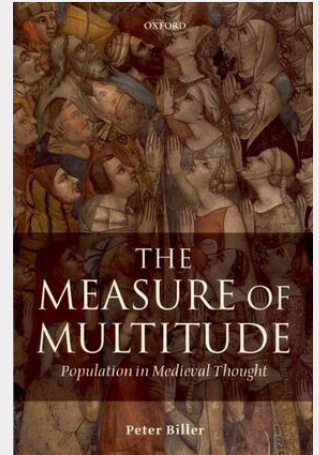


Biller

## MEASURE OF MULTITUDE

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Peter Biller's innovative study challenges the view that medieval thought was fundamentally abstract. He shows how, by 1300, medieval men and women were beginning to measure multitude, counting, for example, numbers of boys and girls being baptized. Their mental capacity to grapple with population, to get its measure, was developing, and the author describes how medieval people thought about population through both the texts which contained their thought and the medieval realities which shaped it. He asserts that they found many topics - such as the history of population and variations between polygamy, monogamy and virginity-through theology, and that crusade and travel literature supplied the themes of Muslim polygamy, military numbers, the colonization of the Holy Land, and the populations of Mongolia and China. Translations of Aristotle provided not only new themes but also a new vocabulary with which to think about population. The Measure of Multitude sets academic discussions of population alongside the medieval facts of 'birth, and copulation, and death' to provide a challenging new approach to the study of medieval demographic thought.



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**Artikelnummer:** 9780198206323

**Medium:** Buch

**ISBN:** 978-0-19-820632-3

**Verlag:** OXFORD UNIV PR

**Erscheinungstermin:** 14.12.2000

**Sprache(n):** Englisch

**Auflage:** Erscheinungsjahr 2000

**Produktform:** Gebunden

**Gewicht:** 889 g

**Seiten:** 506

**Format (B x H):** 163 x 243 mm

