

## Comptes rendus — Book Reviews

MICHAEL MITTERAUER. — *Grundtypen alteuropäischer Sozialformen. Haus und Gemeinde in vorindustriellen Gesellschaften*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog Verlag, 1979. Pp. 258.

WINFRIED SCHULZE. — *Bäuerlicher Widerstand und feudale Herrschaft in der frühen Neuzeit*. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog Verlag, 1980. Pp. 344.

PETER BLICKLE, PETER BIERBRAUER, RENATE BLICKLE and CLAUDIA ULBRICH. *Aufbruch und Empörung? Studien zum bäuerlichen Widerstand im Alten Reich*. Munich: Beck Verlag, 1980. Pp. xi, 320.

How was life organized in family, farm and workshop, house and home across village, mining community and market town? What were the quality of peasant resistance and the nature of pre-industrial labour relations, and how were these legally dealt with? Who was the "common man", and why did he rebel in early modern central Europe? At last these questions are being answered by new schools of social history, exemplified by the socio-political approach of Peter Blicke and others; the socio-legal work of Winfried Schulze; and the historical sociology of Michael Mitterauer.

Mitterauer reprints six essays, written between 1973 and 1979, using Austrian sources for a functional and structural analysis of primary groups of people living in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The authoritarian, extended household with its internal family and servant relations is explored in conjunction with its external co-operative-communal activities among fellow equals in its own local area of settlement. We are taken from rural households to town-country relations, on the way attacking the myths of the prevalence of nuclear families, and of the importance of the industrial revolution in changing primary social relations (see especially pp. 94ff.). The evidence of household reconstitutions in parish, rural community, urban craft guilds and burgher registers, and a fascinating piece on social forms in the rural mining industry, where workers often rented living-space in peasants' houses (pp. 148-93), are systematized into the following conclusions. In early modern Austria stem families were rarer than nuclear families, but incomplete families (especially single-parent) and family remnants (especially widows on their own) that maintained separate households were at least as numerous as were nuclear families. The ideal of father, mother and their offspring is too simple to describe the reality. All families underwent perpetual development, and so in practice there were no norms. The great variety of pre-industrial family types took into account combinations of social categories including those massive groups of people living-in with others, *Inwohner* and *Gesinde*, moving into, across and out of burgher and peasant households, farms, workshops and businesses, creating the familial-paternalist labour relations of the period. We must rethink problems as diverse as the underestimated importance of geographical mobility, and the relative stability of marriage or partnership within the various social categories in early modern Austria. A folklorist element appears with the exploration of attitudes shaped by deeper things than economic necessities, where the starting point, as ever, was the parish pulpit. This needs to be further developed. Mitterauer shows,

however, that early modern urban family patterns were closer to patterns today than were those of early modern villages, but *not* because of any nuclear family "ideal" type. Such families are not the majority in industrial societies, nor were they in pre-industrial ones. In Salzburg twenty-three percent of households were thought to have been nuclear family units in 1647 (p. 42), and in Vienna in 1961 the corresponding figure was still only twenty-seven percent (p. 38). By contrast farming communities apparently made more direct use of the family as a practical economic unit, whereas in town the business situation was more flexible. These agricultural arrangements nevertheless need much more analysis, not least because we are currently being swamped with narrowly urban sociologies.

Mitterauer is to be recommended to anyone who wishes not only to study town and country as a whole in pre-modern times, but also to understand the extent of the pre-modern stranglehold of the countryside upon the urban scene. We know that early modern central European society kept its medieval towns much more in check than does modern society with its commercial-industrial conurbations. Mitterauer begins to tell us how it was done. For those who want to read him in English, there is an article (co-authored with Reinhard Sieder), "The developmental process of domestic groups: problems of reconstruction and possibilities of interpretation", *Journal of Family History*, 4 (1979), taking the Laslett-Berkner debate further by reconstructing the family's function as the primary unit in *all* aspects of pre-modern life.

Schulze starts with the premiss "of a fundamental mood of resistance amongst the peasant subjects which was orientated towards the just exercise of authority and the securing of their own economic existence", and on the basis of this he seeks to develop "the thesis of a gradual legalisation of social conflicts during the period" (Preamble). For those in agribusiness, as well as all others whose economic operations depended upon it, "justice" was certainly a popular concern, and litigation a way of hoping to obtain it as advantageously as possible. But how is one to assess thresholds of violence? Schulze reprints forty-one documents, highlighting the different types of rural unrest between the Peasants' Revolt of 1525 and the French Revolutionary Wars of the 1790s that have left evidence in the archives of central Europe. In a lengthy introduction he develops his neo-Weberian theme of conflict resolution. After the massive civil wars of the 1520s, German territorial governments increasingly defused breakdowns in feudal and commercial labour relations by offering their rent and tax-paying subjects more, and more efficient, avenues of litigation, appeal and redress. Prerogative law stepped into the worn shoes of *Fehde und Austrag*, that once immutable Germanic form of redress by self-help and open violence, followed by *ad hoc* arbitration. In this way the absolutist state justified its existence, showing its usefulness to the rich and middling peasants, craftsmen and merchants in town and country — the productive and managerial elements in pre-modern society — be they freemen, tenants or serfs. Document 10, for example, is from a Swabian splinter territory where, in May 1597, villagers refused to pay Turk taxes or to allow the bailiffs to confiscate their cattle; instead, they fell back on an alliance with their local market town against the territorial ruler's officials. Here we have an *ad hoc* crowd of respectable "common men" refusing to pay an unpopular tax. In another part of Swabia in the same year five villages refused to accept legal arbitration from the Federal Cameral Tribunal (Document 11); they grounded their refusal on an Imperial guarantee against earlier maladministration by their own territorial ruler's government. This protest took the form of the whole Sunday congregation of respectable locals making the representative of one of the two highest lawcourts in the Reich swallow his words. At the same moment, in a neighbouring territory villagers were on strike: they stopped the hay-making until the ruler sacked his new bailiff and removed his sheep from

the common (Document 12). But the usual snag appears in 1601 (Document 13) when a federal lawyer argued that subjects may only obtain redress against tyrannous lords provided that they do not rebel first or use any form of violence. What the lords understood by "violence" was not necessarily what it meant to their tenants. Schulze's "conflict resolution" does not go far enough really to satisfy us, although his archival explorations enable us to draw some tentative conclusions on the subject.

In an excellent case-study, "Agrarkonflikte im Reideselischen Gericht Moos im 17. Jahrhundert", *Archiv für hessische Geschichte*, new series 37 (1979), Georg Schmidt demonstrates the variety of factors that caused peasants to resort to violence. In the last resort the authorities always won, and they sought to learn their lesson by adjusting the law only to that degree deemed necessary to prevent further conflict arising in the future from the same original specific cause. In the meantime the overall fabric of society became more archaic and incapable of generating meaningfully gradual social change.

Schulze's documents should also be studied together with the specific grievance literature which is the stuff of early modern labour relations as worked out by Helmut Neuhaus, "Supplikationen als landesgeschichtliche Quellen. Das Beispiel der Landgrafschaft Hessen im 16. Jahrhundert", *Hessisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte*, two parts, 28 (1978) and 29 (1979). The majority of complaints were probably peacefully resolved without going to the lawcourts or resorting to unlawful assemblies, speeches and withdrawal of labour and dues, things that the authorities and landowners invariably interpreted as violence to their rights.

Blickle and others study the socio-political problems that arise when things become potentially or actually violent. In the process we learn more about the workings of the incredibly complex, hierarchical social structure of the village and market town. Blickle uses Mitterauer's functionalism and Schulze's legalism, bringing together family economy and constitutional laws with the community practice of the *gemeinde (gemeiner) Mann*, "common man". The leading household paternalists of town and country ran the parish communities communally, according to the stake that each, as an employer at farm and workshop level, had in the common welfare. How courts of nobles, professionals and officials governed them naturally determined the level of co-operation or violence in society, beyond that which was merely privately disruptive or criminal. Peter Bierbrauer introduces the subject with a survey of 125 revolts listed between 1336 and 1785, showing that government and governed learned only by trial and error how to get along with each other. On the whole there was less conflict where peasants were still fully involved in local politics, or where they were still relatively free enough to club together and seek redress in the courts. In the territory of Bern in sixteenth-century Switzerland, sixty-nine referenda were held, and as they ceased during the seventeenth century, so the Bern countryside became less loyal and more rebellious. Generally, above the village community level, territorial estates (of town councils, nobles and, less frequently, of clergy) tended only to make the security problem worse by behaving towards their peasants and householding tenants like the thoroughly selfish feudal and allodial landlords that they undoubtedly always were. The dilemma appears in that, the less legalistic conflict resolution was, the more rebellious town and country became. Conversely, the more legalistic conflict resolution was, the more repressively ossified feudal and paternalistic German society became. Between the two failed revolutions of 1525 and 1848 was there ever a politically responsible middle way for the "common man"?

The detailed study presented by Renate Blickle for Rottenbuch, an estate of Augustinian landlords in the Bavarian Alps on the borders of Swabia, shows that the existing system could work through an intelligent mixture of litigation and

leadership: on this estate good monastic management fully consulted the peasant and both sides made full use of the courts in Munich. In the splinter territory of Triberg in the Black Forest, Claudia Ulbrich shows that the government was generally so weak and starved of money and legal sophistication that it tended to give in to determined opposition by its subjects over matters of economic and fiscal innovation. Finally, for the larger Swiss ecclesiastical territory of St Gallen with its components of Appenzell, Alte Landschaft and Toggenburg, Peter Blickle effectively demonstrates that economic policies were by themselves insufficient to explain peasant unrest; ideological demands, couched in terms of freedom in the sense of responsible local self-government and full consultation at village level, also had a role to play. This notion of Blickle's has been pulled together succinctly by Robert Lutz in *Wer war der gemeine Mann? Der dritte Stand in der Krise des Spätmittelalters* (Munich, 1979).

The writings of Blickle establish the existence of a new socio-political structure and base in early modern central Europe, without whose relatively freely granted co-operation ruler, officials, town council patricians and landowning nobles could not have survived. The possibility of exploring the politics of the "common man" in pre-industrial times has been opened up, and a good starting point for readers is now the second edition of Peter Blickle's *Die Revolution von 1525* (Munich, 1981).

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FRANCES J. SHAW. — *The Northern and Western Islands of Scotland: their Economy and Society in the Seventeenth Century*. Edinburgh: John Donald, 1980. Pp. ix, 270.

Ms Shaw, in her opening sentence, explains that

this work sets out to examine some of the central features of the economy and social structure of the islands off the north and west coast of Scotland in the 17th Century, to assess developments in the course of the century, and to look critically at similarities and differences in the economies of the various islands and island groups (p. 1).

The introduction to the book sets the basic background and deals with the nature of the available source material. As well as noting some essential geographic differences between the Western Isles (Hebrides) and the Northern Isles (Orkney and Shetland), the book lucidly states the fundamental difference in tradition between clan life in the Hebrides and Viking influences on the Northern Isles.

As with most work in the historical field, the configuration of the product is conditioned by the available data. In this respect, Ms Shaw has utilized three valuable main sources in her research. The registers of sasines are the records of legal deeds relating to ownership of property, and along with various Exchequer records, form the basis of the sections on landownership and the renting of land. The registers of testaments, containing data on the possessions of deceased persons, enhanced the work for the sections on the pattern of agriculture, other occupations within the community and the pattern of trade. Flesh was added to this core information from a variety of other sources, well documented in a compre-