

leadership: on this estate good monastic management fully consulted the peasant and both sides made full use of the courts in Munich. In the splinter territory of Triberg in the Black Forest, Claudia Ulbrich shows that the government was generally so weak and starved of money and legal sophistication that it tended to give in to determined opposition by its subjects over matters of economic and fiscal innovation. Finally, for the larger Swiss ecclesiastical territory of St Gallen with its components of Appenzell, Alte Landschaft and Toggenburg, Peter Blickle effectively demonstrates that economic policies were by themselves insufficient to explain peasant unrest; ideological demands, couched in terms of freedom in the sense of responsible local self-government and full consultation at village level, also had a role to play. This notion of Blickle's has been pulled together succinctly by Robert Lutz in *Wer war der gemeine Mann? Der dritte Stand in der Krise des Spätmittelalters* (Munich, 1979).

The writings of Blickle establish the existence of a new socio-political structure and base in early modern central Europe, without whose relatively freely granted co-operation ruler, officials, town council patricians and landowning nobles could not have survived. The possibility of exploring the politics of the "common man" in pre-industrial times has been opened up, and a good starting point for readers is now the second edition of Peter Blickle's *Die Revolution von 1525* (Munich, 1981).

Gerhard BENECKE,  
University of Kent.

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FRANCES J. SHAW. — *The Northern and Western Islands of Scotland: their Economy and Society in the Seventeenth Century*. Edinburgh: John Donald, 1980. Pp. ix, 270.

Ms Shaw, in her opening sentence, explains that

this work sets out to examine some of the central features of the economy and social structure of the islands off the north and west coast of Scotland in the 17th Century, to assess developments in the course of the century, and to look critically at similarities and differences in the economies of the various islands and island groups (p. 1).

The introduction to the book sets the basic background and deals with the nature of the available source material. As well as noting some essential geographic differences between the Western Isles (Hebrides) and the Northern Isles (Orkney and Shetland), the book lucidly states the fundamental difference in tradition between clan life in the Hebrides and Viking influences on the Northern Isles.

As with most work in the historical field, the configuration of the product is conditioned by the available data. In this respect, Ms Shaw has utilized three valuable main sources in her research. The registers of sasines are the records of legal deeds relating to ownership of property, and along with various Exchequer records, form the basis of the sections on landownership and the renting of land. The registers of testaments, containing data on the possessions of deceased persons, enhanced the work for the sections on the pattern of agriculture, other occupations within the community and the pattern of trade. Flesh was added to this core information from a variety of other sources, well documented in a compre-

hensive and interesting bibliography. The text is gathered together in a concluding chapter on relative wealth, status and society. In addition, there are a helpful glossary and tables showing local weights and measures.

That, briefly, forms the content of the book. The marriage of content and purpose is, however, a little patchy. On the negative side, the section on the pattern of agriculture is neither satisfying nor convincing. Indeed, it reflects some of the problems faced by Ms Shaw in tackling the task she set herself. The variety of island locations, allied to the gaps in the available source material and the underlying wish to reconcile the available data with the similarities and differences between the island groups form a difficult triangle. Add to the problem the number of technical terms which have to be used, necessitating frequent recourse to the glossary, and the flow of reading stutters. The approach to agriculture through looking at the farming township, arable farming and the animals of the farm is not convincing. It does not readily permit the reader to resolve one of the major questions on agriculture at that time, namely its ability to fulfil the demand for food.

The onset of periodic famine was a feature of the succeeding two centuries in the Scottish Highlands and Islands, culminating in the cataclysmic events of the 1840s and 1850s when many areas of Europe suffered desperate shortages. This text does not really come to terms with this problem, despite occasional references to famine. Nor does it give evidence to suggest that later patterns should not be projected back in time. Further, by separating farming out from other occupations, there is detraction from viewing working life as a totality in what still was a largely subsistent society.

Despite these reservations, the book has important positive attributes. The contrasts between the Western and Northern Isles in the fields of landownership and trade proved fascinating and well-expressed by the text. In respect of the former, the difference in tradition between the two island areas proved to set the basis of two almost entirely separate systems of ownership. The differences between the Islands in their organization of and chief commodities in trade make a striking contrast. Ms Shaw brings out the underlying reasons for this most competently. Much is also gained from the book in the different manner in which these two areas were being brought more and more into the compass of mainland life. Indeed, this theme comes through strongly and is a notable common factor to the life of the whole subject area.

Ms Shaw is to be congratulated on her work because it adds constructively to the ever-growing field of more detailed studies on Scottish history over the last four hundred years. The book represents a contribution to scholarship in this field.

R. R. HOUSTON,  
*Golspie Academy, Scotland.*

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I. R. M. MOWAT. — *Easter Ross 1750-1850: The Double Frontier*. Edinburgh: John Donald, 1981. Pp. ix, 270.

This volume comprehends an extended historical essay or dissertation in 165 pages of critical text, some 46 pages of notes (largely bibliographic references), 22 pages of valuable (but not quite exhaustive) bibliography, and 19 pages of maps and tables in appendices. The essay is concerned with changes in economy,