

INTERRUPTED DISTRIBUTION.

Cautions in Inferring Historical Connexion.

The second possibility is of more interest. A culture element may be not continuous but interrupted in its geographical distribution, that is, it may be found represented in two or more tribes or groups of tribes separated by a tribe or group of tribes which does not share this feature. Here, even more than in the preceding case, it must be clearly ascertained that the supposed similarity in culture is fundamental or real before the problem of independent origin versus historical relationship can be attacked at all. Where the geographical distance is great, the resemblance limited to features of a very general character, and, more important still, the historical trend of the culture element which has been reconstructed for each area proves to run in quite different senses, it would be extremely hazardous, in the absence of other evidence, to infer historical connexion.

Danger of Conceptualizing Too Widely. The constant danger that besets the investigator is to make historical or psychological actualities out of merely conceptual abstractions—the more widely one defines the terms of his abstractions the more easily will he be enabled to embrace very distinct cultural phenomena within a single historical or psychological problem. Superficially the phratric organization of a number of West Coast tribes (Haida, Tlingit, Tsimshian) bears points of resemblance to that of the Iroquois. Between the Iroquois and the West Coast tribes lies a vast stretch of country inhabited almost entirely by tribes without phratric organization. Have we here a case of convergent evolution or of an originally (or from time to time partly) continuous area of phratry distribution which has become disrupted by the vicissitudes of history? A closer study of the nature of the phratries in the two areas soon convinces one that they are in essence more unlike than alike. While the West Coast phratries are, at least in nucleus, enlarged kin groups with specific crests, the Iroquois phratries are rather functional