

Buchbesprechungen

Saeculum Weltgeschichte. Hg. von *Herbert Franke* [u. a.]. Bd. 5: Die Epoche des Mongolensturms. Die Formation Europas. Die neuen islamischen Reiche. Von *Herbert Franke* [u. a.]. Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder 1970. XLIV, 656 S., 10 Karten und 30 Tafeln.

The *Saeculum Weltgeschichte* is certainly a history of the world. This volume covers the era of Mongol conquests, the transition in Western Europe from medieval Church and Empire to the age of nation states and a divided Christendom, the late-medieval consolidation of Slav kingdoms, and the revival and expansion of Islam after the Mongol irruption. Obvious gaps in coverage – the political history of the Western states, the great discoveries, science and technology – are taken care of in vol. 6 which should be considered in conjunction with vol. 5; Oskar Köhler's Introduction, printed here, extends to both volumes. The vision and enterprise of the planning are impressive; the performance unfortunately lags well behind even modest expectations.

The sections which might have been the most interesting (because least familiar) are particularly disappointing. Herbert Franke tells the story of the Mongol phenomenon in the manner of a particularly dreary medieval chronicler. Events *en masse* parade across the pages, but there is no attempt at all at analysis or a search for understanding. We get the succession of rulers in the Ilchan empire of Iran or in Kublai Khan's China, but such questions as why the Mongols erupted, how they achieved their fantastic success, how they were organized, or even how they fought, are left blank. Georg Stadtmüller, discussing Slav Europe, does little better. He amasses even more unmemorable detail, and though now and again he bows discreetly towards the modern preoccupation with economic problems or social analysis, he conveys no impression of the actuality of history. Berthold Spuler, charged with the daunting task of despatching Mamluk Egypt, Safavid Persia, Muslim Maghreb and Spain, Ottoman conquest and Mogul India, all in some fifty pages, manages his proportions better and touches interestingly on civilization, but again the need to present the facts overwhelms the ability to explain. In short, the chapters dealing with the more exotic aspects of these centuries quite fail to measure up to the sweep of events and the clamour of the problems.

That leaves the more conventional areas of European history. Peter Meinhold and Hubert Jedin deal well enough if unsurprisingly with Reformation and Counter-Reformation; despite occasional breathlessness even here, the main issues of theology, ecclesiology and spiritual turmoil are lucidly and fairly set out. The most considerable contribution is by Gerd Tellenbach whose chapter on the foundations of Europe's later hegemony really attempts to bring out the particular political, constitutional and ideological characteristics which both defined that region in a global context and provided the dynamic elements behind its surprising usurpation of leadership at a time when Asiatic empires and non-Christian world religions seemed more likely to maintain their dominance. The chapter is not flawless: Tellenbach's touch is markedly less sure when he leaves Germany and Italy. Nevertheless, he has written real history. At the same time, he shares one weakness common to German scholars: none of the contributors know much about English history or are familiar with recent work on it. Tellenbach manages to describe the English Parliament (a world-historical problem if ever there was one!) in exclusive reliance on German writings, and Meinhold's very poor section on the English Reformation (with its world-historical consequences in the New World) appears