

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.

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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,

standard of living, religion, education and culture (as defined by language) over the interval of one critical century, in a part of Scotland peripheral to the Highlands and in transition from a traditional to a modern mode of society on the land. In the conclusion there is reference to "signs of the clash of cultures common in frontier societies" (p. 149), but this is not a developed theme, despite the subtitle.

The work, in fact, is a painstaking composite of references, skilfully woven into a critical commentary on regional change for country districts which are popularly and historically recognized to have a distinct regional personality: the Black Isle, Easter Ross and Ferrindonald. Unfortunately, nowhere does the author explain or define these regional divisions; instead, he plunges the reader into a welter of parish names. Still on the question of definition, an adequate account of the physical environment would seem to be called for (for which a more than adequate literature now exists); yet there is no mention of recent glaciation or changing sea level, and, although Hugh Miller, the Cromarty stone mason, is mentioned, his classic geology of the Old Red Sandstone (Devonian) is ignored. Reference to the geology, and to the raised beaches, would have defined the region and its natural characteristics, and nicely set the stage for the treatment of a distinctive agricultural region.

Some of the flaws in this work must be ascribed to the publisher: how else to account for the relegation of two essential maps to the appendices, after the notes and bibliography? How else to explain the first footnote's reference to Map 3? Why was the numerical key to Map 2 (showing location of estate mansions), left facing Map 3? Why was Map 1, showing general location, not reduced to a simple inset? In a work of this nature, publishers must learn to treat maps as integral parts of the argued text; they are not mere illustrations! None bear the names of the four bounding firths: Beaully, Cromarty, Dornoch and Moray!

Other flaws belong to the author. Footnote 1.10, for instance, deals with the frequent — and historically significant — "Pit-" element in local place-names, but there is no mention of the recent work of Small or Whittington which would have stimulated some thought about basic settlement processes and patterns on the land. Some two dozen estate plans were examined, some dating back to the mid-eighteenth century, but none was reproduced or analysed. Yet this might have corrected the documentary imbalance between the old system of agriculture and the new which has always been the weakness of studies of the eighteenth-century "Improvement" era. The inadequate treatment of the traditional system is characterized by the author's ignoring of transhumant links between his region and the summer grazings in the adjacent Highlands, and by his wholly unfortunate decision to use the term "crofter" as synonymous with the traditional category of the Highland small farmer: the traditional farmer's rights were in *runrig*, in contradistinction to those of the true crofter which were in *glebe*; the rights, and the categories of tenants which enjoyed them, are mutually exclusive, and to treat them otherwise is to confuse.

There are flaws, too, in the land economics. High rents persisted (p. 25) because the competition for land was constant or increasing — a condition never found on a settlement frontier.

Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of the work is the author's reluctance to show the data on which he bases his description and analysis in any statistical form. For instance, a simple frequency graph showing the spectrum of farm size would have spoken multitudes, and would have been much more convincing than general statements. It is disturbing to read that "while farms had ranged up to 50 acres *or more* [my italics] ... the native farmers in the first decade of the nineteenth century were restricted to holdings of seven to thirty acres" (p. 38). With

rentals and census material at hand, there was no need to be so imprecise. When "black cattle fell in value by 100 per cent" in 1815 (p. 43), did the price actually drop to zero? Why not quote prices?

Social and economic history, particularly in a rural setting, requires a firm grasp of social custom. The announcement of a farm roup (auction) from the pulpit was not "the intrusion of secular affairs into the sacredness of the Sabbath" (p. 116), but, in the absence of local newspapers, an act of charity, as was one's attendance to buy unneeded objects for the sake of the widow.

One may also wonder at the absence of any reference to literature on economic rent, such as Chisholm's *Rural Settlement and Land Use* (1962), which would have introduced the author to Johann Heinrich von Thunen's work on the laws of distance governing farm costs and market prices in a similar economic environment (Pomerania): *The Isolated State* (1826). Much of the peripheral area within British commercial agriculture would have been explicable, and rents seen to be reasonable. The author's aspiration to find rents at Lothian or East Anglian levels in a London-oriented marketing system is unreasonable; the differences, due to distance, might then have led to different inferences about efficiency and enterprise (p. 41).

On matters of social structure and demographic trends and processes, there is no analysis, but uncritical reiteration of contemporary opinion. Perhaps work on the 1841 and 1851 census lists would have helped here. Some categorical statements might then have been made as to the social origins of the farm servants; were they really of a different class from the tenants who employed them? Why is it that the author mentions so many of the landlords, improving or otherwise, but not a single tenant by name? It was the substantial tenant who usually carried out the actual improvement of land, and who engaged in debate about methods and produced the ideas for local demonstration and adoption.

Finally, one can agree with the author that the region saw "radical reappraisal by the landlords of their approach to estate management" (p. 153), but was the resultant absentee landlordism beneficial to the region and its people? It sounds astonishingly weak to conclude that "the phenomenon of a group of essentially conservative landowners changing their estates in less than half a century from an almost medieval backwardness to some of the most improved agricultural properties in the country seems totally inexplicable and, even after careful study, there appears to have been no single powerful motivating force" (p. 154). One can only suggest that, perhaps, the right questions were not asked, that, perhaps, traditional methods of writing history are inappropriate for the object in view.

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H.-U. WEHLER, ed. — *Klassen in der europäischen Sozialgeschichte*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979. Pp. 280.

This small volume contains the revised text of nine papers presented to the section "European Social History in Comparison: Social Inequality and Class Structures" at the 1979 congress of German historians. The section title, more than the book title, describes the contents. In subject matter the essays range from reflections on social inequality (Wehler) to case studies on England (middle and upper