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# RACE, CULTURAL GROUPS, SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

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## THE NATURE OF RACE CONSCIOUSNESS

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### INTRODUCTION

RACE consciousness is a major form of group consciousness. In this paper it is defined as the tendency towards sentimental and ideological identification with a racial group. For the individually race conscious the race becomes an object of loyalty, devotion, and pride. By virtue of this fact it becomes an entity, a collective representation. The race becomes a fiction, a stereotype which to the race conscious is a reality.

It is the purpose of this discussion to interpret the characteristics of race consciousness. Data for the discussion are derived from studies of race consciousness among the South African natives and the Negroes of the United States. Various minority groups, racial and otherwise, have been studied with the problem of the paper in mind. And nationalism, as another form of group consciousness, has supplied insights for the paper.

### THE OPPRESSION PSYCHOSIS OF THE RACE CONSCIOUS

Miller has indicated that a class, a nationality or a race aware of its status in relation to a dominant class, nationality or race with which it is in conflict tends to develop what he aptly terms an "oppres-

sion psychosis."<sup>1</sup> Certainly this is true in the case of racial groups. Thus at the present time the ideology of the oppressed is developing among the natives of Africa, especially those of white-controlled South Africa.<sup>2</sup> And the Negro in the United States gives frequent and eloquent expression to this type of sentiment. The following is a typical expression of this feeling of self-pity and oppression:

To be a Negro in a day like this  
Demands forgiveness; bruised with blow on blow  
Betrayed like him whose woe dimmed eyes gave bliss  
Still one must succor those who brought one low,  
To be a Negro in a day like this.

To be a Negro in a day like this  
Demands rare patience—patience that can wait  
In utter darkness. 'Tis the path to miss,  
And knock unheeded at an iron gate,  
To be a Negro in a day like this.

To be a Negro in a day like this  
Demands strange loyalty. We serve a flag

<sup>1</sup> H. A. Miller, *Races, Nations and Classes* (1924), pp. 32-38. The psychology of the race conscious in the dominant racial groups is apt to be that of a "fear psychosis." They fear the "revolt against White Supremacy," or the "Rising Tide of Color." They do not pity their race but damn aggressively the race conscious in the dominated races for their impudence.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, S. Plaatzje, *Native Life in South Africa* (1917) for a typical expression of this native attitude.

Which is to us white freedom's emphasis  
And one must love when truth and justice lag,  
To be a Negro in a day like this.

To be a Negro in a day like this—  
Alas! Lord God what have we done?  
Still shines the gate all gold and amethyst,  
But I pass by the glorious goal unwon,  
To be a Negro in a day like this.<sup>3</sup>

The race conscious Negro reflecting on his sorrowful lot pities his poor race. Speaking of Armistice Day a Negro writer is unable to see anything joyous in it for the Negro:

So this is Armistice Day. We stand today at another milestone. Our feet are tired, for they have been bruised by our walks along the way. Somehow our burdens have become very heavy, and we have grown, O so weary.<sup>4</sup>

Not always is this self-pity of the despairing type. At times it is cool and detached. In the case of the Negro this type of attitude is expressed in the writing of some of the younger Negroes such as Hughes and Cullen. Notice, for example, this neat little turn from Hughes:

I do not hate you,  
For your faces are beautiful, too.  
I do not hate you,  
Your faces are whirling lights of loveliness, too.  
Yet why do you torture me,  
O white strong ones,  
Why do you torture me?<sup>5</sup>

The race conscious may realize their dilemma, pity their race, and yet be determined to take their punishment standing up. This sentiment is frequently expressed, for example, in the poetry of the Negro, the editorial page of the Negro press and in the spoken word.<sup>6</sup> Self-pity

<sup>3</sup> James D. Corrothers in J. W. Johnson (Editor) *Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Chase in *Pittsburgh Courier*, November 6, 1926.

<sup>5</sup> Langston Hughes, *Weary Blues* (1926), p. 106.

<sup>6</sup> See C. R. Dinkins, "We are Black, But we are Men" in N. I. White and W. C. Jackson, *Poetry by American Negroes* (1924), pp. 111-112.

may be dignified, accompanied by courage. A Zionist Jew, Maurice Samuel, ends one of his books with a sentence that epitomizes this reaction. Says he, "Whatever we do we are damned—and I would rather be damned standing up than lying down."<sup>7</sup>

#### THE SENSITIVITY OF THE RACE CONSCIOUS

Closely associated with the oppression psychosis of the race conscious is their excessive sensitivity. Since the race conscious identify their personal status with that of their race any attack on the race is taken personally. The race conscious are aware of their status in relation to their race. They become "touchy" or supersensitive. To demean the race they feel is to demean every member of it. Naturally, derogatory pictures of their race are resented.<sup>8</sup> Speaking of this ra-

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Samuel, *You Gentiles* (1924), p. 221.

<sup>8</sup> Facts supporting this generalization are numerous. Thus, the sensitive sons of Mother India have been aroused by the uncomplimentary picture of India presented in Katharine Mayo's, *Mother India*. The Jews resent such movies as *The King of Kings*, protest against passion plays and are hurt by the characterization of Jews in literature. (See I. Zangwill, *The Voice of Jerusalem* (1921), pp. 238-251 for a typical discussion of *The Merchant of Venice*.) The race conscious Negroes protest against literature which depicts the "lower class Negro" or panders to white conceptions of Negro life. (For example, Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* was an issue for months in the Negro press, such writers as Mr. DuBois condemning it as an unmitigated slander on the Negro race. See *Crisis*, XXXIII (1927), pp. 81-82.) The jokes and folk characterizations relative to the Negro are not appreciated by the race conscious Negroes. They resent the fact that the Negro is treated as a clown and not taken seriously. Epithets pain. Such folk terms as "nigger" sting the race conscious. So important is such a matter that the drive against this particular word has almost become a movement. The attempt to get writers and publishers to use the capital "N" in writing "Negro" should be considered in this frame of reference. Negro capitalized symbolizes respect for the Negro. Vicariously his status is raised.

cial hypersensitiveness among Negroes, Miller says,

Supersensitiveness to insult is becoming characteristic of the Negroes. This is merely the oppression psychosis in action. The Negro is merely becoming racially self-conscious.<sup>9</sup>

Since the race conscious are sensitive they naturally resent anything that impugns the status of their race. Hence they protest vehemently against the notion of their inferiority as a race. Any definition of status for the race that implies subordination angers and hurts them. And any type of behavior on the part of members of their race that implies the subservient attitude to other races they condemn. For example, Negroes, deplore the "Uncle Tom" type of Negro, the name "Uncle Tom" becoming an epithet that stings. The race conscious Negroes demand that the group as a whole give up its "tin cup" habit of asking for money for churches and other institutions, such a practise being regarded as lowering. Racial status becomes a precious possession to the race conscious.

#### RACE AS A SOCIAL OBJECT

Among the race conscious their race is reacted to as a social object. It becomes a fiction, a mental stereotype. To it one writes poems. One praises it and becomes eloquent about its achievements,

<sup>9</sup> H. A. Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 155. Conceivably the thoroughly race conscious individual might be immune to insult if he is completely identified with his own race. But often, perhaps usually, the race conscious are divided souls. Unconsciously they want the good opinion of other racial groups, especially where their own race is a minority group. They are forced back upon their race and they must be able to think well of this race in order to think well of themselves. The derogatory reactions of the opposing race makes this difficult. Their need for identification with a group which is well favored is great. And when this need is not met pain and a sense of injury are the natural results.

virtues or qualities. The race is personalized. It is an object of feeling, sentiment, and thought. The selection from a Negro writer illustrates the point.

Ah my race  
Hungry race,  
Throbbing and young—  
Ah my race,  
Wonder race,  
Sobbing with song—  
Ah my race,  
Laughing race,  
Careless in mirth—  
Ah my veiled  
Unformed race  
Fumblin in birth.<sup>10</sup>

The race conscious posit their race as an entity to which they have obligations. They have a conscience about this race. They must serve it, fight for it, be loyal to it. To the outsider the race of the race conscious may appear to be an imaginative construction but to the initiated this race is a reality, in a sense, a personal experience.

#### RACE PRIDE AS AN ASPECT OF RACE CONSCIOUSNESS

Race pride is an aspect of race consciousness. It implies the tendency to place highly one's race, to exalt its virtues, to take pride in its past, its great men, its achievements. The racially proud express what Sumner has termed ethnocentrism.<sup>11</sup> Their race becomes the measure of all things. It becomes the central, pivotal human grouping. Invariably race pride tends to be an expression of the sentiment of racial superiority. This is even true of subordinate racial groups such as the Negro in the United States or the natives of South Africa. Such a belief gives support to race conscious individuals.

<sup>10</sup> Helen Johnson "My Race" *Opportunity*, Vol. III (1925), p. 96.

<sup>11</sup> *Folkways* (1906), pp. 13-15.

It bolsters their self-respect, exalts their conception of themselves and inures them against the pain incident to a low status.<sup>12</sup> The race consciousness of a subordinate racial group is apt to be more defensive than is true of that of a dominant racial group. Psychologically its utility is probably greater for the former than for the latter, though to the statusless in the dominant racial group it proves a great boon, giving them a sense of their value that is out of proportion to reality.

This race pride is expressed in several forms. Thus racial achievements are magnified. In the case of racial groups of an inferior status memory of racial achievements compensates for the tribulations of subordination. Stress placed on the achievements of the race represents an attempt to effect a more favorable impression of the race both by its members and by outsiders. This manifestation of racial pride is a defensive gesture, being an attempt to bolster one's conception of one's race.<sup>13</sup> And thus the race conscious individual, contemplating his great racial past, is secured in his sense of personal worth.

<sup>12</sup> See H. M. Bond "Self-Respect as a Factor in Racial Advancement," *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. CXXX, November, 1928, pp. 21-25.

<sup>13</sup> This defensive pride is especially obvious in the case of low status racial groups. Thus the various Asiatic groups, conscious of the valuations of the West, defend in speech, press, and literature their achievements. The same tendency is to be noted among the race conscious natives of Africa, especially of South Africa. (See for typical expressions, S. Plaatje, *Native Life in South Africa* (1917); and S. M. Molema, *Bantu, Past and Present* (1920).) The reaction of the race conscious Negroes of the United States is typical in this respect. Some illustration of this tendency may be found in the concern with Negro history, the vogue of African art, the space given in the Negro press to events and achievements which bolster racial pride, much of the literature of Negro writers, and in the eagerness with which recitals of the Negro's attainments are listened to.

Glorification of the individually great of the race is another expression of the pride of the race conscious. The great man of the race becomes a symbol. His achievements typify the possibilities of the race. In a sense he is the prototype of the race. This great man, in the ideology of the race conscious, tends to become a mythological figure. Through him they vicariously achieve status. This fact is very well exemplified in the following glorification of three of the Negro great.

These men were kings albeit they were black;  
Touissaint and Dessalines and L'Ouverture;  
Their majesty has made me turn my back  
Upon a plaint I once shaped to endure.

These men were black, I say, but they were crowned  
And purple-clad, however brief their time.  
Stifle your agony, let grief be drowned:  
We know joy had a day once and had a clime.

Dark gutter snipe, black sprawlers-in-the-mud,  
A thing men did a man may do again;  
What answer filters through your sluggish blood  
To those dark ghosts who knew so bright a rein?  
"Lo, I am dark, but comely," Sheba sings;  
"And we were black," three shades reply, "but  
kings."<sup>14</sup>

This idealization of the great men of the race is a means of glorifying the race as a whole. It exalts the race in the eyes of its race conscious members. As a result the race conscious themselves are exalted.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Countee Cullen "Black Majesty" *Opportunity*, Vol. VI (1928), p. 148.

<sup>15</sup> Negro newspaper editors have apparently learned that the exploitation of the achievements and personalities of the great of the race pays. Such papers as the *Pittsburgh Courier*, *The Chicago Defender* and the *Negro World* are constantly discovering "great" men of the race, contemporary as well as historic. The anniversaries of such men as Douglas and Washington are observed and given wide publicity in the press. Such men become gods in the pantheon of the race conscious Negroes. A Negro editor on the occasion of the anniversary of Booker T. Washington said, "although his body has been laid to rest, his 'soul

The psychological states of depression, sense of inferiority and humility give way to those of a feeling of personal worth and pride.<sup>16</sup>

#### RACE CONSCIOUSNESS INSPIRES RACE PREJUDICE

Correlating with those traits of race consciousness previously discussed is race prejudice. Race prejudice seems to be an inevitable accompaniment of race consciousness. This is true whether the race consciousness is that of dominant or dominated races. Consciousness of race implies awareness of difference. It effects the division of the racial world into "out" and "in" races. It results in stereotypes of the "out" race. Thus to the race conscious white man all Orientals are alike, as are Mexicans or Negroes. His reaction to them is defined in terms of a derogatory picture or stereotype of them. The native in South Africa or the Negro in the United States who is racially conscious reacts the same way to the oppres-

sing white man.<sup>17</sup> In fact probably the race prejudice among the race conscious of the dominated racial groups is more bitter and potent than is true of that among the dominant races. The contemplation of what the "superior" race has done to the subordinate race naturally breeds hatred. The race conscious of the low status group are aware of past and present exploitation. They recall with bitterness the limitation of their freedom and their debasement. Grievances are formulated, becoming a part of their ideology. The Negro poet, Claude McKay gives eloquent expression to the prejudice of the race conscious in the following poem.

Oh, when I think of my long-suffering race,  
For weary centuries despised oppressed,  
Enslaved and lynched, denied a human place  
In the great life line of the Christian West;  
And in the Black Land disinherited,  
Robbed in the ancient country of its birth,  
My heart grows sick with hate, becomes as lead,  
For this my race that has no home on earth.  
Then from the dark depths of my soul I cry  
To the avenging angels to consume  
The white man's world of wonders utterly:  
Let it be swallowed up in earth's vast womb,  
Or upward roll as a sacrificial smoke  
To liberate my people from its yoke!<sup>18</sup>

#### RACE CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE SENSE OF RACIAL DESTINY

The race conscious easily believe in a portentous destiny for their race. The

<sup>17</sup> The constant reader of the Negro press might easily discover the following picture of the white man. He segregates and lynches Negroes. He is often cruel, frequently hypocritical, at times revealing himself as animal, superstitious, brutal, and perverse. All whites are pretty much alike, especially in their attitudes and behavior with reference to Negroes. They are not to be trusted.

<sup>18</sup> "Enslaved" in *Harlem Shadows* (1922), p. 32. Of course, the race conscious always make exceptions in their prejudicial reaction. Not all Negroes are like Negroes; nor all whites like whites in general. These exceptions become the friends of the race conscious, often objects of affection and gratitude as well as symbols of hope and security.

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goes marching on' as the patron saint of the Negro race." (*Norfolk Journal and Guide*, November 13, 1926.)

<sup>16</sup> The much talked of "New Negro" exemplifies this fact. The phrase is used as a description of the type of Negro who demands his rights, who refuses to pay obeisance to the "superior" white man, who considers himself the equal of any man, who resents insults to him or to his race and who refuses to accept as a fixed and necessary condition a low-caste position in the social system. He is no beggar, no humble "Uncle Tom," but a self-conscious personality, aware of his worth and dignity. He would applaud the sentiment of Mr. Randolph when he says, "The time has passed when a grown-up black man should ask a grown-up white man for anything." (Quoted in *Pittsburgh Courier*, February 26, 1927). See Alain Locke (editor) *The New Negro*, 1925; W. S. Turner "Has the Negro Arrived," *Social Forces*, Vol. V (1927), pp. 479-482; and G. A. Steward "The Negro Hokum," *Social Forces* Vol. VI, (1928), pp. 438-445 for discussion of "New Negro."

race conscious among the "superior" races are aware of the "burdens," duties and obligations of their race to "uplift," Christianize or "civilize" the "backward" races. This is their mission and their destiny. But it is not only the race conscious of the dominant races who have a sense of mission. The race conscious children of the "backward" and "inferior" races are likewise aware of a future and a mission. They have faith, a faith that is often naïve, tinged with the messianic element. The following profession of faith by a follower of Garvey is typical in this respect.

Garvey taught us six great truths. First, this is not our country and we are not to remain here and become a part of this nation. Second, we have no constitutional rights. Having been unable to force them in the constitution—they were put there as a free gift to be withdrawn at will—we now have no power to compel their enforcement. Third, politics, religion, and education cannot solve the Negro problem; nothing but a government owned by Negroes will solve it. Fourth, begging and pleading will not get for us what other races have had to use force to obtain. Fifth, Africa is the natural home of the black man and will remain so when these countries where white men live become too crowded. It is our duty to carry our education to the native African, teach him the ways of civilization as we know it, and become great men of the world in and among our own people. Sixth, Africa must be redeemed. The alien race will give back Africa as soon as they know that all of the four hundred million Negroes want it. These are the ideals Garvey followers look to for salvation and whether Garvey be dead or alive, we will follow them to victory or eternal defeat.<sup>19</sup>

No race conscious member of a subordinate group can believe that his race is to suffer forever the status of an outcaste. There will come a time when his race shall "enter the kingdom." Notice this element in the poems quoted below from the pens of two young Negro writers.

<sup>19</sup> J. R. Ditto in a letter to the *Nation*, CXXIII (1926), p. 273.

We have tomorrow  
Bright before us  
Like a flame

Yesterday  
A night-gone thing  
A sun-down name  
Broad arches above the road we came.<sup>20</sup>

We shall not always plant while others reap  
The golden increment of bursting fruit,  
Nor always countenance, abject and mute,  
That lesser men should hold their brothers cheap;  
Nor everlastingly while others sleep  
Shall we beguile their limbs with mellow flute,  
Nor always bend to some more subtle brute;  
We were not made eternally to weep.

The night, whose sable breast relieves the stark,  
White stars, is no less lovely being dark,  
And there are buds that cannot bloom at all  
In light, but crumple, piteous and fall.  
So in the dark we hide the heart that bleeds,  
And wait and tend our agonizing seeds.<sup>21</sup>

In the hope for a better future the prescribed and race conscious can "fight with faces set, still visioning the stars."<sup>22</sup>

The race conscious of the dominant group do not monopolize the notion of being "a light to the Gentiles." Their brethren of the "inferior" races tend also to develop the ideology of saviors. They are apt to feel that their suffering has refined and spiritualized them, making them superior to their gross natured persecutors.<sup>23</sup> A delicious sense of moral superiority is achieved. Witness the following sample.

Brother, come!  
And let us go unto one God,  
And when we stand before Him  
I shall say—  
"Lord, I do not hate,

<sup>20</sup> Langston Hughes, *Weary Blues* (1926), p. 108.

<sup>21</sup> Countee Cullen in *Negro World*, June 11, 1927.

<sup>22</sup> Jesse Fauset in "Oriflamme" in Jackson and White, *Poetry of American Negroes* (1924), p. 194.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, J. D. Corrothers, "In the Matter of Two Men" in J. W. Johnson (Editor) *Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), 32-33.

I am hated.  
 I scourge no one,  
 I am scourged.  
 I covet no lands,  
 My lands are coveted.  
 I mock no people,  
 I am mocked."<sup>24</sup>  
 And Brother, what shall you say?

The Suffering Servant idea is implicit often in the race consciousness of the proscribed races. To fight with gross, material weapons would reflect on their moral character. Hence the race bides its time, hoping that the example set of suffering and moral fortitude will soften the stony hearts of the tormentors. McKay has expressed this sentiment well, speaking of the Negro.

Think you that I am not fiend and savage too?  
 Think you that I could not arm me with a gun  
 And shoot down ten of you for every one  
 Of my black brothers burnt by you?  
 Be not deceived for every deed you do,  
 I could match—outmatch; am I not Africa's son,  
 Black of the black land where black deeds are done?

But the Almighty from the darkness drew  
 My soul and said: even thou shall be a light  
 Always to burn on the benighted earth,  
 The dusky face I set among the whites  
 For these to prove thyself of highest worth;  
 Before the world is swallowed up in night,  
 To show thy little lamp: go forth, go forth!<sup>25</sup>

For the race conscious among the races of low status to believe in a better future is essential. Race consciousness otherwise would atrophy and die. Hope is essential to its vitality. And to be able to believe that while they suffer and "envision the stars" they are at the same time performing a mission satisfies the human need for the feelings of worth and superiority.

<sup>24</sup> J. S. Cotter in J. W. Johnson, *ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in J. W. Johnson, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

#### SENTIMENTAL SOLIDARITY AMONG THE PROSCRIBED RACES

Up to now there is probably little or none of the sentiment of solidarity among the various dominant races. A community of feeling has not as yet developed, though certain ideologists agitate for such a sentiment.<sup>26</sup> Incompatibility of national and regional interests and values prevent this development. But the opposite is the case among the proscribed races of the world. Thus the Negro in the United States who is assimilated to the ideology of race consciousness sympathizes with the struggles of the African natives, protests against the imperialism of the United States in the Caribbean, appreciates the nationalism of the Indians and Chinese and is sympathetic generally with struggling minorities. The race conscious who belong to proscribed groups sense a spiritual unity and are aware of a common cause. At the Brussels conference of oppressed races and nationalities a young African is reported to have said:

Ah you Chinamen among my auditors here, I embrace you as comrades. You are setting a grand example of revolt for all the oppressed colonial peoples. I only hope that they will catch the inspiration from you.<sup>27</sup>

In the modern world the oppressed races have a common foe, the white peoples of Western Europe and their cousins of the United States. This isolable and convenient enemy makes the emergence of sentimental solidarity among the oppressed easy. The mechanisms of modern communication aid in the diffusion of

<sup>26</sup> See such volumes as M. Muret, *Twilight of the White Race* (1926); Lothrop Stoddard, *Rising Tide of Color* (1920); and Madison Grant, *Passing of the Great Race* (1916).

<sup>27</sup> See article by Lamine Singhor, *Living Age*, March 15, 1927, p. 867.



this feeling to all the oppressed children of men. The oppressed have common experiences, face the same problems, those involving racial status, and hence speak a common language, ideologically speaking. Each oppressed group is strengthened by this realization. The cause of race consciousness takes on a wider meaning and importance.

#### SUMMARY

The purpose of this paper has been to describe the mentality of the race conscious. Such problems as the origin of race consciousness, its natural history, and its relation to race movements have been ignored. Race consciousness has been described as the tendency of members of a racial group to identify themselves emotionally and ideologically with their race. They tend to react, and think within a racial frame of reference. Their status and welfare as persons are associated with the status and welfare of their race. The race conscious may be characterized

as follows: they tend to develop a sense of oppression, especially if they belong to low status racial groups; they are sensitive relative to the qualities, honor and prestige of their race, resenting any attacks or derogatory reactions; their race becomes a social object, a mental stereotype, which evokes their devotion and loyalty; they take pride in their race, stressing its achievements, loyal to its great men and defending its honor, this pride bolstering their conception of self; they develop racial prejudices against competing racial groups; they become aware of a mission and a destiny, secure in their hopes for the future of the race; and, there is a tendency for a sentimental solidarity to develop among the race conscious, especially so in the case of the oppressed races. Race consciousness is merely another form of group consciousness, serving the same purpose and playing the same rôle essentially in the life of the individual that any other type of group consciousness does.

## INFLUENCE OF FOOD ON INDIAN CULTURE

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**F**OOD is the first, most constant and universal need of man. Hence we must expect to find it at the root of every human activity and even of progress, especially when in a primitive social state. Food is then bound to be an essential element of any culture complex, in fact it constitutes often the explanatory factor of the complex, being either cause, occasion, or accompaniment of the other traits. Sometimes, both material and social cultures are directly based upon the type of food and the occupations resulting from the nature of that food, the

ways of obtaining it and the by-products derived from it. There are cases when one single animal species contributes the main source of food and at the same time furnishes materials for clothing and dwelling, for tools and bags; controls the principal occupations for both men and women, their kind of social organization and activity and affects even their art, mythology, and religion. This is why the American school of ethnologists, of which Clark Wissler is one of the leaders, very rightly divides the continent into Food Areas and studies the culture com-