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C. OTHER NOTES

Book Reviews

The Castle of Bergen and the Bishop's Palace at Kirkwall. By W. Douglas Simpson, O.B.E. Aberdeen University Studies No. 142. Published for the University by Oliver and Boyd. 1961. 13s. 6d.

On 20th April 1944 a German ammunition ship anchored near Bergen castle blew up, severely damaging the Great Hall of King Haakon Haakonsson and the Rosenkranz Tower, both of which stand on the quayside. Restoration was completed last year and Dr. Simpson's latest study has therefore a certain topical interest since more than half the text is devoted to an analysis of these two buildings, including hitherto unrecorded features revealed by the explosion. In addition he considers the problems associated with the dating of early stone buildings in Scotland and re-examines the Bishop's Palace at Kirkwall which he believes incorporates a substantial fragment of the building in which King Haakon died.

The book is described as a "study in early Norse architecture" and although primarily intended for the specialist has much to offer the general reader, for the author is an architectural historian who is equally interested in architecture and history. He recalls that King Haakon, whose fleet was defeated at the well-remembered battle of Largs, was no uncouth Viking raider but one of the most enlightened and civilised monarchs of his age. He sees the Haakonshalle both as a building and as a symbol of imperialism corresponding to, probably inspired by,

the Kaiserstadt at Aachen. He describes not only the architectural features of the Bishop's Palace at Kirkwall but also the impact on the life of the little fishing town of the majestic buildings rising in its midst.

Dr. Simpson has the ability to look beyond local issues and to see great buildings in their European context. In this instance he follows his examination of the Haakonshalle with evidence supporting his view that the Hall is English work and possibly to be attributed to one Henry of Reynes. In such a pursuit he is an enthusiast, but always maintains the distinction between fact and speculation. He identifies both secondary work in the Hall and the re-modelling of the Rosenkranz Tower as Scottish work, the latter being supported by documentary evidence. Instances of Scottish influence on Continental buildings are rare and it is disappointing to note how little the Rosenkranz Tower resembles a Scottish tower-house of the same period.

The survival of Norse architecture in Scotland has been disputed for many years, but one must accept Dr. Simpson's view that the men responsible for Kirkwall Cathedral would not be satisfied with dwellings of wood and that top quality craftmanship in Scotland must be contemporary with, not a late copy of, similar work in England or on the Continent. It is therefore inherently probable both that the earliest work in the Cathedral and the adjacent Palace are of one period and that such stone buildings as Cobbie Row's Castle, Wyre and St. Moluag's Church, Lewis, are Norse foundations and not late medieval imitations of earlier work. Dr. Simpson advances structural evidence in support of both these points of view.

Since the book is called "The castle of Bergen and the Bishop's Palace at Kirkwall" one is entitled to regret that the study is not developed a little further than it is, since in each case the buildings described form only part of a wider setting for which either structural or documentary evidence survives. The lack is made good to some extent by an air photograph of Bergen Castle, but one would like to see a corresponding illustration of Kirkwall as a reminder that while geographically remote it contains in the Cathedral, the Bishop's Palace and the Earl's Palace an outstandingly interesting group of buildings.

Dr. Simpson's book is the epilogue to a successful work of restoration and, one hopes, the prologue to another. The Great Hall at Stirling Castle has been used for the last two hundred years as a barrack block. Previous schemes for restoration have

come to nothing, but circumstances are changing and may well permit the rehabilitation of a structure which in its day was the finest thing of its kind in Scotland.

MICHAEL APTED

Highland Folk Ways. I. F. Grant. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1961.

In considering the enthusiastic contribution to Highland ethnological studies which Dr. Grant has made during some 40 years of devoted study, and which she has now synthesised in *Highland Folk Ways*, it seems imperative to define that subject, and to consider its validity as a historical method. Under various pressures, especially that of the economic interpretation school, modern history is becoming conscious of the totality of its subject. Historical investigation of region, or culture, now appears as the unravelling of a complicated skein of threads, which are individual yet relevant and essential to the whole. Round the core of orthodox historicism now lie secondary and ancillary studies (in this context), Archæology, Anthropology, Sociology, etc.; fields which now cannot be ignored in the writing of any general history. On the indefinable boundary that lies between Archæology and Anthropology lies Ethnology; the study of traditional pre-industrial societies in their regional and cultural variation, which in Europe naturally means a peripheral isolated society.

It is about Scottish Ethnology as a historical aide that Dr. Grant has written, and it seems to the reviewer that local usage should revert to this term rather than maintain the clumsy transliteration Folk Life Studies. The concept inherent in Dr. Grant's study—that traditional rural communities, as they stand, are the matrix for valuable historical data, is of some antiquity. The value of what might be termed historical field work was clear even to Herodotus, but it was in the British Isles that this technique really came into being, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when first Dean Munro, then Buchanan, Martin Martin, and Edward Lhwyd became convinced of the value of studying societies as they existed at that moment from personal observation of their language, traditions, literature and customs. This paved the way for a host of travellers—Pennant, Burt, Johnson and Boswell—Johnson, indeed, who put his finger on a fundamental problem in his rather unfair criticism of Martin. "The mode of life which was

familiar to himself, he did not suppose unknown to others, nor imagined that he could give pleasure by telling that of which it was, in his little country, impossible to be ignorant. What he has neglected cannot now be performed. In nations, where there is hardly the use of letters, what is once out of sight is lost for ever" (not strictly true where oral tradition exists).

Ironically, it was Johnson in the van of reactionary historicism who declaimed, "we can know no more than old writers have told us" whilst the real foundations of modern ethnology were being laid by savants like Banks, Cuvier, Buffon, etc., availing themselves of late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century voyages of discovery to record data primarily botanical and zoological, but also ethnological. Here rose the vital schism of interest which relegated "domestic" ethnology in Britain to non-academic backwaters, whilst energy and ability was concentrated on the bewildering kaleidoscope of unfamiliar societies from Tierra del Fuego to the Trobriand Islands which presented themselves in the late nineteenth century. In Scandinavia, by contrast, limited overseas expansion, and consequent cultural introversion, prevented the neglect of indigenous material; Linnaeus, then Asbjörnsen and a host of successors persisted in a movement which led, as did parallel efforts by Thomson and Worsaae in Archæology and for similar and attendant reasons, to the emergence of Ethnology as a valid discipline within the framework of local history. Archæology, in its modern sense, has had a difficult passage across the North Sea but has clearly "made the grade"; "domestic" ethnology in the British Isles is passing along the same hard road to academic acceptance.

The fact remains, and it is vital that this should be generally appreciated while the material still exists, that in the outermost fringes of Western Europe from Lapland to Iceland and Faroe and through the Hebrides to the Canaries live isolated communities who have preserved in greater or lesser measure elements of original settlement. These societies form repositories of anthropological data as valid as any study in Oceania and in some respects more significant, for herein lies the information which can close many of the gaps which exist in our knowledge of European rural society from Neolithic to late medieval times. Much of this material has already vanished, the archæologist can recreate some *ex pede herculem,* but this is a thankless task without the illustration that first-class ethnological field work could produce.

Scotland and especially its Highland area has been highly retentive of this material. In fact, as Dr. Grant may be suggesting, to study the Scottish Gaidhealtachd is to study an ethnic group or the still discernible remains thereof. Such a study is, or should be, a historical treatment of linguistic, literary, social and material evidence, and if treated fully could greatly amplify our picture of the recent and even remote past of the Highlands and of much of Scotland and beyond. The same may be said of work in areas where remains are still more vestigial. The present limited appreciation of these studies is due largely, to misunderstanding of their nature occasioned by faulty nomenclature, and a connection with non-academic studies experienced in the evolution of the subject.

Research in the Highlands began in the last century with the work of J. F. Campbell of Islay, followed by Frances Tolmie and others, but was concerned with traditional tales and music. The marriage of all branches of ethnological study: oral tradition, material culture, music and custom, to documentary sources and historiography proper has not been seriously attempted hitherto, and herein Dr. Grant has been a pioneer. In assessing whether this ambitious attempt has been successful or not, this reviewer has been at some pains to define the field of study which ought to be covered should a serious academic contribution be sought. To recapitulate, the field is, primarily, the proper use of ethnology as a means of identifying social and economic elements within a geographical area which are rudiments of the prehistoric, proto-historic (literate) and historic (documented) past. These elements should be related first of all to a scientific analysis of the geography of the region. They should, secondly, be tied in with the evidence produced by the archæologist for early periods and the linguistic and documentary historian for later periods. Finally, they ought also to be compared with, or referred to, anthropological studies in similar environments or social climates overseas. This is a tall order and it is hardly surprising that few writers have been able to fulfil it, except perhaps Evans in his work in Ulster. Dr. Grant's book forms a significant attempt, but suffers from several drawbacks. The ethnological field work is not yet on a wide enough basis. The geographical area covered is in practice largely confined to the eastern part of the Highlands, and, indeed, to a certain extent, to the East Coast. But this is the area of least conservation, early penetrated by outside influence and thus least representative in most respects of

the old order. Occasional excursuses link these areas to the main repositories of early Highland tradition—the West and North-West Highlands, and the Isles.

Little attempt is made to wed evidence to pre-history, and it is difficult for the reader to appreciate the matrix within which later forms materialised. The first millennium A.D., admittedly a difficult period, but also for this sort of study a vital and determinative one, receives very limited notice, and the theme emerging in the Second Millennium with the earliest documents and sources depends too much on the speculative views of foreign scribes on what was, and continued to be, largely terra incognita.

The whole question of the Norse penetration (rather than conquest) of the West requires much further research, and statements thereon should be in the most flexible and tentative form. As Holgar Arbman has pointed out recently, trade was a major factor in Norse economy, whilst Harald Harfagri was much more than a mere "approach" to the social concept of King.

The clans emerge on the borders of true documentary history. We are informed that "it is important to remember that the clans in no case were the survival of an ancient tribal system". To this reviewer, however, it seems most probable that the clan was indeed a tribal melange with petty, and occasional paramount chiefs; with direct ancestry in the late Celtic Iron Age if with Norse accretions; which emerged in the Second Millennium as a recognisable system. Any other interpretation means a break in social evolution. True, on its periphery this clan system was influenced by the rising power of the embryo Scottish state and by feudal penetration. However, it is suggested that Dr. Grant's list of Norman clan chiefs relates entirely to the Highland periphery, the open Straths of South and East, and North-East. Were the conservative North and West at all infected by Norman feudalism? Did they not exist in a stage of social evolution prior to feudalism; i.e. in a social framework of family and traditional ties rather than in a pyramid of legally defined obligation? As Marc Bloch pointed out "the only regions in which powerful agnatic groups survived—German lands on the shores of the North Sea, Celtic districts of the British Isles—knew nothing of vassalage, the fief, and the manor". It is essential that a broad framework be established for these undocumented periods of Highland history to provide the essential setting for

ethnological research. This is a vital and determinative phase whose complexity must be realised; it needs treatment by the study of material culture as well as of documentary sources.

In the historic period proper, from roughly the fifteenth century, Dr. Grant leans heavily on East Coast sources using the situation there as a yardstick for the West. Much of this material, such as estate papers, reflects the views of outsiders, lairds and factors and fails to provide the more intimate picture which a view from the inside would give. With the improvers much of the old life perished, and thereafter came economic integration with Southern industry and thus the imposition of the sheep and the kelp industries, decisive factors in Highland history, but factors not in themselves illustrative of traditional society.

On traditional modes of agriculture Dr. Grant is good value giving a graphic picture of pre-improvement and extra-improvement conditions. *Feannagan* were of course by no means confined to the Outer Isles although still in use there. In the West, especially, the intensive scratch agriculture and overcrowding of the land are well illustrated, though the fact that this was a climacteric and due to non-traditional factors such as the elimination of warfare and of smallpox, the introduction of kelp and the potato—is not sufficiently stressed. Years of devoted collecting have enabled Dr. Grant to assemble a most representative selection of early agricultural technology. This section of Dr. Grant's book together with those on social and traditional custom and belief, is most competently done, the origins of tartan receiving particularly sensible treatment. However, there is an unfortunate lack of comparative evidence which would prevent the non-specialist reader from assessing the relative significance of any factor, for example "eating of the blood of their cattle" is not so curious a custom by the standards of the Masai and other pastoral peoples. In the present state of our knowledge of Scottish vernacular architecture, thoughts of Dalriadic style cottages, of Pictish ancestry for timber framing, or of "the use of walls of straw and clay mixed, as being suggestively Celtic" are premature.

Wild fowl were exploited very early and were a mainstay of the economy of St. Kilda, Mingulay, parts of Lewis and doubtless other areas. Yet this important factor is hardly alluded to.

As a result of these and other difficulties what we have is a somewhat unbalanced though a stimulating book. Basically,

a sound documentary history of East Highland society with excursions in all directions and on themes of greater or lesser relevance, it fits rather awkwardly into its appointed setting of a précis of the traditional culture of the Highlands as a whole. Nevertheless, one must remember that trail blazers are not noted for the scientific construction of highways, but for the courage and enterprise which carries them into hitherto unknown territory at all. Dr. Grant has essayed a difficult journey but in doing so she has produced a book that is bound to arouse interest, and quicken ideas, and will be useful to those who follow her.

IAIN A. CRAWFORD

International Dictionary of Regional European Ethnology and Folklore. Vol. 1: General Ethnological Concepts. By Ake Hultkranz. Rosenkilde and Bagger, Copenhagen. 1960. 282 pp.

The genesis of the dictionary of which this volume forms the first section was a suggestion made by Professor Arnold van Gennep. His proposals were discussed at the International Congress at Stockholm in 1951, and an editorial committee was set up, under the auspices of the International Committee on Folk Arts and Folklore, to supervise the work. Funds provided by UNESCO have helped in the carrying out of this important international undertaking. Dr. Hultkranz, of the University of Stockholm, who was appointed chief editor, undertook the compilation of the first section of the dictionary. This volume deals with general concepts, schools and methods. The second section, which is now also completed, is concerned with folk literature. It is hoped to publish a further ten sections to complete the work.

The object of the dictionary is to attempt to provide standard definitions of the scientific terms used by writers on ethnology and folklore. The definitions, which are given in the author's own words, are normally followed by the various explanations of the terms concerned given by different authorities. In order to do justice to the scholars concerned, their own writings are freely quoted. No fewer than six pages, for example, are devoted to the setting forth, and discussion, of the numerous definitions of the word "culture" which have been put forward. Again, considerable space is devoted to the name "folklore", which, since its invention in 1846, has been interpreted with an astonishing variety of shades of meaning; the editor recommends for acceptance the definition adopted by the

Arnhem Congress in 1955: "the spiritual tradition of the folk, particularly oral tradition".

While the editor does not attempt to give complete accounts of the development of the ideas with which he has to deal, he does very usefully, where he finds it desirable, explain briefly the stages by which definitions have been reached.

Sociologists who search the dictionary for terms relating to their own discipline may be disappointed. The viewpoint of the editor is primarily that of the ethnologist and folklorist, and the sociological aspect of words is not stressed. Sociologists will, however, be interested to know that sociological terms will be included in a dictionary of Social Science terminology which UNESCO is now preparing.

While, as its title indicates, the dictionary does not profess to deal with more than *European* ethnology and folklore, it does in fact include many American terms; indeed the work would have been felt to be sadly lacking had a policy of rigid exclusion been adopted. Most of the terms dealt with are English, but a number of French, German and Scandinavian words and phrases are included. From whatever language the items are drawn, their equivalents in the other principal European languages are printed beside them.

The dictionary will be welcomed as a new venture in anthropological literature, and will be especially appreciated by ethnologists and folklorists, who have long felt the want of such a work. The editor is to be congratulated on the production of such a valuable aid to study and research.

The text is written in English, and the typography and lay-out are excellent. R. KERR