

of social organization may behave quite differently from the point of view of diffusion. A tale, for instance, will normally travel much faster than a type of clan organization, to be sure, but it is perfectly conceivable, on the other hand, that an esoteric ritualistic myth may fail to be borrowed by a neighbouring tribe which has nevertheless adopted isolated features of social organization.

CONVERGENT DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN AREAS OF CONTINUOUS
DISTRIBUTION.

So far we have assumed that the geographical distribution of a culture element is continuous and that, this being so, it may be represented as a single historical process of gradual diffusion. But two other possibilities present themselves. A culture trait may be continuous and yet not of single origin; in other words, it may have been independently evolved twice or even more often within its present area of distribution, so that the continuity of distribution represents a meeting and partial amalgamation of two or more distinct but similar streams of influence. Personally I do not believe that such types of diffusion, theoretically possible as they may be, are at all frequent. In probably the majority of supposed cases the two or more contiguous culture distributions are of elements that are of only superficial, not fundamental, similarity; where the similarity is undoubted and where, nevertheless, a single origin seems, for one reason or another, improbable, we are entitled to suspect that there has been an assimilation of two originally more clearly distinct elements into new forms. The criteria, formal and functional, of independent origin (convergence) versus historical relationship of similar cultural elements have been often discussed. The question is a large and puzzling one—puzzling, I venture to think, more in the abstract than as applied to specific cases. In any case, the determination of such independent origin or historical relationship must be assumed as made—how does not directly concern us here—before our methods of chronologic reconstruction can be applied.