

# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Mordechai Feingold. *History of Universities*. Volume XXV/1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. 304 pp. \$105.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-959332-3.

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Published on H-Education (October, 2011)

Commissioned by Jonathan Anuik



## Western Universities as Subjects of Historical Scholarly Work

*History of Universities* is a biannual publication. It has an editorial board comprising U.S. and Western European scholars. The present volume contains four articles, two review essays, three book reviews, and a bibliography entitled “Publications on University History since 1977: A Continuing Bibliography.” Although the reader is informed that “this issue contains 832 references to books and articles on the history of universities in the world,” the references are limited to 10 European countries and the United States (p. 226). The continuing bibliography is likely to be of value to students and scholars interested in the history of education in the nations covered.

The review essays, book reviews, and articles reflect the geographic emphasis cited above and the historical scope of this issue. For example, the book reviews range from a collection of papers by the late Agostino Sottili, focusing on the relationship between Italian and German humanism during the fifteenth century, to an examination of the archives of the Registers of Merton College, University of Oxford, during the seventeenth century. In addition, there is a review of a book on the exploration of mathematics education at the University of Cambridge during the nineteenth century.

Although the substance of each of the books reviewed is likely to be of interest primarily to historians of education focusing on the specific regions and time periods, in the review of J. R. L. Highfield’s work on seventeenth-century Oxford, Robin Darwall-Smith discusses two “larger reflections ... both slightly melancholy

ones” (p. 216). The first is that although books that bring archival material to a large audience may not be valued in academic systems of research assessment, “they will remain a resource for future scholars” (p. 217). If productivity or output are the primary bases of rewards, will researchers want to devote years to scholarly inquiry that may result in a book rather than a number of articles (smallest publishable unit) that require less research time and yield greater output? The second is that fewer and fewer historians and archivists are educated in classical languages. Indeed, “Latin is no longer compulsory on archive training courses in the United Kingdom,” however, many primary and secondary sources prior to the eighteenth century were written in Latin (p. 217).

The first review essay, “Walter Charleton, Physician Extraordinaire,” centers on Emily Booth’s book *A Subtle and Mysterious Machine: The Medical World of Walter Charleton (1619-1707)* (2005). Charleton was president of the Royal Society of Physicians (1689 to 1691) and served as physician to the king. The book is likely to be of interest to scholars concerned with the early development of the medical profession in England, in particular with the emergence of a professional identity and the relationship between physician and natural philosopher. All social scientists and historians would do well to heed Gideon Manning’s reminder that “examining what someone practised and what they preached are not always the same” (p. 187).

Sheldon Rothblatt’s review essay, “The Making of

Princeton University,” is the one contribution about a U.S. postsecondary institution. It is based on James Axtell’s *The Making of Princeton University, From Woodrow Wilson to the Present* (2006) and covers the most recent period of any piece. The university was chartered in 1746 as the College of New Jersey and was renamed Princeton University in 1896—the beginning of the period examined. A major theme of this essay concerns the ways in which the transformation from the college to the university occurred without the loss of emphasis on undergraduate education. For instance, in contrast to almost all major U.S. universities, Princeton has never developed a medical, law, or business school. The history of Princeton demonstrates how one Ivy League university was able to accept “the intellectual and scientific assumptions upon which the academic profession would henceforth develop while hesitating to fully adopt the institutional structure and scale of the emerging modern university” (p. 196).

Although there is some variation in the specific nature of each of the four major articles, it is fair to state that each is likely to appeal to a different interest audience. Collectively, they demonstrate a high level of scholarly commitment to the history of universities, reflected in the range of subjects under investigation. In the first article, Thierry Kouame compares royal interventions at various colleges in Paris (e.g., College de Navarre), Oxford, and Cambridge during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. He illustrates the importance of situating the university within the broader political system with his observation that “the relationship between the sovereign and the university was predetermined by the nature of the relationship (authoritarian in France and negotiated in England) between Crown and the colleges” (p. 17). This is followed by Dietrich Klein’s article, “Inventing Islam in Support of Christian Truth: Theodore Hackspan’s Arabic Studies in Altdorf 1642-6.” This article is likely to appeal to scholars of the Abrahamic religions and especially to historians of Lutheran theology. Although it is a study of religion in the university, it is likely to have limited value for historians of universities. The article does, however, reinforce the importance of facility with Hebrew, Persian, and Arabic for certain historical studies.

The final two articles bring the reader back to universities in the United Kingdom. In the first, “Book Economy in New College, Oxford, in the Later Seventeenth Cen-

ture: Two Documents,” William Poole makes the significant point that in order to understand the “book economy” of an institution researchers must “widen discussion of college book use from the focus of the college library to the peripheries of borrowing and personal ownership” (p. 56). To illustrate this he examines the remains of the lending register of the college library, and the list of books owned by a student. He goes on to propose the inclusion of book markets and other libraries in the city in future studies of the concept of the “book economy” (p. 103). Given current opportunities for purchase, reading purposes, and communication provided by the Internet; the proliferation of individual book ownership; the multitude of booksellers; and the interuniversity loan system, Poole’s insight concerning the limitations of studies confined to central libraries gains increasing importance.

Robert Anderson’s well-reasoned and well-documented article, “University History Teaching and the Humboldtian Model in Scotland, 1858-1914,” is likely to appeal to the largest number of historians of higher education. This article is part of a larger project entitled “Representations of the Past: The Writing of National Histories in Europe.” Thus, the development of history as a discipline is traced to the University of Aberdeen, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Glasgow, and the University St. Andrews, and frequent comparisons are made with developments at Cambridge and Oxford. Anderson stresses the importance of Scottish national and institutional traditions in accounting for the ways in which the Humboldtian model, the German university model of commitment “to the advancement and diffusion of knowledge, and to the pursuit of truth by the application of critical and objective knowledge,” was adopted at the four Scottish universities (p. 139). However, “Scotland was not so different from other countries.... And while scientific, positivist method was universally accepted as the mark of professionalism, few historians before 1914 found any difficulty in reconciling it with a patriotic loyalty to their own state and its unique destiny and historical mission” (pp. 172-173).

Historians of higher education need to review this issue and the twenty-five volumes of *History of Universities*. As a result, they are likely to deepen their knowledge of specific institutions, individuals, groups, and disciplines. And, they may expand their research to new topics and to areas outside of Western Europe and the United States.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

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**Citation:** Mark Oromaner. Review of Feingold, Mordechai, *History of Universities*. H-Education, H-Net Reviews. October, 2011.

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