

The international Committee for the Anthropology of Food and Food Habits

FOOD AND NUTRITION appear among the most fruitful fields offered to the thinking of both anthropologists and ethnologists. Although they appear as "total social phenomena", as Marcel Mauss would have stated, food and nutrition have seldom been the subject of an interdisciplinary approach in which specialists of behavioural and biological sciences would have worked together, as was envisaged some twenty-five years ago by the "Committee for the Study of Food Habits", set up by the National Academy of Sciences of the United States. Most ethnologists involved in fundamental or applied research have nevertheless gathered an abundant amount of information on food habits and nutrition. Unfortunately, in many cases these topics have only appeared to them as secondary items, marginal to their major scientific concern.

At a period when food and nutrition are defined as crucial problems of our time, it is unfortunate that this vast store of knowledge remains unpublished and, to a large extent, unused. It is also a pity that isolated attempts fall off for lack of constructive dialogues, or are hidden in obscure places and scattered through numerous publications with no easy access.

With this in mind, following one of the ideas launched in Paris in August 1960 at the VIth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences by Working Group No. 10 dealing with ritual food and drink, eleven specialists met at the VIIIth Congress held in Tokyo/Kyoto in September 1968 and formed the International Committee for the Anthropology of Food and Food Habits, which the Congress ratified by passing a resolution confirming its creation.

The International Committee for the Anthropology of Food and Food Habits hopes to provide a link between scholars belonging to the various disciplines represented in the CISAE — Anthropology, Ethnology, Archeology, Prehistory — who are interested in the study of food and nutrition as a cultural phenomenon. It proposed:

I. To set up a file on these scholars:

according to the geographical area and specific human groups in which they have carried out their scientific work,
according to the specific theme, or original viewpoint from which they have considered food and nutrition problems.

The file will allow all those who agree to participate to come into touch with one another, to exchange information, and eventually to set up working groups for topics of common interest.

II. To establish a bibliography attempting to complete those which already exist.

The majority of the entries deal with publications and articles whose titles clearly indicate their relevance to food and nutrition. Moreover, an attempt will be made to analyse ethnological monographs, many of which, while containing scattered information on food and food habits, have no indexing to clearly indicate that food as a subject was included.

III. To publish a periodical, since many scholars have neglected to process and publish the data they have gathered on food, food habits, and nutrition, thus leaving valuable resources unutilized. The Committee will establish a periodical review under the title *Foodways* which will publish bibliographies and articles dealing with food as a cultural phenomenon, and which can be used as a forum for the members of the group, as well as for others working in these areas of research.

IV. To set up a small documentation center where published articles can be located easily.

V. To suggest research topics for the consideration of the members of the Committee. The result will encourage the holding of symposia and the publishing of articles.

At the Tokyo/Kyoto meeting the following officers were elected: President, Margaret L. Arnott, Philadelphia; Secretary, Igor de Garine, Paris; and Editor and Coordinator of the Journal, Robert L. Freedman, Honolulu.

The foregoing briefly reports on the founding of the International Committee for the Anthropology of Food and Food Habits, and sets forth its purposes. Now it is time to show that it is not just another Committee, but that it has been active and is gradually moving forward.

SINCE ITS INCEPTION, symposia have been suggested, set up, and participated in by its members. A report was made on the foundation of the Committee in a panel discussion under the heading of "Culinary Anthropology" at the annual meeting of the American Folklore Society, held at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana, November 1968; and papers were read by members of the Committee at the American Folklore Society's annual meeting in Atlanta, Georgia in November 1969.

Symposia under the title of "The Anthropology of Food and Food Habits" have been set up at:

— 9th Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological Association, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, April 1969.

— 10th Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological Association, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, May 1970.

Plans have gone forward for establishing the journal. The editor has gathered material sufficient for the publication of two or more issues of *Foodways*; a publisher has been located; an international panel of regional editors is in the process of being formed; and a search is being made for funds to activate publication. In the meantime, space has been allotted to the Committee in the News-

letter of the International Committee for the Research on Agricultural Implements.

An ever-growing file of scholars interested in the study of food and nutrition as a cultural phenomenon is being kept. Shortly a preliminary questionnaire, to be completed and returned to the Secretary, will be circulated on a wider basis than has been hitherto possible.

The bibliography is steadily being added to. Presently it contains over two thousand titles. Application can be directed to the editor of the journal for assistance with bibliographical material in connection with research projects.

The documentation center is dependent upon the generosity of authors and Committee members in sending reprints. While there are several hundred reprints now located in Paris, they have not yet been catalogued since these matters take both time and money.

With this as a beginning, the Committee looks forward to widening its contacts with scholars in all parts of the world who are working on research pertaining to food production, processing, distribution, storage, preparation, consumption, and its cultural context. It welcomes correspondence with those interested in joining forces, or with those seeking information or wishing to offer suggestion. Moreover, it hopes for a productive future in regional, national, and international research and cooperation.