

Karen Skovgaard-Petersen. *Historiography at the Court of Christian IV (1588-1648): Studies in the Latin Histories of Denmark by Johannes Pontanus and Johannes Meursius*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002. Review by MARY E. AILES, UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA AT KEARNEY.

Throughout his reign (1588-1648), Christian IV of Denmark filled his court with artists and scholars and encouraged a cultural renaissance partially to showcase his kingdom's wealth, influence, and power. Skovgaard-Petersen examines an aspect of this cultural trend by analyzing two Latin histories of Denmark written in the 1620s by Johannes Pontanus and Johannes Meursius. In her examination, the author does not analyze the works for their historical accuracy. Instead, she discusses how they revealed the methods that politicians and intellectuals used to create and present a "national ideology" (16). In analyzing this issue, she poses such questions as what was the nature of the Danish monarchy, what impact did the kingdom have upon European politics, and what was the nature of the kingdom's relations with neighboring states particularly its traditional enemy Sweden.

To tackle these issues, the author first discusses the factors that led Christian IV to hire Pontanus and Meursius to produce a Latin history. Prior to their appointments, the crown had hired three other scholars to write a national history. Each failed in their task for reasons varying from sudden death to producing historical accounts that did not fit the crown's vision of how the kingdom should be portrayed. During the 1620s, the king became more concerned to produce a national history due to the kingdom's growing involvement in the Thirty Years' War and to the publication of a Swedish history that claimed that "Scania," a province that Denmark ruled, had formerly belonged to Sweden (28-30). Thus, the king desired the creation of a national history partially to justify Denmark's position within Europe, to glorify the royal family, and to provide historical evidence supporting the kingdom's control over its territory.

The author devotes the book's remainder to an in-depth account of the two Latin histories that Pontanus and Meursius produced in the 1630s. She discusses the works' physical characteristics such as the appearance of the title pages, the length of the books, the dedications, and the authors' differing styles in dating events within the texts. She then surveys the books' historical content, the sources upon which they were based, the themes that each author emphasized, and the authors' differing writing styles.

Through this discussion, Skovgaard-Petersen concludes that Pontanus and Meursius wrote two different, but complementary works. In analyzing Pontanus' book, Skovgaard-Petersen categorizes it as part of the "antiquarian tradition" (149-152). The work covers a multitude of topics including a history of the Danish kings from ancient times until 1448, Denmark's geography, its social structure, its legal system, its economy, and its cultural achievements. Additionally, he relates Danish history to events in Europe in an attempt to make Denmark's past part of a wider European history. Along the same lines, he draws parallels between incidents in classical literature and historical events in Denmark to illustrate that the kingdom's past was equal to that of ancient Greece and Rome (412-413). Pontanus thus presents a comprehensive account of Danish history, but its scattered nature leaves the work lacking a central theme. In contrast, Meursius' work is more tightly focused. It only discusses Danish political history by focusing on the country's rulers from the legendary King Danus to Christian III (1536-1559). Additionally, the book expresses the theme that God's will guided the course of history. Meursius judged the king's actions upon Christian morality and portrayed the kings as God's representatives on earth (411).

Despite the differing emphasis, both scholars presented similar overall themes that the author believes helped to create a specific impression of the Danish monarchy and kingdom. Both authors emphasized the kingdom's power and strength, its ability to conquer and subdue neighboring states, and the monarchy and council's organization. They stressed that from an early era, Denmark was a civilized kingdom with an independent monarchy that enjoyed

the people's support. Thus the two histories advocated the advantages of monarchical government and the kingdom's long tradition of possessing such institutions. These historians also highlighted the Danish monarchy's hereditary nature. Although Denmark possessed an elective monarchy, since 1448 members of the same family had ruled the kingdom with the oldest son usually following his father on the throne. In stressing the monarchy's "almost hereditary" nature, the histories emphasized the monarchy's continuing stability (422-423). The author concludes that the histories target audience probably was academics, diplomats, and noblemen in state service. With their wealth of information on Denmark's past, its society, and its values the works could be useful to diplomats and politicians, both foreign and native (424).

Skovgaard-Petersen has created a well-written and detailed account of two previously neglected national Danish histories written during Christian IV's reign. Since the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the king's ascension to the throne in 1988, historians have produced many works highlighting Christian IV's achievements. The book adds to this already active discussion by expanding the investigations into how the king used culture to strengthen his kingdom's reputation on a European wide level. This is, however, a very specialized work that is targeted to scholars that possess a good background in Scandinavian history.

Despite the book's strengths, the author does not demonstrate that Pontanus and Meursius' histories helped to create a national ideology. While she does speculate that the Danish government ordered the historians to portray the kingdom in a particular light, she does not investigate how contemporary intellectuals and diplomats received the works. Were these works widely read? Did intellectuals, both foreign and domestic, accept the version of Denmark's history that they presented? Did Danish diplomats use these works to justify the kingdom's position in European-wide politics? To what extent did cultural productions influence political events in seventeenth-century Europe? Investigating such issues would strengthen her discussion of the histories' intended

purposes and of their impact upon the European intellectual and political scene.

Betty S. Travitsky. *Subordination and Authorship in Early Modern England: The Case of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton and Her "Loose Papers."* Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999. xii + 290 pp. + 35 illus. \$30.00. Review by LISA J. SCHNELL, UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT.

In 1981 Betty Travitsky edited *The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance*. Though slim in size, it was huge in scope and influence: a whole generation of scholars whose work has been focused on early modern women writers can point to that anthology as their starting point. In the preface to the 1989 reprint of the book, Travitsky herself reflected on the work her compilation initiated: "For the literary scholar, the examination of previously unnoticed, and sometimes misrepresented writings by Renaissance women (often written in unconventional genres) has raised important questions about the nature of literature and the empowerment of the literary canon" (xvii). Almost 20 years later, Travitsky asks those same questions of the manuscript papers of Elizabeth Egerton.

As the title of this recent volume implies, Travitsky has produced not just an edition of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton's "Loose Papers," but she has used the occasion of editing the papers to produce a book-length "case study": a 170-page consideration of the conditions of early modern authorship, particularly for women. The impetus for the monograph came at least in part from Travitsky's profound frustrations—which she details in full—with the gaps in the Bridgewater family library, most of which was acquired by Henry E. Huntington early in the twentieth century for what is now the Huntington Library. Her frustration is entirely understandable: some books were deemed duplicates (of books already housed at the Huntington) and sold at auction; some papers were deemed private or personal (including the manuscript