

## REVIEWS

**Hans-Werner Goetz. *Life in the Middle Ages from the Seventh to the Thirteenth Century*. Translated by Albert Wimmer. Notre Dame & London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993. Pp. ix, 316. Cloth, \$44.95. ISBN 0268-01300-4. Paper, \$19.95, ISBN 0-268-01301-2.**

This study was originally published as *Leben im Mittelalter. Vom 7. Bis zum 13. Jahrhundert* in 1986 (Munich: C. H. Beck). This English edition was translated by Albert Wimmer and edited by Steven Rowan. In the preface the author describes the origin and purpose of his study. Developed from a course for history students, it is intended as an introduction for students and that elusive general reader. His introduction focuses on his approach to the methodological problems encountered in writing a history of everyday life, defined as "human life in its daily passage within the framework of the corresponding conditions of life." Human life is conceptualized in Heidegger's "humankind" or "everyman" as opposed to concrete individuals. This philosophical framing of his subject allows Goetz to organize his study on the basis of social structures—extended communities—rather than on individuals of power as with political history.

After a chapter on climate and demographics of early medieval Europe, Goetz examines the family as the foundation of social life. In the subsequent parts of the book, he studies larger social units in regard to monastic life, peasants and the manorial system, knighthood and courtly life, and city and citizenry in the concluding part of his history. Each of these is studied according to its institutional nature, the physical space inhabited, and some representative types of the way of life under observation.

For example, with monasticism, after a short history from Egypt and Pachomius through Benedict and the Irish and Anglo-Saxon missionaries, Goetz considers the Cluniacs and Cistercians. From "The Plan of St. Gall," divided into eighty-two sections, he describes the pattern of monastic life from the Choir to the Coopery, from the "ora" to the "labora." He is thus able to show that the monastery was a part of the church with its pastoral, educational, and human welfare concerns, and a part of the secular world in its provisioning and praying for the manorial lord represented by the guest house for distinguished visitors.

The author writes in the tradition of *The Annales*, founded by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre in 1929, as he understands that method. He extends social history beyond the material conditions of life of the underclass to include the political, religious, social, economic, and aesthetic dimensions of the life of the people. Also the research he reports is based on the use of historical tools from traditional documents to literary analysis and econometrics. The chronological period, from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries, is such a wide canvas that the body of the text is essentially descriptive and can be found in many survey texts on early medieval culture. His compass is narrower than his title, but mostly includes the eastern part of the Carolingian Empire. As Bloch knew early on, learning from linguistic usage, architectural and technological remains, and the limitless specializations of modern analyses achieves its best results in the study of small groups in small places during a short period of time. In his attempt to organize the results of such intensive and often technical research into a general survey of everyday life in the Middle Ages, Goetz presents a calendar with months, but no dates or days. As in the ninth-century "Salzburger Kalendarium," we see the peasant plowing in June, but his thoughts, his beliefs, his hopes, and his fears remain undisclosed. Perhaps the survey approach to social history is too ambitious. In any case, this book is essentially a history of some medieval social structures. Because of its comprehensive identification and use of archival and published sources, this book is of value for college and university libraries.

Carlow College  
Emeritus

William P. McShea