BOOK REVIEWS

SANDRA OTT, ***The Circle of Mountains: A Basque Shepherding Community,*** Oxford: Clarendon Press 1981. xv, 220 pp., Bibliography, Index, Ills. £17.50.

The author has used for the title of this book a phrase with which the villagers of her community describe the Pyrenean valley in which they live. In this 'circle of mountains' lies the shepherding commune of Sainte-Engrâce, in the Souletine province of the French Basque country; and the circle, in the villagers' way of thinking, not only defines their locality, but is a principle of fundamental importance which orders several of their systems of social relationships. In taking the circle as her theme the author indicates that the organisation of the book is around one of the people's own concepts and that rather than giving a full ethnographic account of the culture, she has chosen to concentrate on certain selected relationships to which this ordering principle, and cognate conceptions, are basic.

This close analytic focus on a cluster of selected themes thus involves treating only tangentially many of the institutions which are normally given prominence in a full ethnography, but innovations of this kind are to be welcomed when, as in this book, the results are of great interest. The chief institutions covered by the author, as being ordered by the principle of the circle (*üngürü*) and its related conception of serial replacement (*aldikatzia*), are relationships between neighbours and those between members of shepherding and cheese-making syndicates; but in addition there are correspondences between practices in the shepherding syndicate and in the household which are interestingly explored, and which involve the allocation of male and female roles among the shepherds and their participation in a process of conception through the 'cheese' analogy which goes back to Aristotle.

In a shepherding community the concentration on shepherding syndicates is obviously self-justifying, and while the concentration on neighbour relationships at the expense of kinship may strike some as odd, it is clear that neighbour obligations play an unusually important part in the Basque country. Families are known by the names of their houses, and the spatial distribution of the houses prescribes a fixed order of relationships between each individual house and three of its neighbours. Thus each house in Sainte-Engrâce has three 'first neighbours', the house which is conceptually to the right being the first and most important of these, the other two being conceptually to the left. The relationships which exist between each house and any one of its neighbours are governed by accepted norms, and these create, according to each situation, a series of symmetric and asymmetric

relationships which go right round the community. Each house will call on any or all of its three 'first neighbours' for assistance in the maize harvest, pig killing, fern cutting and hay making, as well as in a variety of smaller tasks. However, since the third 'first neighbour' of any one house must respond to 'first neighbour' claims from that house, while not itself having any 'first neighbour' claims on it, the relationship is in this sense asymmetric; and in particular the first 'first neighbour' relationship is asymmetric in respect of two interesting customs, that of giving blessed bread, now obsolete, and that of first 'first neighbour' mortuary obligations, which is still observed. The author deals with these customs in some detail, and I return to them later.

Using this selective focus Dr. Ott has documented a phenomenon of particular interest in the European context, where such asymmetric orderings of obligations are increasingly coming to light. The existence of such patterns in Europe was demonstrated in 1968 by Hammel, and Dr. Ott has added a meticulous and well-observed study which interestingly develops this tradition. Perhaps most important of all, though, she has shown that the cyclic turn-taking systems which have been observed in Iberia and elsewhere can have a symbolic dimension concerned with themes of life and death, and though she is suitably cautious about the narrow range of the symbolic connections which are as yet apparent in the Basque case, her evidence provides a stimulus towards the fresh examination of these systems in Europe. It should however also be said that while these re-examinations may well prove fruitful, they do not entirely cover the question, for the relationship between cyclic symbolism and certain forms of co-operation is not, in my view, constant, and either one of these features is able to occur, according to the cultural context, without the other. Thus it would be good to see also further explorations by Dr. Ott of the Basque symbolism as a theme in itself, for it seems possible that there may be further connections to be brought out here.

The book has, then, explored a specific theme to good effect and a close and somewhat exclusive concentration on the subject has been a necessary feature of the analysis. There are, however, difficulties as well as advantages in this approach, and if I have a reservation about the author's limitation of focus, it is that in her concern with the formal ordering principles of the society she has ignored to quite a large extent the complexities and realities of day-to-day interaction between the people. Thus while we are given a sharp picture of the basic values of the community, we are not shown much of the way in which they actually work in practice. It seems fair to ask, for instance, such a question as whether there is any difference between the quality of help given by a third 'first neighbour' (who cannot claim back any services) and a second 'first neighbour' (who can), and to require in general more detailed evidence for the assertion that 'the expectations and obligations contained within the first neighbour relationship ... are not concerned with

issues from which conflict is likely to arise'.

This problem of conflict is in fact particularly relevant to the author's theme if she wishes to claim, as she does in the conclusion, not only that co-operation is highly valued by the people of Sainte-Engrâce, but also that it is realised in the institutions studied. She does indeed present convincing evidence for such a value playing a prominent role in the society, but the question of the degree to which it is actually realised in everyday practice is not clear in certain crucial respects. Perhaps most strikingly the fact that kinship relations are not studied in detail means that the interplay between kinship and first neighbour obligations is hardly investigated at all, while what is said about conflict in general is rather meagre and difficult to interpret. And while this might in theory be because there is no conflict to comment upon, in fact several incidental references indicate notable instances of tension where co-operative ideals have been infringed. Thus, in the context of the author's claims about co-operation, I would have welcomed a more organised account of quarrels and the management of conflict, even though I recognise that this would have involved her in a wider view of the cross-cutting relationships of the community.

In general, though, the most detailed comments which I have to make open up an area less of criticism than of debate, for these concern a proposition about which there is something to be said on both sides - the author's claim that she has discovered 'the first reported European example of two unilateral systems of exchange defined by asymmetry and moving in opposite directions'.

That she has found one such system, chiefly embodied in the circulation of blessed bread right-handed (or clock-wise) through the community, as each household in turn provided the bread and took it to the first 'first neighbour' on the right, is amply documented. The second and opposite system, she argues, is the fulfilment, by the first 'first neighbour', of mortuary obligations to the bread-giving household, which the people say is in return for the first 'first neighbour' having received the blessed bread. The fulfilment of these mortuary obligations may thus be taken to constitute, according to Dr. Ott, a left-handed circulation of services, although she states quite clearly and honestly that this is something which the people 'consistently and adamantly deny', saying that 'only evil things go to the left'. Despite this denial, however, she continues to affirm the existence of this left-handed circle 'considered abstractly'.

There is indeed a sense in which, considered according to a Western exchange model, it could be supposed that the supply of blessed bread is traded for the distinctive element of first 'first neighbour' mortuary services, causing two opposing cycles of 'goods' to be set up. However, this distinctive element is limited primarily to ritual actions, for all 'first neighbours' offer practical services at death on a symmetrical basis of exchange; and since the fundamental meaning of these first 'first neighbour' ritual services is symbolic rather than economic, it

is arguable how far it is fruitful to treat them merely as part of a system of exchange - this being particularly so if their being treated in this way leads to a direct clash between the categories being used by the people and those being used by the anthropologist. There is thus an important principle of interpretation involved here, which concerns the status of the people's own concepts.

There are, of course, cases in which anthropologists can point out things which the people do not know that, or at any rate do not explicitly state that, they are doing. But in these cases the anthropologist's conception is usually consistent with lower-order native concepts, and where it is not, a special and convincing type of evidence is required to support the anthropologist's against the people's version. However, in this case we are dealing with the definition of symbolic values, and it is hard to see how evidence of a symbolic value can be obtained which is contrary to the people's own definitions, in those cases where these popular definitions occur at the same level of generality. Dr. Ott argues that her left-handed circle is not wholly contrary to the people's definitions, since there is such a thing as 'backwards rotation' (*arra-üngürü*) in the wheat harvest, i.e. reversing the order of turns. But in fact everybody also agrees that *arra-üngürü* does not go 'to the left' - that is to say it is not considered to be a symbolic movement to the left, but only a practical arrangement.

Thus it seems to me that the people's own version - that all ritually enacted movements should go to the right - should in this case be the basis of analysis; and in considering this approach it is not impossible to find an alternative account which Dr. Ott's evidence does not rule out. For instance, an alternative interpretation which fits, I think, with the facts presented, is that the neighbour on the right, in fulfilling her ritual obligations at death in return for the blessed bread she has received, carries out a corresponding act at death by receiving the soul. In both life and death, then, the first 'first neighbour' would act as the medium by which life is passed on, in the one case the bread of life which is passed round the community, and in the other case the soul which is helped on its way to God. And in this context there is a suggestive incident quoted by Douglass in ***Death in Murelaga***, where, because of deep snow, a body was not escorted from the house by (in this case) the priest, and the soul, in consequence, was said to remain 'walking about' the area of its former dwelling. It thus appears possible that the first 'first neighbour' in Sainte-Engrâce could be escorting and reaffirming a right-handed onward movement of the soul, even while she has to go physically to the house on her left to do so, and even while this is considered to be entailed by her having received the blessed bread. This at any rate is a sketch of an alternative interpretation (and there may be others) which makes it unnecessary to posit a second left-handed principle of symbolic transmission which is actively denied by the people themselves.

I have discussed this point as some length because I believe it to be important not only for itself but also for the principles of interpretation which it raises. But this is in itself a tribute to the interest of the issues which are raised here, and although in this instance I would argue in favour of looking for a different interpretation from that put forward in the book, it must be said that it has only been possible to consider the matter in this way because of the author's detailed and honest exposition of the evidence.

All in all this is a book centred on a fascinating topic which, notwithstanding certain limitations in its focus and a somewhat abstract quality in the analysis, is full of good material, sharply observed, clearly organised and pleasantly written. Dr. Ott shows in general a capacity for fresh description and simple presentation of a considerable amount of detail which makes the book both easy to refer to and stimulating to read; and her description of the symbolic pattern of co-operation found in the Basque country undoubtedly provides an important document in the development of this European theme.

JULIET DU BOULAY

J.L. DURAND-DROUHIN, L.M. SZWENGRUB and I. MIHAILESCU (eds.), *Rural Community Studies in Europe: Trends, Selected and Annotated Bibliographies, Analyses, Volume 1* [European Coordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences, Vol.1]. Oxford: Pergamon Press 1981. xi, 332 pp., Maps, Tables. £30.00.

It is a current myth that social anthropologists have devoted their attention to the complex societies of 'the West' only recently. In fact, throughout this century anthropologists and other social scientists have conducted ethnographic and socio-economic investigations in both urban and rural communities. Certainly European communities - especially rural villages - have occupied various sorts of social investigators for over one hundred years. Rev. J.C. Atkinson's *Forty Years in a Moorland Parish*, published in the 1840s, is but one example of the thoroughness of some Victorian amateur ethnographers. Until recently, however, the intellectual history of rural community studies in Western and Eastern Europe has remained largely unexplored. *Rural Community Studies in Europe* brings together, for the first time, the elements of such a history.

This work is the first fruit of a project which was commissioned in 1970 by the European Coordination Centre for Research and Documentation in the Social Sciences. The project aimed at investigating 'the future of rural communities in industrialised societies'. However, as Galeski and Mendras explain in their 'Foreword':

> it seemed wise, in the first stage of the project, to present what is known about village societies of the different regions of Europe and the importance they have had and continue to have in the economic and social life of the nations of today.

Appropriately, therefore, this book presents a thorough and detailed analysis of 'the state of the art' of rural community studies. It is a compendium of many aspects of research in rural sociology and ethnography which can be consulted with profit by specialists in these fields. Furthermore, its extensive bibliographies and summaries will provide reference resources for years to come. This is not a book with any popular appeal. It is intended as a tool of trade.

The book is described as 'Volume 1', and the editors suggest that more material awaits publication. This volume contains reports on seven countries - Great Britain, Ireland, Poland, Turkey, Rumania, France and Spain. Each report follows

a standard quadripartite pattern. First, there is a historical review of the main trends and styles in the rural literature of the country considered, from the 1920s till the present. Various research approaches are distinguished, and paradigm changes are related to social, political and intellectual developments (especially in Eastern Europe since 1945). Second, chronologically-arranged annotated bibliographies list 'the most representative works in the field'. Third, between five and seven 'outstanding studies' are summarised in detail, according to eleven themes, in an attempt to facilitate comparisons. Fourth, a location map indicates where studies have been made.

All the chapters follow this agreed structure, but their quality varies greatly. As is so often the case with works of this sort, no fully adequate summary or characterisation is possible for the eight contributions, including the 'Introduction'. Ultimately Durand-Drouhin's 'Introduction' is helpful, despite its plethora of glaring proof-reading errors. It distinguishes the two broad social and historical contexts in which rural community studies were conducted during the twentieth century. Before the first world war these studies examined the village social system, as a microcosm of the wider society. In all European countries, except Great Britain, agriculture represented a fundamental activity, and the peasantry still formed a predominant part of society. The village was seen, therefore, as the reduced model of the national community. After the second world war, studies concentrated more upon the social, psychological and economic consequences of technical innovations in the countryside, and on the social, cultural, and political implications of the strengthening relationships between town and countryside.

Durand-Drouhin also poses questions of the first importance about the future of rural communities in industrial settings. He asks what effect immigrants of urban origin will have on local rural culture. He notes how the transformation of agricultural work itself coincides with this demographic trend, as farm work becomes similar to urban-industrial work. Artisan agriculturists - 'the gardeners of nature' - are fast becoming mechanical technicians who are conversant with the economic mechanisms of the Common Market. Another question concerns the impact of the mass media, especially television, on local communities. Television, he claims, has broken local value systems and compelled behaviours. It has introduced a diversity of information which has given local life a national and international dimension. These and other questions raise interesting problems for future research. Each of the reports indicates how these problems have been approached in specific contries.

Some final comments must be made about the editing and production of this volume. The present reviewer tired of noting repetitions, punctuation errors, spelling mistakes and apparently missing lines. Sadly, a helpful book has been marred by sloppy proofreading. One hopes the forthcoming volumes will be edited with greater attention to style. As far as production is con-

concerned, this book is well-bound but the type-face which is too small and bunched up left much to be desired and made this a difficult book to read. Considering that this book retails for £30, the reader could expect a better product than presently he is being offered.

SCOTT K. PHILLIPS

GEORGES DUMÉZIL, *Camillus; A Study of Indo-European Religion as Roman History* (edited by Udo Strutynski; translations by Annette Aronowicz and Josette Bryson), Berkeley etc.: University of California Press 1980. xii, 269 pp. £10.20.

Place the second part of *Mythe et Épopée* vol. III together with two appendices from that volume; add two more appendices extracted from *Fêtes Romaines d'Été et d'Automne*; allow four different translators to work this material into English; sandwich this between a long introduction and a bibliographical note, both by Udo Strutynski; index the whole *mélange* and there you have *Camillus*. The result is somewhat offputting at first, especially when one considers the way in which Dumézil's *oeuvre* is being fragmentarily transposed into English. Why hasn't the whole of *Mythe et Épopée* been systematically translated? Or how about *Les Dieux Souverains des Indo-Européens*, or even *Loki?*

The editor informs us that Professor Dumézil himself has had a hand in the selection. It seems that he has exercised this option calculatingly. *Camillus* is practically a new book, one in which a dossier of material dealing with the early Roman dictator and general Camillus is placed before the public. More importantly, the book promulgates a certain type of analysis, one slightly divergent from what we have come to expect from the author. I shall return to the significance of this publishing gambit.

It has been Dumézil's life project to demonstrate the extent to which the linguistically related Indo-European (IE) peoples share a common ideology. In his own words, '...la communauté de langue chez les Indo-Européens impliquait une mesure substantielle d'idéologie commune à laquelle il doit être possible d'accéder par un variété adéquate de méthode comparative' (cited in P. Smith and D. Sperber, 'Mythologiques de Georges Dumézil's *Annales*, Vol. XXVI (1971), p. 560). Much hangs on Dumézil's understanding and use of the term 'ideology'. Writing in 1968 he attempted to clarify the matter:

> I recognized toward 1950 that the 'tripartite ideology' was not necessarily accompanied by a *real* tripartite division of

> that society according to the Indian mode; on the contrary, I recognized that wherever one can establish its presence, the tripartite ideology is nothing (or is no longer, or perhaps never was) but an ideal and at the same time a method of analysis [*moyen d'analyser*], a method of interpreting the forces which assure the course of the world and the lives of men.

This statement amended Dumézil's earlier position which was coloured by his studies of Indian and Persian societies where the hierarchical division of the society according to the three functions of sovereignty (priests), force (warriors) and fecundity (peasants) was real. The western IE branches also evinced tripartition but it was not as firmly grounded in the social structure. In Scandinavia and in Rome for example, the evidence was to be found in the distinct domain of the gods. Odin and Jupiter fulfilled the function of sovereignty, Thor and Mars, force and Freyr and Quirinus represented fecundity.

Dumezil's 1968 reformulation allowed him to slip out of the Durkheimian bind of presuming that social tripartition was anterior to instances of tripartition in religion, literature, geography and other spheres. Although there may have been some feedback and reinforcing which occurred between social structure and other spheres, all cases of tripartition were potentially the direct projections of this ideology onto reality.

Now Dumézil's revised position is not without its dilemmas and repercussions. Whereas in the old scheme tripartite classification was practically a conscious, historical remembrance of the days of IE unity, I doubt if Dumézil would now argue that tripartition was necessarily a conscious mode of classifying. The idealism present in this stance, particularly the way in which a common ideology is suggested by linguistic filiation, remind one of Max Müller's work (especially as seen by M. Crick in his *Explorations in Language and Meaning*, London 1976, pp.19ff.). Not that this is bad; it is just ironic that 'the new comparative mythology' should so resemble the decidedly 'old' comparative mythology.

The substance of *Camillus* is an exploration of the ways in which IE religion (we could say 'ideas') was transformed into Roman history. The central and most convincing example revolves around what Dumézil reconstructs from Ossetic and Indic evidence to be a proto-IE conception (myth) of sunrise. According to this myth the animate forces Light and Darkness were thought to oppose each other constantly. Every morning Dawn expelled the evil Darkness from the sky. Yet night was divided into two (in fact we still divide the night into two - our day technically begins at midnight). The second period of darkness, that proceding sunrise, was thought to be the benevolent sister of Dawn. This Darkness was also the mother of the Sun, and the period just before sunrise was one of gestation during which the Sun matured in her womb. At sunrise the Sun was born and passed into the

care of his aunt, Dawn.

Dumézil shows this myth to be homologous with a certain episode in the career of the general Camillus. During a campaign, he and the Roman army were laying siege to the city of Falerii. A traitorous Faliscan schoolmaster delivered his children to the Roman camp to be used as hostages. Camillus, however, was disgusted by such treachery and had the schoolmaster bound and turned over to the children to be driven back to the city. This act of compassion was appreciated and the Romans and Faliscans became allies. The children saved by Camillus named him father and god.

Additionally, Dumézil observes that a particular ritual of the Roman dawn goddess, Mater Matuta, reflected this same IE structure. In this rite, celebrated on June 11th shortly before the summer solstice, Roman women in their first marriage (*univirae*) took a servant-maid into the secret part of the temple of Matuta and then drove her out again with blows (entrance to the temple was normally prohibited to any slave). The women also embraced their sisters' children in place of their own.

In each case two elements are opposed to each other: light and darkness; Roman camp and Falerii; and the temple of Mater Matuta and slaves. They are forcibly kept separate by the expulsion of any trespasser. But just as the young Sun is cared for by his mother's sister, so Camillus protects the children of others and the Roman ladies do the same.

Camillus was both directly and implicitly linked to Mater Matuta. There are numerous indications that Camillus was under her protection. On being appointed dictator his first act was to promise to devote a temple to the goddess. As long as he attacked at daybreak he and his army were invincible. In one of these battles he is described as being 'clothed in brilliant armor' (*ōplismenos lampros*, Plutarch), language which recalls the shining of the sun. In another place, after a victory, Camillus rode into Rome on a chariot drawn by four white horses. Livy was explicit as to what this act meant: 'They [the populace] were troubled at the thought that in respect to his steeds the dictator was made equal to Jupiter and the sun-god....' A close study of Camillus yields practically as much information on the theology of Mater Matuta as it does about Roman history.

This enquiry into the character of Camillus effectively demonstrates that early Roman history was in part 'constructed' by the annalists. This constructing was informed by inherited IE conceptions. Dumézil does not altogether deny that a Camillus may have lived between 445-365 B.C. nor that many of the acts ascribed to him are separately verifiable through archaeology (i.e. the conquest of Vei). However, a historian such as Livy writing centuries afterwards would have had to depend largely on either folk tradition or his own imagination. Livy says as much himself:

> These events are obscure, not only because of their antiquity, which makes them escape attention because of the great distance from which they are viewed,

> but also because of the meager use of writing, which is still the only means of saving the past from oblivion. But beyond that, a great part of what was preserved in pontificial books, in the state archives, or in individual memoirs perished in the fire which consumed the city. (cited pp.45-6)

Demézil's study of Camillus, if it can be summed up, debunks the idea of history as being only a collection of 'facts'. This is of course annoying to scholars who are interested in 'the complex stratifications of Latin chronicles'. Dumézil rests his case with the words, 'everything written by an established historian partakes in the honors, privileges and franchises of history'.

Camillus interestingly enough does not include that part of *Mythe et Épopée* vol. III entitled 'La geste de Camille' in which Camillus is linked with the three functions. In fact Dumézil's text nowhere includes any reference to tripartition or tripartite ideology. It would seem that his English-speaking audience is being directed back to the roots of his project - an examination of the ways in which common IE ideology unfolds itself in the various inheriting traditions. To my mind - and I don't know if Dumézil would share this - tripartition is only *one example* of the common IE ideology. It is a very rich sub-set or component of that ideology. As *Camillus* shows, there are other isolated myths, traditions and principles which have nothing to do with tripartition and yet which influence the perception of life and of the world in IE cultures. The further study of IE ideology as reducible *solely* to tripartition is an unnecessary handicap or restriction both to our minds and to the richness of IE thought. I would like to think that *Camillus* both provides an example and encourages further exploration of these 'other' principles.

CHARLES STEWART

ELIZABETH EDWARDS and LYNNE WILLIAMSON, ***World on a Glass Plate: Early Anthropological Photographs from the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford,*** Oxford: Pitt Rivers Museum 1981. v, 39 Plates, Bibliography, Map. £2.25.

This booklet contains a selection of 43 photographs from the collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. The collection was started in the last century by Henry Balfour, the Museum's first Curator, and is still growing. For example, two of the photographs we see here were donated to the Museum in 1975 though they were taken *circa* 1895.

The photographs are from America, Europe, Asia, Oceania and Australia (a map locates the people concerned), each with details of the people and aspects of their culture and environment relevant to what is portrayed. It is impressive to see what the compilers can compress into two or three short paragraphs.

There is a Foreword introducing the collection, the techniques of 'wet plate' and 'dry plate' photography, and some of the possibilities and problems facing the anthropologist trying to make use of early photographs. Though there are obviously immense difficulties with regard to making inferences about a people's system of social relationships and beliefs from a photographic record, even with intensive field experience in the area, such records should be preserved just in case they can be of use, even if only illustratively. And we should be grateful to the Pitt Rivers Museum for maintaining their collection and allowing us this glimpse of some of it.

Apart from their possible anthropological use these photographs, and presumably others in the collection, are worth preserving as photographs, both with regard to an appreciation of the history of photography and its practicians, and to be enjoyed in themselves. To pick a favourite, Plate 30 of the gallery of a Kayan long house in Baram River, Sarawak in 1895, though not as clear as one might hope for, is a fascinating mix of light and shade and distance, with features catching one's eye right down the gallery.

Can we now hope for an exhibition, perhaps travelling, of the Pitt Rivers Museum collection of early anthropological photographs and the publication of more of them?

JEREMY COOTE.

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