

ßungsprojekte mit der Ansiedlung von Weißen in vollem Umfange durchzuführen, um damit zu zeigen, daß dem Weißen an der Seite des Schwarzen ein Platz zukommt bei der Erschließung Afrikas.

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BERICHTE UND KLEINE MITTEILUNGEN

THE RETROSPECTIVE APPROACH IN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY¹⁾

J. L. M. GULLEY

Die rückschreitende Methode in der historischen Geographie.

Zusammenfassung: In der historisch-geographischen Forschung geht es häufig darum, das Alter von Elementen der gegenwärtigen Kulturlandschaft festzustellen. Eine derartige Untersuchung schreitet von der Gegenwart in die Vergangenheit, von der quellenreicheren zur quellenärmeren Zeit vor, und es herrscht allgemeine Übereinstimmung darüber, daß diese Art der Untersuchung ganz allgemein wertvoll und manchmal die einzig mögliche ist. Nur selten werden jedoch die Ergebnisse einer derartigen Forschungsarbeit auch in der gleichen rückschreitenden Weise dargestellt, und in den Fällen, in denen ein derartiger Rahmen für die Darstellung gewählt wurde, wie von P. DEFFONTAINES, wurde diese Methode kritisiert. Die Kritik äußert sich dahingehend, daß die rückschreitende Darstellung mit grundsätzlichen theoretischen Schwächen behaftet ist. Weitere Überlegungen deuten jedoch darauf hin, daß die Kritik durch unkonsequentes Vorgehen in diesen Studien herausgefordert wurde, und daß, falls die Methode konsequent angewendet wird, die rückschreitende Darstellung von Forschungsergebnissen grundsätzliche Vorteile hat. Ihre größte Stärke liegt darin, daß sie den tatsächlichen Fortgang der Forschungsarbeit widerspiegelt; neue Tatsachen und Ergebnisse können leicht aufgezeigt werden, während Lücken im Wissen ebenfalls klar herausgestellt werden. Dies bildet einen Kontrast im Vergleich zur Darstellung von Veränderungen

in Form einer chronologisch fortschreitenden Erzählung, die oft über Abschnitte, über die unzureichende Kenntnisse bestehen, stillschweigend hinweggeht, um den Ablauf der Erzählung nicht zu stören. Die rückschreitende Darstellung hat natürlich ebenfalls ihre eigenen Schwächen und Schwierigkeiten, aber in Hinblick auf ihre Stärken, die sie ohne Zweifel besitzt, sollte sie nicht völlig vergessen werden.

Where there is much desire to learn, there will of necessity be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making. J. MILTON, *Arcopagitica*, 1644.

Studies in historical geography which commence with the recent and, as chapters continue, proceed steadily further into antiquity have suffered no dearth of objections. Such an approach tends to emphasise the past, tends to antiquarianism: whereas much geographical theory suggests that the past be considered only when it is necessary to our understanding of the present scene²⁾. This is a difference of emphasis and objections can be raised on both sides but there is another, deeper criticism of retrospective writing; if cause precedes result in daily experience, it should

¹⁾ I owe thanks to Professor H. C. DARBY and H. C. PRINCE, both of the Department of Geography, University College London, for comments on this subject.

²⁾ E. g. R. E. DODGE. The interpretation of sequent occurrence. *Ann. Ass. Amer. Geogr.* XXVIII. 1938. 233—237.

surely do so in works of scholarship whose primary aim is explanation³⁾.

These criticisms have been directed primarily at the retrospective narrative. It is hardly possible to question the frequent necessity, in research, of proceeding from a better documented period into the relative darkness of its predecessor; "the natural progression of research is from the best (or least badly) understood to the most obscure. The most illustrious among us have occasionally made strange mistakes through having neglected to pursue a prudently retrogressive method whenever and wherever it was indicated⁴⁾". It is in this sense that historical, geography has been called "géographie humaine rétrospective"⁵⁾; consideration of the present landscape poses problems of explanation which can only be solved by a retrospective search for their origins.

Questioning arises when the description of results follows the same retrospective pattern as the investigation. Yet this consistency has practical value; the lacunae in research are not hid and the enquiry clearly ends when the data does. The sequential account from a past date to the present is both more attractive and more dangerous; narrative is an ideal form for describing geographical changes but its power lies in its continuity. If data thins out (as, for instance, in England between 400 and 600 AD), either scholarship or the continuity of the narrative must go. The former cannot and if the latter must, the advantage of the sequential narrative over the retrospective account is largely nullified.

Thus the retrospective presentation in historical geography has one general virtue, its use is not dependent on an abundant supply of source material. This practical asset is balanced somewhat by the grammatical complexities of retrospective writing but there is a further advantage of principle. By its very nature, a retrospective account is safeguarded from that most simple and specious error in historical reasoning — *post hoc, propter hoc* — the more dangerous because it is generally unintentional⁶⁾.

Other aspects of the benefits and difficulties of retrospective writing are exemplified in the limited number of works which have adopted this form of

written structure. In 1881 JOSEPH ANDERSON described his survey of Scottish prehistory from the early Christian period backwards as in "the realistic manner"; "as the investigation on which we enter is actually analogous to a journey into unknown regions, the safest way of estimating our positions as we advance will always be by reckoning back to the starting point"⁷⁾. He was an archaeologist; two years later F. SEEBOHM, the historian, assayed to trace the openfield system of cultivation in Britain from a field map of Hitchin drawn in 1816 back to the Roman occupation of England⁸⁾. The origin of field systems and rural settlement patterns has figured much in recent research into the historical geography of France and the works of R. DION (1934) for the country as a whole and A. DÉLÉAGE (1941) for Bourgogne both adopted, to some degree, a retrospective presentation of their results⁹⁾. DION traced eighteenth century differences to the Roman period, DÉLÉAGE proceeded from medieval conditions to prehistoric origins. In addition, several studies of Northwest Germany by W. MÜLLER-WILLE have exploited the possibilities of a retrospective map sequence in determining the patterns of colonisation and land-use in the Dark Ages¹⁰⁾.

These works have demonstrated one inherent difficulty in retrospective enquiry. There is an inevitable tendency to assume that sixteenth century

⁷⁾ Scotland in early Christian times. London. 1881. 22; the work was completed by Scotland in Pagan times. I. Iron Age. 1883, and Scotland in Pagan times. II. Bronze and Stone ages. 1886. Sir Mortimer Wheeler commented on this approach thus: "The archaeologist ... begins in actuality at the top with the latest of his materials, and gradually digs down towards the earlier stuff. And that in fact is how how most of us really think." (Roman archaeology in Wales. London. 1957. 9—10.)

⁸⁾ F. SEEBOHM, The English village community. London. 1883; the sequence of chapters is retrospective. A chapter generally describes the data of one period, and this is connected with the later period described in the chapter preceding by a short retrospective section at the beginning or end of the chapter. This was an historian's work; a geologist recently began a regional geology with most recent deposits and then proceeded backwards on the ground that this presentation best interested the lay reader (G. M. DAVIES, Geology of London and south-east England. London. 1939. III).

⁹⁾ DION began with the landscape of the Paris Basin in the eighteenth century and, in later chapters, compared this with data from the first centuries A. D. It was a short essay, and data from the intervening period was largely passed over (Essai sur la formation du paysage rural français. Tours. 1934.) The work of A. DÉLÉAGE was much more detailed and included some sections tracing landscape features from the eleventh century consistently backwards through the centuries (La végétation, pp. 39—65; L'habitat, pp. 91—113; Les terroirs, pp. 115—148); in other chapters (notably Le défrichement, pp. 67—90) the opposite narrative form appears. (La vie rurale en Bourgogne jusqu'au début du XIe siècle. Mâcon. 1941; 3 vols-text, appendices, and maps.)

¹⁰⁾ W. MÜLLER-WILLE, Zur Kulturgeographie der Göttinger Leinetalung. Göttinger Geogr. Abh. I. 1948. 92; Agrarbauerliche Landschaftstypen in Nordwestdeutschland. Deutscher Geographentag Essen. 1953. 179—186.

³⁾ In this connexion, it is interesting that a forum on whether causes always precede effects provoked no agreement, save perhaps to call the factor which occurred first the cause, and the second the result (Analysis. XVI. 1955/56. 49—58, 104—110; XVII. 1956/57. 5—9, 54—63, 81—86).

⁴⁾ M. BLOCH, The Historian's Craft (trans. P. PUTNAM). London. 1954. 45/46. He had written earlier: «La méthode inverse ... bon gré mal gré, finit toujours par s'imposer, en quelque manière, à l'historien. N'est-il pas inévitable que, à l'ordinaire, les faits les plus reculés soient en même temps les plus obscurs? et comment échapper à la nécessité d'aller du mieux au moins bien connu? ... L'historien ... sous peine de ne pouvoir épeler le grimoire du passé, il leur faut, le plus souvent, lire l'histoire à rebours.» (Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française. 1931, reprint 1952. Paris. XII.)

⁵⁾ R. DION, La géographie humaine rétrospective. Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie. VI. 1949. 3—27.

⁶⁾ A common pitfall when assessing the effects of new technological inventions.

conditions (being studied) resembled those of the seventeenth (already described) unless available data specifically contradicts this. In a narrative from past to present some allowance for tradition and geographical inertia is permissible but such allowance has no basis in regressive studies because later events never affect those before. In practice this means that retrospective search for original forms often overemphasises the antiquity of the subject under enquiry and neglects the extent and rapidity of change in later centuries; DION has since written of his own work "bien des traits, la plupart peut-être, n'ont pas ni la haut antiquité ni la fixité qu'on leur avait tout d'abord prêtées"¹¹).

This difficulty cannot be gainsaid but awareness of its difficulties should make a method of approach more valuable rather than less; a method without any faults were the most dangerous of all because, in the context of human frailty, its claim passes credibility. It is noteworthy, therefore, that in much research on field systems a constructive alternative to retrospective enquiry is hardly possible. Clear definition of a field system needs detailed field maps, rarely available before the sixteenth century, and research on earlier periods generally must proceed from this basis. H. L. GRAY wrote in 1915 "this method of trying to ascertain certain conditions largely through the use of later evidence is not without danger, and from its ill effects neither SEEBOHM's nor MEITZEN's works are free"; but he continued "yet there seems to be no other way of approaching clearly the subject in hand (English Field Systems), whilst it is often only by the aid of late survivals that the earlier phenomena can be interpreted at all"¹²).

Two studies have used a retrospective framework to trace the antecedents not merely of field systems but of the present geographical character, as a whole, of a small area. P. DEFFONTAINES, having experimented with this approach in an urban study of Montauban in 1929¹³ used it on a broader canvas in his regional monograph on the Moyenne Garonne, published in 1932. Unfortunately the larger study only reproduced the deficiencies of the first; an irregular and incomplete coverage of sources rendered the account much more interrupted than was necessary and the principle, accepted by the author, that retrospective enquiry should be limited to data directly necessary to explain present conditions meant that some elements in the landscape were pursued through seven centuries, others for less than one. This uneven treatment was further exacerbated by the final major inconsistency; though the order of the chapters was

retrospective, within them the account was largely narrative. The nineteenth century changes were described before the eighteenth, but the early nineteenth before the late nineteenth.

It is hardly surprising that this monograph (a major contribution to regional knowledge, a pioneer in the detailed use of photographs, and with a most agreeable style) aroused criticism of its written structure¹⁴). Questioning was outwardly on grounds of principle but no fundamental theoretical deficiency in a retrospective approach was found by the reviewers and their comments were clearly provoked primarily by the internal inconsistencies of the work.

DEFFONTAINES selected only that past data which, to his mind, bore directly on the present; his was not a work in historical geography and it thus stands in contrast to the shorter essay of H. DÖRRIES on part of the Swiss Alpenvorland¹⁵). This account began with the natural landscape (Naturlandschaft), the background for the succeeding account of the contemporary cultural landscape (Kulturlandschaft)¹⁶); then followed an analysis of past differences and variations (Wandlungen), firstly modern, secondly medieval, finally prehistoric. DÖRRIES described them as Wandlungen advisedly; he objected, as did BROEK later¹⁷), to the unfortunate implications (post hoc, propter hoc among others) of studies of development (Entwicklung). The essay ended not with a dissertation on method but the statement that the desired end had been achieved—the occupation and settlement of the area had been traced back to its beginnings.

DÖRRIES' study is valuable both because of its consistency (if not slavishly) retrospective sequence and because of its completeness. It demonstrates that retrospective writing is possible without grammatical disaster and marks the distinction between the geographical study of the present which needs some retrospective reference to the recent past and historical geography *sui generis*¹⁸), the full retrospective account which may extend, in the west European context, as far back as the first agricultural settlement of the Neolithic¹⁹).

The years since DÖRRIES wrote have seen no substantial increase of retrospective writing in historical geography. A recent unpublished thesis

¹¹) Réflexions de méthode à propos de «La Grande Limagne» de MAX DERRUAU. Ann. de Géogr. LX. 1951. 27.

¹²) H. L. GRAY, English Field Systems. Harvard. 1915. 16.

¹³) Montauban, étude de géographie urbaine. Ann. de Géogr. XXXVIII. 1929. 460—469; he introduced further complexity by trying to divide the past economic changes in the town into a series of cycles. A clearer use of this method of analysis is found in his later study: Une évolution agricole en pays tropical, l'agriculture en Brésil. Ann. de Géogr. XLVIII. 1939. 385—392.

¹⁴) P. DEFFONTAINES, Les hommes et leur travaux dans les pays de la moyenne Garonne. Lille. 1932, esp. p. 29. See the reviews by D. FAUCHER. Ann. du Midi. XLV. 1933. 321; A. DEMANGEON, Ann. de Géogr. XLII. 1933. 640—643 and H. ORMSBY, Geogr. Journ. LXXXI. 1933. 545—546.

¹⁵) H. DÖRRIES, Zur Entwicklung der Kulturlandschaft im nordostschweizerischen Alpenvorlande. Mitt. Geogr. Ges. Hamburg. XXXIX. 1928. 180—202.

¹⁶) The difficulties and deficiencies of such a division between Naturlandschaft and Kulturlandschaft (demonstrated, for instance, in: R. HARTSHORNE, The nature of geography. Lancaster, Penn. 1939. 149—174) are not directly relevant to the present theme.

¹⁷) J. O. M. BROEK, The Santa Clara valley. Utrecht. 1932. 10.

¹⁸) All geography includes some retrospection, as pointed out by E. JUILLARD, Aux frontières de l'histoire et de la géographie. Rev. historique. CCXV. 1956. 273.

¹⁹) R. DION, op. cit. 1949. 3—27.

commenced with a reconstruction of the geography of the Weald of Southeast England in the early seventeenth century and then traced the antecedents of this scene, by retrospective enquiry, back to the first agricultural settlements. At two points in the enquiry the regional geography was reconstructed (the early fourteenth century; the late eleventh century) so that the interconnection of the various elements treated in retrospective enquiry might not be neglected²⁰). Recent published work shews little evidence of similar patterns of writing²¹). The retrospective approach has difficulties, dangers even but when no approach is exempt from these it would seem that truth would be furthered by approaching a problem from as many legitimate angles as possible. It would be regrettable if retrospective writing in historical geography fell into complete desuetude.

DIE STRASSEN-TUNNEL DURCH DEN MONT BLANC UND UNTER DEM GR. ST. BERNHARD

Bemerkungen zu einer verkehrsgeographischen Karte
der Südwest-Schweiz

WALTER STAUB

Die weitaus am stärksten besetzte Nord-Süd-Eisenbahnverbindung durch die Schweiz ist die Gotthard-Linie von Basel nach Chiasso, eröffnet 1882. Auch der Kraftwagenverkehr über und durch den Gotthard steht heute an erster Stelle. Nur in weitem Abstand folgen Simplonlinie und Simplonpaß. Die Kenntnis erst dieser Tatsachen erlaubt eine richtige Beurteilung dessen, was die Kartenskizze zeigen möchte: die Sackgasse im Verkehr im Südwesten der Schweizer Alpen und der Versuch, sie zu überwinden.

Bereits im Altertum führte im Südwesten der Alpen der St.-Bernhard-Paß von Nord nach Süd in die Po-Ebene. Historisch ist dieser Paß überragend der bedeutendste der Schweizer Alpenpässe. Mit 2469 m Paßhöhe ist er einer der höchsten Pässe überhaupt, 470 m höher als der Simplonpaß. Durch das liebliche Val d'Entremont, ein Nebental des Rhônetales, gelangt man in rauhe, lawinengefährdete Alpenszenarien; der kleine Paß-See ist acht Monate im Jahr gefroren. Bereits vor den Römern besorgten keltische Stämme einen Frachtverkehr über den Paß.

²⁰) J. L. M. GULLEY, *The Wealden landscape in the early seventeenth century and its antecedents*. Unpublished Ph. D. thesis, London 1960. The chapters followed thus: I. The Wealden landscape in the early seventeenth century; II. Late medieval changes; III. The Wealden landscape in the early fourteenth century; IV. Early medieval changes; V. The Wealden landscape in 1086; VI. Pre-Conquest colonisation and settlement in the Weald; VII. The Wealden Urlandschaft. This combination of cross-sections at one time with narratives of intervening changes has some analogies with J. O. M. BROEK, op. cit. 1932.

²¹) One exception is M. A. ARNOULD, who adopted a retrospective presentation for much of his essay: *La navigabilité ancienne de la Sambre, note de paléogéographie* (Mélanges Félix Rousseau: études sur l'histoire du pays mosan au moyen âge. Bruxelles. 1958. 47—69).

Eine Blütezeit setzte ein im 11. Jahrh. als, 1049, das berühmte Hospiz auf der Paßhöhe gegründet war. 1800 überquerte Napoleon die Alpen mit seiner Armee von Nord nach Süd auf diesem Paß.

Mit der Fertigstellung der Gotthardstraße 1830, besonders aber nach der Eröffnung der Gotthardbahn 1882 trat der St. Bernhard in den Hintergrund. Eine der größten Verkehrsverlagerungen Europas setzte ein; zwar wehrte sich die Westschweiz dagegen, auf den Zustand als Bauernland zurückgedrängt zu werden. Paris und Dijon wurden um die Jahrhundertwende die Ausgangsstädte für die Bahnlinie über Frasné—Vallorbe—Lausanne—Martigny—Brig—Simplon—Domodossola—Mailand. Der Kanton Bern baute 1913 die Lötschbergbahn als Zufahrtsstrecke zur 1906 beendeten Simplonlinie. Je eine Zugkombination von Paris und eine von Frasné führt heute täglich über Les Verrières (Grenze) nach Neuenburg und Bern; ferner je eine Zugverbindung aus Paris und Belfort über Delle—Delsberg—Biel nach Bern und durch den Lötschberg zur Simplonlinie nach Domodossola. Über Genf werden keine internationalen Züge geführt; grundsätzlich muß in Genf umgestiegen werden. Die Hauptlinie aus Frankreich und der Westschweiz muß also im Wallis das große Knie bei Martigny im Rhonetal mitmachen.

Der wachsende Kraftwagenverkehr zwischen Frankreich und Italien, besonders nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg, brachte völlig neue Projekte auf den Plan. Das höchste Bergmassiv der Westalpen, der Mont Blanc, sollte durch einen Tunnel für Kraftwagen durchbohrt werden; ein Autotunnel an Stelle eines Bahntunnels. Bereits 1953 beschloß die französische Nationalversammlung die Unterstützung des Projekts, dessen Verwirklichung durch den Weltkrieg verlangsamt worden war. Im November 1958 setzte die erste Bohrmaschine auf französischer Seite über Chamonix an, 1959 auf italienischer Seite. 1961 sollte der Mont-Blanc-Tunnel dem Verkehr übergeben werden.

Die Inangriffnahme des Mont-Blanc-Tunnels brachte der Westschweiz eine neue Verkehrslage. Sollte sie nicht ins Hintertreffen des Verkehrs geraten, mußte eine Zufahrt nach dem Aostatal und Turin geschaffen werden. Ein Aktionscomité wurde 1947 gegründet. In Turin und in Lausanne wurden Pläne für den Ausbau der St.-Bernhard-Straße in Angriff genommen, wobei sich die Fiat-Werke zur Übernahme eines bedeutenden Teils des Aktienkapitals der neugegründeten privaten Gesellschaft verpflichtete. Das bereits heute im Bau begriffene Projekt sieht einen kürzesten Alpen-Tunnel vor, von nur 5855 m Länge und beginnend in einer Höhe von 1918 m. Der übrige Teil der Straße wird durch Verbauungen gesichert, wie sie zum Lawinenschutz schon seit längerer Zeit bei Alpenstraßen üblich sind.

Für die beiden Straßenbauten machen wir noch folgende Angaben:

Der Mont-Blanc-Tunnel

Auf französischer Seite nimmt der Mont-Blanc-Tunnel seinen Anfang im Flecken Les Pélerins bei Chamonix in Hoch-Savoyen, auf 1203 m Meereshöhe. Der Tunnel wird 11,9 km lang sein (gegen 19,8 km des Simplon-Tunnels). Das Südportal auf italienischer