

KÜNZEL (Rudi), transl. WEEDA (Claire), *The Plow, The Pen and the Sword. Images and Self-Images of Medieval People in the Low Countries*. London and New York, Routledge, 2018; one vol. 16 x 24 cm, x-343 p., map (ROUTLEDGE RESEARCH IN MEDIEVAL STUDIES, vol. 12). Price : 110 £ (hbk), 20 £ (ebk) - ISBN 978-1-472-44210-9 (hbk), 978-1-315-60089-5 (ebk).

This book is the reworked and translated version of Rudi E. Künzel's 1996 PhD-thesis, earlier published as *Beelden en zelfbeelden van middeleeuwse mensen. Historisch-antropologische studies over groeps culturen in de Nederlanden, 7de-13de eeuw* (Nijmegen 1997). I reviewed this book in *Signum* 10 (1998) 35-41. As a medieval historian, Künzel (Amsterdam 1939) worked most of his career as a researcher at the Meertens-Instituut in Amsterdam, making excerpts from narrative sources and charters to eventually produce a toponymical dictionary of the Netherlands (published in 1989). Through this, he acquired a vast knowledge of the available medieval sources of the Low Countries. After his early retirement, he was affiliated with the department of Medieval History at the University of Amsterdam as a guest researcher and a tutor, working with colleagues such as Bert Demyttenaere and Marco Mostert. In the meantime, he became acquainted with the French *histoire des mentalités*, represented by Jacques Le Goff (1924-2014) in particular, and delved into the new field of historical anthropology along the lines of medieval historians such as František Graus (1921-1989) and Aron Gurevich (1924-2006), and early-modernists such as Keith Thomas (1933), Natalie Zemon Davis (1928), and Willem Frijhoff (1942). Künzel describes his position as 'trying to engage in a history of mental and cultural phenomena that is strongly linked to social history' (p. 4). In his view, these 'should be researched while taking into account internal social diversity.' Therefore, his research focuses on 'the in part conflictual dynamics of medieval society.' The studies gathered in this book were 'conceived ... from the overall concept of historical anthropology' (p. 5). Although this has become less popular as an overarching notion today, 'the dominant research themes from this approach continue to command attention', such as rituals, attitudes towards violence, gift exchange, the collective memory, and emotions (p. 5).

This translation follows the earlier Dutch book but for one exception: Chapter 5 of the original version, on shame and guilt in narrative sources from the tenth and eleventh centuries, has been replaced by a chapter on 'Oral and written traditions in the *Versus de Unibove*', an eleventh-century poem on a peasant with just one ox, earlier published as an article in 2005. As a matter of fact, most chapters are the profoundly reworked versions of earlier articles and book chapters published between the 1970s and 1990s, which means this book contains the third (or even fourth) versions of these. In his 'Acknowledgements', Künzel observes that as 'studies in Dutch based on sources from the Low Countries which contribute to discussions of international relevance' (p. xi) are rarely read outside the Netherlands and Belgium, he decided to prepare a revised and actualized version in English intended for an international audience. It took some while, but this book indeed represents a thought-provoking and insightful collection of studies, tied together by the above-mentioned central idea. It takes into consideration almost everything published internationally in the fields of emotions and mentalities, on social mechanisms such as rituals, gift giving, and conflict management, and on oral and written forms of transmission. As such, it succeeds both in opening up the rich array of medieval sources from the Low Countries and in making accessible the relevant literature based on these sources to international readers. The translation is an excellent piece of work: it follows the Dutch closely but the English is elegant.

In his Introduction, the author lays out his program, first reviewing the state-of-the-art of the history of mentalities, historical anthropology, and cultural history, before taking stock of five approaches historical-anthropological studies have engaged with since the 1960s. Of these, he chooses the study of so-called group cultures (Part I), and a combination of the study of individual research topics and the exemplary approach, singling out individual cases (Part II). The four chapters in Part I deal with group cultures in general, that is, the self-images, images, and inherent ideologies of, consecutively, the clergy, of the aristocracy, of peasants (as held by the Church), and of merchants and townspeople from the seventh to the eleventh century. In these, he describes the shared values, norms, attitudes, and emotional patterns of the members of each social stratum.

In Part II, Künzel elaborates on certain themes from Part I, such as 'oral and written traditions, rituals, stories as an expression of group mentalities, (and) beliefs' (p. 13). The central question is 'whether members of the various social strata [held] divergent interpretations of certain elements of contemporary culture that are indicative of their own stratum.' Each of the four case studies – the aforementioned poem *Versus de Unibove*; the rituals of humiliation of the relics of St Remaclus of Stavelot (1065-1071); the early manifestations of something like an urban mentality by the inhabitants of Sint-Truiden, Trier, and Cambrai between 1050 and 1150; and a 'tournament of the dead' as described by Caesarius of Heisterbach between 1219 and 1223 – searches for comparative components and is, thus, meant to be exemplary. The chapter on humiliation rituals, for instance, serves as a specimen of conflict management in stateless societies and the chapter on the story told by Caesarius van Heisterbach highlights the lively contemporary discussion about the ideas on death and the afterlife.

The eight chapters are followed by a 15-pages long conclusion, after which there are two appendices: the first on the criteria of authenticity, a helpful analytical instrument to assess whether or not arguments and stories in medieval sources are *topoi* or not; and the second one on criteria for the identification of oral tradition.

Whereas the notes in the earlier Dutch version predominantly referred to the sources rather than secondary literature, Künzel has now included references to the international historiography on similar topics, mostly published before 1997 and sometimes after that year. These new references are generally to be found in the introductions to the chapters, such as to guide the intended international audience to the most relevant historical-anthropological literature. Likewise, newer source editions have been referred to, such as the 2013 edition of *The Deeds of the Abbots of St. Trond (Trudo)* by Paul Tombeur. In the same vein, Künzel now made ample use of the *Narrative Sources* website.

Some nit-picking at the end of this review: as so often, the English editors appear to have had trouble with the Dutch and Flemish last names starting with *De* and *Van*: sometimes the 'D's' and 'V's' are capitalized, sometimes they are not. In the Bibliography, they are listed according to the Belgian and French custom under D and V, respectively. Likewise, the *ij* is incorrectly interpreted as *y*.

Arnoud-Jan BIJSTERVELD, *Tilburg University*