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Maren Clegg Hyer and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (eds), *The Material Culture of Daily Living in the Anglo-Saxon World*. Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2011. ISBN: 9780859898430.

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The Material Culture of Daily Living in the Anglo-Saxon World is a detailed guide to living the “good life” in Anglo-Saxon England. It is an edited volume of refreshing works that provides a detailed schematic of Anglo-Saxon daily living and the intricacies of everyday tasks. This book highlights activities which may be simple and habitual but which define the traditions and practices of a society.

The book provides a balanced examination of both textual and archaeological evidence on a variety of fundamental topics including dress, illness, trade and production. This cleverly structured text provides an extra dimension of material culture, one that discusses the practices and technologies behind creations. The potential literary gap between the disciplines of archaeology and history is bridged with eloquent and thoughtful prose.

The layout is sophisticated, defined and easy-to-navigate. The structure and content choice are well selected with nicely linked topics. The potential content for a book on this subject is so substantial that it is hard to comprehend how 386 pages manage to cover it. However, the well-chosen chapter topics playfully and succinctly examine key areas of Anglo-Saxon material culture and daily life, and the editors have used these to create an interesting taster text for the dedicated Anglo-Saxon student.

The introductory chapter (pages 1-8) by Maren Clegg Hyer provides a well-rounded background to the following chapters. It summarises the state of Anglo-Saxon studies and the extent to which Anglo-Saxon society has been researched and dissected. This lays down a solid foundation for the later topics.

The following two chapters, by David Hill (pages 9-22) and C. P. Biggam (pages 23-48) discuss agriculture and phytology in reference to practices, uses and tools, giving a detailed background to Anglo-Saxon agricultural and phytological

knowledge. They mix textual and archaeological examples to illustrate the Anglo-Saxon approach to seasonal changes in their botanical environment. Beautifully produced images and photographs supplement the detailed text and add a textbook feel to the pages.

The fourth chapter (pages 49-72), by Katrin Thier, covers water transport through archaeological evidence and poetic texts. This section highlights the importance of water travel in the Anglo-Saxon world and the romance it held for certain poets. The chapter emphasises the breadth of the topic especially in reference to ship construction, the law, the chronicles and the effect they had on everyday life.

The next chapter (pages 73-92), by Christopher Grocock, discusses the economic and societal significance of sheep and cattle. The chapter analyses the way in which sheep and cattle affected different aspects of Anglo-Saxon life, from food production and animal husbandry to trade and resource management. It provides an enjoyable account of a topic which has previously been understudied by scholars and researchers.

The following two chapters by Esther Cameron and Quite Mould (pages 93-115), and Ian Riddler and Nicola Trzaska-Nartowski (pages 116-141) consider the processes and importance of leather work and bone craft. They provide a thorough examination of the techniques, equipment, locations, products and economics of these two industries and the effect they had on everyday life. Images, diagrams and graphs emphasize the impact of these crafts and help to quantify the chapters' research and their outcomes.

The next topic covers the food and drink of the Anglo-Saxons and the factors which influenced the importance sustenance held. Christina Lee's chapter (pages 142-156) is elegantly and insightfully written and gives food for thought when considering the historical context of food and drink. Seasonal and religious influences are discussed as well as food production methods, contingencies, and their effect on social interaction and diet changes.

The proceeding three chapters cover more familiar interests such as textiles, by Maren Clegg Hyer and Gale R. Owen-Crocker (pages 157-184), metalwork by David Hilton (pages 185-200) and weaponry by Gale R. Owen-Crocker (pages 201-230). They deliberate over the textual and archaeological evidence for each craft and examine interesting aspects of the study such as the social representation of the textile industry, the status of metalworkers and the traditional theories of weapon classification.

The twelfth chapter (pages 231-257) focuses on the Portable Antiquities Scheme and the benefits it has provided to those studying the everyday life of the Anglo-Saxons. The section, written by a trio of authors; Michael Lewis, Andrew Richardson and David Williams, deals with the history, aims, staffing and ethics of the scheme and relates it to the value of Anglo-Saxon archaeological material using brooch and metal find case studies. The chapter is broken down nicely and delivers each section cleanly. It provides a succinct description and evaluation of the Portable Antiquities scheme and the role of metal-detecting in the discovery of Anglo-Saxon finds.

The following chapter (pages 258-274) slips neatly behind the previous segment as it concentrates on the Fuller Brooch, a ninth century creation depicting the five senses thereby showing an impressive education for the period. The chapter is written by Elizabeth Coatsworth and Michael Pinder and uses the brooch as an indicator of processes, materials, skills and knowledge of Anglo-Saxon society at that time. The content is well structured and clear, providing a useful insight into the brooch-making processes necessary to create such a piece.

Medieval glass is the topic for the penultimate chapter with a focus on vessel composition and decoration. The chapter (pages 275-292), by Win Stephens, analyses glasswork traditions, distributions and their longevity from the early to the Middle Anglo-Saxon period. Well-chosen diagrams and distribution analyses help to realise this topic's importance within Anglo-Saxon material culture.

The last chapter (pages 293-309), by Christina Lee, examines disease and impairment but feels slightly out-of-place when considering the other chapter topics. It is, however, useful when filling in the gaps in the Anglo-Saxon life course when all that is missing is death and burial. The focus on anti- and peri-mortem activities allows a closer connection to the subject matter as a whole. The chapter is a welcome addition to this volume as it replaces the traditional chapter on burial rites. This gives the book as a whole a much lighter impression of the Anglo-Saxon world without restricting the reader to technologies and economics.

Unlike many edited works of this type, this volume is balanced and cohesive. There is little criticism to be made of this set of collaborative works as they neatly cover aspects of daily Anglo-Saxon life that are interesting and refreshing. The only possible addition would involve a discussion of burial and funerary practices, which in the editor's defence, has been exhaustively covered by previous scholars and is a subject which usually forms a mainstay of Anglo-Saxon publications. Paradoxically, by omitting this subject, the volume helps to breathe life into the Anglo-Saxons from a different perspective, making the book a very readable account of Anglo-Saxon daily living.