

## Book Reviews

### Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

**The People of Aritama.** The cultural personality of a Colombian mestizo village. Gerardo Reichel-Dolmatoff and Alicia Reichel-Dolmatoff. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill., 1961. xviii + 483 pp. Illus. \$8.50.

The people of Aritama (a pseudonym) are a sorry lot, from almost anyone's point of view, including their own. Their village drapes itself over the steep hillsides of a valley at a point where the river begins to emerge from the rugged mountain terrain of the Sierra Madre onto the gently sloping coastal plain in northern Colombia. Aritama is doubly marginal, in both the geographic and the cultural senses. Upstream live "Indian" groups which, although not considered a part of the modern national sociocultural system, have cultures strongly influenced by Spanish colonial times. Downstream is the territory of a rural unsophisticated version of the modern national "Creole" culture. Just as Aritama is neither of the mountains nor of the plain, it is neither 100 percent "Indian" nor 100 percent "Creole" in the cultural sense. And as a result, according to this account, the people have great trouble in making up their minds in a positive sense about anything.

The community divides itself into two types of people; the *placeros*, or town square people, and the *lomos*, or hill people. The first think of themselves as representatives of the lowland creole culture. The hill people, on the other hand, are more "Indian" and "backward." Both categories, however, share the dominant confusions. Among the "personality" traits that they consciously strive to exhibit are rigid self-restraint, lack of overt emotionality, "respect" for the individual. Along with these traits go an extraordinary set of beliefs in magical spirits, fear of the

night, fear of sorcery, fear of manifesting one's own feelings. Although nominally Catholic, the majority of the people do not believe in the teachings of the Church, including those involving life after death.

Rather, they believe in a variety of non-Christian powers and spirits that would make many a "primitive" tribe envious by comparison. The authors argue quite convincingly that these beliefs and the actions based upon them are results and projections of the peculiar life experiences to which the local situation subjects the individual from birth onward. In particular, they see many features of the local supernatural realm and its inhabitants as first-order projections from the locally universal childhood experience of viewing sexual intercourse under the pervasive sordid conditions, an experience to which all the children are exposed but one about which they cannot talk freely with their elders. Once these childhood projective patterns are established, they lead on to other functions.

The approach of this study is that of sophisticated modern ethnologists. It is primarily descriptive and analytical, rather than being aimed at the universal human problems as set out by one or another high-level theory. However, the authors do not follow the usual ethnographic outline but attempt to approach a series of life problems in historical depth as well as functionally. This makes for some repetition but, in my opinion, adds richness to the description which is adequately synthesized in the final chapter and elsewhere. The orienting emphases are on world view, values, and personality types.

Since this study deals with "social personality," I regret that the authors did not have an opportunity in the field to use the services of psychologists and psychiatrists and that they did not attempt to use such techniques as Rorschach or Thematic Apperception tests. Perhaps before Aritama becomes

completely creolized, there is still time to try some of these techniques that might help to place the Aritama personality types in cross-cultural perspective.

In summary, Gerardo and Alicia Reichel-Dolmatoff have given us a very thorough study, in depth, of a type of community that we may designate as "doubly marginal" and which will, sooner or later, enter into full participation in the modern world, although in terms of the "Modern Latin American" cultural approach to the modern world. Numerous other situations of this general type doubtless exist in the emerging nations, not only in those of Latin America but also in those of Africa, Asia, and Oceania. We need more carefully collected information and analysis of the type here presented.

JOHN P. GILLIN

University of Pittsburgh

### One-sided Perspective

**From Miasmas to Molecules.** W. Barry Wood. Columbia University Press, New York, 1961. 100 pp. Illus. \$3.

In the four Bampton Lectures that he delivered at Columbia University in 1961, W. Barry Wood, Jr., described the growth of knowledge about the diagnosis, causes, treatment, and prevention of diphtheria, in order, as he states in the preface, "to introduce an element of historical perspective into current discussions of the social shortcomings of modern medicine and to document the conclusion that the principal problems which plague the medical profession today are the inevitable consequences of scientific progress." Wood's first three lectures comprise an excellent, brief account of the history of medical knowledge about this disease and a lucid description of complex investigations of recent years. His final lecture outlines current socioeconomic problems of medicine, namely, the changing relationship of physicians to patients, the impending shortage of doctors, the rising costs of medical care, and the increasing gap between medical scientists and practitioners.

Able and interesting as the historical account of diphtheria is, however, I cannot help but conclude that Wood has fallen short of his expressed purpose. His story does not fully "document the conclusion" that he hoped to