

BEAR COUNTRY

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Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern
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**Minorities and Memories:
Survivals and Extinctions in Scotland and Western Europe**
Andrew Strathern and Pamela J. Stewart

**Bear Country:
Predation, Politics, and the Changing Face of Pyrenean Pastoralism**
Bryan Cummins

BEAR COUNTRY

PREDATION, POLITICS, AND THE CHANGING FACE OF PYRENEAN PASTORALISM

Bryan Cummins

CAROLINA ACADEMIC PRESS

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For Tricia, who has been more and given more than anyone could ask.



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CONTENTS

Figures	xi
Series Editors' Preface · Pastoralism, Policies, and Predations in the Pyrenees <i>Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern</i>	xiii
Acknowledgments	xxi
Chapter One · Introduction	3
Method	7
History and Tradition	10
Core and Periphery	11
Practice Theory	16
Continuity and Change	19
Chapter Two · The Mountains, the Valley, and the People	21
Flora and Fauna	26
The Ossau valley	31
Villages and Towns	37
Chapter Three · Pastoralism and Transhumance: Historical Overview	53
Defining Transhumance	58
Evolution of Transhumance	64
Transhumance(s) and <i>The</i> Transhumance in the Ossau valley	65
The Summer Transhumance in the Early 20th Century	74
The Winter Transhumance	77
Transhumance and Environmental Impact	84
Chapter Four · Shepherds, Sheep, and Dogs	93
Sheep Domestication	93

Sheep in the Ossau valley	95
Dog Domestication	99
Dogs in the Pyrenees: The Labrit	100
The Patou and Other Livestock Protection Dogs	104
Historical Accounts of Livestock Protection Dogs Cross-Culturally	110
The Patou in the 19th Century	113
The Pyrenean Mountain Dog (Patou) Today	118
Shepherd and Dog	119
Patous and Predation	124
Chapter Five · Land Tenure in the Pyrenees Past and Present	127
Land Tenure in the Pyrenees: Historical Overview	129
Structure of the Syndicate and Distribution of Lands and Shepherds to 1853	139
New Distribution of Territory, Post 1853	143
The <i>Cadet</i> System	143
A Tragedy of the Commons?	148
Chapter Six · Traditional Life on the High Mountain Pastures	155
Clothing and Equipment	155
The <i>Cabane</i>	156
The <i>Cujala</i>	161
Cheese-Making	163
Social Life in the Mountains	165
A Community of Shepherds?	170
<i>Entraide</i>	176
Chapter Seven · The Seasonal Round Today	179
Autumn	182
Cheese-Making Today	186
Winter	189
Spring	191
Summer	193
Chapter Eight · Predation, Politics, and Protests	203
Vultures and Predation	204
The Pyrenean Brown Bear	206
The Return of the Wolf	233
Domestic Dogs and Predation	238

The Lynx	239
Compensation for Livestock Damage	240
The Patou and Prevention of Predation	247
A Balanced Ecosystem with Large Predators?	253
Conclusion	256
Chapter Nine · Shepherds and the Parc National des Pyrénées	259
Chapter Ten · The Changing Face of Pyrenean Pastoralism	279
Core & Periphery and Globalization as Factors in Change	279
Winter Transhumance and the <i>Cadet</i> System	282
Wives and Families and Opting in to the Profession	285
Salaried Shepherds	290
The Individualization of Shepherding and the Decline of <i>Entraide</i>	291
The Changing Face of Sheep and Dogs	296
Changes in Use of the Valley Land, Intermediate Zone, and Mountain Pastures	301
The European Union and Standards for Cheese-Making and Shepherding	309
Mechanization	312
Intensive Farming?	316
Tourism and Pastoralism	317
Chapter Eleven · The Future of Ossalois Pastoralism	319
Glossary of French and Béarnais Terms	325
References	331
Index	341

FIGURES

An ancient way of life. Summer, 2005.	5
The Haut Ossau looking south from above Bilhères. Spring, 2006.	11
Threat of avalanche closes a mountain road in winter. Winter, 2006.	36
Buzy, gateway to the Ossau valley. Summer, 2005.	38
Laruns, Haut Ossau. Summer, 2005.	42
Pic du Midi. Summer, 2005.	44
Cars share the road with livestock in the mountains. Summer, 2005.	45
Transhumant shepherd and flock. Spring, 2006.	54
Cromlech in the intermediate zone above Bilhères. Spring, 2006.	66
Dolmen at Buzy. Summer, 2005.	68
This chapel commemorates the zoo-epidemic of 1774–76. Spring, 2006.	70
Basque Béarnais, the sheep of the Ossau valley. Summer, 2005.	97
Patou and Labrit. Summer, 2005.	100
Shepherd, sheep, and dog. Spring, 2007	122
Evidence of summer habitation in the high mountains. Summer, 2005.	129
Summer in the mountains. Summer, 2005.	145
A shepherd left his mark in the high mountains, 1929. Summer, 2005.	147
Remains of a <i>cabane</i> in the mountains. Summer, 2005.	158
Traditional tools of the shepherd on display at the Arudy museum. Note the spiked collar for the Patou. Summer, 2005.	162
Milking in the high mountains. Summer, 2005.	186
Cheese-making in a modern <i>cabane</i> in the mountains. Summer, 2005.	187
Saloir in Gabas. Summer, 2005.	189
Milking in the <i>bergerie</i> . Winter, 2006.	190

Shepherd and Labrit move a flock through Laruns. Spring, 2006.	192
Shepherd and her dogs watch their flock in the sunshine. Spring, 2006.	193
Pyrenean brown bear on display at the Arudy museum. Summer, 2005.	207
Graffiti opposing bear reintroduction. Summer, 2005.	212
Graffiti supporting bear reintroduction. Summer, 2005.	218
The bear as a marketing tool for a café. Summer, 2005.	225
A sign directs visitors to buy cheese from shepherds who support bear reintroduction. Spring, 2007.	227
Evidence of predation on the mountain pasture. Summer, 2005.	246
Patous reduce predation on the flocks. Spring, 2007.	249
A Patou on duty cautions the photographer to approach no closer. Spring, 2006.	253
Parc National des Pyrénées. Summer, 2005.	264
The park is enjoyed by hikers and horseback riders. Summer, 2005.	267
Shepherd (left) talks with hikers in the park. Summer, 2005.	271
Shepherding is no longer exclusively a male occupation. Summer, 2005.	286
This flock has over 800 sheep. Spring, 2006.	292
The changing face of Pyrenean pastoralism: neither the dog nor sheep breed is indigenous to the region. Spring, 2006.	299
Modern equipment for cheese-making. Spring, 2006.	314

SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

PASTORALISM, POLICIES, AND PREDATIONS IN THE PYRENEES

Pamela J. Stewart and Andrew Strathern

As Series Editors we are very pleased to include Dr. Bryan Cummins' book in this Series on European Anthropology.¹ The first book in the Series, "Minorities and Memories: Survivals and Extinctions in Scotland and Western Europe" (A. Strathern and P.J. Stewart)² dealt with a wide variety of topics, linking ethnog-

1. We have been pleased to read through the successive drafts of this manuscript and comment on it for the Series.

2. Another topic that we have been exploring in our own research is represented in the title of the European Union Center of Excellence conference that we co-organized in March 27–29 of 2008: "Landscape, Heritage, and Conservation: Farming Issues in the European Union".

This conference was held at the University of Pittsburgh and addressed the following concerns: Farming has been in a process of change in the European Union and elsewhere in the world as a result of many factors. In particular farming has been linked with issues to do with landscape, conservation, heritage, sustainability, and cropping policies, including setting aside areas for conservation and the question of genetically modified (GM) crops. Several of these issues involve farmers in the USA as well as in the EU, and questions of shared or divergent policies between these two regions of the world have emerged. Further, with the marked recent expansion of the EU, divergences between the needs of different countries within the EU with regard to agriculture have also become evident. In the older-established EU countries, farming has turned more and more towards conservation. In newer-entrant countries a priority may be to seek access to EU-wide markets.

Harmonizing these divergent needs will no doubt remain a major policy objective in the future, as it is already. However, in our Conference, while keeping policy imperatives in mind, we explored how farmers themselves and others in their communities experience and cope with the shifting political, economic, and cultural conditions in which they work.

We explored how the impact of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is felt; the development of parks and tourism; the intertwining of concerns over natural heritage and social heritage; and the likely or possible outcomes for the overall sphere of heritage as it applies to the farming world within Europe. Continuity or rupture in family farms was

raphy to history through tenant farming and branching out to local poetry, religion, prehistory, and national politics.

There is a growing interest in European Anthropology, with the expansion of the European Union (EU) and an increase in the numbers of anthropologists carrying out field research in Europe generally. In addition to EU studies much work is being done in European countries that have remained outside of the EU and are undergoing rapid change (e.g. political, religious, and economic), and much exciting research is being conducted in the general region of Europe today, including on the relationships between Europe and other regions such as the Americas, Asia, and the Pacific.

The expansion of the EU raises an interesting and important set of theoretical and practical questions to do with integration; religious, cultural and linguistic diversity; political process; mobilities of persons and immigration within the EU; and governance generally. Some of the issues about shared culture and "values" have been explored earlier in the work of Cris Shore (Shore 2000), but they require continuous updating, since change is dynamic and in many ways unpredictable over time. Also, history is being re-written in relation to the requirements of particular groups and countries, within the EU countries, in the new era of potentialities that arise from expansion. Issues over the European Constitution are also likely to remain important and provide a fertile field for scholarship. The questions of reference to religion and religious values are prominent and are entering into internal political debates. Studies focused on religious issues within the EU countries may be expected to proliferate in the near future. Also, one of the more dynamic and problematic arenas in the EU has to do with the popular reception, accommodation, and resistance issues that arise as the European Commission seeks to "Europeanize" its populations. Perceptions about the distribution of power and goods in the EU countries are a major concern for the individual nation-states and this is reflected at a number of levels, including within local and regional contexts.

In addition, the ways in which transnational and globalizing processes impact the lives of peoples provide a core concern for studies in this arena, including how the "local" is altered by these pressures and how people re-imagine and reproduce their localities. The study of how local situations transform, not simply by replicating patterns found elsewhere but by incorporating globally generated items into a local set of practices, i.e. glocalization opposed to glob-

looked at as a correlate of the above issues. And note was taken of literary representations of rural change which have formed a major part of the theme of nostalgia for the rural past and attempts to preserve small farms against the predations of agribusiness in the contemporary context.

alization (Raz 2005; see also Eriksen 2003; Lewellen 2002; Strathern and Stewart 2005), continues to be important. Issues of indigeneity within Europe are also a growing arena of interest to scholars, as well as an arena of debates on a wider front. What does indigeneity mean in the complex historical contexts of Europe?

The ways that the divide between EU countries and other European countries manifests itself over time in terms of cultural and political machinations is a particularly vital arena of research owing to the fluidity of the situations that are undergoing rapid change as a result of various pressures both from inside and outside of the countries under consideration. Historical approaches that explore contemporary European concerns and problems are much in need. The aim of the present Series is to provide a forum for these developing issues while also retaining scope for full-scale ethnographic studies that are based in local and regional contexts. Studies of minority languages and their political context; of changes in farming and inheritance patterns in response to EU policies; and of the dynamics of religious change, are all welcome topics. The Series also caters for books written from a number of disciplinary perspectives, including history, sociology, linguistics, and political science, as well as maintaining a primary focus on anthropological work.

The new book for the Series by Dr. Cummins fits well into important dimensions of our vision for the Series. Since this proposal was first received, we have worked with him over many months to give him comments and suggestions, directing him to some comparable studies elsewhere in Europe, and bringing him in as a participant in our 2008 Conference at the University of Pittsburgh (see note 2), on farming, heritage, and conservation issues in EU countries. The topic of Dr. Cummins' manuscript constituted a good fit with the topic of that conference, since his detailed study of pastoral practices and traditions in the French Pyrenees leads him directly into the sources of conflict between the shepherds he studied and French national policies endorsed by the EU authorities on the reintroduction of the brown bear. Bears are disliked by the shepherds because of the potential threat they pose to flocks of sheep. To defend the flocks the shepherds keep special dogs, especially the large *patou* dogs which grow up with and become very protective of the sheep they guard. In the interest of biodiversity and perhaps also tourism the French government has sought to bring back bears, after they were hunted out of existence. Conflict has set in, which is not yet fully resolved.

Dr. Cummins sets this basic narrative into an exceptionally detailed panorama of pastoral practices in the Pyrenees, employing both historical depth and contemporary observations on the changing lives of the shepherds and their families. We learn much about the ecology of herding, rights over pastures, rules

of inheritance, gender relations and how they are changing, and the details of how the shepherds live in the mountain cabins and make their special cheeses. We gain an appreciation of the guard dogs and their ways. We are informed on problems surrounding the national park which impinges on the areas shepherds and their flocks use. In short, conservation problems are set into a full ethnographic and historical context, including a comprehensive discussion about the bears themselves and what is known about their lives and fates.

A remarkable feature of the whole study is its portrayal of a complex interplay between continuity and change. In our original comments on the manuscript we pointed to a tension in the description of life in the Pyrenees between assertions of great continuity and obvious portrayals of change. The tension may be resolved by acknowledging that change itself is continuously present, yet certain practices, adapted to the environment and based on practical transmission of knowledge, may show great historical depth. In his chapter 4, Dr. Cummins gives us a detailed account of how sheep are actually bred and looked after. Some of the knowledge of the shepherds can be compared to the injunctions that are found in the treatises of ancient Roman writers on agriculture, for example Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 B.C.E.). Cummins, for example, discusses breeding practices, noting the numbers of rams kept per ewes in a flock and remarking that the shepherds keep the rams with the flock year-long, thus adhering to natural biological cycles. Varro, however, recommends a more managed regimen (Varro, ed. Hooper 1934: 339–340). He suggests that the rams be removed from the flock two months in advance and fed with barley, to strengthen them for their task. He specifies the time of mating so as to ensure that births will occur at the end of autumn when the grass is full. When the ewes are all pregnant, Varro says, the rams should be removed, so that they do not trouble the ewes; and ewes themselves should not be allowed to breed until after they are two years old. While these injunctions are not exactly the same as those Cummins reports, they are of the type that the Ossau valley shepherds in the Pyrenees would easily appreciate as practical and based on experience. Cummins' own discussion of transhumance in his Chapter 3 is a valuable addition to the literature on this topic, along with the deeper historical picture of pastoralism and his extended treatment of the characteristics and history of the dogs used by the shepherds in his Chapter 4 (for comparative materials on animals see Knight 2005). Indeed Cummins pays a meticulous attention to the animals in the regional ecosystem themselves as well as to human-animal interactions. This observation also applies to the bears, whose contested existence forms an important part of the book's narrative and serves to highlight the issues and dilemmas of conservation and heritage that are at the heart of the book.

With these issues in mind we take up here a number of points for further discussion. First, there is the question of globalization and world systems theory (WST). We have discussed this issue elsewhere (Strathern and Stewart 2005), but since that text has appeared only in Chinese translation we allude briefly to some matters here, in line with suggestions we made to Dr. Cummins in the context of his revision of his manuscript. World Systems Theory as a forerunner of globalization theory is based on the idea of centers and peripheries of political and economic power in the world at large. Globalization theory may also be tied to such a vision, but it need not be so tied, and intrinsically it deals with the complex international flow of goods and influences in all directions in the world. WST also tends to imply the relative powerlessness of peripheries *vis a vis* centers. Practice theory, by contrast, while tending to acknowledge inequalities of power, is concerned with people's agency, and hence their ability or attempts to resist, subvert, or transform the operations of powers in their areas. The struggle between the shepherds and French authorities over the reintroduction of bears in the Ossau valley clearly illustrates the possibilities, as well as the limitations, of agency in this context.

Similar considerations apply to relations with the European Union (EU) authorities. EU regulations have greatly impacted agricultural practices through Europe. While farmers generally benefit from subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), they smart under the restraints placed on them in the name of hygiene or "modernization". Cummins mentions the issues of the disposal of carcasses of dead animals and the question of imposed standards in the artisanal production of cheese in the Ossau valley.

We have noted that in Poland recently EU regulations have had the effect of making operations on small farms difficult if extreme hygiene stipulations are adhered to (New York Times, April 21, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/04/world/europe/04poland.html>). EU regulations may also favor wild life and conservation rules against the interests of farmers and shepherds. We also note that in Finland EU regulations have been introduced to protect wolves, but the reindeer herders declare that wolves are a threat to their stock. Predators actually include lynxes, brown bears, and wolverines as well as wolves. The herders are angry and feel the livelihood of their families is threatened. The EU authorities take the line that humans and wolves have coexisted in the past and they can continue to do so, and have imposed hunting restrictions to ensure the survival of the wolves (New York Times, International, January 21, 2008, p. A4). This case from Finland clearly provides a direct parallel to the conflicts of opinion and regulation in the Ossau valley. National Parks provide another arena for contestation between shepherds and their flocks on one hand, and tourists on the other.

Cummins reports, for example, how shepherds dislike being gaped at by tourists. Park authorities do uphold the rights of the shepherds and help them to maintain their mountain huts or *cabanes*, but the Park also supports the reintroduction of bears, and this policy draws criticism from the shepherds.

Conservation issues also implicate questions of sustainability of the environment. Cummins rightly criticizes the previously influential work of Hardin on the “commons” and Hardin’s argument that overgrazing and environmental degradation inevitably result from systems of shared pasturage. Hardin basically took a wrong view of the social definition of “the person” in these societies. Pastoralists, like people everywhere, live within, and in fact create, social systems that constrain and guide their actions. On the other hand, quoting here Jared Diamond’s study *Collapse* (Diamond 2005), Cummins acknowledges that people are not necessarily wise conservationists, and disastrous results can occur from exploitative mismanagement. Industrial societies are probably the greatest offenders historically in this regard, simply because they have a greater capacity to do harm as well as to bring benefits to people.

We have ourselves been interested in this topic in various parts of the world where we have conducted research, including Papua New Guinea and Taiwan (Stewart and Strathern 2002, 2004; Strathern and Stewart 1998, 2001b).

Cummins briefly refers here to the early work of Roy Rappaport on the *kaiko* festivals in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea among the Maring people (Rappaport 1968, 1999). Rappaport argued that these pig-killing festivals, in which the hosts gave pork to their military allies as thanks for help in the past and to ensure their help in future, acted as a means of preventing overgrazing by pigs and thus served to maintain the environment at large. The Maring, of course, raised their pigs specifically in order to sacrifice them at the *kaiko* occasions, and the timing of the *kaiko* was determined not only by the size of the herd but by the perceived obligations of the hosts to their allies (for further discussion of sacrifice and exchange relations see Stewart and Strathern 2008). The preservation of “the environment” was a secondary side-effect of political planning and a socio-cosmic ecology that included the spirits of ancestors as well as the living. The overall point here is the same as appears above in relations to Hardin’s arguments. The Maring idea of the person included the notion of the person’s obligations to living allies and to dead kin as ancestors. It was this cosmic scheme that directed their actions, not a concern immediately with the environment as such, because they did not split off the environment from the rest of their lived world. The concept of landscape applies better here than the concept of the environment (see Stewart and Strathern eds. 2003).

We have commented here on only a selection of the gamut of themes that Dr. Cummins has orchestrated in his book. The volume will provide much

information and much food for further thought to anthropologists and historians at large, as well as in particular to scholars interested in, for example, ecology, farming, kinship and inheritance, pastoralism, the politics of conservation, the Pyrenees, agency and resistance theory, and the European Union.

Cromie Burn Research Unit
 May 2008
 PJS and AJS

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