

PSYCHOLOGY

Hear Voice, Not Words

► ONE OF THE CAUSES of misunderstanding in the Near East may be the traditional tendency of the Egyptian to pay attention to subtleties of tone, pitch, and rhythm of speech rather than to the content of what is said to him.

This is revealed in a study of an Egyptian village in the Delta area carried out by Dr. John Boman Adams of the American University of Beirut in Lebanon. His study is reported in *American Anthropology* (April).

The Egyptian villager, Dr. Adams found, is trained by long custom to give and receive communications whose content is so stereotyped that he pays little attention to what is said. His interpretation of what is said depends largely upon his attitude toward the speaker.

If the speaker is a "friend," then what he says is generally accepted as friendly. Even if the words are not complimentary, the listener assumes that his friend "doesn't mean what he says" or is "only teasing."

If the speaker is an "enemy," then everything he says, however conciliatory, is suspect.

The Egyptian villager has few merely neutral relationships, Dr. Adams reports.

Since the same expressions are always uttered, interpretations of friendliness or enmity depend upon the sound of the voice rather than the words used. Certain melodic patterns mean sincerity to the Egyptian villager. Others mean irony, sarcasm or even hostility.

When communications are from or with persons of other cultures, they are likely to be misinterpreted entirely, Dr. Adams indicates. The speech melody and rhythm that mean sincerity in Egypt usually seem to an American "cross" or "belligerent."

On the other hand, the melody and rhythm that would express to an American "righteous indignation" are often interpreted by Egyptians as hostile or vengeful.

The misinterpretation is magnified by the fact that radios are few. The villager gains his knowledge of events from newspapers read aloud in the coffee-house by the literate villagers and so he is influenced by the voice, gestures and facial expressions of the reader.

One of the most powerful influences in Egypt, he found, is the authority exercised by the father of the family. A man cannot achieve full adult status until he is married, has sons, finds wives for them, and wields absolute control over them all. As long as he lives, all of these people depend upon him for their living and in return all must bow to his desires and opinions.

Population growth is breaking down this patriarchal system, however. The average family land holding has shrunk to less than three-quarters of an acre. Today, a son can usually expect to inherit a parcel of land

so small that it will not support his immediate family much less the extended one of former days.

Young men who cannot hope to become patriarchs themselves do not feel bound to abase themselves before authority. They attack authority and also traditional authoritarian values and techniques.

It would not be going too far, Dr. Adams concludes, to say that the revolution in Egypt was in many ways a rebellion of groups imbued with democratic ideals, begun and nourished among young men companions, against empty authoritarian institutions whose power to reward had failed.

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NUTRITION

Do You Believe in Food Fads, Fallacies?

► YOU may be superstitious about food without even knowing it.

According to Dr. Cora Miller, assistant professor of foods and nutrition at the University of California at Los Angeles, there are almost as many superstitions about food as about the weather.

"One is the belief that if you abstain from drinking water you will lose fat," she said. "Water, of course, has weight, but it certainly cannot form tissue of any kind, so it cannot possibly fatten!"

Dr. Miller, who is making a study of food fads and fallacies, said it is not uncommon to hear individuals seriously proclaim that aluminum cooking pots cause cancer, fish is "brain food," milk causes mucus and skim milk has had all its food value removed.

"None of these statements is true," she said. "Fish is an excellent food but it will not improve your acuity of insight or raise your I.Q. any more than it will improve your backstroke."

Proponents of the "brain food" theory have been known to base their belief on the nebulous argument that fish contains iodine which is needed for the thyroid gland which controls the workings of the brain, Dr. Miller said.

The milk-mucus myth probably got started because the physical character of the proteins in the milk may give them the sensation of a film similar to that experienced in phlegm formation during a cold.

However, in a few rare cases, individuals do produce more mucus when drinking milk, but this is in no way harmful.

"And skim milk," Dr. Miller concluded, "contains all the nutrients of the original milk except the fat and fat-soluble substances. The minerals and proteins as well as water-soluble vitamins remain in the skimmed fraction."

Dr. Miller, a member of the Los Angeles Nutrition Council, said the council's aims are to combat misinformation so that people will not "take false security in a single food as a health-insurer" or pay exorbitant prices for substances cheaply obtainable in regular food.

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ASTRONOMY

Naked-Eye Meteors Add Ten Tons to Earth Daily

► THE 200,000,000 NAKED-EYE METEORS smashing into the earth's atmosphere add at least ten tons daily to the earth's mass, two Canadian scientists have calculated.

They studied the brightness distribution of about 30,000 meteors, most of which were recorded by groups of watchers during meteor showers. They found a systematic difference in the numbers of meteors spotted having a particular brightness. This difference is higher than had previously been thought, indicating there are larger numbers of fainter meteors falling toward the earth than was once estimated.

A report on the studies of the scientists, Dr. Peter M. Millman, now with the National Research Council of Canada, and Miss Miriam S. Burland of the Dominion Observatory, Ottawa, appears in *Sky and Telescope* (March).

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PHOTOGRAPHIC EMULSION—H. S. Tasker of Ilford Ltd., London, places on exhibit a block of thick photographic emulsion. This 75-pound block is used for recording cosmic ray tracks, and the emulsion contained in it would produce more than 5,000 rolls of film for amateur use. There is no film base in the block, part of the International Photographic Exposition at the National Guard Armory, Washington.