

**Winfried Schenk, *Historische Geographie (Geowissen kompakt)*, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt 2011, pp. 134 with several b/w images**

With his new book about Historical Geography Winfried Schenk tries to present a worthy successor to the standard reference his doctoral adviser Helmut Jäger wrote in the 1960s.

It is quite remarkable that during the last 40 years no researcher has tried to write a new introduction to this field of study. Winfried Schenk himself gives us a short answer to this open question in his introductory chapter dealing with the integration of Historical Geographical Research into university studies. He states that Historical Geography has become a subdivision of departments of Geography (and not – which might also have been possible – of departments of History). But the development leading to this condition has not always been as straightforward as it may seem nowadays. Although today Historical Geography is clearly embedded into departments of Geography, it is still an interdisciplinary subject which is a valuable auxiliary science both for present-time Geography and the science of history.

The introductory chapter is followed by a chapter about historical-geographical methods and their use, namely the interpretation of textual and figurative archival documents, the analysis of historical maps, place names, field names and other elements of the cultural landscape.

The third chapter is about research in the history of human settlement, especially about its main constituents *village* and *town* and their influence on the shape of landscapes.

The fourth chapter presents several periodization models for human cultural history. While some of the models are centred on an energetic point of view, some others focus on elements of Economic and Social History.

The comprehensive fifth chapter is dedicated to phases of the development of cultural landscapes from Neolithic times up to the Industrial Age. The first of the two subchapters starts with the first farmers in Central Europe,

then approaches Celtic and Roman times and closes with the Migration Period, which marks the transition from the Ancient World to the Middle Ages. The timeframe of the second subchapter ranges from the first period of medieval settlement to the Industrial Age. It, therefore, comprises the colonisation period in the High Middle Ages, the period of abandonment of villages in the Late Middle Ages, the second colonisation period in the Early Modern Age and the beginning of industrialization in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It also incorporates special cases like the German colonisation of the East and the rise of towns in the Middle Ages.

The concluding sixth chapter deals with current application-oriented projects of Historical Geographers. In this context, the modern term of *Kulturlandschaftspflege* (cultural landscape fostering) plays a decisive role. By presenting numerous examples of regional planning and research Schenk provides a deep insight into the everyday work of Historical Geographers.

All in all, Schenk's new textbook offers a precious introduction into this branch of Geography and it fills a gap which has developed because of the big temporal distance to the publication of Jäger's standard reference in 1969. The contextual setup of both books is almost identical, but while Jäger focused on questions of methods, Schenk emphasises current projects that are in step with actual practice. By doing this he takes account of the reorientation of Historical Geography towards questions of *Kulturlandschaftspflege* in the 1970s and therefore provides insights into his subject that back in Jäger's time could not even have been obtained. ■

Markus Naser  
Institute of History  
Würzburg University