

# NATURE

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### SHORT REVIEWS

#### ANTHROPOLOGY AND ARCHÆOLOGY

##### African Women

A Study of the Ibo of Nigeria. By Sylvia Leith-Ross. Pp. 367+8 plates. (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1939.) 15s. net.

IT is, of course, no more possible to generalize about the African woman than it is about the women of Europe and still less Asiatic women. Notwithstanding the title of her book, Mrs. Leith-Ross makes no such elementary mistake. She gives her readers the results of a careful and detailed investigation of the position of women among the Ibo people of Nigeria; and even here, she is careful to discriminate. The specific problem with which she was concerned was the reaction of the Ibo woman to the changes which are taking place around her under European administration and owing to the contacts with white civilization. Mrs. Leith-Ross, whose acquaintance with the African is of long standing, directed her observations to female life and character in four different types of community: the isolated bush community, where traditional patterns have suffered little modification, or at least so it would appear; a semi-sophisticated rural community, in which certain ideas and movements are beginning to stir the surface, more especially in the women's societies and organizations, such as on a previous occasion gave rise to serious trouble; a town of some considerable size; and finally the commercial and administrative centre, in which society, both European and more especially African, is cosmopolitan or mixed.

The Ibo woman, like women among many other African peoples, is by no means the conventional down-trodden creature of popular conception. She has a sturdy independence, and in some respects is 'more of a man' than her husband. Nor is she cut to a single pattern. The contrast shown here between the women of the bush and the semi-sophisticated village is instructive, and goes deeper than any difference due to degree of white contact. Apart from such individual differences, however, the progression in change of behaviour and character as the author passes from one type of community to another is very clearly marked.

##### Manuel de préhistoire générale:

Europe, Asie, Afrique, Amérique. Par Prof. Raymond Furon. (Bibliothèque scientifique.) Pp. 398+8 plates. (Paris: Payot et Cie., 1939.) 50 francs.

DR. FORON'S manual covers a wider field than its title immediately suggests. It deals—as the author recognizes—with what is now termed proto-history as well as pre-history, telling the story of man from his earliest beginnings down to the iron age and the spread of the Celtic-speaking peoples.

As the aim of the author is to provide an introduction to archaeological studies, rather than an exhaustive treatise, it would, perhaps, be less than fair to criticize a lack of balance in treatment. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that while one half of the book is devoted to the descent of man and stone age culture down to the end of the palæolithic, and seventy pages are given to mesolithic and neolithic, one hundred pages have to suffice for the bronze and iron ages; while Australia and America are dealt with apart in twenty pages. As the whole of the Old World is covered by geographical regions throughout, it will be realized that in the later periods Mesopotamia, Egypt, Crete, and the various geographical regions of Europe come in for extremely short measure indeed. Nevertheless, so far as it goes, the matter is as informative as it can be in so brief a space, while the ampler treatment given in the earlier section relating to the physical development of early man and his predecessors, and the account of early stone age cultures, as known in 1937, the date of the latest reference, will be found most helpful as a general introduction. This applies in particular to the lucid account of the bearing of recent geological and palæontological research on the chronological problem in quaternary times.

##### Tools and the Man

By W. B. Wright. Pp. xvi+236+9 plates. (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1939.) 12s. 6d. net.

IN one sense the late Dr. Wright's presentation and survey of present-day knowledge of the data bearing on early man and the development of his material culture in the early stone age supersede all previous manuals of the kind. It is the first of such handbooks