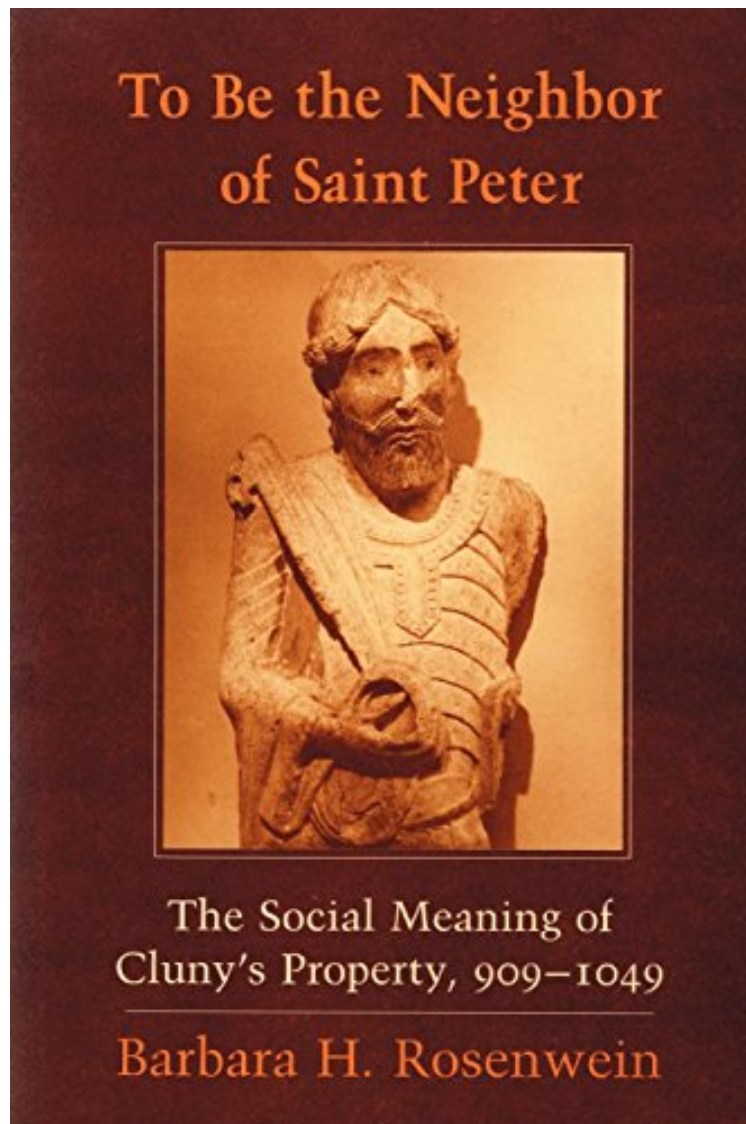


## To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 9091049

*Barbara H. Rosenwein*

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before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 9091049:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Excellent Legal-Anthropological HistoryBy A CustomerOriginally conceived as a computer-assisted mapping of Cluny's property, Rosenwein's book evolved into an examination of

social relationships created by this French monastery's land transactions. The author wrote this work after analyzing thousands of charters produced during the years AD 909-1049. In it, Rosenwein takes her methodological inspiration from the discipline of anthropology and teases meaning out of a mountain of dry legal documents in the form of various deeds, grants and quitclaims. This study sheds new light on the meaning of property in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Rosenwein dispels the notion that charters were merely about land. On the contrary, they reveal a complex network of patronage which allowed Cluny to develop alliances with neighboring aristocratic families over generations and thereby extend its reach. In fact, property transactions were a kind of social glue. "In an age of fragmentation and social dislocation [i.e., prior to 1049]," argued Rosenwein, "land transactions emphasized the connections and interrelations among people and between people and saints" (p. 202). Property transactions were less absolute than they are today. When property was donated it was not "alienated." The same piece of property was often donated to Cluny, reclaimed, and later re-donated once again. Sometimes, a parcel of land was donated twice in two succeeding generations of the same family. Donation apparently did not always mean the total revocation of all claim to land, and apparently land that had already been donated could be given again in order reestablish ties between family and monastery and provide further spiritual benefits for the donor family. Families also sold land to Cluny, which purchased land, more of than not, systematically to solidify its holdings in a certain area. On top of any benefits in the hereafter, donors often became "neighbors of St. Peter" through land transactions, thus having heaven's doorkeeper nearby even in this lifetime (at least according to the way contemporaries saw it). More than just buying heavenly favor ("For the salvation of ..." was the standard formula), giving land to St. Peter meant welcoming St. Peter into the circle of the donor's friends and family under the "gift economy" of that day and age. To me, it would have strengthened her thesis if the author could have produced other kinds of primary source documents (e.g., letters) to corroborate her findings and demonstrate that Cluny's medieval donors actually assigned the same kind of meaning to property transactions that Rosenwein claimed they did. Still, the book is very well researched and, I believe, argues its case convincingly from the available evidence. Maps, charts and graphs make Rosenwein's book more understandable. The index and extensive bibliography make it more useful. Overall, this is an excellent book which shows that mundane records such as property transactions are viable sources for writing meaningful social history.

Barbara H. Rosenwein here reassesses the significance of property in the tenth and eleventh centuries, a period of transition from the Carolingian empire to the regional monarchies of the High Middle Ages. In *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter* she explores in rich detail the question of monastic donations, illuminating the human motives, needs, and practices behind gifts of land and churches to the French monastery of Cluny during the 140 years that followed its founding. Donations, Rosenwein shows, were largely the work of neighbors, and they set up and affirmed relationships with Saint Peter, to whom Cluny was dedicated. Cluny was an eminent religious institution and served as a model for other monasteries. It attracted numerous donations and was party to many land transactions. Its charters and cartularies constitute perhaps the single richest collection of information on property for the period 909-1049. Analyzing the evidence found in these records, Rosenwein considers the precise nature of Cluny's ownership of land, the character of its claims to property, and its tutelage over the land of some of the monasteries in its ecclesia.

"The import of the title is that Cluny's property lay in a neighborhood, that is, an area with little, if any, central authority. The charters appear at first sight to be simply records of property transactions, but they are not: Rosenwein has shown they are alliances in the making, feuds being ended, and they reveal a vast network of patronage. . . . This is an important and trailblazing book well worth the effort that has gone into it." Eric John, *Catholic Historical* "Although Rosenwein relies heavily on quantitative evidence, her clear and often polished prose style enlivens her information considerably. Her command of the scholarly literature is likewise very impressive. The author not only gives a definitive answer to some questions regarding Cluny's property but also stimulates the posing of new questions. This book shows how quantitative social history should be done." Robert C. Figuerira, *Speculum* "To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter is an important addition to the knowledge of an exemplary monastery. Rosenwein has developed new techniques for studying monastic property holdings and given a new insight into early medieval society." John B. Freed, *The Historian* "Rosenwein has studied the nature of Cluny's ownership of land, the character of its claims to its property, and its tutelage of the lands of the subject houses, with the benefit of direct access to and familiarity with the resources in Dijon and Mnster. She also seeks to bring to bear the methods and findings of social history and anthropology. Her book thus offers a fascinating and inviting apercu of what modern methods and resources may make possible when applied to large bodies of charter material in general and especially to the charters of Cluny." H. E. J. Cowdrey, *American Historical* "Rosenwein . . . probes the charters and cartularies of Cluny. The results provide marvelous insights into the ways in which medieval property was conceived. . . . Rosenwein's conclusions about the social and symbolic meaning of medieval property are a healthy corrective to the anachronism that property has always been judged in narrowly economic terms." Albert J. Schmidt, *Continuity and Change* "Barbara H. Rosenwein has combined research on monastic property records with new insights into the nature of medieval property and social relations. She gracefully integrates textual analysis, prosopography, and new computer techniques." Constance B.

Bouchard, University of Akron "For over a generation, the analytical techniques developed by Charles-Edmond Perrin and Georges Duby have enriched medieval social history. In *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter*, Barbara H. Rosenwein goes beyond them and shows that by asking the right questions one can know more than the institutional networks of individual lives." Fredric L. Cheyette, Amherst College

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About the Author Barbara H. Rosenwein is Professor of History at Loyola University, Chicago. She is the author of *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe*, editor of *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, and coeditor of *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society*, all from Cornell.