but that are relevant to the situations it describes, such as "Better a quick death than a life with shame." The list of writings and authors that concludes the volume is an index rather than a bibliography; the works listed are followed by a reference to the chapter and paragraph where they are discussed. (Page references would have made the material easier to locate.) There is a minimum of publication information, undoubtedly reflecting a conscious decision deriving from the general nature of the work. This is, in some cases, unfortunate; while it is reasonable to assume that an Icelander would be able to find an edition of Hávamál with little trouble, this is less likely to be the case of the reader who wants to follow up references to Saxo Grammaticus or Matthew Paris.

Hermann points out in the introduction, as he has done repeatedly in the past, that much is to be gained from reading the longer version of the saga, now readily available along with the shorter one in the modern Icelandic edition *Islendinga sögur and þættir* (Reykjavík, 1986).

As an introduction to a literary work written in an unfamiliar cultural milieu, Hermann's approach is extremely successful. It provides answers to precisely the questions that students new to the sagas are likely to ask, and the parallels he adduces will be of use to any scholar of medieval Icelandic life and culture. All his entries are carefully cross-referenced, making it easy to find one's way around the book. The general accessibility of the material, however, makes the necessity of referring to his earlier works for detailed examination of a number of important topics all the more frustrating. Icelandic students of this saga have acquired an extremely useful, if idiosyncratic, introduction. One could wish that Hermann would crown his contributions to the field of *Hrafnkatla* studies by presenting the results of his research in a single volume in one of the major scholarly languages.

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JEAN-CHARLES PICARD, *Le souvenir des évêques: Sépultures, listes épiscopales et culte des évêques en Italie du Nord, des origines au Xe siècle.* (Bibliothèque des Ecoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 268.) Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 1988. Pp. iv, 819; 17 tables, 60 black-and-white plates and figures.

In 386 St. Ambrose, the testy bishop of Milan celebrated for combating Arian heretics, wrote his sister that he was revising his burial plans. He would cede the tomb he had prepared for himself beneath the altar of the funerary basilica he was building to the two early martyrs whose relics he had discovered by a miraculous vision; his own grave would lie to one side. Ambrose thus created the model of episcopal *ad sanctos* burial in the West. Historians like Peter Brown have recently been struck by the importance of saints' graves, relics, and *ad sanctos* burial in the development of Latin Christianity; this study argues that Ambrose's home region of north Italy was the seat of a particularly long and complex development involving episcopal sepulture and the "memory of early bishops," which came to full fruition only in late Carolingian times.

The subtitle accurately indicates the structure of this impressive study, the publication of the author's *thèse d'Etat.* The principal title places the work well within the realms of "cultural history," as this has recently been discussed by the contributors to *The New Cultural History* edited by Lynn Hunt. Picard argues that the "memory of early bishops" (as we must render his key phrase *souvenir des évêques*) was a deliberate construct which came to "constitute one of the components of the urban dynamism of northern Italian medieval cities." It assumes the status of an energizing myth:

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"Every community, in order to grow, needs a foundation story (*récit des origines*)," which confers upon it pride and confidence in its future. The memory of the early bishops went a long way to fulfilling that function. The story line (*schéma*) constructed by the clerics had the simplicity and force of myth. It showed that the city's development was inscribed in God's own plan: "it was he who had sent to the city the holy bishop who was to convert it, and the protection of this saint was guaranteed to the city for eternity" (p. 729). The book's *histoire-des-mentalités* thrust rests, however, on a framework of solid, painstaking erudition in the three distinct types of source material indicated in the subtitle.

Northern Italy is defined as the area governed by the archbishoprics of Milan, Ravenna, and Aquileia/Grado; this choice is defended, fairly enough, on the grounds of sufficient cultural cohesiveness in the domain studied and an adequate documentary basis, notably two nearly complete lists of episcopal sepultures for Milan and Ravenna. Picard's first task, which occupies about half the book, is to establish the value of these, and of two less satisfactory lists for Brescia and Pavia, in reconstructing the history of episcopal sepulture and in demonstrating the politico-cultural dimensions of this history. He proceeds to examine these four cases thoroughly, bishop by bishop, before going on to integrate into his interpretation the scattered references to episcopal burial in another score of cities (there is no information at all about two-thirds of the sixty-six known bishoprics). I have no space here to do more than barely suggest the complexity of the analysis necessary to answer the questions: Where was this bishop buried? When? In what context? Let us take the example of a figure of the first rank, the legendary first bishop of Ravenna, St. Apollinaris: can one not assume that the famous early Christian church which now bears his name in the suburb of Classe was built on the site of his tomb? Picard presents a cogent résumé of the difficulties: neither the ninth-century antiquary Agnellus, nor the (probably) seventh-century *Passio,* nor the earliest datable reference to the tomb (in a sermon, ca. 449) are topographically precise enough. The basilica itself was consecrated in 549, several centuries after the alleged epoch of the saint, by the politically ambitious Archbishop Maximianus, who was intent on promoting the cult of an early founder to augment the prestige and ecclesiastical independence (*autocéphalie*) of Ravenna. Maximianus took the trouble of leaving an inscription to mark the place where Apollinaris had rested up to then in a fine sarcophagus (the sarcophagus detail is independently confirmed in the *Passio*); this inscription survives today, and archaeological work suggests both the likely original location of the tomb and its plausible original context: an ordinary — that is, not specifically religious — extramural cemetery. This scrupulous and heavily footnoted discussion allows readers to decide for themselves how much weight a particular type of evidence will bear in a plausible construction of Ravenna's Christian origins, but one is likely to agree with Picard's point that whether or not Apollinaris was a real historical figure who founded the church of Ravenna, Maximianus, by creating a funerary cult, made him into a mythological figure who has remained important to the church of Ravenna ever since.

Picard insists that his study is built principally on written sources, with archaeology of relatively little help (p. 2), and this is true in the narrow sense that there are few modern, conclusive, and scientific excavations on which to rely. But, as the above example from Ravenna shows, the author skillfully and critically integrates relevant archaeological data: indeed, the 60 glossy-paper illustrations (including many maps and plans) function as an integral part of the demonstration, as in an archaeological book. Not only does Picard display a sure sense of the use and limitations of archaeology today, he shows that archaeology has in fact been a history-building tool for a long time, before the discipline was defined. In addition to the work of the ninth-

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century Ravennate cleric Agnellus, the very type of a monumental antiquarian, who copied inscriptions assiduously and described monuments with a relish of precision, much archaeological evidence concerning the early churches and graves would have been irretrievably lost had it not been collected and preserved by the sixteenth-century bishop Charles Borromeo and his disciples. Again and again the text and the abundant footnotes of this study draw our attention to how the material remains of the past were taken into account previously and must be today: surely this is the essential aspect of the archaeological perspective.

Having dealt with episcopal burials, Picard devotes four chapters to another neglected source: episcopal lists. Eighteen survive, mostly in manuscript form (these are given in the tables), but there were also figurative lists, painted on the walls of churches (like Saint-Paul-outside-the-Walls in Rome) or embroidered on altar cloths. Historians who have dealt with these lists have tended to accept them as "good" or reject them as unreliable, in both cases uncritically. Picard shows them to be complex historical documents which began to be produced around the sixth century as part of a new concern for local particularism, which was replacing the earlier emphasis on Christian universalism. Interest in keeping them up declined, then was strongly renewed in the ninth century. He rejects the notion that they were primarily liturgical documents meant for recitation in the mass, nor do they derive from a concern for historical record (most of them ignore chronology). They are meant rather to demonstrate an unbroken chain linking the contemporary bishop with the heroic age of the founders, a time perceived not historically but mythically and commemorated in the cult of the bishop-saint, analyzed in the last part of this book. Again, Picard argues convincingly for historical depth and complexity where a one-dimensional figure had previously been seen. Until the mid-tenth century local bishop-saint cults were very rare in north Italy (in contrast to Gaul or to south Italy), for the tradition had preferred to venerate martyrs, if possible universal Christian martyrs. Few local bishops were remembered at all, except as a chain of names linking the present to the heroic early days. Then, in the tenth century, they were "globally canonized": their remains were translated from the scattered sites of original burial and collected in the cathedral, where their Carolingian successor united them physically and spiritually to the Christian-urban *familia* over which he was coming, feudal-fashion, to preside.

As Picard wryly points out, St. Ambrose certainly had no idea that he was creating a new funerary "model" when he added the relics of the newly found martyrs to his basilica, and popular recognition of his own posthumous saintly status was extended to very few of his contemporary bishops. Nor was it his local status that mattered: he and the few other late-antique bishops to be honored soon after their deaths were remembered as heroes of the universal Church. But by 550, with the breakdown of universalism, the bishop's pastoral role was augmented by new magisterial dignities and pretensions to local independence. As the bishop of Rome sought to impose the principle of his primacy, the three north Italian archbishops countered with the first development of their own foundation story, seeking apostolic founders and venerable graves to defend their independence. Ravenna under Maximianus and his successors developed this model most fully to back up its claims to *autocéphalie;* the literary theme of the local saint-bishop then spread in north Italy as an expression of local self-confidence. This survived the brief episode of Carolingian universalism to provide a new source of inspiration to the bishops and clerical entourages of the tenth century. So the episcopal lists were brought up to date; the early bishops joined the relics of martyrs in the cathedrals; there was a new wave of hagiographies. The image of the golden age of the foundation of Christianity in the diocese was now firmly fixed,

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anchored in the memory of the early bishops, to nourish the medieval town's sense of identity.

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WALTER POHL, *Die Awaren: Ein Steppenvolk in Mitteleuropa, 567–822 n.Chr.* ("Frühe Völker.") Munich: C. H. Beck, 1988. Pp. x, 529; tables, 4 maps.

The early Middle Ages seems filled with mysterious peoples who step briefly into the light furnished by surviving documents. They perform more or less important actions and — just as suddenly as they appear — vanish from our sources. Walter Pohl's *Die Awaren* has succeeded in stripping much of this veil of mystery from the history of the Avars. A former student of Herwig Wolfram, Pohl has followed his teacher's history of the Goths with a study that also combines synthesis of the documents and secondary sources with new methodology and research.

As Wolfram notes in a short foreword, this work is based on ten years of research. It constitutes, in part, a revision of a 1984 Vienna dissertation. Pohl's approach to the history of the Avars comes from the "Vienna School's" concentration on ethnogenesis, an interdisciplinary method and focus for research that combines history, ethnography, linguistics, and archaeology. Many of the arguments made in this book also derive from a sort of comparative history of the nomadic peoples of central Asia and early-medieval eastern Europe. *Die Awaren* illustrates many of the strengths and only a few of the weaknesses of this approach.

An introductory chapter discusses the nature of the sources and sets out the main lines of the ethnogenesis method. One important element of this work is its use of a wide range of Byzantine and Western documentary source materials and the complementary use of central Asian inscriptions, Chinese documents, and modern ethnographical work. The evidentiary base also employs published and unpublished archaeological finds made and described by István Bóna and others. Pohl is aware that interdisciplinary work often consists of a "Supermarkt-Prinzip," but his control of these diverse materials is impressive. The source criticism in the text and notes is thoughtful and sound. The vast majority of the secondary works cited in the bibliography were written after 1960, and a good part of these after 1980.

Chapters 2 through 5 trace the history of the Avars and their neighbors from their first appearance in the sources to 602. A heterogeneous group from central Asia, the Avars fled westward after the Turks shattered a nomadic confederation to which they belonged. Gathering new elements during their flight, they took their identity and unity from the dominance imposed by their khagan, Baian (c. 560–c. 582). He also imposed on them their internal discipline, unique among the early nomads, and developed a *Machtpolitik* that gave the Avars control of the Carpathian Basin. This *Machtpolitik* derived from the military power of the armored riders and their reflex bows and Baian's own cunning. The Avars dominated the Byzantine Danube frontier in a complicated relationship that saw raids, wars, trade, and the payment of large annual sums of tribute. A similar complex relationship existed with local Slavic groups. Slavs provided soldiers in Avar armies and were sold by the Avars to outsiders. Avar "defensive force demonstrations" against Byzantium and western neighbors provided wedges for further Slavic penetration of these areas.

The power of the khaganate that provided Avar unity and dominance was seriously weakened by the Avar failure at Constantinople in 626. Chapters 7–8 trace the effects of this weakness and the internal and external conflicts that followed. New peoples

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