

conception of culture transmission, though its sponsor would fain have us think that it is the opposed notion that deserves it.¹

LIMITATIONS TO THE HISTORICAL USEFULNESS OF THE CONCEPTS
OF CULTURE AREA AND STRATUM.

Our rapid review of the concepts of culture area and culture stratum may seem rather disappointing, but it should be remembered that our point of view is entirely historical, not descriptive or psychological. The culture area is a highly useful classificatory device for descriptive purposes, indeed it aids considerably also in the psychological interpretation of culture; its usefulness for historical purposes, however, depends entirely on the extent to which its differentia can be interpreted as a culture stratum or a series of culture strata. The culture stratum itself is an intrinsically useful historical concept but, owing to reasons already advanced, it may be both unduly inclusive and exclusive; hence the erection of a sequence of culture strata, when unsupported by archaeological evidence, must not be interpreted too rigidly but must allow for very extensive overlapping. And, most important of all, the culture stratum must not be freely handled as a universal counter, but needs to be restricted to the bounds set by at most a continent or parts of two adjacent continents. Some strata, indeed, must be considered as of hardly more than local application. As far as American culture is concerned, I think it would be more than advisable for the present to refrain from the attempt to establish a sequence of strata intended to hold for the whole of North and South America; further, to refrain from assigning such generalized elements as the crutch paddle, the simple bow, the exogamic clan, or the manitou concept to specific culture strata. A painstaking determination of the relative ages and directions of distribution of the single culture elements and complexes themselves must eventually yield a solid basis for their grouping into strata and for the extent and direction of distribution of these strata.

¹ Father Schmidt's demonstration of the existence in South America of identically the same culture strata as Graebner had isolated in the South Seas is a welcome *reductio ad absurdum* of the latter's conception of culture diffusion.