

Paul Warde. *Ecology, Economy and State Formation in Early Modern Germany*.

Cambridge Studies in Population, Economy and Society in Past Time 41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xvi + 392 pp. index. illus. tbls. map. gloss. bibl. \$99. ISBN: 0-521-83192-X.

Paul Warde's stated goal in this book is to understand how the state intersected with the material world in the history of early modern Europe by focusing on its regulation of the allocation and use of wood — the most important raw material of this age. This is a regional study of the forest district of Leonberg in the Duchy of Württemberg in southwest Germany, a region that recommends itself by its lack of peculiarity. While many parts of Europe were undergoing significant social polarization between the late fifteenth and early eighteenth centuries, the social structure and economy of Leonberg remained relatively stable despite the impact of demographic pressure, war, and epidemic. Warde attributes this stability not to a lack of dynamism in the region, or an uneventful history, but to the investment of the district's inhabitants in enduring communal and state institutions.

Warde challenges what he identifies as basic assumptions about the peasantry of early modern Europe: that they can in no way be associated with social or economic dynamism and, hence, with modernity, that their regulation of local resources necessarily demonstrates an anti-market *mentalité*, and that their approach to the natural world was somehow more environmentalist than the economic attitudes promoted by forces from outside the village community. In regards to understanding economic behavior in early modern Europe, he is skeptical about the value of economic models which oppose a largely subsistence-based and local natural economy to an increasingly commercialized and money-based market economy. In their place he proposes instead a model of two types of

ecologies: a territorial ecology, which tends to reinforce existing patterns of activity in a specific place, and hence to reproduce itself, and a transformational ecology, which undermines attempts at territorialization and the integrity of established ways of doing things. Recognizing that the defense of particular territorial interests can generate transformations elsewhere, Warde notes that every action can be both potentially transformational and territorial at the same time. He argues further that at the beginning of the period under study there were already two well-established ecologies of wood use in Leonberg: that of the village community, and a broader, regional one. These existed in a stable, symbiotic relationship with each other, although over time the broader regional trade ecology became increasingly important.

In Leonberg, woodland use was the focus of regulatory activity by both communal and territorial authorities at the same time. Within the commune, this regulation was the result of a process that balanced the interests of different social groups, and disputes about wood allocations could spill over into disputes about the nature of the commune. In these disputes, concepts like *custom*, *need*, and *common good* were not fixed entities, but flexible terms which could be pragmatically appropriated by different parties for their own purposes. As population grew and the strain on the resource base increased, communal disputes over resource management led to appeals to ducal authority. The territorial state, then, played an arbitrating role, and the principle of state intervention in communal affairs was more a product of paternalism than of the assertion of forest rights, in what Warde characterizes as primarily a “trickle up” process of state formation (327). As a result of this activity, of course, the state was able to reaffirm the position of local elites — its natural allies in the local community — and their vision of the commune.

This is at times a difficult book, especially for those of us who are not well-versed in the intricacies of economic modeling, or the details of ecological history. However, the implications of Warde’s conclusions for how we think about peasant economic activity, for the nature of rhetoric employed in disputes within the village commune, and for the interaction of the center and localities in the formation of the early modern territorial state in Europe are ample rewards for the perseverance of the nonspecialist reader.

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