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Isabella Lepri

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- <sup>1</sup> In this book, Isabelle Daillant succeeds in combining theoretically sophisticated anthropological analysis and rich and personal ethnography, to explore in innovative and original ways the relationship between sociality and spatiality among the Chimane of lowland Bolivia.
- <sup>2</sup> It is a very scholarly work and in many ways a very readable one too, although the extensive and thorough treatment of Chimane kinship will probably appeal more to the specialist reader; however, the analysis never loses sight of the lives of the Chimane themselves. The book clearly benefits from the long-standing first-hand acquaintance of the author with the subject of her inquiry and the theoretical discussion evidently arises from a solid ethnographic base.
- <sup>3</sup> The book can be divided into four broad areas of interest. The introduction and the first chapter describe the arrival of the anthropologist, the context of the research and the place currently occupied by the Chimane vis-à-vis their neighbours and the national society in general. The following section (chapters 2-6) focuses on Chimane kinship, covering terminology, residential and marriage rules, and explains their Dravidian cognatic system. The third section (chapters 7-10) moves to the religious and supernatural domain, including myth, shamanism, the supernatural landscape and ritual.

In the final section, the author describes traditional patterns of social organisation (chapter 11) and proposes a synthesis of the Chimane model of space (chapter 12).

- 4 *Sens dessus dessous* is an important piece of work for a number of reasons. First, it addresses a still under-researched region, the Andean piedmont of Bolivia, and sheds light on the life and customs of a people about which relatively little has been written to date – an exception being Rebecca Ellis' (1996) as yet unpublished doctoral thesis.
  - 5 Secondly, and no less significantly, Daillant's analysis of the Chimane data draws an interesting contrast with the model of « concentric dualism » so well established in Amazonian kinship theory today. This places her material firmly within comparative Amazonian literature. The author stresses how the Chimane vision of the world subverts the list of oppositions which is often held by scholars to be quasi-universal among Amazonian peoples: interior/exterior; centre/periphery; close/distant; self/other; kin/affine. Significantly, for the Chimane, the opposition kin/affine is not concentric but diametrical. This kind of opposition is also found in Chimane topography, which enables Daillant to establish a correspondence between Chimane conceptions of space and society (hence the book's title). In doing so, she also brings kinship structures and rules to life by demonstrating their relevance for understanding the Chimane lived world (though arguably this is possible because the Chimane are themselves strict followers of kinship rules).
  - 6 The non-Amazonianist reader would probably wish further comparison outside the region for this work to be of broader appeal. Nevertheless, this is undoubtedly a piece of anthropological writing of notable quality and thoroughness, which manages to combine theory and ethnography in such a way as to attain two often incompatible goals: presenting a lively and faithful portrayal of a society while also being able to step back and extrapolate the wider significance of what is presented beyond the specificity of the subject.
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## AUTEURS

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