

***Popular Protest in Late Medieval Europe: Italy, France, and Flanders (Manchester Medieval Sources)*. Ed. by Samuel K. Cohn, Jr. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004. Paper, xxiv + 389 pp. ISBN 0-7190-6731-6. \$24.95.**

Although Cohn did not accomplish his original objective of a broad sourcebook covering late medieval Europe, readers still will find this an outstanding collection of source material, much of it translated into English for the first time. The model for this sourcebook was R.B. Dobson's *The Peasants' Revolt of 1381* (London, 1983), and the editor's primary aim is to provide substantial background and context for the other two major revolts of the fourteenth century, the French Jacquerie and the Florentine Ciompi rebellion. Simultaneously, the selections permit an exploration of the general atmosphere of protest and revolt following the Black Death. The material presented spans 178 years, with documents relating to the Jacquerie and the period from 1378 to 1382 naturally filling two-thirds of the text. The material is arranged partly by chronology, partly thematically. The notes at the beginning of the chapters and sections provide just the right amount of context; the footnotes are informative while kept to a minimum to focus on the text. Consequently, the collection is easy to use and navigate, and a reader unfamiliar with these revolts will not be lost or confused as to the personages and ideas encountered.

Cohn frequently refers to the ideas laid out by M. Mollat and P. Wolff in *Ongles, bleus, Jacques et Ciompi: les révolutions populaires en Europe aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles* (Paris, 1970), in particular the clustering or 'contagion' of revolts from 1378 to 1382. The organizational principles are derived from this and similar theories, although Cohn injects his own interpretations. His secondary goal is to encourage research into the subject and to move the discussion beyond 'modernist' and 'feudal-to-modern transition' models that oversimplify and caricature medieval protest and revolt. For this reason, Cohn takes a broad view of popular protest, though he included little material on certain revolts because he sees them as civil wars rather than true popular protest (p. 4). Some scholars may disagree with this, and rightly so; why must all "popular" protests derive from social or economic causes? Aside from this, the selections are drawn from a broad range of documentary categories, such as diaries, petitions, pardons, and ballads, as well as the obligatory chronicles. Taken together, they illustrate a surprising array of popular unrest in this period, from the ideas, motivations, and mentalities of the actors, to the course of the protest and the inevitable response and suppression. This reader was struck by the 'modernity' and sophistication of many of the protests, and yet at the same time, the differences these protests and those of the modern era are clear. Furthermore, the variety of motivation and perception showcased in the sources is refreshing; when possible, multiple viewpoints of a revolt or disturbance are presented, not merely the standard accounts of monastic chroniclers or 'fat cat' diarists.

Although the collection generally is strong, it has its flaws. The utility of some entries is dubious; for example, one early entry consists solely of a twelve-word

sentence that does nothing to illuminate the causes or courses of popular revolts (p. 22). Unfortunately, it is not the only choice that reads like a paraphrase or summary. Many of the selections are repetitive and unfortunately will discourage students from close reading and analysis. A map showing the location and density of events would have permitted the inclusion of this data while making room for greater geographical coverage, and still allow a representative selection of documents.

The quality of translation in some sections is uneven, with colloquial, clumsy or trite phrasings rendered all the more conspicuous by the predominantly high standards of the rest of the work. At times, the editorial explanations are puzzling. Some apparently obvious translations merit mention, one recurrent example being Cohn's sporadic need to point out that 'rebelled' and its cognates are direct translations from *rebellavit (et al.)* in the original documents, while other, possibly interesting terms for protest and disturbance go unremarked. More annoying is the inconsistency in rendering certain key terms, in particular those such as *populo minuto*. The editor also has a propensity to reduce a broad lexicon of protest (such as *tumultus*, *troubles*, *rumori*, *facere routam*, and *seditio*) into a simplified English idiom of revolution (revolt, riot, and rebellion are the dominant terms upon which he relies), which may obscure important nuances in the original accounts. The translation of this vocabulary is not always straightforward and the meaning of a term sometimes varied by region, as Cohn himself briefly points out in the introduction and in various notes. The book would have benefited from a thorough explanation of the translations, if for no other reason that it would be a great benefit to students, one of the target audiences.

Despite these limitations, this is a much-needed contribution to the corpus of primary sources in English translation, especially as it is an inexpensive paperback edition. An excellent and easy to use collection, it should find its way onto the shelves of many students of the later middle ages. While it will be of greatest use to those teaching or researching social movements, this book should appeal as well to those instructors teaching basic medieval history courses; and many of the documents should be required reading for those who study modern protest and labor history. Cohn's efforts in presenting this material and asking questions of it should inspire considerable interest and research into protest in later medieval Europe.

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