

of reference. For example, the author does a workmanlike job describing the pledging system, but spends little time discussing the causes for indebtedness or the effect of indebtedness on the kinship group to which a man belongs—two aspects which seem to me to be of central importance for the understanding of her problems. Elsewhere, she talks about the sale of land without reference to the land tenure system. Nevertheless, this report raises a number of questions that should be of interest to anthropologists and others concerned with economics, culture change, and technical assistance.

The Moral Basis of a Backward Society. EDWARD C. BANFIELD. With the assistance of LAURA FASANO BANFIELD. (Research Center in Economic Development and Cultural Change, the University of Chicago.) Glencoe: The Free Press, 1958. 204 pp., appendices, map. \$4.00.

Reviewed by THOMAS MCCORKLE, *University of Iowa*

Based on recent field work in "Montegrano", a south Italian village, *Moral Basis* proposes an hypothesis to account for the "inability" of villagers to "... act together for their common good or, indeed, for any end transcending the immediate, material interest of the nuclear family."

The book presents brief sketches of village economics, social class, and family life, but devotes most space to developing and discussing a concept called "amoral familism" defined (p. 85) as a state of affairs where each person behaves as though he were following this rule: "Maximize the material, short run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that all others will do likewise."

The existence of "amoral familism" is documented partly through field observations and partly by means of interpretations of the responses of 31 individuals to a single thematic apperception test picture. Arid Italy is compared to arid Utah, but without adequate treatment of the histories of the two regions, and no serious consideration is given the possibility that "amoral familism" may be part of a configuration that constitutes a successful adaptation to a political climate that discourages formal associations of all varieties.

Banfield has pointed out a real problem; no one will doubt that lack of capacity (or opportunity) to organize for common purposes constitutes a serious disability in a sedentary group forced to have relations with a powerful government. Of the remedial measures suggested by the author for southern Italy, one, "Changing the ethos ... perhaps by introducing Protestant missionaries" (p. 171), may be based on several misconceptions; however it is not seriously advocated by the author, and requires no discussion in this journal. A second possible remedy, "... devolution of as many governmental functions as possible ... to local bodies which demonstrate capacity for self-government" (p. 172), appears more plausible. Unfortunately, we are told nothing of the structures of local manifestations of the nearly (if not quite) universal human urge to organize; hence it might be necessary to perform additional field work in order to learn whether or not the Montegratesi could be expected to carry on successful group festive, ceremonial, public works, or other functions.

Those interested in southern Italy will wish to read Banfield's book. Some, like the reviewer, will feel that it would have been a better book if (1) its author had read and referred to the excellent works of Giuseppe Pitré (*Biblioteca della Tradizioni Popolari Siciliane*, 25 vols., various publishers, including Carlo Clausen, Torino-Palermo, 1871-1913), Ignazio Silone (*Fontamara*, New York, H. Smith and R. Haas, 1934), Phyllis Williams (*South Italian Folkways in Europe and America*, New Haven, Yale University

Press, 1938); or (2) given us something more like Laurence Wylie's recent account of French life (*Village in the Vaucluse*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1957); or (3) found and described structure and leader-follower patterns in family or informal (such as hunting and cafe) groups; or all three.

We still need an up-to-date ethnographic account of a south Italian village, both as a contribution to knowledge and as a basis for presenting information that would enable planners to operate intelligently in the region.

Poland: Its People, its Society, its Culture. CLIFFORD R. BARNETT with others. (Survey of World Cultures.) New Haven: HRAF Press, 1958. 471 pp., 30 tables. \$7.50.

Reviewed by KONSTANTIN SYMMONS, *Wilkes College*

This new volume in the HRAF series is focused on the present situation in Poland rather than on its history and culture. Of the 22 chapters, 13 are devoted to a detailed discussion of the political evolution of Poland under its Communist regime, its economic development and problems, and the organization of public welfare and education. Five chapters providing the sociocultural background deal with the family, social classes, art and learning, values and attitudes, and culture and society in general. There are in addition four introductory chapters containing a summary of the country's history, and a discussion of its geography, population, ethnic groups, languages, and religions.

The authors faced a difficult problem of presenting in one volume an analysis of a Communist state existing in a non-Communist country, and of interpreting the last 20 tragic years in the nation's experience against the background of almost a millennium of its political and cultural history.

They were eminently successful in accomplishing their first objective. Their account of what has happened to Poland since it became a Soviet satellite is clear, accurate and informative, if somewhat repetitious. They manage to explain very well how "the problem of preventing Poland from becoming a second Hungary" led to an unnatural and uneasy compromise between the ideological enemies: the people of Poland and their Communist rulers.

The authors are much less successful in their efforts to interpret the more significant trends in Polish history and to provide an analysis of Polish culture. Their treatment of history is too superficial and too fragmented to avoid occasional oversimplification and some distortions, especially with respect to the period from 1919 to 1939—to which they pay much less attention than it actually deserves. Their analysis of Polish culture, although containing some interesting observations, strikes one as rather impressionistic and much too bold in some of its generalizations.

In spite of these shortcomings, the book should be of great service to those interested in the contemporary Poland. Numerous statistical tables and bibliographies of works on Poland in English increase its value.

Islam—The Straight Path: Islam Interpreted by Muslims. KENNETH W. MORGAN (Ed.). New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1958. x, 453 pp., glossary. \$6.00.

Reviewed by G. E. VON GRUNEBaum, *University of California, Los Angeles*

The significance of this book is less in the substantive information it provides than in the evidence it furnishes of the view prominent Muslims of different national and sectarian backgrounds are holding of their faith, their way of life, and their society.