



Review

Reviewed Work(s): Christ Stopped at Eboli by Carlo LEVI

Review by: George M. Foster and A. Gschaedler

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Varios: J. del Cañizo Gómez, I. Escagües Javierre, F. Hernández Pacheco, E. Hernández Pacheco, M. Lorenzo Pardo, J. de la Llave Sierra, S. Alcobé, José Tudela, A. García Bellido, J. Martínez Santa Olalla.

No es posible comentar aquí en lo particular ninguno de los trabajos indicados. Una vez más nos unimos a este merecido homenaje rendido a quien es (junto con Aranzadi) el promotor, guía y Maestro de la Antropología científica española en la primera mitad del siglo XX. Nos honra proclamar que a las enseñanzas, sugerencias y apoyo moral de Hoyos Sainz, debemos nuestra iniciación en la ciencia antropológica que más tarde seguimos —por consejo de Hoyos Sainz—, junto al gran Maestro de la Antropología ginebrina, Eugène Pittard. Ojalá que nuestra ciencia cuente en el futuro con investigadores de la talla intelectual de estos dos eminentes hombres.

Juan Comas

LEVI, Carlo.—Christ Stopped at Eboli. New York, 1947. 268 pp.

The ill wind which carried Carlo Levi to the tiny, remote village of Gagliano, in the south Italian province of Lucania, has brought to ethnography one of the most delightful, penetrating studies of European folk culture. At the start of the Abyssinian War in 1935 Levi, a doctor, painter, and author, was banished to this remote hamlet because of his opposition to Fascism. During the next year he lived the life of the villagers, a way nearly as strange to him, a product of north Italian city life, as to a foreigner. As a medical man he quickly gained the confidence of the people; as a human being of deep character he developed understanding and sympathy for them; as artist and author he has been able, even through translation, to bring to the reader an extraordinarily clear picture of the meaning of life in this other world. The work is not ethnographic in the standard sense. It is simply an informal account of how the people live, what they think, how they celebrate festive occasions, how they pass on from one year to the next. It is one of those rare books —Elliot Paul's *Life and death of a Spanish Town* is a similar example which comes to mind— in which a sympathetic observer brings more life and meaning to printed pages than a dozen ethnographical craftsmen.

The tone of the culture is set by the title. "We're not Christians," they say.

"Christ stopped short of here, at Eboli." "Christian," in their way of speaking, means "human being," but the Gaglianos feel that they have never belonged to the wider Christian community of men. "Christ never came this far, nor did time, nor the individual soul, nor hope, nor the relation of cause to effect, nor reason or history... No one has come to this land except as an enemy, a conqueror, or a visitor devoid of understanding... To this shadowy land, that knows neither sin nor redemption from sin, where evil is not moral but is only the pain residing forever in earthly things, Christ did not come. Christ stopped at Eboli."

In its isolation Gagliano has drowsed on through millennia, preserving ancient ways of wresting a living from the soil, un verbalized concepts of social integration, attitudes toward sex, birth, marriage, and death. Fatalism pervades the culture to its roots, but it is a fatalism through which a glimmer of the potential vitality of the people shines, a vitality which has survived the worst that State and Nature have to offer, a vitality which might serve Italy well in a different cultural frame.

This account of Gagliano is particularly interesting to Latin American scholars because of recognizable patterns common to both regions. In part these patterns are generic, springing from the same substratum of general European culture, in one case preserved through centuries, in the other transplanted and grafted onto or mixed into another cultural tradition. And, in part, the common patterns spring from essential cultural unities apparent under similar environmental and developmental conditions. The significance of the *comparaggio*, or *compadrazgo*, is illustrative: a routine Christian rite from this common substratum which both in the New World and in Gagliano fulfills a function of social integration, apparently a like response to similar local cultural challenges. Generic similarities in witchcraft, superstitions, folk beliefs, curing, and annual fiestas are also apparent. But "the deepest feeling the peasants have in common, a bond made by nature rather than religion, this passive brotherliness, this sympathy in the original sense of the word, this fatalistic, comradely, age-old patience," seems to me to reflect a developmental cultural stage, a description as valid for many Indian groups as for Gagliano. The fundamental problems inherent in the Italian situation are not unlike those facing Latin American countries with large groups of unassimilated peoples. "We are faced with two very different civilizations, neither of which can absorb the other. Country and city, a pre-Christian civilization and one that is no longer Christian, stand face to face." Poverty, the result of centuries of misuse and neglect of land, is a second problem. The social use of resources is the third. On the last score Levi feels that big landed estates and their owners, while "not charitable institutions," are secondary as a scourge to the "middle-class village tyrants." It would be interesting to compare this analysis with the picture in Latin American villages.

Levi's solution to the problem is fuzzy. He speaks vaguely and metaphysically of a new concept of society with the individual as its basis, with the individual, not as a separate link, but as a meeting place of relationships of every kind. "The name of this way out is autonomy," decentralization and local responsibility. However desirable this may be, and the past history of Anglo-Saxon institutions indicate its validity, it is quite clear that this is not the direction in which society can go in the present century. **Christ Stopped at Eboli** should be read, not for its political and

social ideas, which actually are secondary and incidental, but as an artistic masterpiece, a work which has captured the spirit and feeling and essential truth of a subject in a way in which no mere art critic or ethnographic specialist can hope to do.

George M. Foster

McILWRAITH, T. F.—Ethnology, Anthropology and Archaeology. The Canadian Historical Review, XXX (2): 190-206. University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1949.

List of recent publications contributed once a year since 1925 by Professor T. F. McIlwraith. It includes articles as well as books with short descriptions of contents, for the years 1947 and 1948, and also some publications which did not reach the reviewer until recently.

A. Gschaedler

MESO AMERICAN NOTES. I, Department of Anthropology. Mexico City College. Winter, 1950. 54 pp.

Con este número se inicia la revista del Departamento de Antropología del Mexico City College, a la que deseamos larga y próspera vida. La edición consta de 350 ejemplares numerados que, como de costumbre, se volverán rápidamente una rareza bibliográfica. Está impresa por la "Casa de Tlaloc" (Santander 27, Atzacapotzalco) e incluirá en sus páginas trabajos de la facultad y alumnos del mencionado Colegio. No tiene fechas fijas de salida, pero se esperan por lo menos dos volúmenes anuales.

Este primer número consta de 54 páginas y contiene:

1.—Textos recogidos de Xaltocan, E. de México, por el profesor Miguel Barrios. Son muy interesantes, ya que se trata de textos de huehuetlalhtolli o pláticas de viajeros, notablemente reminiscentes de los discursos antiguos conservados por Sahagún que se hacían en ocasiones importantes. Los ahora presentados se refieren al matrimonio y se dan tanto en su texto nahuatl como en traducción castellana.

2.—Breve nota de D. Kimmel sobre las actividades del Club de Antropología del Mexico City College.

3.—Una nota de R. Barlow acerca de un curioso hueso inciso encontrado en Huexotla, Méx.

4.—Notas por F. A. Peterson referentes a objetos cerámicos encontrados en Coatlínchan, durante una excavación realizada ha poco. El informe final aún no está terminado, pero esperamos lo sea próximamente.

5.—Textos modernos de la "Llorona", recopilados por F. Horcasitas Pimentel, en los que se incluyen versiones del siglo XVI y contemporáneas, todas con ese típico argumento como base. Se anuncia la continuación de más historias sobre el mismo tema.

El número contiene por tanto asuntos etnográficos, lingüísticos, arqueológicos y