

infanticide, but also provide new interests, such as organised games, which take the place of warfare.

The discussion closed with an important paper by Dr. A. P. Elkin on "The Cultural and Racial Clash in Australia", which in its broader implications has a bearing on native problems in a wider field than that with which it deals immediately. He pointed out that the coming of civilisation brought about a sudden change in the environment of the aborigines of Australia. Before the advent of the white man, the aborigines had reached an almost static condition of equilibrium, which was maintained by an intricate, but logical, system of social, legal, religious and technical customs, ensuring the cohesion, solidarity and persistence of the aboriginal race in its

environment. The change worked by the coming of the white man has been almost as hard, objective, and inhuman as a geographical change. Tribal and horde grounds, which were associated with the past through sacred sites and beliefs, are used by the white man for his own purposes. Being unable to perform the initiatory, historical and totemic rites in the way and at the sites sanctified by tradition, the aboriginal feels that there can be no future for him and prepares to die. Being unable to adapt himself to this new environment, he has rapidly decreased in numbers. The Australian race is another example of a type so specialised and adjusted to one environment that it cannot adapt itself to another.

Thomas Norton and the "Ordinal of Alchimy"

AS one of the earliest alchemical books in English, the "Ordinal of Alchimy" is of much interest; Dr. M. Nierenstein and Mr. P. F. Chapman are therefore to be thanked for their exhaustive inquiry (*Isis*, 18, 290-321; 1932) into its authorship. Ashmole, in his "Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum", is the chief authority for ascribing the "Ordinal" to Thomas Norton of Bristol, who was supposed to have flourished in the fifteenth century. Ashmole's evidence for the authorship of this anonymous poem was that "from the *first word* of this *Proeme*, and the *Initial letters* of the *six following Chapters* [namely, "Tomais Norton of Briseto"] . . . we may collect the *Authors Name* and *place of Residence*". As for the date of the book, there is the statement at the end of the seventh chapter: "In this yeare of *Christ* One thousand foure Hundred seaventy and seaven, This Warke was begun, *Honour to God in Heaven*".

Dr. Nierenstein and Mr. Chapman, from a consideration of the language of the poem, and of the authorities quoted in it, regard the date 1477 as, in all probability, correct; and Dr. Peter Haworth, whom they consulted, says that the "Ordinal" certainly belongs to the second half of the fifteenth century. The problem of authorship is, however, more confused. Dr. Nierenstein and Mr. Chapman say that Norton's name, in connexion with the "Ordinal", became known only in 1617-18, when Michael Maier mentions him as a master of alchemy who wrote in English verse, and published a Latin version of the "Ordinal" in his "Tripus Aureus". They do not, however, notice that (according to Mrs. Singer's "Catalogue of Latin and Vernacular Alchemical Manuscripts", 2, 556-7; 1930) two fifteenth century manuscripts of the poem exist, in which the author is described as "T. N." This would appear to afford weighty support to Ashmole's 'cipher' theory; though it does not necessarily follow that "T. N." belonged to the well-known

Bristol family of which he is usually described as a member.

Dr. Nierenstein and Mr. Chapman have very carefully and thoroughly sought out the records of the Bristol Nortons, and have constructed a genealogical table of the family, covering the relevant period, so far as is necessary to establish the interrelationship of those members named Thomas. There appeared to be four Thomas Nortons, and four only, for whom any case could be made out as possible authors of the "Ordinal". Thomas Norton I was alive in 1388, and may therefore be safely rejected. Thomas Norton II is equally ruled out, as his will was proved in 1449. As to Thomas Norton IV, he was certainly dead in 1479, and it is extremely unlikely that he was alive in 1477. There remains Thomas Norton III, who, as great-grandfather of the alchemist Samuel Norton (1548-1604?), would seem to have the best claim, since Samuel refers to his ancestor as an alchemist. However, Thomas III also is unacceptable to Dr. Nierenstein and Mr. Chapman, who state that he was a thoroughly disreputable character, according to the Bristol records, "avoiding divine service" and spending "sermon time in the afternoon at tennis and frivolous sports". His will was dated November 26, 1513, and the authors think that he must have died soon after.

The conclusion at which Dr. Nierenstein and Mr. Chapman arrive is that Maier and Ashmole were not justified in definitely ascribing the anonymously written "Ordinal" either to "Thomas Norton" or to "Thomas Norton of Bristol". While no fault can be found with this cautious statement, it yet seems probable that Maier and Ashmole were correct; and in view of the well-known character of many alchemists, it is perhaps surprising that Dr. Nierenstein and Mr. Chapman did not consider that Thomas Norton III—who, on chronological and other grounds, is obviously eligible—has a strong claim on the very grounds of his disreputability. E. J. HOLMYARD.

Prehistoric Society of East Anglia

AT the annual business meeting of the Prehistoric Society of East Anglia held on February 18, Dr. Cyril Fox, director of the National Museum of Wales, was elected president for the year 1933, Prof. V. Gordon Childe, vice-president, and Mr. G. Maynard, of the Ipswich Museum, general secretary.

After the business meeting, specimens were

exhibited and papers read. Mr. R. N. Chandler sent an account of his researches during the past six years in the basal gravel of the Swanscombe Terrace of the Thames Valley, where he had obtained more than 200 implements belonging to Stages 1 and 2 of the Clactonian culture. Fully 50 per cent of the artefacts are cores of which the chopping tool characteristic of