lack of care in the compilation of the book that the crystal drawings of the enantiomorphous sodium ammonium tartrates reproduced by the author and evidently copied from older text-books have little relation to the crystalline forms of these

substances and may be described as representing crystal monstrosities. It is unfortunate that the author of a new text-book should be so uncritical as to reproduce what has long been known to be an error in older books. CHARLES S. GIBSON.

Religion and Medicine of a West African People

Religion and Medicine of Gã People

By M. J. Field. Pp. xi + 214 + 16 plates. (London : Oxford University Press, 1937.) 17s. 6d. net.

THERE is a charming feminine inconsistency between Miss Field's announcement that she refrained from studying anything that anyone else had ever written concerning the subject upon which her own researches were to be directed—her only lapse in this respect being the “perfunctory” perusal “eight years ago” of a work dealing with a neighbouring tribe—and her acknowledgement of advice and criticism from various experts in her particular subject.

The author may, however, have had in mind the example of certain anthropological students, who, having sat with reverence at the feet of some great master, the originator of a new school of thought, are so influenced by his teaching that they, perhaps unconsciously, find further proofs to back up—or to bolster up—those pet predilections of a beloved teacher. Modern youth, however, of both sexes, is now inclined to display independence, and the functionists, diffusionists and what-nots, need not be surprised to discover rebels in the ranks of former pupils. It is well that it should be so. There is no science where an open mind and freedom from preconceived ideas are more essential than in a study of mankind's primitive institutions.

The title of this eminently sympathetic and thorough piece of field work perhaps disarms one otherwise obvious criticism.

It deals—and only purports to deal—with “religion and medicine”; in anthropological parlance, the latter term is often synonymous with the former. Yet there will be many, besides the writer of this notice, who would have wished to know more of the origin of this interesting West African people. Their curious affinity in customs, in language, and most of all in their folk-lore, with their northern neighbours, the Twi-speaking tribes, is very marked. Miss Field states, for example, that the religious songs at a certain ceremony were in the forgotten “Obutu dialect”, and adds that these were often “mere gibberish to both singers and hearers”. In a footnote, however, she states that her informants insisted that this “gibberish”

was Twi, but she adds that could not be so, for it would mean that the particular custom was a late, not an early, cult. “Fleeting glimmers” such as this—to use Miss Field's own expression—make us all the more anxious to probe still further into the question how far the Gã have been influenced by their northern neighbours.

The book plunges straight away into an account of Gã gods and their servants. In the first paragraph is the arresting statement that the whole idea of the *fetish* is foreign to Gã worship. “The typical Gã high-priests,” the author writes, “have no fetishes and are not fetish priests”. There is, of course, now, every reason to believe that among the Twi and Ashanti, the indigenous cults were equally free from the influence of the *suman*. These Gã people of the lagoons and Atlantic free-board appear, in spite of centuries of contact with Europeans, to have retained, unchanged, certain primitive institutions which have been lost or become obscured among the inland tribes. This has perhaps been due to the greater wealth and rise of native kingdoms and warlike confederacies among the latter, which postulate external influences, in their case, from the north, that is, from the great inland kingdoms of Ghana and Melle.

Miss Field also refers to the survival of priest-kings, still faintly discernible in the Ashanti *Asase-wura* (master of the earth) and functioning more clearly in the Ashanti hinterland in the person of the *Tendana*. “Gã governments,” she writes, “were originally absolute theocracies, and the only rulers were the priests”. Scores of similar analogies rise before the reader who is familiar with the Twi-speaking and other Gold Coast peoples. It is to be hoped that the author will one day bring her scholarship to bear on the problems thus suggested.

This book is a model of what sympathy and painstaking research can achieve. It is, indeed, on books of the kind that the whole science of anthropology is being reconstructed. Those scientific investigators who cannot themselves embark on field work can wholly rely upon, and safely draw correct deductions from, such a work.

R. S. RATTRAY.