

The Chinantec and Their Habitat. By BERNARD BEVAN. Vol. I, *The Chinantec*. Report on the Central and South Eastern Chinantec Region. (Mexico: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, Publication No. 24, 1938. Pp. 161.)

This publication presents information on one of the isolated and little-known people of Mexico. The ethnographic facts, obtained in the course of five journeys to the eastern slope of the Sierra Madre in northern Oaxaca, were apparently drawn from observation and conversations with natives; most of the settlements of the area were visited but none was studied intensively; there is therefore no case material. The chief topics represented are the habitat, the technology and manner of livelihood, the form of village government and religious institutions and practices. As a work of ethnological pioneering, the monograph deserves commendation. It furthermore includes tables showing the relative amounts of monolinguality in Mexican Indian groups, a catalog of manuscript and printed sources on the Chinantec, and translations of little-known early colonial documents on these people. The work is badly printed and the index is poor.

To the ethnographic data the author has related a surprising amount of historical material from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources. Moreover, the explorers found still in use by these Indians a number of manuscripts, some of which probably date from the early seventeenth century. They are written in Chinantec, and contain sermons and moral lessons. The great similarity of several versions of the same sermon, although these were written at different times, indicates that all go back to a single early missionary source. A certain sermon is still read and venerated in the Catholic liturgy as it was provided by missionaries three hundred years ago or more. Striking is the fact that these people, so isolated in their tropical jungle that they do not keep pack animals because horses and mules cannot cross the suspension bridges that provide entrance to their country, preserve faithfully Catholic usages taught them in the sixteenth century, while, so far as the author discovered, there is little of the pagan religion left except the nineteen "month" agricultural calendar. The Zapotec, neighbors of the Chinantec, a progressive and commercial group, keep more of the pagan culture. The most isolated group is not necessarily the least modified group. This report adds substance to our impression that once the great shock of conquest, conversion and depopulation by disease was over in Middle America, the tendency of the thereafter isolated Indian peoples was to continue with little change forms of living, especially in Catholic religious ritual, inculcated in early colonial times. In some very isolated regions, the destruction of paganism

was more thorough than in some less isolated regions. The reviewer has material from Yucatán and Quintana Roo consistent with this conclusion.

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Indian Arts in North America. By GEORGE C. VAILLANT. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939. Pp. 63 + 96 illustrations. \$5.00.)

Meeting the ever increasing demand for a popular and authentic work on the arts of the American Indian, George C. Vaillant presents an attractive volume of ninety-six full page plates selected mainly from photographs of tribal arts by Konrad Cramer, and illustrating objects of pre-Columbian and recent origin, from every corner of the North American field.

Only in recent years have the arts of our native Americans been accorded recognition for their unique value in aesthetics. Until the pioneer display of the Exposition of Indian Tribal Arts in New York, as absurdly recent as 1931, one had to look for such objects exhibited as a part of ethnologic materials in museums of natural history. Not until then did art museums venture to offer, sparingly, notable examples of indigenous arts of the Latin Americas—thus preparing our country at large for so startling an innovation as the inclusion of sculptures, ceramics, jewelry and other native crafts of the American Indian for serious consideration among the arts of old world races.

Contemplation of the varied sources and styles of art portrayed in his plates has led the author to prepare a concise and stimulating foreword in which he discusses under separate heads the nature, the background, and the origin of the various regional types in their development before and after white contacts. His well-considered treatise invites further study of such contrasting arts as the ancient shell carving of the Southeast, the wooden masks of British Columbia, and the ceramics, textiles and silver of the Southwest. Toward this end he has appended an excellent bibliography for each of the nine distinct culture areas. Preceding the plates, a pictorial map with an accompanying correlation of regional culture trends serves to orient the reader in his study of tribal contributions to the corpus of American Indian art. Unfortunately the accuracy of this feature is not maintained further on, where geographic details are scrambled in citing the provenience of certain specimens and styles from the Southwest.

Vaillant's appraisal of the essential qualities of each art shows a thoughtful approach coupled with the keenest appreciation of the freedom attained by the individual artist and manifest against the