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# Algeria 1960

The disenchantment of the world

The sense of honour

The Kabyle house or the world reversed

Essays by

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brothers, ever to be openly avowed as such and thus to become the explicit principle of economic transactions, and ultimately of all exchanges between men.<sup>35</sup>

35. Although, in order to do justice to the complex dynamics of practice, this text may at times appear to autonomize the agents' strategies in relation to the objective structures, the fact remains that the principle underlying the production of strategies (the *habitus*) is itself the product of the objective structures; and to succeed in and with their strategies the agents must constantly adjust them to the objective structures. The foregoing analyses of the strategies with which the Kabyle peasants strive to maintain and increase their capital of honour are an inseparable part of a reconstruction of the system of the objective regularities and the material and symbolic stakes of the political and economic game: reinserted in this context, or, more precisely, in the context of the system of reproduction strategies, the practices of honour reveal their function as strategies intended to reproduce symbolic capital, which they fulfil in the reproduction of an economic and political order of which the ethos of honour, the principle generating such strategies, is itself the product.

## The Kabyle house or the world reversed<sup>1</sup>

"Man is the lamp of the outside, woman the lamp of the inside."

The interior of the Kabyle house is rectangular in shape and divided into two parts, at a point one-third of the way along its length, by a small openwork wall half as high as the house. The larger of the two parts, approximately fifty centimetres higher and covered with a layer of black clay and cowdung which the women polish with a stone, is reserved for human use. The smaller part, paved with flagstones, is occupied by the animals. A door with two wings provides access to both rooms. On top of the dividing wall are kept, at one end, the small earthenware jars or esparto-grass baskets used to store the provisions kept for immediate consumption, such as figs, flour, and leguminous plants, and at the other end, near the door, the water jars. Above the stable is a loft where, next to all kinds of tools and implements, quantities of hay and straw to be used as animal fodder are piled up; it is here that the women and children usually sleep, especially in winter.<sup>2</sup> Against the gable wall, known as the wall (or, more precisely, the "side") of the upper part or of the *kanun*, stands a brickwork construction in the recesses and holes of which the kitchen utensils (the ladle, the cooking-pot, the dish used to cook wheatcake – *aghrum* – and other earthenware objects blackened by the fire) are kept and at each end of which are placed large jars

1. This text was first published in *Echanges et communications: mélanges offerts à Claude Lévi-Strauss à l'occasion de son 60e anniversaire*, ed. J. Pouillon and P. Marande (Paris and the Hague: Mouton, 1970), pp. 739–58, and reprinted in P. Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (Paris and Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1972).

2. The place for sleep and sexual relations seems to vary, but only within the "dark part" of the house. The whole family may sleep in the loft, particularly in winter, or only women without husbands (widows, divorced women, etc.) and the children; or the family may sleep next to the wall of darkness; or the man may sleep on the upper part of the dividing wall, the woman going to bed on the lower part, near the door, but joining her husband in the darkness.

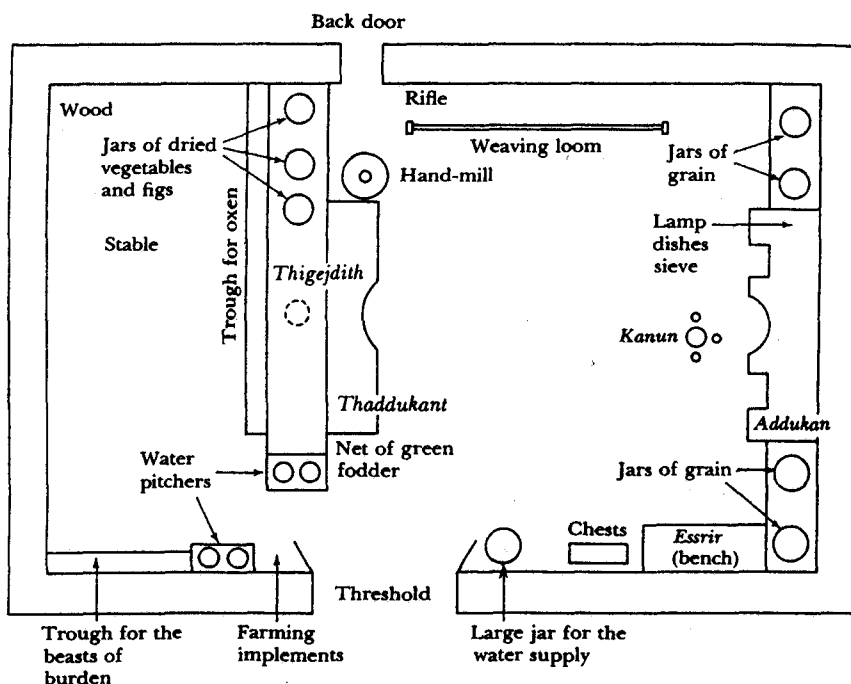


Fig. 1. Plan of the house

filled with grain. In front of this construction is the fireplace, a circular hollow three or four centimetres deep at its centre, around which, arranged in a triangle, are three large stones to hold the cooking utensils.<sup>3</sup>

3. All previous descriptions of the Berber house, even the most precise and methodical ones (such as R. Maunier's, "Le culte domestique en Kabylie" and "Les rites de la construction en Kabylie", in *Mélanges de sociologie nord-africaine* (Paris: Alcan, 1930), pp. 120-77) or those richest in detail concerning the internal organization of space (such as those by E. Laoust, *Mots et choses berbères* (Paris: Challamel, 1920), pp. 50-3, and *Etude sur le dialecte berbère du Chenoua comparé avec celui des Beni Manacer et des Beni Sala* (Paris: Leroux, 1912), pp. 12-15, and H. Genevoix, *L'habitation kabyle* (Fichier de documentation berbère, no. 46, Fort National, 1955)), for all their meticulousness, contain systematic lacunae, particularly as regards the location and orientation of things and activities, because they never look upon the objects and actions as parts of a symbolic system. It is necessary to postulate that each of the phenomena observed derives its necessity and its meaning from its relationship with all the others. This alone enables one to carry out the sorts of observation and questioning that are capable of bringing out the facts which escape any unsystematic observation and which the informants are unable to provide spontaneously because they take them for granted. This postulate is validated by the very findings of the research which it makes possible: the special position of the house within the system of magical representations and ritual practices justifies the initial abstraction by which it is taken out of the larger system so as to be treated as a system in its own right.

In front of the wall facing the door, generally referred to by the same name as the outside wall that is seen from the rear courtyard (*tasga*),<sup>4</sup> or else called the weaving-loom wall or the facing wall (one faces it on going in) stands the weaving loom. The opposite wall, where the door is, is called the wall of darkness, or the wall of sleep, the maiden, or the tomb;<sup>5</sup> a bench wide enough for a mat to be spread out on it is set against this wall. This is the place set aside for the festal sheep or small calf, sometimes for the wood or the water pitcher. Clothes, mats, and blankets are hung, in the daytime, on a peg or a wooden crossbar next to the wall of darkness, or else they are put under the dividing bench. Thus, the *kanun* wall is opposed to the stable as the high to the low (*adaynin*, stable, comes from the root *ada*, the bottom), and the weaving-loom wall is opposed to the door wall as the light to the dark. One might be tempted to give a purely technical explanation of these oppositions, since the weaving-loom wall, facing the door, which itself faces eastward, is the most brightly lit and the stable is indeed at a lower level than the rest (the house usually being built at a right angle to the contour lines, to facilitate the drainage of animal waste and dirty water). However, a number of indices suggest that these oppositions are the centre of a cluster of parallel oppositions the necessity of which never stems entirely from technical imperatives and functional requirements.<sup>6</sup>

The dark, nocturnal, lower part of the house, the place for things that are damp, green, or raw – jars of water placed on the benches on either side of the stable entrance or next to the wall of darkness, wood, green fodder – and also the place for natural beings – oxen

4. With this one exception, the walls are designated by two different names, according to whether they are considered from the outside or the inside. The outside is plastered over with a trowel by the men, whereas the inside is whitewashed and hand-decorated by the women. This opposition between the two points of view is, as we shall see, a fundamental one.
5. It is said of a father with many daughters: "He has evil days in store for him." Other sayings: "The maiden is the dusk", "The maiden is the wall of darkness."
6. The setting of the house in geographical space and social space, and also its internal organization, are one of the loci where symbolic or social necessity is articulated with technical necessity. This is a case where the principles of the symbolic organization of the world cannot be implemented freely but have, as it were, to come to an arrangement with external constraints, those of technique, for example, which require the house to be built perpendicular to the contours and facing the rising sun (or, in other cases, those of the social structure, which require every new house to be built in a particular locality, defined by genealogy). It is, perhaps, in such cases that the symbolic system reveals its full capacity to reinterpret, in terms of its own logic, the data supplied to it by other systems.

and cows, donkeys and mules – natural activities – sleep, sexual intercourse, childbirth, and also death – is opposed, as nature to culture, to the light-filled, noble, upper part: this is the place for human beings and especially the guest, for fire and objects made with fire, such as the lamp, kitchen utensils, the rifle – a symbol of the male point of honour (*nif*) which protects female honour (*hurma*) – and the loom, the symbol of all protection; and it is also the site of the two specifically cultural activities performed within the house, weaving and cooking. These relations of opposition are expressed through a whole set of convergent indices which both establish them and receive their meaning from them. A guest who is to be honoured is invited to sit in front of the weaving loom (the verb *qabel*, to honour, also means, as we have seen, to face up to a person and to face the east).<sup>7</sup> When a man has been badly received, he will say: "He made me sit beside his wall of darkness, as in a grave." The wall of darkness is also called the invalid's wall, and the phrase "to keep to the wall" means to be ill and, by extension, idle: a sick person's bed is in fact placed next to this wall, especially in winter. The connection between the dark part of the house and death is also shown in the fact that the washing of the dead takes place at the entrance to the stable.<sup>8</sup> It is traditionally said that the loft, which is made entirely of wood, is supported by the stable as the corpse is carried by the bearers; *tha'richth* designates both the loft and the stretcher which is used

7. The opposition between the part reserved for receiving guests and the more intimate part (an opposition also found in the nomad's tent, which is divided by a curtain into two parts, one open to guests and the other reserved for the women) is expressed in ritual forecasts such as the following: when a cat, a beneficent animal, enters the house with a feather in its fur, or a thread of white wool, if it goes towards the hearth, this portends the arrival of guests, who will be given a meal with meat; if it goes towards the stable, this means that cow will be bought, if the season is spring, or an ox if it is ploughing time.

8. The homology between sleep and death is explicitly stated in the precept that on going to bed one should first lie for a moment on one's right side and then on one's left, because the first position is that of the dead in the tomb. The funeral chants represent the grave, "the house underground", as an inverted house (white/dark, high/low, adorned with paintings/crudely dug out). In doing so they make use of homonymies such as the following, associated with a similarity in shape: "I found people digging a grave,/With their pickaxes they carved out the walls,/They were making benches [*thiddukanin*],/With mortar below the mud" – so runs a chant sung at wakes (see Genevoix, *L'habitation kabyle*, p. 27). *Thaddukan* (plural *thiddukanin*) designates the bench set against the dividing wall, opposite the one against the gable wall (*addukan*), and also the bank of earth on which a dead man's head rests in the grave (the slight hollow in which a dead woman's head is laid is called *thakwath*, as are the small recesses in the walls of the house, in which small objects are kept).

to carry the dead. It is clear why a guest cannot, without offence, be invited to sleep in the loft, which is opposed to the weaving-loom wall in the same way as is the wall of the tomb.

It is also in front of the loom wall, facing the door, in full daylight, that the young bride is made to sit, as if to be shown off, like the decorated plates that hang there. When one knows that a baby girl's umbilical cord is buried behind the loom, and that, to protect a maiden's virginity, she is made to step through the warp, from the side facing the door to the side next to the loom wall, then the function of magical protection attributed to the loom becomes evident.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, from the standpoint of her male kin, the girl's whole life is in a sense summed up in the successive positions she symbolically occupies vis-à-vis the weaving loom, the symbol of male protection.<sup>10</sup> Before marriage she is placed behind the loom, in its shadow, under its protection, just as she is kept under the protection of her father and brothers; on her wedding day she is seated in front of the loom, with her back to it, with the light upon her, and thereafter she will sit weaving, with her back to the wall of light, behind the loom. The bridegroom is called "the veil cast over shames", the male point of honour being the sole protection for female honour or, more accurately, the only "fence" against the shame the threat of which is contained in every woman ("Shame is the maiden").<sup>11</sup>

The low, dark part of the house is also opposed to the upper part as the female to the male. Not only does the division of labour between the sexes (based on the same principle of division as the organization of space) give the woman responsibility for most of the objects belonging to the dark part of the house, the carrying of water, wood, and manure, for instance;<sup>12</sup> but the opposition

9. Amongst the Arabs, to perform the magic rite supposed to render women unfit for sexual relations, the betrothed girl is made to step through the slackened warp on the loom, from the outside towards the inside, that is, from the centre of the room towards the wall next to which the weavers sit and work. The same operation, in the opposite direction, undoes the charm (see W. Marçais and A. Guiga, *Textes arabes de Takrouna* (Paris: Leroux, 1925), p. 395).

10. Laoust derives from the root *zell* (to weave) the word *tazellat*, which, among the Berbers of Morocco, designates the protection given to every person travelling in foreign territory or the payment the protector receives in return for his protection (*Mots et choses berbères*, p. 126).

11. See above, pp. 95–132.

12. When a new pair of oxen are first taken into the stable, they are received and led in by the mistress of the house:

between the upper part and the lower part reproduces, within the internal space of the house, the opposition between the inside and the outside, between female space – the house and its garden, the place *par excellence* of *haram*, i.e. the sacred and forbidden – and male space. The lower part of the house is the place of the most intimate secret within the world of intimacy, that is, the place of all that pertains to sexuality and procreation. More or less empty during the daytime, when all the (exclusively feminine) activity in the house is centred on the fireplace, the dark part is full at night, full of human beings and also full of animals, since the oxen and cows, unlike the mules and donkeys, never spend the night outdoors; and it is never fuller, so to speak, than in the wet season, when the men sleep indoors and the oxen and cows are fed in the stable.

There is a more direct way of establishing the relationship which links the fertility of humans and of the fields with the dark part of the house, a privileged instance of the relation of equivalence between fertility and the dark, the full (or the process of swelling) and the damp, which recurs throughout the mythico-ritual system. Whereas the grain intended for consumption is, as we have seen, kept in large earthenware jars next to the wall of the upper part, on either side of the fireplace, the grain kept for sowing is stored in the dark part of the house, either in sheepskins or wooden chests placed at the foot of the wall of darkness, sometimes under the conjugal bed; or else in chests placed under the bench against the dividing wall, where the woman, who normally sleeps at a lower level, by the stable entrance, comes to join her husband. When one knows that birth is always the rebirth of an ancestor, since the life circle (which should be called the *cycle of generation*) is completed every three generations (a proposition which cannot be demonstrated here),<sup>13</sup> it can be understood how the dark part of the house can simultaneously and without contradiction be the place of death and of procreation, or birth as resurrection.<sup>14</sup>

13. See Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: University Press, 1977), p. 155.

14. House building, which always takes place when a son is married and which symbolizes the birth of a new family, is forbidden in May, as is marriage. The transporting of the beams, which, as we shall see, are identified with the master of the house, is called *tha'richth*, like the loft and like the stretcher used to carry a corpse or a wounded animal that has to be slain far from the house. It occasions a social ceremony exactly similar in its meaning to that of burial. By virtue of its imperative character, the ceremonial

But this is not all: at the centre of the dividing wall, between "the house of the human beings" and "the house of the animals", stands the main pillar, supporting the "master beam" and the whole framework of the house. Now, the master beam (*asalas alemmas*, a masculine term), which connects the gables and extends the protection of the male part of the house to the female part, is explicitly identified with the master of the house, whereas the main pillar, a forked tree trunk (*thigedjith*, a feminine term) upon which it rests, is identified with the wife (the Beni Khellili call it *Mas'uda*, a feminine first name which means "the happy one"), and their interlocking symbolizes sexual union (represented in the wall paintings, in the form of the union of the beam and the pillar, by two superimposed forked shapes).<sup>15</sup> The main beam, supporting the roof, is identified with the protector of the family honour; offerings are often made to it and it is around this beam that, above the fireplace, the snake, the "guardian" of the house, is coiled. Symbolizing the fertilizing potency of man and also death followed by resurrection, the snake is sometimes represented (in the Collo region, for example) on the earthenware jars made by the women and containing the seedcorn. The snake is also said to descend sometimes into the house, into the lap of a sterile woman, calling her "mother", or to coil itself around the central pillar, growing longer by the length of a coil each time it takes suck.<sup>16</sup> In Darna, according to René Maunier, a sterile woman ties her girdle to the central beam; the foreskin and the reed that has been used for circumcision are hung from the same beam; if the beam is heard to crack those present hasten to say "May it be for the good", because this portends the death of the head of the family. When a son is born, the wish is made that "he may

form it assumes and the extent of the group it mobilizes, this collective task (*thiwizi*) has no equivalent other than burial. As much *hasana* (merit) accrues from taking part in the carrying of the beams, a pious act always performed without remuneration, as from taking part in the collective activities connected with funerals (digging the grave, extracting the stone slabs or transporting them, helping to carry the coffin or attending the burial).

15. See M. Dewulder, "Peintures murales et pratiques magiques dans la tribu des Ouadhias", *Revue Africaine*, 1954, pp. 14–15.

16. On the day of *tharurith wazal* (8 April in the Julian calendar), a decisive turning point in the farming year between the wet season and the dry season, the shepherd goes out very early in the morning and draws water which he sprinkles on the central beam. At harvest time, the last sheaf, cut in accordance with a special ritual (or a double ear of corn), is hung from the central beam, where it remains all year.

be the master beam of the house", and when he has completed the ritual fast for the first time, he takes his first meal on the roof, that is, on the central beam (in order, so it is said, that he may be able to carry beams).

A number of riddles and sayings explicitly identify woman with the central pillar. A young bride is told: "May God make you the pillar firmly planted in the middle of the house." Another riddle says: "She stands upright but has no feet." This fork open upwards and not set on its feet is female nature, fertile, or rather, capable of being fertilized.<sup>17</sup> Against the central pillar the leather bottles full of corn, *hiji*, are piled up and here the marriage is consummated.<sup>18</sup> Thus this symbolic summary of the house, the union of *asalas* and *thigedjith*, which extends its fertilizing protection over all human marriage, is, in a sense, the primordial marriage, the marriage of the ancestors, which, like ploughing, is also the marriage of the sky and the earth. "Woman is the foundations, man the master beam", says another proverb. *Asalas*, defined in a riddle as "born in the earth and buried in the sky", fertilizes *thigedjith*, which is rooted in the soil, the place of the ancestors, the masters of all fertility, and open towards the sky.<sup>19</sup>

Thus the house is organized in accordance with a set of homologous oppositions – fire: water:: cooked: raw:: high: low:: light: dark:: day: night:: male: female:: *nif*: *hurma*:: fertilizing: able to be fertilized:: culture: nature. But the same oppositions also exist between the house as a whole and the rest of the universe. Considered in relation to the external world – the male world of public life and farming work – the house, the universe of the women, the

17. A young bride who adapts well to her new house is praised with the expression *tha'mmar*, meaning (among other things – see n. 30 below) "she is full" and "she fills".

18. Among the Berbers of the Aurès, the consummation of marriage takes place on a Monday, a Thursday, or a Saturday, which are *dies fasti*. The day before, the maidens of the bridegroom's family pile up *hiji* against the central pillar – six leather bottles dyed red, green, yellow, and violet (representing the bride) and a seventh, white one (the bridegroom), all of which are filled with corn. At the base of *hiji*, an old woman throws salt to drive away evil spirits, plants a needle in the ground to increase the bridegroom's virility and lays down a mat, turned towards the east, which will be the couple's bed for a week. The women of the bride's family perfume *hiji*, while her mother (just as is done at the start of ploughing) throws a shower of dates into the air, which the children scramble for. The next day, the bride is carried to the foot of *hiji* by a close kinsman of the groom, and her mother again throws flour, dates, swollen wheat, sugar, and honey.

19. In certain regions the ploughshare is placed in the fork of the central pillar with its point turned towards the door.

world of intimacy and secrecy, is *haram*, that is to say, both sacred and illicit for any man who is not a part of it (hence the expression used in swearing an oath: "May my wife [or, my house] become illicit [*haram*] for me if..."). As the place of the sacred of the left hand, *hurma*, with which all the properties associated with the dark part of the house are bound up, it is placed in the safekeeping of the male point of honour (*nif*) just as the dark part of the house is placed under the protection of the master beam. Every violation of the sacred space therefore takes on the social meaning of sacrilege. Thus, theft from an inhabited house is treated in customary law as a heinous act – an offence against the *nif* of the head of the family and an outrage upon the *hurma* of the house and consequently the *hurma* of the whole community.<sup>20</sup>

The woman can only be said to be shut up in the house if it is also pointed out that the man is kept out of it, at least in the daytime.<sup>21</sup> As soon as the sun has risen, in summer he must be out in the fields or at the assembly house; in winter, if he is not in the fields, he must be in the assembly place or on the benches set in the shelter of the pent-roof over the door to the courtyard. Even at night, at least in the dry season, the men and the boys, as soon as they have been circumcised, sleep outside the house, either near the haystacks, on the threshing floor, beside the shackled mule and donkey, or on the fig-drying floor, or in the fields, or more rarely in the *thajma'th*. A man who spends too much time at home in the daytime is suspect or ridiculous: he is "a house man", who "broods at home like a hen at roost". A self-respecting man must offer himself to be seen, constantly put himself in the gaze of others, confront them, face up to them (*qabel*). He is a man among men (*argaz yer irgazen*).<sup>22</sup> Hence the importance attached to the games of honour, a sort of theatrical performance, played out in front of others – informed spectators who know the text and all the stage

20. A guest gives the mistress of the house a sum of money called "the sight". This happens not only when a guest is invited into the house for the first time but when, on the third day of a marriage, a visit is paid to the bride's family.

21. The duality of rhythm related to the division between the dry season and the wet season manifests itself, *inter alia*, in the domestic order. Thus in summer the opposition between the lower part and the higher part of the house takes the form of the opposition between the house proper, where the women and children retire to bed and where the stores are kept, and the courtyard where hearth and hand-mill are set up, meals are eaten, and feasts and ceremonies take place.

22. Relations between men must be established outdoors: "Friends are outdoor friends, not *kanun* friends."

business and are able to appreciate the slightest variations. It is understandable that all biological activities, sleeping, eating, procreating, should be banished from the specifically cultural universe and relegated to the house, the sanctuary of intimacy and the secrets of nature, the world of woman, who is consigned to the management of nature and excluded from public life.<sup>23</sup> In contrast to man's work, which is performed outdoors, woman's work is essentially obscure and hidden ("God conceals it"): "Inside the house, woman is always on the move, she bustles like a fly in whey; outside the house, nothing of her work is seen." Two very similar sayings define woman's estate as that of one who can know no other abode than the house, a tomb above the ground, and the tomb, a house underground. "Your house is your tomb", "Woman has but two dwellings, the house and the tomb."

Thus, the opposition between the house and the men's assembly, between private life and public life, or, if you will, between the full light of day and the secrecy of night, corresponds exactly to the opposition between the dark, nocturnal, lower part of the house and the noble, brightly lit, upper part.<sup>24</sup> The opposition between the external world and the house only takes on its full significance when it is seen that one of the terms of this relation, i.e. the house, is itself divided in accordance with the same principles that oppose it to the other term. So it is both true and false to say that the external world is opposed to the house as the male to the female, day to night, fire to water, etc., since the second term in each of these oppositions divides each time into itself and its opposite.<sup>25</sup>

In short, the most apparent opposition – male (or day, fire, etc.)/female – is liable to mask the opposition male/(male-female/female-female) and, consequently, the homology male/female::male-female/female-female. It can be seen from this that the first opposition is only a transformation of the second, pre-

23. "The hen does not lay eggs in the market", as a saying puts it.

24. The opposition between the house and the *thajma'th* is seen clearly in different designs of the two buildings. Whereas the house is entered by the door in the front wall, the assembly building takes the form of a long covered passage, completely open at the two gables, and which is crossed from one side to the other.

25. This structure is also found in other areas of the mythico-ritual system. The day is divided into night and day, but the day is itself divided into a diurnal-diurnal part (morning) and a nocturnal-diurnal part (evening). The year is divided into a dry season and a wet season, but the dry season is made up of a dry-dry part and a wet-dry part. A similar structure is observed in the political order, expressed in the saying: "My brother is my enemy, my brother's enemy is my enemy."

supposing a change in the system of reference, whereby the female-female ceases to be opposed to the male-female and, instead, the whole which they make up is opposed to a third term: male-female/female-female → female(= male-female+female-female)/male.

The house, a microcosm organized by the same oppositions and the same homologies which order the whole universe, stands in a relation of homology with the rest of the universe. But, from another point of view, the world of the house taken as a whole stands in a relation of opposition to the rest of the world, an opposition whose principles are none other than those which organize both the internal space of the house and the rest of the world and, more generally, all areas of existence. Thus, the opposition between the world of female life and the world of the city of men is based on the same principles as the two systems of oppositions which it opposes to one another. It follows from this that the application to opposed areas of the same *principium divisionis* which establishes their opposition ensures economy and a surplus of consistency, without involving confusion between those areas. The structure  $a:b::b_1:b_2$  is doubtless one of the simplest and most powerful that a mythico-ritual system could use, since it cannot counterpose without simultaneously uniting, and is capable of integrating an infinite number of data into a single order by the endlessly repeated application of the same principle of division. It also follows that each of the two parts of the house (and, by the same token, each of the objects that are put there and each of the activities carried on there) is, in a sense, qualified at two degrees, that is, first as female (nocturnal, dark) insofar as it belongs to the universe of the house, and secondly as male or female insofar as it belongs to one or the other of the divisions of that universe. Thus, for example, when a proverb says "Man is the lamp of the outside, woman the lamp of the inside", this must be taken to mean that man is the true light, the light of day, and woman the light of darkness, a dark light; and we know from other sources that woman is to the moon as man is to the sun. Similarly, by her work on wool, woman produces the beneficent protection of weaving, whose whiteness symbolizes happiness;<sup>26</sup>

26. "White days" are happy days. One function of the marriage rites is to make the woman "white" (sprinkling of milk, etc.).

the weaving loom, the instrument *par excellence* of female activity, which stands facing the east like the plough, its male homologue, is at the same time the east of the internal space so that, within the system of the house, it has a male value as a symbol of protection. Again, the hearth, the navel of the house (which is itself identified with the belly of a mother), where the embers smoulder with a secret, hidden, female fire, is the domain of the woman of the house, who is invested with total authority in all matters concerning cooking and the management of the food stores;<sup>27</sup> she takes her meals by the fireside, whereas the man, turned towards the outside, eats in the middle of the room or in the courtyard. However, in all the rites in which they play a part, the fireplace and the stones surrounding it derive their magical power, whether to give protection from the evil eye or illness or to bring fine weather, from the fact that they belong to the order of fire, the dry, and the heat of the sun.<sup>28</sup> The house itself is endowed with two-fold significance: though opposed to the public world as nature to culture, it is also, from another standpoint, culture; it is said of the jackal, the embodiment of wild nature, that he builds no home.

The house and, by extension, the village,<sup>29</sup> the full country (*la'mmara* or *thamurth i'amaran*), the precinct peopled with men, are opposed in one respect to the fields empty of men which are called *lakhla*: empty, sterile space. Thus, according to Maunier, the inhabitants of Taddertel-Djeddid believed that those who build their houses outside the village precincts run the risk of their family dying out; the same belief is found elsewhere and the only exceptions are made for the garden, even when remote from the

27. The blacksmith is the man who, like woman, spends his day indoors, beside the fire.

28. The hearth is the site of a number of rites and the object of taboos which make it the opposite of the dark part of the house. For example, it is forbidden to touch the ashes during the night, to spit into the fireplace, to spill water or to weep tears there (Maunier). Likewise, those rites which aim to bring about a change in the weather and are based on an inversion make use of the opposition between the wet part and the dry part of the house. For example, to change the weather from wet to dry, a wool-packing comb (an object made with fire and associated with weaving) and a glowing ember are left on the threshold overnight; conversely, to change from dry to wet weather, the wool-packing and carding combs are sprinkled with water on the threshold during the night.

29. The village also has its *hurma*, which all visitors must respect. Just as one must take one's shoes off before going into a house or a mosque or on to a threshing floor, so one must dismount and set one's feet on the ground when entering a village.

house (*thabhirth*), the orchard (*thamazirth*), or the fig-dryer (*tarha*), all of which are places which are in some way linked with the village and its fertility. But the opposition does not exclude the homology between the fertility of humans and the fertility of the field, each of which is the product of the union of the male principle and the female principle, solar fire and the wetness of the earth. This homology in fact underlies most of the rites intended to ensure the fertility of human beings and of the earth, whether the rites of cooking, which are closely dependent on the oppositions which structure the farming year, and are therefore tied to the rhythms of the farming calendar; the rites of renewing the fireplace and stones (*iniyen*), which mark the passage from the wet season to the dry season, or the beginning of the calendar year; and, more generally, all the rites performed within the microcosm of the house. Whenever the women play a part in the specifically agrarian rites, it is again the homology between agricultural fertility and human fertility, the form *par excellence* of all fertility, which underlies their ritual actions and endows them with their magical potency. A considerable number of rites that take place within the house only seem to be domestic rites, since they aim simultaneously to ensure the fertility of the fields and the fertility of the house, which are inextricably linked. For, in order for the field to be full, the house must be full, and woman contributes to the prosperity of the field by dedicating herself, *inter alia*, to accumulating, economizing, and conserving the goods which man has produced and to fixing, as it were, within the house all the good that can enter it. "Man is like the channel, woman like the basin"; one supplies, the other holds and keeps. Man is "the hook on which the baskets are hung"; like the beetle and the bee, he is the provider. What man brings to the house, woman puts away, protects, and saves. It is women who say: "Handle your riches like a log on the fire. There is today, there is tomorrow, there is the grave; God forgives those who have saved, not those who have eaten." And again: "A thrifty woman is worth more than a yoke of oxen ploughing." Just as "the full country" is opposed to "empty space" (*lakhla*), so "the fullness of the house" (*la'mmara ukham*), that is to say, usually the "the old woman" who saves and accumulates, is opposed to "the emptiness of the house" (*lakhla*



*ukham*), usually the daughter-in-law.<sup>30</sup> In summer, the door of the house must remain open all day long so that the fertilizing light of the sun can enter, and with it prosperity. A closed door means dearth and sterility: sitting on the threshold – and so blocking it – means closing the passage to happiness and prosperity. To wish someone prosperity, the Kabyles say “May your door remain open” or “May your house be open like a mosque.” A rich and generous man is one of whom it is said: “His house is a mosque, it is open to all, rich and poor alike, it is made of wheatcake and couscous, it is full” (*tha'mmar*); generosity is a sign of prosperity which guarantees prosperity.<sup>31</sup>

Most of the technical and ritual actions which fall to women are oriented by the objective intention of making the house, like *thigedjith* opening its fork to *asalas alemmas*, the receptacle of the prosperity which comes to it from without, the womb which, like the earth, receives the seed the male has put into it; and, conversely, the intention of thwarting all the centrifugal forces which threaten to dispossess the house of the goods entrusted to it. Thus, for example, it is forbidden to give anyone a light from the fire on the day a child or a calf is born, and also on the day when ploughing starts;<sup>32</sup> when the threshing has been done, nothing must leave the house and the woman retrieves all the objects that she has lent; the milk produced in the three days following calving must not leave the house; the bride must not cross the threshold before the seventh day after her wedding; a woman who has given birth must not leave the house before the fortieth day; the baby must not go out before the Aïd Seghir; the hand-mill must never be loaned and must not be left empty for fear of bringing famine upon the house; woven cloth must not be taken out before it is finished; like giving embers to light a fire, sweeping, an act of expulsion, is forbidden during the first four days of

30. Applied to a woman, *'ammar* means to be thrifty and a good housewife; it also means to establish a home and to be full. The opposite of *'ammar* is the sort of man who is called *ikhla*, extravagant but also sterile and isolated, or *enger*, unmarried and sterile, that is to say, in a sense, wild – incapable, like the jackal, of founding a home.

31. Here too the system of moral values can be seen to derive its fundamental principles from the mythico-ritual system.

32. Conversely, the bringing of new fireplace stones into the house, on inaugural dates, is a filling-up, an input of goodness and prosperity. The forecasts made on these occasions are therefore concerned with prosperity and fertility. If a cockchafer grub is found under one of the stones, there will be a birth in the course of the year; a green plant means a good harvest; ants, a bigger flock; a woodlouse, more cattle.

ploughing; when someone dies, the removal of the corpse is “facilitated” so that prosperity is not taken away with it;<sup>33</sup> the first “goings-out”, the cow’s, for example, four days after calving, or the newborn calf’s, are marked by sacrifices.<sup>34</sup> “Emptiness” may result from an act of expulsion; it can also find its way in with certain objects, such as the plough, which must not enter the house between two days’ ploughing, or the ploughman’s shoes (*arkasen*), which are associated with *lakhla*, empty space; or certain people may bring it in, such as old women, because they are bearers of sterility (*lakhla*) and have caused many houses to be sold or be visited by thieves.

On the other hand, a number of ritual acts aim to ensure the “filling” of the house, such as those which consist of casting the remains of a marriage lamp (whose shape represents sexual union and which plays a part in most fertility rites) into the foundations, after first sacrificing an animal; or of making the bride sit on a leather bag full of grain, on first entering the house. Every first entry into the house is a threat to the fullness of the world inside, a threat which the threshold rites, at once propitiatory and prophylactic, must ward off: a new yoke of oxen is met by the mistress of the house, *thamgharth ukham*, that is, as we have seen, “the fullness of the house”, *la'mmara ukham*, who places on the threshold the sheepskin on which the hand-mill stands at other times and which receives the flour (*alamsir*, also called “the door of provisions”, *bab errazq*). Most of the rites intended to bring fertility to the stable and, therefore, to the house (“a house without a cow is an empty house”), tend to give magical reinforcement to the structural relationship between milk, the green-blue (*azegzaw*, which is also the raw, *thizegzawth*), grass, springtime – the childhood of the natural world – and human childhood. At the spring equinox, on the “return of *azal*”, the young shepherd, who has twofold affinities with the growth of the fields and the cattle on

33. To console the bereaved, they are told: “He will leave you the *baraka*”, if an adult has died, or “The *baraka* has not gone out of the house”, in the case of a baby. The corpse is placed near the door with the head towards the threshold. Water is heated on the stable side and the washing is done near the stable; the embers and ashes of this fire are scattered outside the house; the board used in washing the corpse is left in front of the door for three days; after the burial, three nails are fixed in the door from the Friday to the following Saturday.

34. The cow must step over a knife and some broad beans placed on the threshold; drops of milk are poured on the hearth and threshold.

account of his age and his task, gathers a bouquet to be hung from the lintel of the door and made up of "all that the wind shakes in the countryside" (except for oleander, which is generally used for prophylactic purposes and in the expulsion rites, and scilla, which marks the division between fields). A little bag of herbs, containing cumin, benjamin, and indigo, is buried at the threshold of the stable, with the words: "O green-blue (*azegzaw*), keep the butter from waning!" Freshly picked plants are hung on the butter-churn, and the receptacles used for the milk are rubbed with them.<sup>35</sup> Above all, the new bride's entry is fraught with consequences for the fertility and plenitude of the house: while she is still seated on the mule which has carried her from her father's house, she is presented with water, grains of wheat, figs, nuts, cooked eggs, or fritters, all of which (whatever the local variants) are things associated with the fertility of woman and of the land; she throws them towards the house, thus ensuring that she is preceded by the fertility and plenitude she must bring to the house.<sup>36</sup> She crosses the threshold carried on the back of one of her husband's kinsmen or sometimes, according to Maunier, on the back of a Negro, but never, in any case, on her husband's back; for the person who carries her interposes himself, intercepting the malignant forces which might otherwise affect her fertility and of which the threshold, the meeting point between two opposed worlds, is the site. A woman must never sit near the threshold holding her child; and a young child and a bride should not tread it too often. Thus, woman, through whom fertility comes to the house, makes her own contribution to the fertility of the fields: consigned to the world of the inside, she also acts on the outside by ensuring plenitude for the inside and, in her role as guardian of the threshold, by supervising those unrequited exchanges which only the logic of magic can conceive, through which each part of the universe expects to receive from the other nothing but fullness while giving it only emptiness.<sup>37</sup>

35. In some places when a young shepherd hears the first cuckoo he picks up a stone and puts it on his head; this stone is then put into the vessel used to receive the milk. Elsewhere the milk may be drawn through the handle-ring of a pickaxe or a pinch of earth may be thrown into the container.

36. She may also be sprinkled with water or given water and milk to drink.

37. Various objects are hung in the doorway; they have in common the fact that they manifest the dual function of the threshold, a selective barrier whose purpose is to keep

But one or the other of the two systems of oppositions which define the house, either in its internal organization or in its relationship with the external world, is brought to the forefront depending on whether the house is considered from the male or the female point of view. Whereas for the man the house is not so much a place he goes into as a place he comes out of, the woman is bound to give the opposite importance and meaning to these two movements and to the different definitions of the house which they imply, since, for her, movement outwards consists above all in acts of expulsion, and movement inwards, that is, from the threshold towards the hearth, is her proper concern. The significance of movement outwards is never more clearly seen than in the rite performed by a mother, seven days after giving birth, "in order that her son may be valorous": striding across the threshold, she sets her right foot upon the carding comb and simulates a fight with the first boy she meets. Going out is the essentially male movement, which leads towards other men and also towards the dangers and trials which must be *confronted* with the determination of a man as prickly, in matters of honour, as the spikes of the carding comb.<sup>38</sup> Going out or, more exactly, opening (*fatah*) is the equivalent of "being in the morning" (*sebah*). A self-respecting man must leave the house at daybreak; morning is the day of the daytime and leaving the house in the morning is a birth. Hence the importance of the things encountered, which are a portent for the whole day, so that in the event of an undesirable encounter (a smith, a woman carrying an empty leather bag, shouts or a quarrel, a deformed being), it is better to go back and "remake one's morning" or one's "going out".

It is now clear why it is so important which way the house faces. The front of the main house, the one which shelters the head of the family and which contains a stable, almost always faces east, and the main door – as opposed to the low, narrow door, reserved for the women, which leads to the garden – is commonly called the east door (*thabburth thacherqith*), or else the street door, the upper

out emptiness and evil while letting in fullness and goodness and predisposing towards fertility and prosperity everything which crosses the threshold towards the outside world.

38. A newborn girl is wrapped in the softness of a silk scarf; a boy is swathed in the dry, rough bindings that are used to tie sheaves.

door, or the great door.<sup>39</sup> Given the siting of the villages and the lower position of the stable, the upper part of the house, with the fireplace, is in the north, the stable in the south, and the weaving-loom wall in the west. It follows from this that the movement by which one approaches the house to enter it is oriented from east to west, in opposition to the movement made when coming out, in accordance with the orientation *par excellence*, towards the east, that is, towards the high, the bright, the good, and the prosperous: the ploughman turns his oxen to face the east when he harnesses and unharnesses them and he starts ploughing from west to east; likewise, the harvesters work facing *elqibla* and the sacrificial ox is slain facing eastward. Countless actions are performed in accordance with the cardinal orientation; they include all the actions of importance, that is, all those involving the fertility and prosperity of the group.<sup>40</sup> It is sufficient to recall that the verb *qabel* means not only to face up to, to confront with honour and receive worthily, but also to face the east (*elqibla*) and the future (*qabel*).

If we now go back to the internal organization of the house, we can see that its orientation is exactly the reverse of that of external space, as if it had been obtained by a semi-rotation around the axis of the front wall or the threshold. The weaving-loom wall, which a person entering immediately faces on crossing the threshold, and which is lit directly by the morning sun, is the light of the inside (just as woman is the lamp of the inside), that is, the east of the inside, symmetrical to the external east, from which it draws its borrowed light.<sup>41</sup> The dark, inside face of the front wall represents

39. It goes without saying that the opposite arrangement (as in a mirror image of the diagram on p. 152) is possible, though rare. It is explicitly said that all that comes from the west brings misfortune, and a door facing that direction can only receive darkness and sterility. In fact, if the inversion of the "ideal" ground-plan is rare, this is mainly because when secondary houses are set at right angles around the courtyard, they are often simply lodging rooms, without kitchen or table, and because the courtyard is often closed off, on the side opposite the front of the main house, by the back of the neighbouring house, which itself faces east.

40. The two *sufs*, political and martial factions which are mobilized as soon as any incident occurred (and which maintained variable relations with the kinship-based social units, ranging from superimposition to complete separation) were named *suf* of the upper part (*ufella*) and *suf* of the lower (*buadda*), or *suf* of the right (*ayafus*) and *suf* of the left (*azelmadh*), or *suf* of the east (*acherqi*) and *suf* of the west (*aghurbi*). The last pair of terms was less common but was kept to designate the two sides in the ritual games (from which the traditional battles between the *sufs* derived their logic); it still survives nowadays in the language of children's games.

41. As we have seen, the master of the house receives (*qabel*) his guests on the weaving-loom side, the noble part of the house.

the west of the house, the place of sleep, which one leaves behind one as one moves towards the *kanun*; the door corresponds symbolically to the "door of the year", the opening of the wet season and the farming year. Likewise, the two gable walls, the stable wall and the fireplace wall, receive two opposing meanings depending on which of their sides is being considered: to the external north corresponds the south (and summer) of the inside, that is, the part of the house which is in front of and to the right of a person who enters facing the loom; to the external south corresponds the internal north (and winter), that is, the stable, which is behind and to the left of someone going from the door towards the fire.<sup>42</sup> The division of the house into a dark part (the west and north sides) and a bright part (the east and south sides) corresponds to the division of the year into a wet season and a dry season. In short, to each external face of the wall (*essur*) corresponds a region of the internal space (which the Kabyles refer to as *tharkunt*, which means, roughly, a side) which possesses a symmetrical but opposite meaning in the system of internal oppositions. Each of the two spaces can thus be defined as the class of movements undergoing the same displacement, i.e. a semi-rotation, with respect to the other, with the threshold constituting the axis of rotation.<sup>43</sup> The importance and symbolic value given to the threshold within the system cannot be fully understood unless it is seen that it owes its function as a magical boundary to the fact that it is the site of a logical inversion and that, as the necessary meeting point and the locus of passages between the two spaces that are defined in terms of body movements and socially qualified crossings,<sup>44</sup> it is logically the place where the world is reversed.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, each of the two universes has its own east, and the two

42. The four cardinal points and the four seasons must therefore be added to the series of oppositions and homologies set out above (and it can be demonstrated that these significations belong to and are adequate to the mythico-ritual system as a whole): ... culture: nature:: east: west:: south: north:: spring: autumn:: summer: winter.

43. For an analysis of the theoretical implications of the fact that the transformational rules which permit the passage from one space to the other can be related back to movements of the body, see Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, pp. 116-19.

44. In certain regions of Kabylia, the young bride, and a boy circumcised at the time of the same celebration, must cross paths on the threshold.

45. This explains why the threshold is directly or indirectly associated with the rites intended to bring about a reversal of the course of events by carrying out a reversal of the basic oppositions: the rites to obtain rain or fine weather, for instance, or those performed on the threshold at the turning points of the year (e.g. the night before *ennayer*, the first day of the solar year, when charms are buried at the threshold).

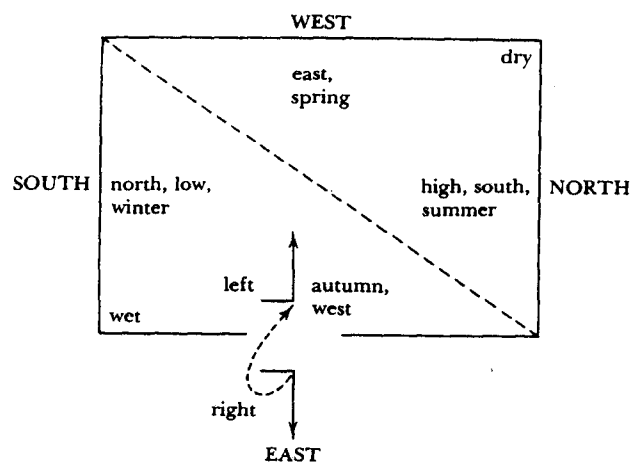


Fig. 2. The dual space orientation of the house

movements most fraught with magical significance and consequences – displacement from the threshold to the hearth, which should bring fullness and is performed or ritually controlled by woman, and displacement from the threshold to the outside world, which, by virtue of its inaugural value, contains all that the future will bring, especially the future of the farming work – can each be carried out in accordance with the beneficent orientation, that is, from west to east.<sup>46</sup> The dual space orientation of the house means that one is able both to go in and go out on the right foot, literally and figuratively, with the magical advantage attached to this observance, without there ever being a break in the relation linking the right to the high, the bright, and the good. The semi-rotation of space around the threshold thus ensures, as it were, the maximizing of magical profit, since both centripetal movement and centrifugal movement are performed in a space so organized that one enters it facing the light and also comes out of it facing the light.<sup>47</sup>

46. The correspondence between the four corners of the house and the four cardinal points is expressed clearly in certain propitiatory rites observed in the Aurès: when the fireplace is renewed, on the new year's day, the Chaouià woman cooks some fritters, divides the first one cooked into four pieces, and throws them in the direction of the four corners of the house. She does the same thing with the ritual dish on the first day of spring (see M. Gaudry, *La femme chaouià de l'Aurès* (Paris: L. Geuthner, Librairie Orientaliste, 1928, pp. 58–9).

47. I shall endeavour to show elsewhere that the same structure is to be found in the temporal order. But to indicate that this is doubtless an instance of a very general form of magical thought, one further, very similar, example will suffice: the Arabs of the

The two symmetrical and opposite spaces are not interchangeable but hierarchized; the inner space is but the inverted image or mirror reflection of male space.<sup>48</sup> It is no accident that only the direction the door faces is explicitly prescribed, the internal organization of space never being consciously perceived as such – still less deliberately planned – by those who inhabit it.<sup>49</sup> The orientation of the house is fundamentally defined from outside, from the standpoint of men, and, so to speak, by men and for men, as the place men come out of. “A house prospers through woman; its outside is beautiful through man.” The house is an empire within an empire, but one which always remains subordinate because, even when it exhibits all the properties and all the relations which define the archetypal world, it remains an inverted reflection, a world in reverse.<sup>50</sup> “Man is the lamp of the outside, woman the lamp of the inside.” One must not be misled by the appearance of symmetry: the lamp of day is only apparently defined in relation to the lamp of night. In fact the nocturnal light, the female male, remains subordinate to the diurnal light, the lamp of day, that is, to the day of the daytime. “Man trusts in God, woman looks to man for everything.” “Woman”, it is also said, “is twisted like a sickle”; and so even the straightest of these warped natures is only ever straightened up. Once married, woman also finds her east, within the house of man, but her east is only the inversion of a west; for “the maiden is the west”. The supremacy given to movement outwards, in which man affirms his manliness by turning his back on the house in order to face other men, choosing the way of the east of the world, is only one form of the categorical refusal of nature, the inevitable origin of the movement away from it.

Maghreb considered it a good sign, Ben Cheneb relates, for a house to have its right front foot and its left rear foot white in colour; the master of such a house cannot fail to be happy, since he mounts towards white and also dismounts towards white (Arab horsemen mount on the right and dismount on the left) (see Ben Cheneb, *Proverbes d'Alger et du Maghreb* (Paris: Leroux, 1905–7), vol. 3, p. 312).

48. Mirrors play an important part in inversion rites, particularly those to obtain fine weather.

49. This explains why it has escaped the notice of even the most attentive observers.

50. In the internal space too, the two opposed parts are hierarchized. The following saying is yet another index of this: “A house full of men is better than a house full of chattels [*el mal*]”, i.e. cattle.