SERIES EDITOR'S FOREWORD

Shortage of suitably rich and reflective material often makes it difficult to access the mentalities of an earlier medieval society. But in the case of Ottonian Germany, Thietmar of Merseburg, an idiosyncratic yet wide-ranging and highly conscientious chronicler, offers a wealth of entrées and insights into his world but also – belying the notion that introspection comes only with the long twelfth century – himself. David Warner's fine translation of Thietmar's stylish Latin now opens the entrées wide to new audiences. His substantial Introduction sets the work in social and cultural as well as political contexts, making sense of authorial concerns that blended the public with the private, the genuinely altruistic with the intensely self- and kin-centred. The Manchester Medieval Sources Series has never confused accessibility with dumbing down: readers need the whole text. The Press has been admirably undeterred by the scale of Thietmar's work, since in this case scale is of the essence. Thanks not only to Thietmar's literary talents and the range and variegated interest of his themes, but also to David Warner's expertise as translator and historian, this large book will surely get and keep readers' rapt attention. It reveals, like no other work of its place and period, the textures and contexts of the Ottonians' regime, as the activities of the German rulers and their contemporaries, and their dealings with Slav and Scandinavian neighbours, enable Thietmar, and his readers, to make their own analyses and comparisons. With this volume, Germany, hitherto insufficiently represented in the series' European panorama, takes its full place. Thietmar's perspective, personal as it is, also embraces, and is representative of, Europe's early eleventh-century culture.

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