New Mexico Historical Review

Volume 35 | Number 1 Article 5

1-1-1960

Book Reviews

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Navaho Art and Culture. By George Hills. Colorado Springs: The Taylor Museum of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, 1959. Pp. 273, Illustrations.

After reading the laudatory remarks of Clyde Kluckhohn's introduction to this book, some readers may be disappointed in *Navaho Art and Culture.* As Mr. Kluckhohn points out, the problem undertaken by Dr. Mills is indeed a large and important one. Essential to understanding a culture is an appreciation of the relationship of its art and its core values ("those more pervasive postulates and categories that underlie all culturally distinctive perceptions and judgments"). Yet these two spheres are peculiarly elusive to measurement in objective and empirical terms. In attempting a comparative study and synthesis of these fields, Dr. Mills is to be applauded, and, given the difficulties implicit in pioneer work of such a nature, it may be too much to expect a definitive work on first trial.

The present volume has many things to recommend it. The bibliography is useful for one, such as this reviewer, who is not an anthropologist, and one is grateful for the handy summary of John Adair's *Navaho and Pueblo Silversmiths* or the historical background of Navaho weaving. Also the format and good quality of the illustrations make this a pleasant book to handle. But even here there are drawbacks. One has all sorts of unnecessary difficulties in relating text to illustrations. There is simply no way to tell which of the many drawings mentioned in the text are also illustrated other than looking up each reference. One discovers that as many drawings, seemingly important to the discussion, are omitted as are illustrated. And even more questionable: are these amateur drawings by Navahos, collected in the field by the author and here illustrated, of such relative importance as to justify the complete exclusion of illustrations of all other forms of Navaho art? The reader who desires specific

visual information about the other three fields of Navaho art considered in this volume must hunt out photographs and drawings elsewhere. And while the author makes very specific references to his drawings, he makes almost no mention of particular art objects in the other three fields of Navaho art on which he also bases his conclusions. Indeed, one almost has the feeling that Dr. Mills has studied Navaho silverwork, drypainting (sand painting) and weaving through the eyes of other people.

Perhaps this reviewer can best summarize his impression of Dr. Mills' book by remarking that it reminds him more of a first draft than a finished work. There is lots of good material and many loose ends. The literary style constitutes a real barrier to the reader's concentration upon content. When the going is smooth and one is relieved of the angularities of style, he usually discovers that it is another author who is paraphrased or quoted. (Usually I found that it was one of Gladys Reichard's studies which had caught my attention because of its content and clarity of expression.) Even more disturbing was Dr. Mills' use of inadequately explained concepts or terms such as "cue value" on page 157. It is understandable that a scholar involved with given concepts for months on end will develop certain key phrases and words whose connotations for him are quite clear and in the use of which he may be quite consistent. But if he is to avoid distracting uncertainty in the minds of his readers, he must explain such concepts. The specialist must be able to back off from his project and see it in the general contours of the nonspecialist, and he should try to anticipate the questions which will arise in the mind of his audience. Such organization, with an eye to the reader's legitimate demands, *Navaho Art and Culture* does not have.

On yet another count this book proves unsatisfactory. Too often the text becomes a mosaic of quotations or extracts from eminent authorities; chapter eight discusses the formal traits of primitive art in such a fashion. One even suspects a kind of parading of reputable references, especially when they have as little pertinence as the citations from Heinrich

Wolfflin on page 145 or from Frederick Antal on page 136. The reader does not doubt that author Mills has examined dutifully the fields of aesthetics and the psychology of art as well as all phases of Navaho life and culture. But Dr. Mills uses the material accumulated from his authorities in a mechanical way—as a kind of sieve through which he processes his field notes on drawing and his accumulated reading notes about Navaho sand painting, weaving and silver-work. My feeling is that Dr. Mills never got convincingly beyond his stage of processing. True, there are summary paragraphs which appear suddenly and endless summary charts, but our author never manages to carry his reader along with him in his processes of arriving at judgments or of integrating Navaho art and culture.

University of New Mexico BAINBRIDGE BUNTING

Six Months in the Gold Mines: From a Journal of Three Years' Residence. By E. Gould Buffum. Edited with an introduction by John W. Caughey. Pp. xxiii, 145. n.p.: The Ward Ritchie Press, 1959.

All accounts covering the transition years from Mexican to American rule in California are prized, for the literature encompassing this period, especially the eve of the Gold Rush, is relatively sparse. This item covering the years indicated in the title falls in this category, but unfortunately for those especially interested in California prior to the late summer of 1848, they will be somewhat disappointed by the Buffum account which, as the main title indicates, pertains mainly to a half-year period beginning in late October, 1848. However, Buffum's introduction sketches the author's movements in Lower and Upper California from the time of his arrival at La Paz, Mexico, in March, 1847, as a lieutenant in the 7th Regiment of New York State Volunteers, until he took off from San Francisco in search of fortune in the Diggings. Interspersed with this travelogue are some thumb-nail portrayals of California's physiography and her inhabitants.

And again, in the concluding pages of the book are some sketches of the old towns of California—Monterey, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, and San Diego—which gives glimpses of the gay and somber sides of former rancho days.

Buffum's narration of his gold seeking ventures, while once removed from his journal, has the special virtue of being the record of a Forty-eighter—and a highly readable one at that. Buffum wrote with a journalistic flair, conscious of the fact that he was producing a work for publication. Professor Caughey, who provided an excellent introduction, asks the obvious question: "How, it may be asked, does Buffum's 'memorial of adventure' compare with other writings of the approximate date and purpose?" He then gives his answer. As a description of the mines during the fall and winter of 1848-1849 the book "may have a peer, but it is not surpassed." Moreover, the editor contends that the book performed its function as a general commentary on a metamorphic California. The book is very attractively composed and handsomely, if not expensively, bound.

Indiana University OSCAR OSBURN WINTHER

Mexico: 1825-1828: The Journal and Correspondence of Edward Thornton Tayloe. Edited by C. Harvey Gardiner. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959. Pp. 212, Index. $5.00.

For contemporary accounts of men, events and conditions in Mexico, during the late 1820's, as seen through foreign eyes, we have heretofore been forced to rely almost exclusively upon the accounts of a quartet of British observers. In order of their importance, these are Minister Henry George Ward's *Mexico in 1827* (2 vols., London, 1828), businessman R. W. H. Hardy's *Travels in the Interior of Mexico in 1825, 1826, 1827, and 1828* (London, 1829), and mining commissioner George F. Lyons' *Journal of a Residence and Tour in the Republic of Mexico in the year 1826* (2 vols., London, 1828).

Now as a result of the ingenious editorial labors of Professor Gardiner we have the first published eye-witness account of this critical period by a United States citizen, namely that of Edward Thornton Tayloe (1803-1876), the private secretary of United States Minister Joel R. Poinsett. Observer Tayloe first set foot on Mexican soil on May 3, 1825, and departed on March 13, 1828. His prior and subsequent careers have been ably summarized by the editor in an epilogue and a prologue to the journal and correspondence. Dr. Gardiner has further eased the reader's burden by skillfully integrating into the running journal Tayloe's own marginal expository notes and his letters from Mexico written to a favorite brother.

The editor argues the superiority of Tayloe's observations as compared with the aforementioned Englishmen because Tayloe was "unhurried" and not "eternally rushed" like the others, because "Tayloe's observations are based on longer stay in that country than are those of any other travel account of the period" and because "Tayloe, driven by his curiosity rather than a job to be done, had an opportunity to range more broadly over the total pattern of Mexican life" (p. 15).

In the opinion of this reviewer, the editor has gone overboard in his attempts to build up an essentially fourth-rate observer. For despite Tayloe's *gentil* family origins (Virginia planter aristocracy) and fine schooling (Harvard—class of 1823), his reporting abounds with immaturity, naivete, and bias. After all, he was but a callow youth of twenty-two, unable to speak Spanish and ignorant of Mexican history, when his affiuent father tried to launch him in a diplomatic career by paying his salary as Poinsett's private secretary. His sympathy for individual Mexicans is overshadowed by his general hostility toward what he describes as the nation's immoral men, its lazy women, its decadent church, and its corrupt politicians. Of Lucás Alemán, he writes, "as a statesmen . . . he has . . . many superiors—I admire neither his style, nor sentiments nor reasoning" (p. 72). The only real objective of Miguel Ramos Arizpe and his party, he declares, is "self-

aggrandizement." He contrasts the pure and noble York Masons *(yorkinos)* in politics with the predatory and unpatriotic Scotch Masons *(escoceses)*. Such observations reveal far more about the observer himself than about the political history of Mexico. In fact, disappointingly little can be learned about Mexican politics from this account. As much is said about the United States scene, but here again it is mainly a partisan defense of the high-minded Minister Poinsett, Secretary of State Henry Clay, and President John Quincy Adams in the face of what Tayloe depicts as unwarranted attacks by unpricipled Jacksonian critics. He holds the niggardly United States Congress largely responsible for his repeated failures to obtain an official diplomatic appointment.

If there is anything in which the work abounds, it is trivia —what time Tayloe arose, what he ate for breakfast, the structure of the carriages, the condition of the roads, the distance between villages, the unsanitary inns, the uncomfortable beds, the rainfall, the raincoats, the mountains, the snow on the mountains, the trees, etc. Until something better comes along, this reviewer, at least, intends to stick with the British observers for foreign insight into Mexican history and politics in the late 1820's.

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