

In the Eyes of the Ancestors: Belief and Behavior in a Maya Community. By JUNE NASH. New Haven, 1970. Yale University Press. Illustrations. Map. Tables. Figures. Notes. Appendices. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xxiv, 368. \$12.50.

The successful incorporation of ethnic groups, isolated by language, custom, and belief from the mainstreams of national life, is a problem which almost all countries face to some extent. In *The Eyes of the Ancestors*, June Helm gives us a sympathetic and revealing account concerning the traditional life of a Tzeltal Indian community in southern Mexico and the processes whereby it accommodates itself to the new opportunities found in contemporary Mexico, while maintaining its ethnic identity and esprit. In other words, incorporation follows the plural society model rather than that of the melting pot. Amatenango is a fairly typical Mesoamerican highland community, with a traditional economy based on agriculture and pottery making. In social structure, world view, and religion and ritual it generally resembles other Maya-speaking southern Mexican communities. A highly developed cosmology gives substance to ritual patterns and beliefs, which blend formal native government with informal patterns of social control. These patterns have resulted in relative cultural equilibrium since the sixteenth century *congregación* of isolated hamlets that formed the town. Equilibrium was maintained, and customary behavior validated, by the belief that everyone did as their forebears had always done, that they lived "in the eyes of the ancestors."

Cohesiveness was based on shared assumptions and traditions, on common rituals and avenues to prestige. It was also based on the fear of witchcraft, a response to envy, which inculcated the importance of not attempting material progress that would distinguish a person from his neighbors. As late as 1955 a man who dared put a tile roof on his house feared the consequences of witchcraft, and in 1966 the town's most successful entrepreneur was assassinated because he rose too far too fast. Even today new wealth resulting from individual and collective entrepreneurial enterprises is not seen as the consequence of new opportunities, but rather as subtraction from a given resource previously controlled by another. "The prospering leaders of these enterprises feel themselves to be particularly vulnerable to the envy of others and thus to the charge of witchcraft."

In spite of these brakes on progress, there is increasingly suc-

cessful adaptation to the opportunities of the outside world. An encouragement to this adaptation is the declining belief in the guardianship of the ancestors. Younger men, rather than the old and conservative *principales*, may now make political decisions concerning new relations with non-Indian groups. Simultaneously, cooperatives provide a device for at least partially countering the fear of witchcraft, for their members fully appreciate that they socialize the risk of making a profit. "The organization of the cooperatives is one means of diverting envy directed against individuals and permitting some increase in productive efforts," although higher consumptive standards are still frowned upon. The more progressive villagers also recognize the advantages accruing to them as members of an ethnically and linguistically separate community: special help from the Mexican government, the opportunity to play the "dumb Indian" when apprehended in contraband activities, and their very sense of identity and worth, as contrasted to deculturated Indians. "They see the community not only as a defensive screen against the outside world, but as a springboard for entry into the national economic and political life." Although full participation in national life is still far from the ability of most villagers, strategic devices which set the course have been decided upon, and it will be interesting to follow the community over the years to see if the right decisions have been made.

University of California,
Berkeley

GEORGE M. FOSTER

El inmigrante mexicano. La historia de su vida. By MANUEL GAMIO. México, 1969. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales. Tables. Pp. 271. Paper. \$60.00 (Mex.).

The late Manuel Gamio, dean of Mexican anthropologists, was trained at Columbia University and later organized Mexico's Bureau of Anthropology. He directed the famous study of the Valley of Teotihuacán and published such influential works as *Forjando patria* (1916). In 1926 and 1927 he was asked by the Social Science Research Council to carry out a study of Mexican immigration to the United States, which resulted in the publication of the classic *Mexican Immigration to the United States* (1930). A selection of immigrants' autobiographies, too lengthy for inclusion in this volume, were translated by Robert C. Jones and published as a separate