

tion that few will grudge him. Nevertheless, much of the argument is presented as if it were novel, and many readers may not realize that all the significant parts appeared long ago in the writings of Huxley, Tyndall and Schafer, for these are neither quoted nor mentioned in the book.

N. W. PIRIE

## AFRICANA UPSALIENSIA

Contribution to the Ethnography of Africa

By Sture Lagercrantz. (*Studia Ethnographica Upsaliensia*, 1.) Pp. xix+430. £9.

Origin of Death

Studies in African Mythology. By Hans Abrahamsson. (*Studia Ethnographica Upsaliensia*, 3.) Pp. vii+178. £3.

(Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksell; London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1950-51.)

WE are indebted to the Humanistic Foundation of Sweden for the publication of a series of six anthropological studies dealing with the comparative ethnology of Africa. The two which are reviewed here, "Contribution to the Ethnography of Africa" and the "Origin of Death", are weighty and erudite studies of the diffusion of culture in Africa. The aim of the two authors, who follow the Continental diffusionist school of Graebner and Schmidt, is to test the theories of this school regarding the successive cultures of Africa by a comprehensive examination of all the literature that has been published on African anthropology since the theories were first propounded. S. Lagercrantz, the general editor of the series, does this, in the first and largest volume, by examining particular culture traits grouped under the general headings of food, ornaments, weapons, commerce, art, medicine, divine kingship and religion. Abrahamsson, in the "Origin of Death", which is actually the third volume in the series, makes a similar examination of particular themes of African folk-lore which seek to explain how death came to the world.

Lagercrantz, in his introduction to the first volume, briefly surveys the successive culture theories held by the leaders of this school, ending with those of Baumann, who in 1940 distinguished seven hypothetical cultures—pygmy, Eurafrikan steppe, old African (Ankermann's old Sudanese), west African, east Hamitic, north Hamitic and a young Sudanese—which last is also claimed to have a counterpart in the Zimbabwe culture of Rhodesia. Lagercrantz's conclusion is that Baumann "may probably be said to have resolved some of the most important problems of African research in a way that on the whole is likely to prove of permanent value". It is very doubtful if this opinion would be shared by most British or American Africanists, but their aims and methods are entirely different. British social anthropologists are concerned with the study of contemporary African societies as they exist at present or in the historic past. The Uppsala ethnologists are concerned with the interpretation of contemporary African cultures in terms of their origins, and their endeavour is to deduce these origins from a study of the distribution of isolated culture traits which are regarded as the survivals of these earlier hypothetical cultures.

Readers who are interested in the diffusion of particular culture traits will find in these volumes,

particularly the first, a mass of interesting material; those who wish to study contemporary African societies will merely be irritated by them; and the scientifically minded will note the absence of any first-hand archaeological or anthropological field-work and will wonder whether this technique of culture analysis, useful as it may be in the case of European ethnography where it can fall back on corroborative archaeological and historical research, can validly be applied to a continent so deficient in such research.

G. I. JONES

## FRONTIERS OF ORGANIC CHEMISTRY

Progress in Organic Chemistry, 1

Editor: Prof. J. W. Cook. (Progress Series.) Pp. viii+287. (London: Butterworths Scientific Publications, Ltd., 1952.) 50s. net.

A GLANCE at the current journals of the chemical societies of the world will show that organic chemistry remains an immensely fruitful and popular branch of science. A correspondingly heavy burden is placed on organic chemists and others concerned in keeping afloat in the cataract of literature. Fortunately the position is relieved by the increasing tendency to publish reviews of comparatively small sections of the subject. Among such reviews the collection of monographs entitled "Progress in Organic Chemistry, 1" is among the most authoritative.

Eight articles are included, all written by active workers in the different fields. To attempt a brief classification: four deal with natural products (Sir Robert Robinson on strychnine; H. Erdtman on heart-wood constituents; H. H. Brockmann on photodynamic pigments; I. A. Preece on starch); two deal with general synthetic and industrial organic chemistry (S. F. Birch on petroleum chemicals; B. C. L. Weedon on acetylene chemistry); one deals with reaction mechanisms (D. H. Hey on free radicals as intermediates); and one with chemotherapy (F. Bergel and A. S. Parkes on drugs inhibiting symptomatic stimulators). As might be expected from this list of authors, the general level of the contributions is remarkably high. It is of particular value to have from the highest authority a logical summary of the elucidation of the tangled structure of strychnine, coming as it does immediately after the final solution. Among the other monographs one notes particularly those of Erdtman and of Brockmann as authoritative reviews of most interesting groups of compounds. Bergel and Parkes's article is remarkable for its range, and Birch's for its timeliness.

A readable book of less than three hundred pages dealing with progress in organic chemistry can only touch on a few topics, and Prof. J. W. Cook has done well to limit these so that the treatment may be thorough. Nevertheless the book as a whole suffers from the defects of its qualities: it admirably describes *examples* of progress rather than the progress as a whole. It is probably true that the subject is now so wide that it can only be reasonably covered by a number of volumes like this, each dealing with one important aspect, such as natural products, synthetic methods, reaction mechanisms and so on.

The book is well printed and free from errors.

R. P. LINSTAD