research. This, indeed, has given rise to a special technique called the ethnohistorical method.

Where past contacts between historic peoples are the concern of the student, the acculturative situation can be studied by the use of documentary materials. These materials have not been used more because, as Hodgen has put it, "The scope of acculturation study has been unduly circumscribed by the tight but unrealistic boundaries of the formal academic disciplines." This student has shown what fruitful results can follow from breaking down these unrealistic boundaries by her own documentary study of the spread of glass making and paper in England.⁵ The three steps in borrowing that she distinguishes are exposure, establishment, and dissemination. Treated as a continuous process, their application to studies of contact between contemporary peoples should yield valuable results. The study by Wittfogel of the social history of the Chinese Liao empire of the tenth and eleventh centuries, is another case in point. Cast in terms of "acculturation and relative, selective, and graded diffusion,"⁶ it similarly demonstrates the results that can be gained from the study of historic documents which reveal, as process, the causes and effects of culture-change resultant on borrowing.

To differentiate diffusion from acculturation pragmatically as has been done here does not, however, fully delimit the meaning of the term "acculturation." It has been differently used by different disciplines, while certain equivalents for it found in the literature of anthropology itself have carried connotations that require clarification.

2

PSYCHOLOGISTS, educators, and child development specialists have found the word acculturation useful to describe the process of conditioning by means of which a child is habituated to the ways of life of its group. It will be obvious, however, that in this sense it is roughly the equivalent of the word enculturation that, in these pages, has been used to describe this same process. As far as can be ascertained, those who use the word acculturation in this way have

⁵ M. T. Hodgen, 1945, pp. 466-7.

⁶ K. Wittfogel, 1946, p. 5.

employed it without defining its meaning with any great degree of precision. In the case of child study reports, acculturation is often given the significance of several other terms, each of which carries slightly different connotations. It is a commonplace to find papers where *acculturation*, *socialization*, *education*, and *conditioning* are used, insofar as context would indicate, as synonyms, and without any attempt to distinguish shadings in their meaning.

It is not altogether surprising that acculturation has been so used by students of child development, for the word expresses their meaning well. There is certainly no justification for any discipline to insist on the exclusive right to the use of any technical term. However, as we must again repeat, knowledge is not bound by the various subjects into which it is conventionally divided. Problems must follow wherever the data lead, and the data have a habit of disregarding the intellectual fences that separate the concerns of one discipline from another. We can here, therefore, but note the difference between the anthropological use of "acculturation" and its employment in a different sense by students in closely related fields. No question of proper or improper usage intrudes, since in science there is no "right" or "wrong" in the non-evaluative use of a word, except by definition. It is essential, however, that different usages in science be made explicit in scientific analysis and that, above all, a term employed in any given work be consistently used. "Acculturation" in these pages then, will consistently signify the study of cultural transmission in process. Those who are accustomed to its use as comprehending either or all of the ideas expressed in such terms as *socialization*, *education*, *cultural conditioning*, and the like, will here find their equivalent in the phrase *early enculturation.*

The question of proper or improper usage does enter, however, where connotations of an evaluative character are injected into the study of acculturation, especially where research concerns contacts between what are termed higher or lower, or active and passive, bodies of tradition. For evaluations of this nature, injected into scientific study in any field, lessen objectivity and by this very fact increase the difficulty of obtaining the ends of scientific analysis.

Let us, for example, consider the position of Malinowski, that the study of African culture-contact is one of "an impact of a higher, active culture upon a simpler, more passive one." To the study of the resultant situation, he holds, "the conception of culture change as the impact of Western civilization and the reaction thereto of the indigenous cultures is the only fruitful approach."⁷ His disregard of the fact that, in African culture-change the native exerts his influence upon the resultant borrowing, both intertribal and between Europeans and Africans, is difficult for those who take the position that under any contact all peoples party to it borrow from one another. A position that does not take this into account is psychologically untenable, also, since it is not easy to envisage any human being or group of human beings who, in any situation, are as passive as this approach would imply. Even slaves and prisoners react to their situations in ways that effectively change

⁷ B. Malinowski, 1945, pp. 15, 17.

them, if only through passive resistance to measures they deem too oppressive. Africans, who are neither slaves nor prisoners, obviously do a great deal to shape the course of their developing cultures under contact with Europeans, to say nothing of how they influence the Europeans themselves.

Except for the German ethnologist, Mühlmann, no other student of cultural theory has laid such exclusive stress on what can best be described as "cultural-imposition." Actually, Mühlmann's theory of the *kulturgefälle*, cultural decline (literally "culture-fall") that results from peoples with cultures that are "unequal in content of civilization" (*Ungleichheit an zivilisatorischen Fülle*), would seem to be a kind of translation, in the sphere of culture, of the Nazi doctrine of racial superiority. The date of publication of Mühlmann's work, 1938, is significant in this connection because of the climate of opinion in which he wrote. *Kulturgefälle*, which represents an extreme position in the theory of culture-contact, is mentioned here, however, merely for the record. It is based on no field research, and lacks documentation to give it any validity.⁸

It is ironical that Malinowski's functionalist position should have been called on to justify so arrant an ethnocentrism as that of Mühlmann. Both explicitly and implicitly Malinowski's work stressed the values in the life of nonliterate peoples and the necessity of studying every culture in terms of its own orientations. We must, therefore, seek our explanation of Malinowski's point of view elsewhere than in any systematic exploitation of ethnocentrism. One reason for his position was the essentially anti-historical point of view of functionalist theory, derived as it was from field-work in a single, small, relatively static South Seas culture. Another reason is to be found in the fact that Malinowski's concern with the phenomena of culture-contact was to develop a basis for techniques that could be applied in solving the practical problems of African colonial administration.

The first of these reasons caused Malinowski to evolve the concept of the "zero-point" in culture, the point from which change in a static way of life began. It is difficult to believe that he did not develop this concept merely to be able to demolish it, for there is no "point" at which any culture is static. What is done in studies of culture-contact is to take some period in the history of a given culture, usually antecedent to the particular contact being investigated, that can act as a base-line from which to triangulate change, and thus provide the framework within which the resultant dynamic processes can be analyzed. This technique Malinowski and his students, like all others concerned with contact studies, were forced to employ; though his ahistorical approach made it difficult for him to place change in Africa in its proper perspective, as only one phase of the age-long process in human experience of cultural transmission.

Malinowski's preoccupation with administrative problems led him to overemphasize the weakness of African ways of life in the face of the impact of European culture. The very works of his students, that he himself cites to make his points, contain abundant proofs of the extent to which African culture, despite the pressures brought against it, has withstood these on-

⁸ W. Mühlmann, 1938, pp. 195-6, 202-3.

slaughts. It is this same preoccupation, too, that caused him to neglect the phenomenon of interchange of cultural elements under contact. In contact between Europeans and Africans, this interchange has at least been sufficient to make the life of Europeans living in Africa something quite different than it is in Europe, a fact that has theoretical, no less than practical, implications.

Far more acceptable than the evaluative phrasings we have just considered is the word transculturation, that first appeared in 1940. Ortiz, the Cuban scholar who devised it, gives these reasons for its use: "I am of the opinion that the word *transculturation* better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word *acculturation* really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as deculturation. In addition it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which would be called neoculturation."⁹

The word transculturation, as described in this passage, is unambiguous with respect to the fact that every situation of cultural contact and the subsequent innovations that result from it implies cultural borrowing. The misapprehension of Ortiz concerning the use of the term acculturation is certainly not as serious as one which would ascribe to acculturation an ethnocentric quality which it has never had. Were not the term acculturation so firmly fixed in the literature of anthropology, "transculturation" might equally well be used to express the same concept. It is so used by some anthropologists who employ Spanish as their medium; but in Brazil, the Portuguese equivalent of acculturation, *aculturação*, is the accepted designation.

Aside from questions of terminology, what is important to understand is that the term acculturation in no way implies that cultures party to contact are to be distinguished from each other as "higher," or "more advanced," or as having a greater "content of civilization," or to differ in any other qualitative manner. As far as the evidence shows, the transmission of culture, a process of cultural change of which acculturation is but one expression, occurs when any two peoples have historic contact with one another. Where one group, because it is larger, or better equipped technologically than another, forces changes in the ways of life of a conquered people it rules, it can be called a "dominant" group.

Situations of this kind are no novelty, no unique attribute of the twentieth century. Mohammedan domination was of this character; so was that subsequent to the conquest of local groups by the Inca of Peru; so were the conquests of the autochthonous agricultural tribes of East Africa by the invading cattle-herding Nilotes. Contacts between Euroamericans and native nonliterate, nonindustrial peoples are taking place more widely over the world than in the past. It seems evident that present-day contacts are more demoralizing to the subject-peoples than the contacts of earlier times, if only because they have the sanction of a more fervent ethnocentrism than has in

⁹ F. Ortiz, 1947, pp. 102-3.

the past marked the rule of one people by another. However, in these characteristics they differ in degree, not in kind, from the many instances in recorded history, to say nothing of unrecorded history, where one people have attempted to regulate the ways of another. The significant point is that whatever the nature of the contact, mutual borrowing and subsequent revision of cultural elements seem to result.

3

Types of contact between peoples differ in many respects. They can occur between entire populations, or substantial segments of these populations, or they may arise from contact between smaller groupings or even individuals. Where the representatives of one group bring to another a particular facet of their culture, the elements borrowed will self-evidently be those of the facet presented. When the men of two nonliterate groups meet periodically when following game, for example, one would not anticipate that the women's sphere of either culture might be much affected. Where the representatives of Euroamerican culture in contact with a native people are missionaries, relatively little change in native technology would be expected.

The conclusion, however, is not to be drawn that the more representative the segments of populations involved in an interchange, the more comprehensive the transmission of culture will be. As in other instances in the study of culture, deductions whose logic is impeccable are rendered invalid because of the nature of the particular historic circumstances of a given contact, and the ways in which the interests of the peoples concerned have, in a particular case, been pointed. Among the American Indians, the contacts between the sedentary Pueblos and the Spaniards never resulted in the Pueblo peoples taking the horse, though this animal became an integral part of Plains culture. In Africa, attempts to induce natives to improve their techniques of cultivation by changing from hoe to plow have met with great resistance. Yet in most of Africa, cotton prints for clothing have been taken over with avidity.

Contacts are also to be classified as friendly or hostile. So much stress has been laid on the more dramatic instances of hostile contact, that the less striking—but probably more numerous—examples of friendly association between peoples has tended to be lost sight of. An outstanding contribution that has effectively called attention to the importance of studying this latter type of contact is the analysis by Lindgren of the "culture contact without conflict," occurring between the Reindeer Tungus and certain Russian Cossacks in northwestern Manchuria. She defines the condition of this contact in terms of two salient facts: "1) I heard no Tungus or Cossack express fear, contempt, or hatred in relation to the other group as a whole or any individual composing it. . . . 2) No instance was recorded of the use or threat of force in the relations between these communities, although the reminiscences of the elderly cover most of the period of contact."¹⁰

¹⁰ E. J. Lindgren, 1938, p. 607.

Redfield has sketched a similar situation in Guatemala, where contact has been continuous between the Spanish-speaking urban "ladinos" whose customs are European, and the "indios" who speak a native Indian language and whose culture is that of the native villages. Here again we have an instance of contact between peoples of different cultures—in the one case European, Christian, and literate, and in the other relatively non-European, relatively non-Christian, and nonliterate. Nonetheless, Redfield finds only, "benign ethnic relations: the absence of recent attempts by one group to dominate the other; the fact that there is little or no economic competition along ethnic lines; the circumstances that natural resources are plentiful; the individualistic character of the economy and the social organization; and the fact that both groups carry on some of the prevailing means of livelihood."¹¹ That neither in Manchuria nor Guatemala was prejudice felt by one group against the physical type of the other, must be accounted as significant. In both cases, too, no strong convictions of a religious or other nature seem to have stood in the way of a peaceful interchange of ideas.

It must be made clear that cultural interchange is not prevented by hostile contact between peoples. The mutual borrowing that has marked the contacts between Euroamericans and natives has often been achieved despite the absence of friendly relations between the parties to the interchange. Bushman "clicks" now characterize the language of the Zulu and other Bantu-speaking peoples of southeast Africa, whose cattle the Bushmen for many generations have systematically raided. The lesson to be drawn from examples such as these seems to be that cultural borrowing results from any kind of contact; that the factor of friendliness or hostility is of itself not crucial.

It is essentially out of contacts involving dominance of one people over another that contra-acculturative movements arise—those movements wherein a people come to stress the values in aboriginal ways of life, and to move aggressively, either actually or in fantasy, toward the restoration of those ways, even in the face of obvious evidence of their impotence to throw off the power that restricts them. The Ghost Dance that swept over various Indian tribes of Western United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and eventuated in the Indian wars of the period, afford one example of such a contra-acculturative movement. The rise of organized labor in various parts of Africa, and the association of the virtues of aboriginal, non-European life with the immediate economic ends in view, is another instance of this kind of reaction to contact. Of a similar type was the Gandhi movement in India, which stressed a return to the hand-loom as a part of a program whose essential aim was political independence.

One of the best documented instances of a contra-acculturative movement has been given by Williams, who has described the rise and subsequent career of what he termed the "Vailala Madness," naming it after the town on the Gulf of Papua, New Guinea, where the movement originated in 1919.¹² This cult arose as a reaction to the hopelessness of the situation in

¹¹ R. Redfield, 1939, p. 516.

¹² F. E. Williams, 1923 and 1934.

which natives found themselves under foreign domination, and was based on a doctrine of the early return of the dead. It had its prophets, and was marked by possession and violent dancing. Though it was anti-white, and predicted the day when olden times would return and the invaders would be wiped out, it led to the destruction of certain rituals and sacred objects of earlier times, and in the new cult substituted for them certain Christian and secular European elements. Twelve years later the Madness had abated, leaving only certain traditions that the miracles predicted by the prophets had actually taken place.

Three further types of contact are to be noted. One is where contacts are between groups about equal in size, or where groups are of different sizes. Another is where groups differ markedly in the complexity of their material or nonmaterial culture, or both; or where cultures are of an equal degree of complexity. Finally, we encounter those situations where a group having one way of life comes into the habitat of another, or where the receiving group achieves its contact with the new culture in the new habitat.

The significance of all these factors is readily apparent, though of the three situations it is likely that the first, where population size is involved, will prove to be of least importance. There are too many instances where small groups have influenced large ones, or where a large group has failed to influence a small one, for this to stand as a factor of any considerable significance. We may recall how few were the representatives of Mohammedan culture among the Hausa of Sudanese Africa, and yet how firmly entrenched the Moslem tradition has become there. Or we may consider how the sparse Pygmy populations of the Ituri forest have continued their own way of life despite the extended contact they have had, probably for centuries, with the more numerous Congo tribes among which they are interspersed.

Unequal complexity in various aspects of culture may, as we have seen, be referred to difference in population mass, and in this sense the size of the groups concerned may be accounted a factor in the resulting process, albeit a secondary one. The most important point to be held in mind in assessing the role of cultural complexity is that by and of itself, and aside from the prestige factor that may be introduced, greater complexity in a culture does not necessarily carry conviction to those whose traditional background is of a simpler nature. A more complex culture can offer more things to be borrowed than a simpler one. But this very richness may confuse, or even remain unperceived, by a people whose ways of life are pitched in a different key. Though on first glance the spread of European dominance over the world seems to refute this, further analysis shows that such a conclusion is premature. It is doubtful, as a matter of fact, if the native peoples of the world, by and large, have taken over much more of Euroamerican culture than the western world has borrowed from them.

More interesting is the problem presented by the third type of contact. Do a people who move into the habitat of another take over more of the culture they find, or does a migrating group give more of its culture to those among whom they settle? Many examples of both kinds of exchange are to

be cited, so that the balance in a specific case must be struck in terms of the particular peoples involved, and the particular situation encountered. Europeans who migrated to the Americas took over much of Indian agricultural practice, foods, and clothing, but nothing of Indian social structure or religious beliefs. Europeans who migrated to the East Indies took over relatively little of the life of the natives. Euroamericans who migrated to Hawaii took over more of nonmaterial culture than of aboriginal foodstuffs or agricultural practices.

Negroes who were brought to Brazil influenced the culture of the dominant Portuguese, themselves migrants, and subject to Indian influence as well. These varied influences are to be seen merged in such widely differing aspects of modern Brazilian life as the cuisine, the social structure, beliefs of various sorts, current musical forms and linguistic usages, to say nothing of the extensive retentions of African belief and behavior that were maintained by the Africans themselves.¹³ In North America, on the other hand, the Negroes took over far more of the dominant European patterns than they gave to the resulting culture. As a third example of differing results from the same forced migration, Haiti can be mentioned. Here, in spite of two centuries of early French domination, the present-day life of the peasants retains more African traits than French, and but little if anything that can be referred to the customs of the autochthonous Indians.

The situations in which acculturation occurs are, in a sense, but an aspect of the types of contacts that have been sketched. The first kind of situation to be envisaged is where elements of culture are forced on a people, or where acceptance is voluntary. The second situation is where no social or political inequality exists between groups. In the third situation, three alternatives are presented—that is, where there is political dominance but not social; where dominance is both political and social; and where social superiority of one group over another is recognized, without there being political dominance. Little can be added to the preceding discussion concerning these "situations." Political and social dominance are undoubtedly factors in accelerating or retarding cultural interchange. Where superiority of one group is acknowledged, a desire for prestige may act as a powerful stimulant to further the spread of the customs of the dominant group and to inhibit the masters taking over the traditions of those who are recognized as inferiors, or the rulers may act to prevent those they rule from adopting their customs. Prestige, however, can vest in the way of life of a politically impotent group. There is much reason to believe that the motive that brought the conquering Teutonic peoples to Rome was the prestige of Roman culture, which these "barbarians" were as eager to adopt as the Romans, in their turn, had been eager to take over the customs of the politically impotent Greeks.

In contacts between nonliterate peoples, it is to be doubted if considerations of this kind have been too important. In such cases, all parties to contact tend to be small and, because first-hand contacts are restricted in large part to neighboring peoples, borrowing is on a more modest scale. It is more a matter of taking over details of culture than of integrating many elements

¹³ G. Freyre, 1946, *passim*; A. Ramos, 1940, Ch. I-VIII, *passim*.

that come from strikingly different ways of life. We have seen that the acculturation between Euroamerican and native peoples in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is no more than a special instance of a process that is as old as man himself. Situations where political and social dominance play a principal role are therefore to be thought of as particularly applicable to this special case. The examples of contact without conflict indicate that more borrowing has probably occurred where dominance did not enter, than where it did.

4

SOME students of culture-contact have approached acculturative situations with the idea of analyzing the resultant cultures into their component parts, seeing which are borrowed and which represent retentions of older traits. Others have criticized this approach, holding that this treats borrowing as "a mechanical pitchforking of elements of culture, like bundles of hay, from one culture to another," as Fortes¹⁴ has phrased it. To break down cultures of mixed origin into traits, they maintain, is to reduce the living reality of a way of life into lifeless and, what is worse, meaningless components. For them, the arithmetic of culture-contact is never a process of addition. The borrowed element is always merged with what was present before the contact. As a result, a culture of multiple origins is different from any of the bodies of tradition that have contributed to it. The dynamics of acculturation, they say, are creative. To study the results of acculturation by tracing traits to their origin is to distort the picture and falsify the results.

Similar reasoning has been encountered in our earlier discussion of the structure and integration of culture, where, for example, the concept of the validity of the culture-trait as a methodological device was considered. The point was made there that if we hold this concept of the culture-trait not too rigidly, and employ it flexibly as a tool, it can be of great usefulness in organizing the data about cultures, and can reveal facts about the structure and processes of culture that would otherwise be difficult to discern. The methods of all science, it was pointed out, involve isolating elements that actually exist only as components of larger unities that, of themselves, are so complex that they must be broken down for purposes of study. This same argument was seen to hold for the aspects of culture. These can be clearly marked off by the student, and employed to study significant problems, even though any aspect of culture is rarely if ever isolated in human experience, which comprises a continuum that merges these aspects with fine disregard of the anthropologist's classifications.

In acculturation studies, therefore, as in the study of any phase of cultural dynamics, cultures are analyzed into component elements only as a methodological device. There can thus be no conceptual disagreement with such a formula, typical of many that could be cited, as that advanced by Bateson for the study of the contact between peoples in terms of: "(a) The complete fusion of the originally different groups, (b) The elimination of

¹⁴ M. Fortes, 1938, p. 62.

one or both groups, (c) The persistence of both groups in dynamic equilibrium within one major community."¹⁵

The ideal of studying the results of contact between peoples in terms of whole cultures is, without doubt, well worth pursuing. The principal difficulty in this approach lies in the fact that workable methods of achieving it have as yet to be devised. On the contrary, the really significant studies of culture-contact have been those where one aspect, even one trait, has been taken at a time, perhaps to be combined later into a comprehensive portrayal of the results of the acculturative experience.

One of the best examples of this flexibility in method is to be found in Parsons' study of the Mexican community of Mitla. This study had two ends in view. The first of these was to obtain comparative data to throw light on possible Spanish or Indian derivations of Pueblo Indian culture, far to the north. But it also had the broader objective of exposing "the patterns in Indian-Spanish assimilation and acculturation" and thus "add to the understanding of these fundamental processes of social change not only in Latin America but in society at large." The description of the life of the people of Mitla, with two exceptions that we need not name here, is drawn in terms of the accepted categories of the ethnographic monograph, while Parsons' summary chapter breaks down the institutions already described into their Indian or Spanish sources, and considers the amalgamations of custom that are seen to derive from both cultural streams. How telling this approach can be is to be seen if some quotations, given as "partial answers" to the "basic queries" of why the traits that have been studied survived, and why certain elements that might have been expected to be found are not present, are cited:

Traits may be preserved merely because of ignorance of anything different; in other words, certain parts of two contacting cultures may not be in contact at all.

Intermarriage is a more obvious factor in cultural breakdown or cultural assimilation, whichever way you look at it, particularly when the woman belongs to the dominant culture.

Ignorance of custom, whatever it is due to, is a great protection to custom.

. . . An old custom . . . [may survive] . . . because it is agreeable to the new one.¹⁶

The effectiveness of the study of a single cultural element is also to be seen in research that revealed much of the results of acculturation of the Pawnee Indians through the intensive study of one complex, the Ghost Dance hand-game. In studying this element, the background of aboriginal and later custom in which the hand-game was set was fully taken into account, and the subsequent acculturative experience of the Pawnee that provided the historic background for understanding the change in this game from a ritual to a gambling device was described. "The persistence of traits constitutes that body of cultural elements without which no identification of the two forms would be possible," says Lesser, discussing the changes in the

¹⁵ G. Bateson, 1935, p. 179.

¹⁶ Elsie Clews Parsons, 1936, pp. xii, 511-19.

hand-game. "There are first of all those traits which persist from the old game into the new form identically; these form the base. In addition there are persistences of phases of the pattern or form, into which similar but not identical cultural material has been filled."¹⁷

There are some situations in which the study of acculturative change can be made only in terms of how separate elements have fared in the inter-change. Chinese migrants to the South Seas who return to their home, Hsü points out, "have not shown fundamental changes from the home culture but they have taken on many single items of the alien cultures. In addition, new ideas and ways of life have either been taken on by some emigrants in the South Seas or are being broadcast into the home communities by a few 'progressive' reformers. The latter insist on the abolition of the joint family, on the free choice of life partners, on the suppression of superstitions and so forth."¹⁸ Obviously, the problem for study here is how each of these centers of change in Chinese communities is achieving acceptance or rejection of the changes in the particular elements where reform is being advocated. There would be little point, at the stage in the process indicated, to study the changing culture as a whole.

However desirable studies of changes in whole cultures may thus be, it seems most advantageous in practice for the student to analyze into its components the culture that has experienced contact, and the results of this contact that are the object of his research. One can no more study "whole cultures" than one can take as the subject for a specific research project the human body in its entirety, or a mountain chain, or "the mind." The study of New World Negro cultures, that we will refer to at some length in later chapters, shows this clearly. Here we find that the various aspects of culture differ significantly from each other in the degree to which they have responded to the acculturative situation; that in religion and music, for example, far more aboriginal African elements have been retained than in economics and technology.

It was only by analyzing a restricted cultural element that Hallowell¹⁹ could demonstrate for the St. Francis Abenaki Algonkian Indians, or Eggan²⁰ could show for the Choctaw how kinship systems, long held to be one of the most conservative aspects of culture, could change under contact. Spoehr, building on this previous work and extending it to the comparative level, was able to utilize these analyses of this single phase of culture to yield a principle of still broader significance. For he found that while the kinship structures of the Southeastern Indians changed from one fundamental type to another, they nonetheless have preserved "characteristics of a 'system' despite radical changes in type." Thus, as always in science, we move from the particular to the general.²¹ We agree with Parsons that to study borrowing and integration means the analysis of "one of the most subtle and

¹⁷ A. Lesser, 1933, p. 309.

¹⁸ Francis L. K. Hsü, 1945, p. 55.

¹⁹ A. I. Hallowell, 1928.

²⁰ F. Eggan, 1937.

²¹ A. Spoehr, 1947, p. 229.

elusive of social processes, which does not reveal itself by plucked threads, by isolated facts. . . ."²² Yet it remains true that unless we pluck the threads, and analyze how they have been woven into the whole-cloth of culture, we will never understand the structural basis of the functioning unity that we seek to comprehend.

5

ONE of the most important reasons why the study of acculturation in terms of whole cultures is so difficult is that borrowing, even in the most intimate contacts, is selective. This principle of selectivity is so important that it is not only basic to a discussion of acculturation, but to the consideration of any phase of cultural change. It was the need to study the nature and processes of cultural selectivity that led anthropologists from the hypothetical reconstruction of presumed processes of change, to the study of changes actually taking place. The principle of selectivity is as important in understanding why innovations from within a society become a part of its culture or are discarded, as it is in helping us comprehend why elements of one culture presented to another are taken over or refused, or even give rise to contra-acculturative movements that seek to restore the sanctions of a pre-contact way of life.

Selectivity, moreover, accounts for the great variation in the degree to which peoples undergoing contact do take over elements of each other's culture. A variety of historic factors enter to facilitate acceptance or to steel resistance to innovations. Thus Willems has shown that the "horse complex," as he terms it, was taken over by the Germans who settled in southern Brazil not only because of the higher standing of *gaucho* [cattle-breeder] culture in the hierarchy of Brazilian regional cultures, but also due to certain cultural associations which the average German immigrant attached to the saddle horse. This latter point is illuminating. "It should be remembered," we are told, "that the German peasant cultures . . . do not have the horse as a riding animal. . . . The saddle horse represented and still represents one of the outstanding cultural traits of Germany's rural aristocracy. Here as elsewhere in Europe the large farmer . . . controls the activities of his field hands by using a horse from which he gives his commands. Landless fieldworkers and smaller landowners never own saddle horses."²³ As a result of this and other prestige factors centering about the horse, it has come about that, while the Brazilian Germans have retained many elements of the culture they brought with them, they have taken over the horse-complex of Southern Brazil, including the extensive Portuguese vocabulary that has to do with this animal.

Mandelbaum has described how, in the Nilghiri hills of India, four tribes have "lived in economic and cultural symbiosis . . . mutually interdependent, yet culturally distinct." The Toda are a pastoral people, the Badaga are

²² Op. cit., p. xi.

²³ E. Willems, 1944, pp. 156-7; see also *ibid.*, 1946, Ch. VIII.

agriculturalists, the Kota artisans, and the Kurumba food gatherers and sorcerers. Despite the fact that they inhabit the same area and have been continuously in contact for many generations, the four groups "were culturally and linguistically segregate." Though "there was some cultural give and take among the tribes; the great wonder is that it amounted to so little."

The different economic base of each culture provides one reason why so little borrowing between them took place. Another important reason is the kind of intercourse they did have; of this, one example may be given. The Kota are the musicians who play for the rituals of the Toda, a people we have already met, who are famous in anthropological writings because of the way in which the religion that dominates their life centers about the sacredness of their cattle. Therefore, though "Kota musicians have to be present at all major Toda ceremonials; yet if the band comes too close to a dairy, the place is polluted and can only be resanctified by elaborate purificatory rituals."

A third factor in inhibiting borrowing is the prestige symbolism of these people. "A unique tribal trait tends to be interpreted as a symbol of group status. Any attempt to imitate it by another group is violently resisted. For example, Badagas wear turbans, Kotas do not. When a few Kotas once took to wearing turbans, the Badagas felt that the Kotas were getting above themselves. Some of the Badagas ambushed and beat up the Kota offenders, tore off their headgear, and effectively blocked the borrowing of this trait."²⁴

Another example of contact with a minimum of borrowing is found on the island of Trinidad, where British Indians and Negroes have lived in contiguity since the first half of the nineteenth century. The immigrants from India, brought as indentured workers on the plantations, settled in Trinidad, and their descendents now form a colony almost one hundred and seventy-five thousand strong. "They speak their own language, dress in the Indian manner, cultivate their irrigated rice patches, and otherwise follow the modes of life of the parts of India from which they derive." The Negroes, on the other hand, have become acculturated to many patterns of the Europeans who constitute the economically, politically, and socially dominant minority of the island's population. The Negroes, from the first, resented the importation of the "coolies" from India as an economic threat; the Indians looked on the Negroes as "savages," according to Charles Kingsley, who was on the scene in 1871. The Indians have taken over something of Negro magic, but the Negroes seem to have accepted nothing from the Indians.²⁵

We contrast such situations with those in which peoples in contact take freely and even enthusiastically from each other, as is to be seen in the history of Europe; or where a people hold it desirable to borrow from another, but are restrained because a dominant group will not share a prestige symbol. An instance of this has already been cited from India. Another has been reported from Fiji, where the wearing of shorts by native men was in

²⁴ D. G. Mandelbaum, 1941, pp. 19-20.

²⁵ M. J. and F. S. Herskovits, 1947, pp. 19-20.

earlier times prohibited, since shorts were reserved for political officers and others of the dominant colonial power.

Contact, therefore, can result in minimum borrowing, with or without external pressure, or it can range to almost complete acceptance of the ways of life of another people. In any given case, the aspects of culture that are transmitted, or the transfer of the sanctions of an older custom to a new cultural form are the result of particular historical circumstances which influence the psychological motivations underlying the selectivity that comes into play.

It makes little difference that certain borrowings, objectively viewed, would be of advantage to a people to whom something new is presented, or even that something which seems attractive to a people is actually disadvantageous. Many European colonists in the tropics cling to habits of food and dress that are traditionally important to them, but are difficult, if not detrimental, in hot climates. Native peoples in these same areas often give prestige-value to sheet-metal roofs that conduct heat, and discard their cooler thatched roofs. Loeb has cited the case of the Mentawai Islanders near Sumatra, who have refused to borrow rice-cultivation from the neighboring Malay, despite the fact that this would raise their standard of living. Rice cultivation, however, entails continuous work, and Mentawai religion demands that all work stop for month-long periods. Therefore the Mentawai continue to grow their taro, that can be raised with intermittent care.²⁶

The historical and psychological aspects of borrowing are, of course, only to be distinguished on the conceptual level. What we are saying, essentially, is that while all peoples are exposed to elements of cultures other than their own, what they will in a given instance take over and what they will reject is determined by their pre-existing culture and the circumstance of the contact. The enculturation of later life, as we have seen, is the mechanism through which change is achieved. The adult member of a group must make a decision as to whether or not he will accept something new; or, if something is forced on him, he must devise ways and means to retain what he has been taught are the right and proper kinds of belief or behavior. As Hallowell has put it, "readjustment on the part of individuals may influence the thinking, feeling or behavior of other individuals and perhaps lead to readaptation in the mode of life of the group." One of the least studied, but most important problems in acculturation research, as he points out, derives from "the drives that have motivated individuals toward readaptation and how these drives are rewarded."²⁷

6

LET us turn once again to the points Spier raised in the concluding paragraphs of his study of the Sun Dance. These points, it will be remembered, brought to the fore questions that could only be solved by materials that,

²⁶ E. Loeb, 1935, p. 163.

²⁷ A. I. Hallowell, 1945a, pp. 177, 185.

though they were no longer available for that rite, were "equally a requisite for any other study of cultural development." These were, "a more precise knowledge of the innovating individual, of his cultural equipment, the character of his milieu, and the extent of his contribution." The nature of the circumstances in which "a novelty acquired by an individual and subsequently socialized by his fellows," was also pointed to as essential to an understanding of how a borrowed trait is taken over. Finally, the "mental conditions" that influence the incorporation of a new element into the pre-existing cultural matrix, especially in terms of the dominant interests of the incorporating group, were held to be of significance.

As has been suggested, such questions could be no more than raised while anthropologists confined their researches to analyzing the results of assumed contact between nonhistoric peoples. Only after the study of cultural exchange in process could they be attacked on the basis of data gathered by direct observation, and by the use of written records. Spier himself recognized this, as was apparent in his statement that more data of the type presented by Radin in a preliminary statement of an early acculturation study entitled "A Sketch of the Peyote Cult of the Winnebago,"²⁸ was needed. The Peyote Cult, treated in this paper and in Radin's later work, is one of a series of revivalist movements that have marked the reaction of the Indians to white aggression. One of the most important of these, the Ghost Dance, had been studied by James Mooney, an army officer who realized its significance after the Sioux Indian outbreak of 1890. Its value in laying bare a pre-existing Messianic pattern in American Indian culture was soon recognized, and gave rise to a number of other studies of comparable movements.

The analysis of the Peyote Cult by Radin, however, came at a time when, as we have seen, the inadequacies of the hypothetical assumptions concerning the dynamics of culture that the diffusionist approach offered were becoming apparent to anthropologists. His study, therefore, pointed new possibilities in the investigation of the origin, development, and spread of specific cultural elements. This particular cult represented a reaction of the Winnebago against the frustrations of white domination. Radin came to know John Rave, the Winnebago who had brought the Mexican stimulant called peyote back from a visit to the Indians of Texas and Oklahoma. It was demonstrated how Rave had helped develop this religious movement of protest, that incorporated elements of Christian and Indian belief into a system centered about the values given by the physiological purging and the resultant vision experience which came after eating the peyote.

Here was diffusion in process—the antecedent situation, the "mental conditions," the selective taking over of foreign elements, the manner of their reworking into a new situation that became a part of the older culture. The observation of change in process that this represents, together with the use of relevant documents that give contemporary evidence of earlier conditions where change is an accomplished fact, have over the years afforded a

²⁸ P. Radin, 1914.

rich body of data that transcends the points Spier could but raise as questions desirable to answer.

Thus, in the case of the Teton-Dakota, Mekeel, utilizing documentary materials, has described the transition of this people from the buffalo hunting epoch to the reservation phase of their experience, showing the cultural changes that accompanied this process.²⁹ Goldfrank, extending the scope of this and other studies that analyze the differences in Dakota culture resulting from the transition from buffalo days to life on the reserve, has described "certain modifications within each period which . . . disturbed the inner balance between such factors as cooperation and competition, altered the social configuration and, in turn, the social character."³⁰

How important historic depth can be in aiding the student to comprehend the dynamics of cultural change is similarly to be seen in studies of other tribes of this general region. Keesing has assessed the effects of three centuries of contact between Menomoni Indians and the whites in the light of the present ways of life of these Indians;³¹ Lewis, using the techniques of ethnohistory, has made a similar study of one group of Blackfoot, particularly as these people were affected by the fur trade;³² while Goldfrank, here as in the case of the Dakota, has investigated the changes in the cultural configurations and basic incentive-drives of another subdivision of this people.³³ These and many other investigations that not only accept "adulterated" cultures as valid objects of study, but make their principal aim the search for an understanding of how such cultures arrived at the state in which they are to be observed, all reflect a profound reorientation in anthropological thinking.

In summary, then, the search for "pure" cultures, "uncontaminated" by outer contact, has been almost entirely given over, while the hypothetical nature of reconstructions of unrecorded history has come to be clearly understood as an exercise in probability. The use of historical documents and the field study of peoples whose cultures are changing under contact have, above all, demonstrated that culture-change is a single problem, whether studied in process, or through the consideration of accomplished cultural facts analyzed in terms of the distribution of variant forms of the same element. With this unity of the problem of cultural dynamics established, then, we may next take up certain aspects of the organization and the psychology of culture that, as part of the same problem, throw further light on the mechanisms of cultural stability and cultural change.

²⁹ S. Mekeel, 1943.

³⁰ E. Goldfrank, 1943, p. 67.

³¹ F. Keesing, 1939.

³² O. Lewis, 1942.

³³ E. Goldfrank, 1945.