

Rulership in Medieval East Central Europe: Power, Rituals and Legitimacy in Bohemia, Hungary and Poland, ed. Grischa Vercamer and Dušan Zupka, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2021 (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, 78), xx, 534 pp., 20 color figures, 3 b/w maps and 3 tables. Table of contents available online at <<https://brill.com/view/title/61130>>

This substantial volume has a great potential to attract scholars' attention. The popular subject matter and promising selection of contributors are virtual guarantees of that, as well as the words of encouragement from the editors themselves. They assure the prospective reader that the volume 'provides the first detailed overview of research on rulership' (back cover); and that it 'outlines the evolution of rulership [...] with an emphasis on its understanding and interpretation in contemporary sources' as well as 'aim[s] to provide the most recent research on rulership in theory and practice' (pp. 3–4). These words make one believe that the present publication is an edited collection of cutting-edge essays that seeks to bring the latest achievements from local research circles into the wider international debate on medieval rule and rulership.

A collection meeting such expectations would indeed be highly desirable, since Central and Eastern European historiographies, with their established traditions of research on power and rulership, have a lot to offer to international medieval studies, and yet their achievements remain seldom available outside the local environment. It is thus all the more regrettable that the optimistic assurances of the editors clash painfully with the real value of the final product. The responsibility for this should be attributed to the editors who have failed to develop an internally coherent whole and made errors when conceptualizing the project, apparently unable to decide what character the result of their efforts should have — of another handbook on East Central Europe or an edited collection of essays.

The volume comprises nineteen chapters, divided into an introductory part and four thematic sections, plus a bibliography, twenty colour figures and three b/w maps, three tables and one joint index of personal and geographical names. The concept behind organizing these sections is rather loose, as their names mix together theoretical and chronological criteria. This solution brings little clarity and several essays could certainly be placed in different sections.

Part I, 'Introduction', contains two inaugural chapters. Dušan Zupka presents the individual contributions and introduces the reader to the arcana of East Central European history from the perspective of rulership. Unfortunately,

he has very little to say about the volume itself and contents himself with high-flown platitudes and empty promises, such as that the volume would show the peculiarities of rule/rulership in Poland, Bohemia and Hungary compared to Western Europe (p. 4). The focus on the issues laid out in the volume's subtitle is explained by the statement that the collection 'follows the track of the current revival of the new political and cultural history focusing on rulership, power, rituals and legitimacy' (p. 19). But contrary to this claim, many of the chapters are methodologically conservative, and the significance of these 'new political and cultural histories' is nowhere explained in the volume. What is greatly missing here is a discussion on the methodology behind the book.

Unfortunately this latter flaw is by no means mitigated by the chapter by Grischa Vercamer, even though its title suggests that it is meant as a 'theoretical and conceptual introduction'. This is because the chapter deals exclusively with rule/rulership in the medieval West. These considerations, while often interesting, are irrelevant insofar as they relate only marginally to the content of the volume and studies of rule/rulership in East Central Europe. Instead, the author provides his concept of research methodology on the fields of activity and interaction of rulers taken from his *Habilitationsschrift*.¹ It seeks to replace current approaches in medieval studies, which are inadequate 'for grasping "medieval rule" in its whole and detailed complexity', 'because they always work eclectically' (pp. 55–56). Since there is no trace of familiarity with Vercamer's approaches in the individual contributions, and no indication of the methodological framework being adopted, such a claim may even be seen as disavowing the value of the collection, because of its high degree of methodological eclecticism.

Part II, 'Legitimacy and Rulership — Beginning and Development of the First Dynasties in the Early and High Middle Ages', consists of three chapters. Martin Wihoda overviews the history of political structures and ruling dynasties in the Bohemian basin region after the collapse of Avar power. His essay is a descriptive lecture from the perspective of political history, devoting scant attention to the issue of legitimacy. The next essay, by Márta Font, is quite different. Albeit synthetic, it can be considered as a solid introduction to the current research of Hungarian scholars on the legitimation of power through lineage, charisma and designation, as well as primogeniture, ritualization, sacralization, marriage strategies, army and government, and the real bases and limitations of power. Yet another concept lies behind the chapter by Zbigniew Dalewski, which examines selected issues related to the concept the power of the Polish Piasts dynasty until about the middle of the eleventh century. Since the essay is based on original and fresh research by the author himself, it is of high independent value.

¹ Compare with Grischa Vercamer, *Hochmittelalterliche Herrschaftspraxis im Spiegel der Geschichtsschreibung: Vorstellungen von 'guter' und 'schlechter' Herrschaft in England, Polen und dem Reich im 12./13. Jahrhundert*, Wiesbaden, 2020 (Quellen und Studien der Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau, 37), pp. 55–59.

Five further chapters make up Part III, entitled: 'Ritual and Politics: Established Rulership in the High and Late Middle Ages'. The title is misleading since it suggests that the papers gathered there concern the role of ritual in political life, whereas only one of them fully fits into such a definition. Moreover, it erroneously suggests that ritual is some specific feature of the 'established rulership'. In his chapter Dušan Zupka takes up the issue of political, religious and social frameworks of military religion in East Central Europe during the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. As with Dalewski's chapter, this is a paper based on original research by the author himself. Zupka's main argument here is that the rulers of Bohemia, Poland and Hungary used specific war rites and connected ideas to legitimize their power, seeking to both sacralize it and strengthen it in the real world. In this case however, the generality of the arguments caused by the inclusion of too many issues and their survey against all three polities is somewhat disconcerting. Robert Antonín's chapter deals with the role of ritual practices in the fourteenth-century Kingdom of Bohemia and is undoubtedly a neat introduction to modern Czech historiography on the symbolic communication between rulers and society. The author discusses this issue through the lens of three subjectively selected royal rites: coronation, funeral and *adventus*. Despite the synthetic character of Antonín's argument, there is no lack of sources and historiographical discussion, which makes his essay engaging. In turn, Marcin R. Pauk's essay is a cutting edge study that deconstructs the paradigm of perceiving the period of the so-called 'territorial partition' of the Polish monarchy in terms of the decline and degradation of monarchical power. Pauk replaces this old paradigm with a more dynamic vision, emphasizing the need for a proper understanding of the mentalities and values of this period (like ducal *honor*, seen as the central political idea of the time). Because of its methodology and comparative approach, this piece deserves attention not only from scholars interested in Polish history but from anyone inquiring into the basics of princely power in the high Middle Ages. In her short essay, Julia Burkhardt presents the matter of the formation of assemblies as an expression of the political participation and representation of the late medieval nobility. By comparing the Holy Roman Empire and the polities of East Central Europe, she notes similar mechanisms at work, at the same time pointing out important differences between those regions. It may come as a surprise, however, that her focus is only on the late Middle Ages, since the assemblies were crucial for the functioning of all monarchies much earlier than in the fourteenth century. It is also worthy of note that basing her discussion on German- and English-language studies only, Burkhardt omits many important works from East Central and Eastern European historiographies.

Part IV, 'Structures of Power in the Late Middle Ages', contains four further essays. The first chapter in this section is the only one in the entire collection on visual culture. In his well-crafted study, Vinni Lucherini shows how the creators of the famous Angevin illuminated historiographical collection,

the *Chronicum pictum* (c. 1358), portrayed the role of the sacred in the history of Hungary, especially in the stories concerning its rulers. The problem of the legitimacy of the royal power of the last Piast kings on the Polish throne is the subject of Paul W. Knoll's chapter. It is a highly general piece that does not fully take into account the important achievements that Polish scholars have made in the last decades in research into ideas concerning the power of Władysław Łokietek and Casimir the Great. Attila Bárány's chapter on the military administration in Angevin Hungary is, on the other hand, a very detailed one. However, without taking into account the broader context (in a manner quite typical of military historians from East Central Europe), the author fails to recognize that the situation he discusses reflects patterns formulated long before by the Carolingians. In several places in the chapter, Bárány notes that certain solutions known from the time of the Angevins were already in use under the Árpáds. Given the long-term functioning of these models, it is not clear to what extent the Angevin system was a new one. Bożena Czwojdrak's chapter on the Jagiellonian system of power in fifteenth-century Poland is another general and panoramic essay, but with good insights into the newest research.

Part V, 'Influences on Rulership in East Central Europe from Outside', contains six chapters and opens with a contribution by Panos Sophoulis on the impact of Byzantium on Bohemia, Hungary and Poland in the period up to the thirteenth century. This is another general paper that would fit better into a textbook or companion than a collection of studies advertised as new and cutting-edge research. The case is different for the next chapter. Christian Raffensperger, like Dalewski and Pauk, presents fresh results of his research, which corresponds interestingly with the findings of both aforementioned scholars, even though Raffensperger's chapter does not concern Poland, but Rus'. While the inclusion of a chapter on Rus' in a book devoted to East Central Europe may raise doubts, in this case it should not because as Raffensperger shows the structures of power and the models of its exercise in Rus' in many respects resembled the realities of Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary. In Rus', as in these three polities, one can see the rivalry between the aspirations for hegemonic rule and the opposite trend of maintaining equality between the representatives of the ruling families and the equal participation of all dynasts in the exercise of power. In this context, less useful is Felicitas Schmieder's contribution on the impact of the Mongols on the political realities of East Central Europe. The author argues that these were not limited to the pains of invasions but also the reception of new patterns and experiences. One cannot doubt that the nomads were agents of change, but it seems that this issue still requires more in-depth research. Unfortunately Schmieder, like Burkhardt, cites nearly no Hungarian, Polish, or Russian scholarship on these issues.

The next two papers on the impact of the medieval western Roman Empire on East Central Europe were conceived as a single whole, centered around the question of political and structural impact. Stephan Flemmig's chapter on the Late Middle Ages is another highly generalized essay. Its aim is to overview the

reciprocal political relationships and influences of the Empire and East Central European realms, with some glimpses into other, mainly politically-related, factors. In turn, Grisca Vercamer opted for a more elaborate depiction of the unilateral influence of the Reich on Bohemia, Poland and Hungary. Unfortunately, despite the topic raising hopes this is probably most disappointing chapter in the entire collection. Although the author initially lists five main fields of influence (dynastic, religious, political, structural-social, and economic), the chapter is dominated by a descriptive presentation of the political relations between the Reich and East Central European realms. Influences other than political (apart from the so-called *Ostsiedlung* and the issue of curial offices) have been relegated to the margins, and when they are addressed the chapter does not always follow current knowledge. For example, Vercamer argues that one of the crucial differences between the Empire and the East Central European triad is the practice of 'itinerant kingship' (*Reisekönigtum*) – used extensively in the Empire as a method of rulership and allegedly completely unknown in East Central Europe (p. 367). Such a claim contradicts, however, the results of studies showing that in the East Central European realms, especially in the earlier Middle Ages, the exercise of power involved the practice of constant travel of the monarch, which is sometimes linked to influences from the Ottonian-Salian Empire.² No less bizarre is the explanation of this alleged difference by the electoral method of choosing monarchs in the Empire and the domination of the model of 'hereditary monarchy' in East Central Europe. In his essay, Vercamer fails to discuss the influence of other institutional, structural, or ideological-religious patterns, such as the Imperial church system (*Reichskirchesystem*), immunity, the king's peace, *regalia*, the idea of sacral power (*Sakralkönigtum*), cult of saints, relics, rituals and ceremonies, to name just a few. This omission in the volume should be considered a regrettable shortcoming, especially because those phenomena were highly important in the context of rulership and its legitimacy and because of the great research achievements in studying those issues in recent decades. Vercamer's chapter also contains far too many erroneous statements, such as the claim that

² For Poland, see Antoni Gąsiorowski, 'Stacje królewskie w Polsce średniowiecznej', *KHKM*, 20, 1972, 2, pp. 243–64; Antoni Gąsiorowski and Izabela Skierska, 'Średniowieczna monarchia objazdowa: Władca w centralnych ośrodkach państwa', in *Sedes regni principales: Materiały z konferencji, Sandomierz 20-21 października 1997 roku*, ed. Barbara Trelińska, Sandomierz, 1999, pp. 67–80; Marcin R. Pauk and Ewa Wólkiewicz, "'Ministri enim altaris ministri curie facti sunt': Ottońsko-salicki "system" Kościoła Rzeszy i jego oddziaływanie w Europie Środkowej XI–XII wieku', in *Kościół w monarchiach Przemysłidów i Piastów*, ed. Józef Dobosz, Poznań, 2009, pp. 105–38 (pp. 126–29). For Hungary, see Pavol Hudáček, 'Kráľovské lesy a dynastické majetky Arpádovcov v 11.–12. storočí (porovnanie so západnou Európou)', in *Slovenské dejiny v dejinách Európy: Vybrané kapitoly*, ed. Dušan Kováč, Bratislava, 2015, pp. 31–78; idem, "'Iter regis", kráľovské paláce, kláštory a listiny', in *Gestá, symboly, ceremónie a rituály v stredoveku*, ed. Peter Bystrický and Pavol Hudáček, Bratislava, 2019, pp. 155–74; idem, 'Kráľ v sedle: Arpádovci a "Itinerant Kingship" ("Reisekönigtum")', in *Gestá, symboly, ceremónie*, pp. 119–35.

the restoration of the sons of Władysław the Exile to rulership rights in Silesia 'marked the beginning of a specific path and individual history of the Silesian territories' (p. 369); or that Henry the Bearded and his wife Hedwig proved to be successful in leading Silesia to a higher stage of development, 'just because they were both (probably) perfectly [*sic!*] bilingual (German and Polish)' (p. 373).

The last essay comes from Monika Saczyńska-Vercamer and is devoted to the issue of the role of papal power in the monarchies of East Central Europe. In terms of structure, this chapter resembles the one by Robert Antonín. Through the prism of three late medieval issues of a political nature (the Polish-Teutonic Order trial before the papal legates; the problem of Hussitism; and crusades against the Turks), as well as some papal prerogatives (the system of benefices; Apostolic Penitentiary), Saczyńska-Vercamer seeks to show the dynamics of papal influence in the region against not only the changing status of the papacy, but also that of these particular realms. It is regrettable that this is the only paper in the volume which deals with ecclesiastical matters, because the local churches played important roles in shaping rulership, affording a great deal of legitimacy to royal/ducal power and at the same time providing a cadre for courtly rituals and ceremonies.

While some individual essays of the volume are rich in detailed insights, overall the collection turns out to be less than the sum of its parts. This is because the volume is an amalgam that forcibly stitches together very different pieces and perspectives. The differences between them do not come down to only volume or methodology, but also to focus and level of detail. Fresh and insightful studies are juxtaposed here with some highly schematic approaches which in some cases do not present fully up-to-date knowledge, while very detailed and specialized chapters are presented side-by-side with highly general ones. All this gives the impression that the editors wanted to prepare an edited collection, but overlooked the fact that this task does not consist in simply combining random contributions, but requires an underlying conceptual framework in which the materials are selected and arranged so that together they form a whole that is as coherent as possible. The editors even refrained from making cross-references in footnotes to direct the reader to other places in the volume where similar issues are discussed.

It should be added that the value of this collection is also undermined by the poor quality of correction and editing. Obvious errors can easily be found in the main text, both in common words (for example: chronic/chronicle; dals/deals; historiograph/historiographer; resent/recent), place names (for example: Gnieźno/Gnieszno; Łeczyca/Łęczycza; Trybunalski/Trybunalski), or personal names (Antonin/Antonín; Koyota/Kojata; Przemysław/Przemysław; Szücs/Szücs; Zygulski/Zygulski). In addition there are many inconsistencies. In footnotes, book titles are sometimes italicized and sometimes not, and English titles capitalized or not. And in the body of the text a period may either precede or follow the footnote number, and personal as well as place names appear in various variants (personal names, for example: Ademar/Adhemar; Władysław/Vladislav; Vincent/Vincentius; place names, for example: Brandenburg/

Brandenburgia; Dobrzyn/Dobrzyń; Gdansk/Gdańsk; Cuiavia/Kujavia/Kujawy; Cracow/Crakow/Krakow/Kraków; Small Poland [*sic!*]/Lesser Poland), as well as nationalities (for example: Bohemian/Czech; Rusian/Russian/Ruthenian (regarding Kievan Rus'); Saxon/Saxonian). Moreover, rulers' names appear sometimes under various nicknames (for example Łokietek/Elbow-High), and their titles are inconsistently capitalized. The Bibliography contains remnants from the proofreading stage (pp. 523n). The volume is not provided with a system of abbreviations for frequently-cited publications.

The quintessential example of the lack of a firm editorial hand is the three-and-a-half-page index of local and personal names (an index of subjects is missing). Not only is this index highly incomplete in terms of indicating where the records appear in the body of the text, but it also omits many characters and places, including important ones which appear repeatedly, for example Přemysl Otakar I, Přemysl Otakar II, Władysław Łokietek, Władysław Jagiełło or St Hedwig of Silesia. The real surprise is the appearance of one person twice, in both cases without an indication of the proper title and main dignity. Jadwiga/Hedwig of Anjou, the king of Poland, appears once as 'Hedwig (Jadwiga), Polish princess' and once as 'Jadwiga, daughter of Louis the Great from Hungary'.

All of this is regrettable, not least given the volume's high cover price. As a whole, this volume simply does not do justice to the richness, originality and inventiveness of the research conducted in recent decades into medieval rulership, power, its legitimacy, and on rituals in medieval Bohemia, Hungary and Poland. Although there are several inspiring chapters, the lack of a clear concept underlying the book significantly hinders the reader's ability to gain for her/himself the stimuli to broader and comparative reflection.

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Christianity and War in Medieval East Central Europe and Scandinavia, ed.
Radosław Kotecki, Carsten Selch Jensen and Stephen Bennett, Leeds:
Arc Humanities Press, 2021 (Beyond Medieval Europe), XIV, 310 pp.

In their introduction to the publication under review, the editors have assessed as 'modest' the findings of research hitherto carried out on the titular topic and postulated a reconstruction of an investigative questionnaire based on the output of recent historiography, which has undertaken the relevant research utilising source materials taken from the cultural centres of the medieval West. Further, they have adopted the assumption that, during the process of 'expansion of the Christian cultural sphere' to the area of 'younger' Europe during the High Middle Ages, there occurred a reception from the West of the Christian culture of war, possibly enriched by elements of local origin ('An Introduction', pp. 1–21).

The volume comprises a list of illustrations, a brief preface by the editors, an index of abbreviations, the cited introduction, thirteen articles grouped in two parts (titled ‘The Church and War’ and ‘Religion in War and its Cultural Expressions’), a selective bibliography, and a register. The articles have been written by fourteen authors from the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Great Britain, Hungary, Norway and Poland. As regards chronology, their subject matter covers the period from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries.

The book opens with an article by Judit Gál, titled ‘The Role of the Dalmatian Bishops and Archbishops in Warfare During the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries: A Case Study on the Archbishops of Split’ (pp. 25–37). According to the author, the Hungarian capture of Dalmatia at the beginning of the twelfth century resulted in the archbishops of Split being assigned military duties. Thus, the first Hungarian archbishop, Manasses (c. 1113–16), was to support the commander (*dux*) of a Hungarian unit in its attempt to seize and plunder Split. At the same time, its residents were gathered for a liturgy presided over by the archbishop himself, so it is difficult to speak of his actual military involvement. While the actions of Archbishop Bernard of Perugia (c. 1200–17), who hired ten galleys from Gaeta and paid for them with monies received from King Emeric, intending to aid Zadar at the time (1202) besieged by the Venetians, fit in with the traditional role of the archbishops of Split as diplomatic representatives of the city. In fact, the first hierarch to be strongly involved in martial affairs was Ugrin Csák, who was elected Archbishop and Comes of Split (1244–48) under pressure from Béla IV. The author herself describes him as ‘the prototype of the Hungarian warrior-archbishop in the city’ (p. 35).

According to Gábor Barabás (‘Thirteenth-Century Hungarian Prelates at War’, pp. 39–56), Hungarian bishops were already presented as warriors in an account from the *Primary Chronicle* concerning the siege of Przemyśl by King Coloman the Learned in 1099. Specifically, two prelates participated in the expedition. One of them, Bishop Koppány, was killed by Ruthenians while pursuing Hungarian forces that had managed to escape from encirclement. Both bishops were probably accompanying the army in their official clerical capacity. Nevertheless, the author’s attention is focused on the thirteenth century, when the military involvement of bishops was supposedly more discernible in sources. He goes on to state that two other hierarchs, who were travelling with King Andrew II on a crusade, perished during the siege of Damietta. The entry in question — ‘Duo episcopi Ungarie, qui mortui sunt ante transitum fluminis in sabulo Damiate’ (p. 43, footnote 23) — requires a more careful interpretation. Further on, Barabás presents information about the bishops’ participation in Hungary’s defence against the Mongol Invasion of 1241. However, he does not consider the ideological aspects underlying their stance. As regards the second half of the thirteenth century, he discusses the solitary case of Job, the warrior bishop of Pécs.

The ‘warrior-bishop’ theme has been taken up by Sini Kangas in ‘The Image of “Warrior-Bishops” in the Northern Tradition of the Crusades’ (pp. 57–73). She notes that chronicles depicting the northern crusades are silent on the issue of

the active participation of clergymen in armed combat, focusing instead on their ministrations to the crusaders and neophytes. However, the second Bishop of Livonia, Bertold, who perished during an engagement against the Livonians in 1198, has been portrayed in historiography as a 'warrior-bishop'. Kangas is correct in stating there is no basis for such an interpretation. Basing ourselves on the chronicle of Henry of Livonia, we are inclined to believe that Bertold did not even have a destrier worthy of the name, as the horse which he had mounted shied and charged into the withdrawing Livonians, after which one of them stabbed the bishop in the back with his spear. In fact, the author has argued that Bertold provoked the battle by his actions toward the Livonians. It is possible, however, that peace with the Livonians was broken at the demand of the crusaders, who incurred losses in men while foraging for their horses. On the other hand, according to Henry of Livonia's chronicle, Bertold favoured applying the principle of *compellere intrare* (forced conversion) towards apostates and conducting an indirect missionary war against the pagans.

This article should be confronted with Kristjan Kaljusaar's text titled 'Martyrdom on the Field of Battle in Livonia During Thirteenth-Century Holy Wars and Christianization: Popular Belief and the Image of a Catholic Frontier' (pp. 245–62), which is concerned with the perception of martyrdom in Henry of Livonia's chronicle and in the anonymous *Livonian Rhymed Chronicle*. According to the author, the concept was not so much a technical term as a descriptor denoting the steadfast enduring of suffering. And while Henry of Livonia connected martyrdom with individual persons, the aforementioned, anonymous author associated it with the entire Teutonic corporation.

Kaljusaar asks why Henry of Livonia described Bishop Bertold as a 'martyr' only in the tenth chapter and not in the second, in which he wrote about the circumstances of his death during the previously mentioned battle between the Crusaders and Livonians. In his opinion, the chronicler did not want to emphasise these circumstances. Canon Law prohibited clergymen from spilling blood, and an infringement of this rule could be cited as an obstacle in possible canonisation proceedings. Such an interpretation has its weaknesses, however, mainly as it does not consider that Bishop Meinhard's title — 'confessor' — is also quoted only in book ten and not in book one, in which mention is made of his death. The annalist first presents the martyrdom of two Livonian neophytes — Kyrian and Layan — and after that adds that they were buried in the church in Üxküll next to the 'confessor' Meinhard and 'martyr' Bertold. It would appear that Henry of Livonia wanted to bring into relief the humility of the first bishops-missionaries to Livonia, for when writing about the *martyrium* of the neophytes and the services of Meinhard and Bertold, he gave the former far lengthier treatment.

The topic of the 'warrior-bishop' has also been touched upon by Jacek Maciejewski in his article 'Memory of the "Warrior-Bishops" of Płock in the Writings of Jan Długosz' (pp. 75–95). His analysis is founded on information about four bishops of Płock from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: Szymon,

Aleksander, Gedko and Gunter, which was quoted by Jan Długosz in his *Roczniki* and *Katalog biskupów płockich* directly from the chronicles of Gallus Anonymus and Wincenty Kadłubek, and partially supplemented with Płock lore.

According to Maciejewski, in his account of the battle between the Mazovians and the Pomeranians, Gallus Anonymus placed Bishop Szymon at the head of the Mazovian army, next to Comes Magnus. In the chronicle, we read (II, 49) that Szymon ‘oves suas — luctuosis vocibus — sequebatur’ and that the Mazovians achieved victory due to the bishop’s prayers, just as the Israelites had vanquished the Amalekites thanks to the prayers of Moses. The chronicler clearly implies that Bishop Szymon (like Moses) had been in the rear guard during the battle.

Maciejewski’s opinion that Wincenty Kadłubek presented Szymon as the sole person capable of replacing a lay commander for the Mazovians does not seem convincing. Wincenty states (III, 8) that the Mazovians, of whom there was only a small number, caught up with the Pomeranians and, recognising that they were outnumbered, considered fleeing the field. In contrast, the Pomeranians disdained the opportunity of fighting with the small group of Mazovians. The gist of the story is thus: the Mazovians assessed the proportion of forces in the same way as the barbarian Pomeranians, without considering possible help from the heavens. Szymon thought otherwise: God is the master of numbers, and thus not they are the foundation of victory or defeat, but prayer.

The author further considers that in his *Roczniki* and *Katalog biskupów płockich*, Jan Długosz was trying to point out that Bishop Szymon did not participate in the Mazovian expedition against the Pomeranians at all, but rather that he brought about Comes Magnus’s victory through prayer and fasting. Nevertheless, the entries in *Katalog biskupów płockich* and *Roczniki* concerning Moses and the Amalekites — the first explicitly and the second implicitly — may suggest that, according to Długosz, Szymon was in the vicinity of the battlefield.

Maciejewski continues that Wincenty (III, 8) also portrayed Aleksander as a cleric and a knight. We should, however, take into consideration the annalist’s own statement to the effect that Aleksander’s piety could not be doubted since God had not told him that which he told Salomon: ‘non edificabis mihi templum, quod uir sanguinum es’ (cf. 1st Book of Chronicles 28:3), and he was able to erect a cathedral in Płock. Aleksander organised the defence of the bishopric but himself fought using spiritual weapons — tears and prayer. Thus, while relativising Aleksander’s duality as a bishop and a warrior, Długosz followed Wincenty’s interpretation.

As regards Bishop Gedko, *Katalog biskupów płockich* emphasizes that his weapon was prayer. But the source’s information about Bishop Gunter is more challenging to elucidate: ‘Prudentia egregie atque fortitudine praeditus rura, homines iuraque ecclesiae non minus corporis quam ingenii viribus defendit. Impetus enim Prutenorum fortiter avertit, castrum Dzirgow recuperavit, captivos vi eripuit et reduxit, cohortes barbarorum fudit fugavitque’ (pp. 85–86, footnote 45). According to Maciejewski, the first sentence mentions two of the

bishop's traits: prudence and courage. Whereas the actual reference is, I think, to the (cardinal) virtues. Indeed, it is not difficult to discern two other virtues: equity (manifesting itself in defence of the entitlements of the Church in Płock) and moderation (evidenced by the use of the intellect). Długosz understands that Bishop Gunter conducted himself impeccably in moral terms. And it is only from this perspective that we should analyse the information presented in the second sentence about how Gunter defended his bishopric against the incursions of the Prussians. Maciejewski's statement that the bishop 'was presented without camouflage as the commander of military operations, who personally took part in the war' (p. 89) shows an incomplete comprehension of Długosz's way of thinking, for in no way does it take into consideration his aretology.

The author's general conclusion is that Długosz, as opposed to chroniclers from the twelfth century, rejected the idea of militarisation of the clergy. Furthermore, perusing the relevant sources indicates that Gallus Anonymus and Wincenty Kadłubek, too, had the same approach.

Let us now return to texts which have as their topic the Baltic region. Johnny Grandjean Gøgsig Jakobsen's article titled 'Preachers of War: Dominican Friars as Promoters of the Crusades in the Baltic Region in the Thirteenth Century' (pp. 97–115) contains a breakdown of source-based information on the subject, which includes a copious selection of materials and topical literature from the Scandinavian countries. The author has turned his attention to issues that have been taken up in historiography only rarely, for example, the types of work undertaken by the Dominicans in the field of crusader preaching and the effectiveness of their endeavours.

In his essay titled 'Depictions of Violence in Late Romanesque Mural Paintings in Denmark' (pp. 117–38), Martin Wangsgaard Jürgensen attempts to interpret the ideological content of decorative paintings presenting knights in battle that appeared in several rural Danish churches at the turn of the thirteenth century. According to Jürgensen, these scenes of knightly combat should be seen as an element of a broader iconographic programme. For example, on the northern wall of the church's nave in Sønder Nærå on the island of Funen, there is an upper decorative strip showing scenes from the life of Thomas Becket, including his martyr's death at the hands of English knights. The strip immediately below depicts scenes of agricultural labour, which are preceded by an impression of the banishment of Adam and Eve from Eden by an angel carrying a fiery sword. The lower strip presents knights doing battle. Further, the glyph of the eastern window offers the sacrifice of Cain and Abel, with Christ shown blessing the latter. In contrast, the glyph of the western window portrays a man and a woman offering themselves, with the Holy Spirit in the guise of a dove with an aureole hovering over them. Obviously, they are not offering themselves to the Holy Spirit or Christ, as Jürgensen would have us believe (pp. 121, 123), but to God through Christ in the Holy Spirit. The author argues that all these motifs are conjoined by thoughts of sin, penance and sacrifice. The impression of the warring knights was intended to make the faithful more aware of the necessity of

fighting sin through actual personal involvement instead of focusing solely on prayer and meditation.

It would seem that the Church addressed this iconographic programme, particularly with regard to knighthood. Jürgensen does not develop the topic of the knights who murdered Thomas Becket. These were persecutors of the Church. The knights in the battle scene could be interpreted as symbolising men of arms who have accepted the ethos proposed by the Church. According to a theory popular in the eleventh–twelfth centuries, the implementation of this ethos was decisive for the harmonious cooperation of the three ‘estates’ (*ordines*); the inclusion of scenes presenting peasants at work could also have been in some way connected with this theory.

Carsten Selch Jensen focuses on the point of contact between religion and war based on the example of the images of Absalon, Bishop of Roskilde and Archbishop of Lund, and Valdemar I, King of Denmark, contained in the chronicle of Saxo Grammaticus (‘Religion and War in Saxo Grammaticus’s *Gesta Danorum*: The Examples of Bishop Absalon and King Valdemar I’, pp. 189–206). The author states that Saxo presented Absalon ‘not only [as an] important and powerful prelate but also a great naval warrior dedicated to the maritime defence of the kingdom’ (p. 197). But the term ‘warrior’ raises doubts, as the chronicle makes no mention of the bishop fighting with sword in hand. Rather, it depicts him as the organiser of the maritime defence of Denmark against the Slavs and as an army scout and guide: ‘patriam firmioribus uallaret excubiis, maritimam assidue stationem peragens’ (Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum: The History of the Danes*, published by Karsten Friis-Jensen, vol. 2, Oxford, 2015, lib. 14, cap. 21.3, p. 1116). Absalon, who ruled over the sea, which was perceived as the abode of hostile forces, appears as a man of God whom one could compare to Moses. Thus, the annalist indirectly informs his readers that the bishop used spiritual weapons.

The fragment, which describes how, on the eve of Palm Sunday, Absalon first defeated the Slavs near Boeslunde on the western coast of Zealand, brims with lofty symbolism. Eighteen men (*clientes*) from the bishop’s retinue crushed an entire enemy army that had arrived on twenty-four ships. Jensen states the following: ‘the chronicler creates a parallel between Christ as the ultimate sacrifice celebrated at Easter, and a newly appointed bishop ready to sacrifice himself for his flock’ (p. 197). In my opinion, any interpretation should instead point to the concept of the Kingdom of God and present Absalon as a ‘collaborator’ acting in support of this Kingdom (Epistle to the Colossians 4:11), for when he entered Jerusalem, Jesus was worshipped as the Messianic King.

The author cites an incident when Absalon, having learned of the approach of the Slav fleet, interrupted his preparations for a Mass that was to be celebrated on the coast — which was controlled by the Slavs — and sent against them his vessels, ‘armis, non precibus deo libamenta daturus. Quod enim sacrificii genus scelerum nece diuine potentie iucundius existimemus?’ (Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, lib. 16, cap. 5.1, p. 1512). Here, Jensen sees only proof of the hierarch’s involvement in matters of war (p. 202). Whereas Saxo, presenting the bishop as

making a pronouncement on sacrifices, associated him with prophetic attributes (such an interpretation is supported, for example, by Isaiah 1:13–16). It could have been that the chronicler wanted to emphasise that the deeds of the bishop's knights were good, for they were motivated by a posture of dedication, and thus the foretold sacrifice were not in vain.

Bjørn Bandlien focuses on the approach of the Norwegian church elite of the twelfth century to war ('Civil War as Holy War? Polyphonic Discourses of Warfare During the Internal Struggles in Norway in the Twelfth Century', pp. 227–43). At the first level, his analysis centres on the monuments of law elaborated following the ascension to the throne of Magnus Erlingsson (1163–64). It is worth noting that the statutes of the provincial synod in Nidaros (Trondheim) from the turn of the seventh decade of the twelfth-century place emphasis on the separateness of the clerical and knightly 'estates', and on the Church's legitimisation of military operations aimed at restoring/maintaining peace. It would have to be determined whether this was a reference to the Peace of God. The postulate set forward in the coronation oath, namely, that the king should be just, is also associated with the matter of peace (cf. Isaiah 32:17: 'Et erit opus justitiæ pax'). In any case, the importance of this issue would have been understandable in a century of civil war.

Øystein, the Archbishop of Nidaros, who stressed the distinctness of the tasks of clergymen and knights (as the statutes as mentioned earlier signify), appealed to the authority of two popes, Alexander III and Clement III, and received the unequivocal opinion that a cleric who spills the blood of a pagan shall cease to be allowed to serve at the altar. Bandlien's comment, made in connection with this exchange of correspondence, is astonishing: 'Archbishop Øystein seemed to explore the limits of clerical participation, especially in wars against those defined as heathens, and he saw it as quite likely that clerics could spill blood during battles' (p. 233). A deeper interpretation is also required of the provisions of Pope Celestine III's protective bull (1194) concerning military obligations imposed on members of the clergy as they applied to Archbishop Eirik of Nidaros.

Further, the article touches upon the cult of St Olaf in the context of the war between King Magnus Erlingsson and the claimant to the throne, Sverre Sigurdsson. Here, too, attention should be drawn to the topic of peace, as it is present in the hagiography devoted to St Olaf and in literary writings connected with Magnus and Sverre. As regards the latter, mention is made not only of the promise of peace on earth but also of eschatological peace (the same concept is present in the Nidaros statutes).

In his article titled 'Orthodox Responses to the Baltic Crusades' (pp. 263–78), Anti Selart expresses the view that until the Late Middle Ages, the Latin-Orthodox Christian proximity in the eastern part of the Baltic zone was devoid of any features of denominational confrontation, with the overall focus being on political and military rivalry. Shifts in the spheres of influence of both worlds found reflection in the church affiliation of specific territories. In contrast, services towards a particular Church were at once an expression of political subjectivity.

Let us return for a moment to the subject matter mentioned in the title and apply in to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Dušan Zupka, in his article titled 'Religious Rituals of War in Medieval Hungary Under the Árpád Dynasty' (pp. 141–57), seems to have conducted an initial examination of the titular topic. But the pertinent terminology (ritual, rite, liturgy) is used freely, whereas source materials (from the eleventh–thirteenth centuries) are not so much analysed as presented and not always correctly. For example, Otto of Freising states in his chronicle (I, 33) that before the Battle of the Leitha between the armies of Géza II, King of Hungary, and Henry II, Duke of Austria, in 1146, the former 'ad quamdam ligneam aecclesiam accedit, ibique ab episcopis — nam eo usque in puerilibus annis positus nondum militem induerat — accepta sacerdotali benedictione ad hoc instituta armis accingitur' (p. 149, footnote 34). According to Zupka, this is a description of the ceremony of knighting; however, the text refers to something entirely different — Géza II (at the time around sixteen years of age) being dressed in a suit of armour for the very first time. The benediction mentioned by the chronicler could have been an allusion to St Paul's words on spiritual weapons (Epistle of St Paul to the Ephesians 6:11–17).

Radosław Kotecki's essay titled 'Pious Rulers, Princely Clerics, and Angels of Light: "Imperial Holy War" Imagery in Twelfth-Century Poland and Rus' (pp. 159–88) is interesting. It deals with Wincenty Kadłubek's depiction of an event that accompanied the marching out of Bolesław III Wrymouth's army against Nakło, a fortified town held by the Pomeranians, in 1109: and behold, atop the Church of St Vitus in Kruszwica there appeared a youth with a golden spear (III, 14; also 15–17). Kotecki convincingly identifies him with an angel that foretold Bolesław's victory and thanks to whom victory was actually achieved.

The author has taken note of comparative materials, namely, the *Primary Chronicle's* description of an expedition organised by Ruthenian princes against the Cumans in 1111. In both accounts, the angel is the guardian of the army and the true originator of its triumph; en route to the battlefield, the soldiers visit various sanctuaries to assure themselves of God's favour, while the marching column is preceded by clergymen carrying some *signum victoriae* — for this is how the *primipilarius* mentioned in Wincenty's account should be identified. One must view as both bold and interesting Kotecki's hypothesis that the said *primipilarius* carried the same spear that had been mentioned by Gallus Anonymus in his depiction of the Congress of Gniezno of 1000 (I, 6). Let us add that the author has placed his deliberations in the context of liturgical rites, which, together with the angelological theme, accompanied the marching out of Western European and Byzantine armies in the Early and High Middle Ages.

David Kalhous and Ludmila Luňáková have performed a comparative analysis of how war was perceived by Widukind of Corvey, Cosmas, Gallus Anonymus and the author of the *Primary Chronicle* ('Rhetoric of War: The Imagination of War in Medieval Written Sources (Central and Eastern Europe in the High Middle Ages)', pp. 207–25). The presence of Widukind among this group appears to be somewhat

accidental, for he was a few generations removed from the remaining three annalists and receives little attention in the essay. According to the authors, the chroniclers in question, although they were clerics, considered war as an integral element of life. Cosmas stands out because he devoted only half as much space to descriptions of military operations as the other annalists. But no attempt has been made to clarify the causes of this difference. An element the chroniclers are said to have had in common was that they attached considerable importance to the justification of war — be it moral, legal, or civilisational. Kalhous and Luňáková hint at two interesting research problems: that of the personal role models offered by Church intellectuals to the lay elites in the ninth–eleventh centuries and of war as a factor to consolidate the political organisms created at the time in Central and Eastern Europe.

The editors of the volume under review have doubtless made considerable efforts to ensure that the works gathered therein present a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the relationship between Christianity and war in Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages. This objective, however, has been achieved only in part. First and foremost, the issue of crusades to the Baltic lands has not been drastically limited (it occupies no less than one-half or so of the book) for the benefit of other aspects of the titular subject matter that are rarely touched upon in topical literature. Such an approach would have been all the more justified by the fact that generally speaking, articles concerning the crusades do not serve to radically advance research. The texts focusing on the other topics offer decidedly more that is new. In the present instance, interesting research questionnaires do not always go hand in hand with sufficiently incisive interpretations of source materials.

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František Šmahel, *Europas Mitte in Bewegung: Das Königreich Böhmen im ausgehenden Mittelalter*, Munich: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021 (Veröffentlichungen des Collegium Carolinum, 113), 596 pp.

During a celebration of one of Gerard Labuda's anniversaries, Henryk Samsowicz said that Labuda could be described as an institution. Although it is said that *comparaison n'est pas raison*, if we accept the description of the Poznań scholar as apt, then it would be just as appropriate to use the term with regard to František Šmahel, who represents Czech historiography.

The present review will focus on a volume of the Czech scholar's studies published in the prestigious series of the Munich institute Collegium Carolinum, which carries out research into the history of Czechia and Slovakia. Another institution contributing to this edition is the Leibnitz Institut für Geschichte und

Kultur des östlichen Europa (GWZO) in Leipzig, an institution with extraordinary achievements in the study of Central and Eastern Europe. The collection presented here comprises twenty-five studies which were published in 1984–2007 in German. The publication is intended as a celebration of the eighty-fifth birthday of the Czech scholar (slightly belated, as František Šmahel was born in 1934), and is addressed to German-speaking scholars.

Before we move to presenting the more interesting threads in Šmahel's analyses, it may be worth providing more information — necessarily in brief — about Šmahel to Polish readers, as this outstanding scholar is known in Poland only to specialists, and among his numerous studies only several minor contributions and one major study devoted to the history of the Hussite revolution have been translated¹ — questionably at that — into Polish. Irrespective of his impressive output, what remains an interesting topic in itself is the scholar's biography, which reflects, as if it were a mirror, the difficult and complicated vicissitudes of Czech scholarship over a period of more than six decades.

Šmahel's successful completion of his studies, crowned with an honours degree and his first publication, won an award from the city of České Budějovice and held out the promise of a bright scholarly future. Unfortunately, the young scholar did not fulfil all the conditions, as he was labelled a revisionist, and this 'flaw' stuck to him for many years. An important point and opportunity in his academic career came with a position at the Historical Institute of the Czechoslovakian Academy of Sciences, which he obtained in 1964. This was when Šmahel embarked on systematic studies of the Hussite period, and this subject became his *spécialité de la maison*.

Šmahel very quickly made a name for himself, tackling topics inspired by his sound knowledge of international historiography. He also made his mark in the field by editing the excellent periodical *Mediaevalia Bohemica*, which was published in major European languages and gave Czech historians an opportunity to present themselves in Europe. This 'carnival' did not last long however, and the periodical ceased to be published after the Prague Spring in 1968. Our protagonist's fate was similar to that of many other scholars who suffered as a result of the imposed 'normalization'. In 1975–79 Šmahel worked as a tram driver in Prague, without interrupting his individual research at the same time. Paradoxically, to this day the scholar remembers the period not as a trauma but fondly, joking that he has never enjoyed such respect as in the tram depot. He spent the following decade — in an atmosphere marked by a loosening of the political corset — at the Museum of the Revolutionary Hussite Movement in Tábor, an institution with scholarly ambitions. These were very fruitful times for the prolific scholar.

At the same time Šmahel did not fail — despite the existential and political difficulties — to cultivate his international contacts. What may be the most spectacular example of this was the invitation, extended to him in 1983 by

¹ František Šmahel, *Rewolucja husycka*, 3 vols, Oświęcim, 2018–20.

Jean Delumeau, to deliver a series of four lectures on the Hussite movement at the Collège de France. Šmahel's presentation of the phenomenon in a broad European context as foreshadowing, as it were, the future Reformation, led to the publication of the lectures in French.² This was where the notion of Hussitism as a 'historical anomaly' appeared for the first time. In addition, from that moment on the term 'revolution' was the most frequently used term in the historiography describing the Hussite movement.

Freedom, which came in 1989, opened up new possibilities for hitherto disadvantaged scholars, and František Šmahel inevitably found himself at the centre of Czech scholarship. The period following the 'Velvet Revolution' more than made up for his years of humiliation and hopelessness. František Šmahel was showered with honours in Czechia and the world. He took advantage of many invitations to overseas conferences and lectures, often also visiting Poland, where he had and still has many friends. It is remarkable and admirable that with so many activities and duties he was able to find time for indefatigable scholarly work, as is evidenced by his huge bibliography. After the death of the eminent Bohemian studies specialist Ferdinand Seibt in 2003, František Šmahel wrote — half jokingly — that it had always seemed to him that Seibt had written so much that he would not be able to read all of it. It now seems that these words can just as well be applied to the Czech medievalist.

The title of the volume of studies under review refers to 'Europe's centre on the move', that is the Kingdom of Bohemia towards the end of the Middle Ages. This is an apt metaphor, as a lot indeed was going on in the region in the last two centuries of the period in question. On one hand, the Bohemian realm was both a source of as well as a central point of conflicts, but on the other it was part of the avant-garde of useful innovations. The entire volume is divided into five thematic sections. The first encompasses what the editor describes as 'panoramic' texts, tackling themes with a broader perspective. The study inaugurating the section comes from the concise history of Europe edited by Ferdinand Seibt³ in 1987 — and still used today — and presents the history of the Bohemian lands from the eleventh to the fifteenth century. As the remaining studies in the volume deal with the late Middle Ages and mostly Hussite topics, this introduction shows Bohemia's journey until the outbreak of the 'biggest heresy of medieval Europe'. Already in this study Šmahel described Hussitism as an 'early revolution' of huge European significance, an assertion that became one of the focal points of his later writings. The next study in the section is an attempt to formulate several questions about the state of research into Bohemian society in the pre-Hussite period, in the context of the so-called Crisis of the Middle Ages. The author claims that without this highly complex crisis the Hussite Revolution would never have happened. Šmahel's studies in the present volume, originally published at various

² František Šmahel, *La révolution hussite, une anomalie historique*, Paris, 1985.

³ *Handbuch der europäischen Geschichte*, 7 vols, Stuttgart, 1968–87, vol. 2: *Europa im Hoch- und Spätmittelalter*, ed. Ferdinand Seibt, 1987.

points in time, are presented without changes, but the scholar often adds more recent literature on the subject. In a note added to the study of the crisis he suggests that more research will be needed into detailed topics relating to the social and economic development in Bohemia.

Let us now devote some attention to another study in this section, in which the author analyses the 'holy war' and the 'forced tolerance' — to use his expressions — of 1419–85. Among the most controversial topics in the discussions about the Hussite movement are those concerning chronology — some scholars separate the period of fighting in 1419–34 from what happened later, including the reign of the Hussite king George of Poděbrady; while others see the matter in terms of the *longue durée*. Šmahel believes that the disputes and fighting under the banners of the cross and the chalice encompass practically the entire century of Bohemian history, from the first inquisition trials against Bohemian reformers around 1390 until the Religious Peace of Kutná Hora in 1485. For the Czechs the latter is a reason to be proud, because — as not everyone knows — seventy years before the famous Peace of Augsburg the Peace of Kutná Hora guaranteed religious toleration and freedom of confession. Šmahel suggests that in addition to the choice of confession, there also appeared at the time the concept of atheism.

The second group of studies focuses on the dynastic and ethnic-national issues in the bilingual (practically trilingual) Kingdom of Bohemia. The author stresses the fact that society in this monarchy was gripped by many conflicts. The man who was able to control these conflicts effectively was Emperor Charles IV of Luxembourg, under whose reign Bohemia appears as an oasis of peace in the eyes of medieval historiographers. The literature on this ruler is vast, but František Šmahel adds a very interesting aspect, which he describes as *spectaculum et pompa funebris*. A detailed analysis of all available information has made it possible to reconstruct the funeral ceremony of the great ruler. In addition to the symbols and elements of ritual, the author reconstructs the entire funeral procession in Prague. This great event also created an outline for a model later used — in varying degrees — during funerals of other monarchs.

One of the most controversial problems in historical research is the question of nationality. The same applies to Bohemia, but it could be said that in the Hussite period the problem became even sharper. The understanding and assessment of the question affected, and continues to affect, the global view on the Hussite Revolution, in which there were no simple national divisions, with the population of German origin often joining revolutionary actions. Obviously Šmahel does not underestimate the profound differences in the understanding of nation and national consciousness in the various periods. He reminds us that the contents of these concepts as we know them today emerged in the nineteenth century — a time marked by a strong sense of nationalism — but questions whether nationalism should be removed from the Middle Ages as a result. The Czech medievalist is fairly cautious in this respect, pointing to a possible compromise

solution. In his view national consciousness was limited in the Middle Ages to narrow circles of scholars, and instead of hidden xenophobia there was often a peaceful co-existence — or at least discussion — among the various ethnic groups. When it comes to the Hussites, which are of particular interest to Šmahel, he notes a certain asynchrony here. As we know, the Taborites tried to ‘export the revolution’ and disseminated Latin and German manifestos encouraging the acceptance of revolutionary slogans throughout Europe. However, they found no understanding for or acceptance of their supranational proposals imbued with Christian universalism. It was too late for that (a whole decade had passed since the ‘Defenestration’ of Prague) and the revolution had been squeezed into the Bohemian nationalist corset. Šmahel does not shy away from comparisons with the Reformation, and rightly stresses that the Czech-speaking community, tired by the earlier wars and upheavals, was distrustful of the movement started by Luther, while the German-speaking population of Bohemia and Moravia joined it *en masse*.

The third part of the volume is focused on urban themes, especially on the two centres of the Hussite Revolution: Prague and Tábör. It is worth referring here to several ideas from a study included in this part and providing a concise picture of the Jewish community in Prague from the late fourteenth century until the end of the fifteenth century, that is throughout the ‘Hussite’ century as Šmahel would have it. Paradoxically, despite the fact that this was a time of persecution of Jews, the period was relatively prosperous for the community. It has been suggested in earlier research that the ‘Jewish problem’ at the time was not among key issues, yet František Šmahel is inclined to give it more prominence, though with the caveat that the separateness of the Jewish community was visible more for economic and existential reasons than for ethnic-religious ones. The two following studies present fragments of the author’s broad research concerning Tábör and are summed up in the concise analysis of that centre mentioned earlier. There are interesting reflections on Tábör as a model of organizing an urban community with roots in the biblical tradition, as is suggested by the town’s name. Another study explores the ideas expressed by a very original fifteenth-century thinker, Petr Chelčický, who was extremely critical of the reality around him. His views — which evolved, but this is not the place for presenting this evolution — were close to anarchism; he regarded all authority as evil oppressing its subjects. The phenomena particularly strongly denounced by Chelčický included the city as a civilizational phenomenon, as opposed to humans’ ‘natural’ environment, that is the countryside.

The fourth thematic section presents us with five studies concerning various parts of the realm which, as a result of the revolution, became an area of ‘double faith’. We find here analyses of the views of Jan Hus’ and Jerome of Prague, with an attempt at their comparison with a fine bon mot: that both men faced the Council of Constance and are also facing the court of history. Jan Hus needs no defenders; Šmahel is right in insisting that historians’ role is not to judge the orthodoxy of their protagonists; but he is clearly fond of Jerome of Prague, to

whom he devotes attention in his research on more than one occasion.⁴ Let us quote his neat statement that 'Jerome died a heretic but also a martyr of the Reformation'. A great deal of misunderstanding arose around the programme of the Hussites, especially with regard to the differences between 'learned' and 'popular' ideas, though we need to bear in mind that it was to a large extent a lively movement, albeit one very divided internally as well. Šmahel tries to remedy this by analysing the Hussite's 'Bible'; that is the Four Articles of Prague. We need to bear in mind that this foundation of the revolution evolved over the course of the events and the understanding of it changed. The Czech historian concludes — probably rightly so — that the Four Articles of Prague can be regarded as a compromise between the ideological extremes. The fourth part of this collection ends with reflections on the Hussites' attitude toward purgatory and role of pre-Christian beliefs in the period. Šmahel asks how it was possible that despite centuries of efforts on the part of the Church, the sources still record many traces of 'paganism' in the Hussite era. His answer can probably be referred to many European countries. A high level of illiteracy, the deep divide between 'external' and 'internal' religiosity and, in many regions, the prevalence of traditional agrarian culture created impassable boundaries for the official Church. Hussitism made the Bohemian lands somewhat unique in this respect. Wherever the new currents did not take root more deeply; where the mystery of the chalice quickly lost its appeal and where the ranks of helpers in the form of the clergy thinned; the door was opened to the world of folklore, superstition, and magic. Interestingly, unlike most European countries, where the intense persecution of 'witches' started in the late fifteenth century, the Calixtinistic Bohemia used much gentler means when fighting magic.

The last, fifth part of the book, deals with phenomena defined today as visual canvassing, mass media and propaganda. The studies included in this part shed light on the huge role they played in the 'Hussite' century. The repertoire of the means used was very diverse. Suffice it to mention singing and music; but bearing in mind that the hymns sung by Taborite troops caused terror in the ranks of the enemy. From the beginning the pulpit occupied a strategic position in propaganda, with the most industrious preachers appearing before the populace several times a day. To this we should add journalism, that is various ephemeral publications, manifestos, satires, and pamphlets produced by both the Hussite and anti-Hussite sides. The low level of literacy meant that various forms of visual, largely symbolic propaganda were crucial.

František Šmahel's studies collected in this volume demonstrate the breadth of the Czech scholar's research, presenting the Bohemian lands at the end of the Middle Ages against a Central European backdrop, although despite the many side topics we remain in the Hussite world. After years of studying the phenomenon, the author sometimes joked that he was tired of Hussitism —

⁴ Cf. František Šmahel, *Jeroným Pražský*, Prague, 1966.

after all his output also contains studies in philosophy or art history – but whether he liked it or not, he is known to the public as the greatest living ‘Hussitologist’. And let it stay that way.

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(Translated by Anna Kijak)

Mihai Dragnea, *Christian Identity Formation Across the Elbe in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries*, New York: Peter Lang, 2021 (Christianity and Conversion in Scandinavia and the Baltic Region, c. 800–1600, 1), 126 pp.

The book under review is the first volume in a new series issued by the publisher Peter Lang, entitled *Christianity and Conversion in Scandinavia and the Baltic Region, c. 800–1600*. Its editor, and at the same time author of the book in question, is Mihai Dragnea, a young researcher from the University of South-Eastern Norway in Notodden. In 2018 he defended his PhD thesis at the Romanian Academy of Sciences on the ideology accompanying the 1147 Wendish Crusade. An English-language version of this thesis¹ has been critically reviewed in Poland by Marian Dygo.² Since then Dragnea has been publishing, with surprising intensity, studies devoted to various Polabian topics, but the quality of some of them is debatable.³ This, unfortunately, is the case with the book under review.

It consists of seven chapters, comprising only 112 pages, and ending with a five-page conclusion, as well as an index of persons, subject index and list of

¹ See Mihai Dragnea, *The Wendish Crusade, 1147: The Development of Crusading Ideology in the Twelfth Century*, London, 2019. A Romanian-language version of the study was published in the same year: Mihai Dragnea, *Misiune și cruciadă în teritoriul venzilor (secolul al XII-lea)*, Bucharest, 2019.

² See Marian Dygo, review of Mihai Dragnea, *The Wendish Crusade, 1147: The Development of Crusading Ideology in the Twelfth Century*, London–New York 2020, *ZH*, 86, 2021, 2, pp. 161–66.

³ See Mihai Dragnea, ‘Mental Geographies and Cultural Identities in the Baltic Region in the Eleventh Century: the Anglo-Saxon “Cotton” World Map’, in *Istorie, Cultură și Cercetare / History, Culture and Research*, ed. Dumitru-Cătălin Rogojanu and Gherghina Boda, 4 vols, Târgoviște, 2016–20, vol. 3, 2019, pp. 13–28; idem, ‘Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication Between Germans and Wends in the Second Half of the Tenth Century’, *Journal of the Institute of Latvian History*, 2019, 2 (110), pp. 5–33; idem, ‘The Saxon expeditions against the Wends and the foundation of Magdeburg during Otto I’s reign’, *The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies*, 11, 2019, 2, pp. 7–34; idem, ‘Constructions of Christian Identity in the Northern Periphery: The Sawley World Map in Twelfth-Century England’, *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 72, 2021, 4, pp. 726–50; idem, ‘Crusade and Colonization in the Wendish Territories in the Early Twelfth Century: An Analysis of the So-called Magdeburg Letter of 1108’, *Mediaevalia*, 42, 2021, pp. 41–61.

abbreviations. The publisher has decided not to include a bibliography, which is why it can be reviewed only by checking the notes placed at the end of each chapter.

In the introductory chapter the author briefly describes the Carolingian and Ottonian imperial ideology, rightly seeing the representatives of the Ottonian dynasty as followers of Charlemagne — especially in the context of the Christianization of the pagans living on the frontiers of their state. He stresses the merging of the ideas of *imperium* and *christianitas*, and thus the political and religious unity in the period in question. Next Dragnea focuses on the question of Christianization itself, asking when — according to intellectuals from the tenth–eleventh centuries — a man becomes a Christian. The author has opted for a rather obvious choice — and one that cannot be said to be wrong — that is baptism. Dragnea also raises the question of self-identification of Christians by means of defining non-Christians, but does not elaborate on this topic. He takes a similar approach to questions he barely mentions, such as the *interpretationes romana et christiana* of the pagan religion, which are discussed divorced from the context of identity studies, although the author claims that this is the purpose of his referring to them.

In this chapter Dragnea defines the main objective of his book, namely the presentation of how Christian intellectuals of the tenth and eleventh centuries perceived the process of incorporating the Polabian Slavs into the Christian ecumene. He rightly sees the process in the light of the Ottonians' imperial ideology as an element of the political theology of the period. Such a formulation of the objective raises doubts however, because the title of the book suggests reflections on the Christian identity of the Polabians and not the ideas which the authors of the sources had about the Christianization of the region. Thus the reader is misled by Dragnea's unfortunate choice of title.

The next chapter provides a short characterization of the Polabian Slavs; in the book named, after the German literature on the subject, the Wends. Dragnea explains the origin of this term and proceeds to discuss the distribution of the Polabian tribes on the basis of information provided by Thietmar and Adam of Bremen. He pays a great deal of attention to questions of terminology, namely terms appearing in the sources in the contexts of Slavdom, like *urbs*, *civitas* and *oppidum* as well as *terra*, *pagus*, *provincia* or *regio*, which he rightly considers important. Dragnea also examines, very briefly, the territorial organization of Slavic lands under Ottonian rule (until the revolt of 983) as well as the political organization of the Obotritic Confederation. It remains unclear why he focuses on this particular entity instead of presenting — in a more general dimension — the nature of the Polabian political organizations. What may be behind this is the belief, expressed in the first sentence of this part of the chapter, that the 'Obotrites were by far the most powerful tribe across the Elbe' (p. 18), which, however, is not accompanied by any chronology, and the opinion contradicts the next part of the study, where much more attention is devoted to the Lutici. Even more questionable is the assertion that the 'Obotrites had a political system similar to that of the

Bohemians and Poles' (p. 19); all the more so given that it is not supported by any argument or at least a reference to the literature on the subject. Dragnea's analysis of the Obotrites' political organization — even if it is only cursory — is surprising because of its lack of reflection on its origins, especially given the objective of the book. An overview of the Carolingian sources — which the author knows, though he reads them rather perfunctorily — reveals that the initiator of a supra-tribal political organization of the Obotrites was Charlemagne,⁴ a conclusion of great importance to the study of the identities of the communities making up the Confederation.

Chapter 3 is a very brief overview of the history of the Christianization of the Polabians. There is no need to sum up the contents of this part of the book, as it is a cursory presentation of the basic facts of the process referred to in the title. Among the more interesting issues tackled by the author, it is worth mentioning the subject of a missionary war, which Dragnea wrongly calls (without the necessary justification in this case) a just war. There is also an interesting question of the translation of liturgical texts into Slavic by Bishop Boso of Merseburg, mentioned by Thietmar. However, this has not been used in the author's reflections of the Christian identity of the Lusatian Sorbs of that period. Dragnea instead limits himself to a rather unreflective analogy to the mission of Cyril and Methodius. The brief description of the Moravian mission cited by him does not point out similarities between the two cases, thus the analogy can rightly be regarded as debatable and without solid argumentation. It is one thing for Boso to allow the vernacular language to be used in the Latin liturgy on an exceptional basis, and another to create a new rite in such a language. A similarly undeveloped (albeit fascinating) thread is the reign of the Obotrite prince Gottschalk, whom Helmold even portrays in his chronicle as a holy and very Christian ruler.

This chapter also features a Polish thread, referred to for the purpose of comparison. However, Dragnea's rather categorical assertions demand a polemic — I mean here information about the founding of a bishopric in Poznań in 968 (leaving aside the discussion over the date, much more important is the issue of the nature of the bishopric), as well as the thesis that Mieszko I, helped by the pope, thwarted the Ottonian plans to incorporate Poland into Magdeburg's jurisdiction. More recent research indicates that Jordan functioned as a missionary bishop rather than a typical bishop of a given territory. The argument here is built on a comparison with the better-known activities of other missionary bishops of the period, primarily Adalbert, later Archbishop of Magdeburg, and Bruno of Querfurt.⁵ When it comes to Mieszko I and the so-called *Dagome iudex*, even if we assume that the objective behind the

⁴ Robert Kasperski, 'Frankowie i Obodryci: tworzenie "plemion" i "królów" na słowiańskim Połabiu w IX wieku', in *Granica wschodnia cywilizacji zachodniej w średniowieczu*, ed. Zbigniew Dalewski, Warsaw, 2014, pp. 55–113 (especially pp. 88–97, 101–08).

⁵ See more, recently: Maksymilian Sas, 'Między swoistością a typowością: kult św. Piotra Apostoła w monarchii wczesnopiastowskiej na tle środkowoeuropejskim (do końca XI w.)', in *Oryginalność czy wtórność?: Studia poświęcone polskiej kulturze*

document was to define the boundaries of the future ecclesiastical province (which is a plausible albeit debatable hypothesis),⁶ Dragnea's thesis may be questioned on account of the lack of any reaction from Rome. When thinking about the 'thwarting of Magdeburg's expansion', we would expect that a new metropolitan see would have been established, but this happened only in 1000 CE, in completely different circumstances and without any connection to Mieszko's document. It is by no means necessary to state categorically that the potential aspirations of the Polish duke — a 'friend of the emperor' after all — to establish an archbishopric must have been against the emperor's interests, although in this case greater support on the part of Otto would have been expected. In any case, any anti-imperial campaign by Mieszko in Rome cannot be reconciled with the extremely close relations between the pope and the emperor at that time.

In Chapter 4, entitled 'Wendish Idolatry in a Broader Context', Dragnea presents the history of the successive Polabian revolts. He argues that they were understood by the Christian side as acts of disobedience to the empire and the Church. While this obvious observation is supported by ecclesiological arguments drawing on authorities from the Gregorian Reform period, it seems inappropriate to some extent because it is hard to refer these intellectual trends — spreading to the geographical area in question only in the late eleventh and the twelfth century — to the works of Widukind, Thietmar, or Adam of Bremen, which make up the source base for the study of Slavic insurrections. Nor does it seem justified for Dragnea to claim that the 983 revolt 'had a strong anti-clerical background' (p. 46). We can agree that the course of the revolts was indeed of this nature, but the reasons were mainly political in nature, as Dragnea rightly points out elsewhere in the book (p. 94). However, he is unconvincing when he claims that the number of bishoprics founded by Otto I in Polabia testified to the size of the Christian population in the region. The author forgets (or does not realize) the role of religious foundations in spiritual life and in the manifestation of social position in the Ottonian period. Another debatable thesis is that Thietmar placed the Obotrite revolt of 1018 in February in order to symbolically highlight the disobedience of the Slavs. According to Dragnea, the chronicler points to a link between the revolt of the Slavs against being purified of the sin of idolatry and the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrated in the Church. This is a bold hypothesis, but the problem is that in the fragment in question Thietmar makes no mention of the Marian feast.

politycznej i religijnej (X-XIII wiek), ed. Roman Michałowski and Grzegorz Pac, Warsaw, 2020, pp. 291–377 (pp. 296, 356–62).

⁶ The dating of the document is debatable, but it is possible that when it originated there was no bishop in Poland (after Jordan's death). In light of this fact it seems justified to assume that Mieszko may have simply wanted to establish a bishopric and not a metropolitan see, see *ibid.*, pp. 361–64 (includes further literature).

Chapter 5 is a kind of introduction to the final two chapters of the book, which are devoted to the paganism of the Lutici. Dragnea concisely presents the Christian view on divination, rightly drawing attention to the fact that the practice deviated significantly from the theory. He briefly describes two kinds of divination practiced by Christians and criticized by ecclesiastical dignitaries — practices like *sortes sanctorum* and *sortes biblicae*, listing the most important elements of these criticism phenomena. What is puzzling is the fact that Dragnea limits himself to late ancient and twelfth-century literature, while declaring that his work is devoted to the tenth and eleventh centuries. Consequently, the very legitimacy of making a separate chapter out of this passage is questionable. It deviates considerably and thematically from the rest of the chapter, and would work much better (especially with a more thoughtful selection of the literature) as an introductory passage opening the sixth chapter, ‘Horse Divination among the Liutici’. Contrary to what the title suggests, in Chapter 6 the author examines not only divination featuring horses but also, more broadly, the place of divination practices in the social and political life of the Lutici Confederation, on the basis of Thietmar’s description of Riedegost. Dragnea argues that the shrine within the Redari’s territory was the centre of political life, and that the system of tribal federation, which the Lutici Confederation was, had all the markings of a theocracy. All important decisions of a political nature were to be taken with a significant contribution from the shrine priests, who controlled divination. However, we already know this from older scholarship. The whole chapter can thus be characterized as a brief overview of the features of the Lutici’s paganism in Thietmar’s description, taking into account the possible potential political interpretations. Unfortunately, the overview contributes nothing new to the current state of research because the author, drawing on the achievements of his predecessors, does not use their findings to carry out a more in-depth analysis or draw new conclusions. A similar topic is explored in the final chapter of the book, in which Dragnea continues his religious and political reflections concerning the Lutici. Having discussed Thietmar’s Riedegost, he moves to Rethra, described by Adam of Bremen, which like most scholars he considers to have been the same religious centre. The conclusions from the previous chapters are repeated here in the context of new sources — Adam and his ‘continuator’ Helmhold. While we can agree that both Thietmar and Adam described the shrine using a model derived from their knowledge of Greco-Roman religiosity, the suggestion that Adam’s term ‘Rethra’ comes from the so-called Great Rhetra, (that is a collection of Spartan laws apparently dictated by the oracle of Delphi), seems to be an unjustified conjecture. In my view the analogy is too remote and the author does not build any solid argumentation to demonstrate that Adam was familiar with this ancient term.

At the end of the book Dragnea sums up his most important conclusions. They are hardly novel, although it would be hard to deny that many of them are correct. First of all, Dragnea points out that the authors of the analysed sources see the Polabians as apostates rather than pagans *sensu stricto*. This particular point is debatable, as it seems that the issue is a little more complex

than Dragnea would have it. However, it should be noted that the terms ‘pagans’ and ‘paganism’ were repeatedly used until the twelfth century to refer to Slavs living between the Elbe and the Odra Rivers. This may suggest that owing to the 983 revolt the *gens Slavorum* is classified in terms of apostasy solely in the non-historical (transcendental) dimension, while the historical (‘living here and now’) Slavs as individuals are, for the authors of the sources, simply pagans who had never become acquainted with the ‘sweet yoke of Christ’. Dragnea also stresses in his Conclusions that for Christian intellectuals a key role in the assessment of the Slavs’ religious affiliation was played by their loyalty and obedience — including of a political nature, as religion and the state were closely linked in that period. This is connected with his last conclusion, that the dispute between the empire and the Slavs was by and large political in nature, although in its justification religious argumentation and rhetoric must have been used by both sides of the conflict (although we have at our disposal testimonies of only one of them). Instead of providing an in-depth analysis of the source material, Dragnea limits himself to a rather perfunctory overview of it as well as a summary of part of the literature on the subject, selected more on the basis of its availability rather than its significance to the subject under discussion. Dragnea seems to have a problem finding anything in the sources that has never before been extracted from them. He may be doing this unconsciously, not knowing part of the important literature on the subject — at least this can be concluded based on his selection of literature. A vast majority of the studies included by him are in English, with relatively few (given the subject matter) in German and none whatsoever in Polish.⁷

⁷ Suffice it to say that not once does the author refer in his book — either to substantiate his conclusions or to enter into a polemic — to Hans-Dietrich Kahl’s studies, which are absolutely fundamental to the subject matter in question. This is even though most of the most important studies have been published in the easily available collection *Heidenfrage und Slawenfrage im deutschen Mittelalter: Ausgewählte Studien 1953–2008*, Leiden and Boston, 2011 (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, 4). Another great classic omitted by the Romanian scholar is Herbert Ludat, whose publications do not appear in the footnotes either. Dragnea writes about the reflections of Christian authors on the Christianization of Polabia, yet he fails to mention Volker Scior’s *Das Eigene und das Fremde: Identität und Fremdheit in den Chroniken Adams von Bremen, Helmolds von Bosau und Arnolds von Lübeck* (Berlin, 2002), which is a fundamental study on the topic. Nor do we find in the footnotes (with the exception of one minor study) references to Christian Lübke’s research. Yet given the subject matter of the book under review, it would be really hard to overestimate such studies by this scholar as *Struktur und Wandel im Früh- und Hochmittelalter: Eine Bestandsaufnahme aktueller Forschungen zur Germania Slavica* (Stuttgart, 1998) or *Fremde im östlichen Europa: Von Gesellschaften ohne Staat zu verstaatlichten Gesellschaften, 9.–11. Jahrhundert* (Cologne, 2001). It would also have been appropriate for Dragnea to have referred to important studies by Lübke published in Polish: ‘Powstanie i istota Związku Luciców: Jedna z konsekwencji chrystianizacji Europy Wschodniej w X stuleciu’, in *Chrześcijańskie korzenie: Misjonarze, święci, rycerze zakonni*, ed. Sergiusz Sterna-Wachowiak, Poznań,

The chronological scope of the book also raises doubts. Why has the twelfth century been excluded? I do not see any strong arguments in favour of such a decision. It seems much more natural to end the analysis shortly after the 1147 crusade, at a time of growing stabilization of the political situation in the region and, consequently, of the normalization of ecclesiastical relations. Another surprising element is the geographical scope and the related choice of sources. What is completely incomprehensible is the exclusion from the analysis of the Rugian and, above all, Pomeranian contexts, and thus the omission of Saxo Grammaticus and the hagiographic corpus devoted to St Otto. Not only are these sources key to the subject matter indicated in the title, but they are also well known — including to the author of the book.

When reaching for the book *Christian Identity Formation Across the Elbe*, the reader is entitled to expect reflections on the eponymous Christian identity of the inhabitants of the Polabian region, not a chaotic discussion of Christian intellectuals' reflections on mission aims and missionary strategy, mixed with a rather cursory description of Polabian paganism. I do not find any fresh ideas in this book about the perception of the Christianization of Polabia and the perception of paganism in the region by the elites of the empire. Nor do I find any attempt to answer the question about the Christian identity of the inhabitants of the region between the tenth and the eleventh centuries, which would indeed have been a novelty in the research into early medieval Polabia. Admittedly, Dragnea's book does not contain any major factual errors,⁸ at most a number of poorly argued theses. But this is definitely not enough for it to be called a 'good book' and to be recommended to readers. The book must be described as disappointing and, at the same time, an example of the sad phenomenon of overproduction of studies of questionable quality — a phenomenon with which historiography — and in particular English-language historiography — has been grappling with in recent times.

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(Translated by Anna Kijak)

1997, pp. 51–64; 'Pogańscy Słowianie — chrześcijańscy Niemcy?: Tożsamości mieszkańców Połabszczyzny w VIII–XII wieku', in *Bogowie i ich ludy: Religie pogańskie a procesy tworzenia się tożsamości kulturowej, etnicznej, plemiennej i narodowej w średniowieczu*, ed. Leszek Paweł Słupecki, Wrocław, 2008, pp. 73–84. Among other important omissions in Polish, apart from the classic studies by for example Gerard Labuda or Jerzy Strzelczyk I should mention Stanisław Rosik's excellent book *Conversio Gentis Pomeranorum: Studium świadectwa o wydarzeniu (XII wiek)*, Wrocław, 2010. If Dragnea knew about it, he would appreciate the significance of the Pomeranian context to the subject matter he has tackled.

⁸ At most minor details can be mentioned, such as the inclusion of Rugia's Arkona (p. 14) in the Billung March or the statement that the only Obotrite ruler appearing in the sources with a royal title is Gottschalk's son Henry (p. 32).

Weibliche Herrschaft im 18. Jahrhundert: Maria Theresia und Katharina die Große, ed. Bettina Braun, Jan Kusber and Matthias Schnettger, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2020 (Mainzer Historische Kulturwissenschaften, 40)

The volume under review brings together papers presented during an international conference of historians and art historians from Austria, France, Germany, Russia and Hungary, which took place at the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz on 11–13 May 2017. The editing was entrusted to Bettina Braun (who researches the history of the German Catholic Church in the early modern era and the politics of the Viennese court during the reign of Maria Theresa), Jan Kusber (who specializes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history of Russia) and Matthias Schnettger (expert on the early modern history of Germany and its relations with countries on the Italian Peninsula). The volume contains sixteen papers, excluding the Introduction. Each paper closes with a list of the sources and the literature used. The bibliographies do not contain archive material. The book is complemented by an index of names, which does not take into account individuals appearing in the footnotes.

In the Introduction the editors present the theoretical assumptions underlying the volume. They stress that they realize that Maria Theresa and Catherine II operated in different conditions; thus the intentions of the authors of the volume was not to sketch parallel portraits of the rulers, but to point out areas that seemed key to female rule in general and the eponymous heroines in particular. The authors' assumption is that 'women's rule was characterized by unique features, which made them different from rule by men' (p. 10), which is evident in several areas in particular. When it comes to discharging monarchical duties, the matter particularly concerns the army. Female rulers were not involved with this domain; they did not have the right competences, as this aspect played no role in their upbringing. Another unique feature of female rule, as the authors of the volume argue, was the way they were depicted in fine arts. The authors' view is that in the case of women beauty played a much bigger role than in the case of men.

The first two articles are intended as an introduction, providing a framework for 'female rule' in the early modern period. Lorenz Erren is inclined to accept the thesis that the state can hardly be seen as a subject of international activities in the early modern era. He believes that we are dealing here with 'dynastic forms', 'heterogenous state complexes', dynasties, and representatives of estates. Erren agrees with the observation that after the Peace of Westphalia a system of sovereign states had not yet emerged in Europe and that sovereignty itself was more of an attribute of rulers. Thus, in order to explain the politics of European powers in the early modern era it is necessary to devise a new paradigm of the state — a paradigm that would take into account the tension between the patrimonial rule of the dynasts on the one hand, and political nations seeking emancipation on the other. Erren

narrows the field of his reflection by not taking into consideration societies that developed the concept of a political community, for example the United Provinces, England, or Poland.

Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger wonders whether female rule in the early modern era should be treated as an exception to the universal principle. She concludes that Maria Theresa's gender was not decisive when it came to being a monarch: sometimes it could prove to be a hindrance (for example in conducting military operations, or taking part in the imperial election), and sometimes was a positive factor. The matter is debatable — after all, Maria Theresa's gender was of no significance during the 1745 election; despite the negative opinions of German jurists, the vote of the Bohemian queen was taken into account. Stollberg-Rilinger is of the opinion that in the nineteenth century Maria Theresa became an icon of the Austrian national myth precisely because she was a woman. According to the German historian, the generation of Alfred von Arneth 'made her an object of their passionate ideas', which today seems 'bizarre and even [...] funny' (p. 21). The author does not substantiate these remarks with source references.

Was gender indeed an obstacle to describing Maria Theresa as a monarch fighting for her state? Bettina Braun analyses how Maria Theresa's military virtues were presented in her lifetime and shortly after her death. Soon after Maria Theresa's coronation as Queen of Hungary, an engraving was made in which the ruler, wearing the coronation robe, is depicted on horseback with the Hungarian coronation sword in her raised right hand. While this is not a battle scene, nonetheless the depiction brings to mind Maria Theresa's martial determination and readiness to defend her Hungarian domain. The image remains unique — there are no similar depictions from a later period. As Braun notes, even if Maria Theresa's military virtues were not highlighted, her close links to the army were stressed in a different manner: regardless of their background, all officers serving in her guard corps were regarded as noblemen; a Military Order of Maria Theresa was established to commemorate the Battle of Kolín (1757); and military uniforms were promoted as court attire (long before Joseph II rejected the Spanish dress). In coins Maria Theresa was depicted, in accordance with ancient models, as a *mater castrorum*; appropriately to this image she took an interest in the fate of soldiers, for example by visiting the barracks and watching military manoeuvres. After the death of Francis Stephen she often made these visits incognito. During cabinet meetings, the empress queen was often consulted on many ventures of a military nature, although she usually let army commanders have the biggest say, recognizing their competences. What also should be mentioned here is the founding in 1751 of the Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt. After the death of Maria Theresa, her concern for the preservation of peace was pointed out, with emphasis given to the fact that if, as a ruler, she decided to go into battle, she did so with the intention of protecting her estates and her subjects. The author concludes that although the motif of pursuing peace rather than war was invoked far more often in

propaganda efforts, military themes by no means played a minor role in monarchical representation. Braun believes that gender was no major hindrance here: not all rulers were interested in military matters and in the eighteenth century few decided to take direct part in warfare.

The Russian traditions, as is suggested by Victoria Ivleva's article, went in a different direction. There are many known portraits in which Elizabeth Petrovna and Catherine II were depicted on horseback, wearing military uniforms. Yet the author focuses on another issue: the attire worn by Catherine II during official audiences and other engagements; as well as on the legislation regulating attire promulgated during her reign.

Drawing on accounts by the apostolic nuncio to Vienna Camillo Paolucci and the Genoese envoy Rodolfo Brignole from the last few months of 1740, Matthias Schmettger paints a picture of the Viennese court in the first weeks of Maria Theresa's reign. The diplomats provided detailed accounts of the actions taken at the court after the death of Charles VI, and they wrote about talks with representatives of other European courts. They stressed a growing uncertainty surrounding Frederick II's political intentions, pointing to some additional problems of the Viennese court: internal unrest, conflicts at the court, financial problems and military weakness. An important topic raised in the diplomatic correspondence was the Viennese court's efforts to win support for Francis Stephen in the race for the imperial crown. Unlike the accounts of, for example, the Venetian diplomat Apostolo Zeno, the letters of the nuncio and the Genoese envoy contain no value judgments concerning the new ruler's gender. What's more, the nuncio criticized the decision to make Francis Stephen co-regent; according to the nuncio, the decision could be viewed as a violation of the Pragmatic Sanction. In any case, the envoys realized that the most important figure at the court was the chancellor Philipp Ludwig von Sinzendorf. In the sources studied by the author, the matter of Maria Theresa's gender was not a major problem with one exception: on the day of Charles VI's death the papal nuncio wondered whether as a woman Maria Theresa would be able to exercise her right — associated with the possession of the Crown of St Wenceslas — to vote in the imperial election. As we know, the first ruler to put the crown on his head was Charles VII and he was able to cast the Bohemian vote during the imperial election of 1742. As has been mentioned above, during the following election the Bohemian electoral vote was in the hands of Maria Theresa.

Martina Beck has analysed the court ceremonial associated with audiences granted by Maria Theresa to Russian diplomats. Beck concludes that the formal setting was used as an indication of the state of political relations. In this sense the breaking of friendly relations between Vienna and Petersburg after the death of Empress Elizabeth had an impact on the nature and course of the Russian envoys' meetings with Maria Theresa. However, the matter is by no means so simple. The author does not take into account the political context in which Catherine II decided to change the alliance system.

She fails to mention not only the Prussian-Russian alliance of 11 April 1764, but also the relations between Catherine II and Frederick II in general, nor does she recall the efforts taken in Vienna to renew the alliance of the imperial courts. It would be relevant to look at the activities of the Russian envoys accredited to the Viennese court; the spaces for talks with Austrian statesmen; the information channels; and the networks of contacts. Such detailed studies would demonstrate that political talks determining the relations between the states were conducted primarily in the privacy of cabinets and not 'in the limelight'.

Zsolt Kökényesi examines the position of the Hungarian nobility at the Viennese court during the reign of Maria Theresa. The period was marked by a significant increase in the number of Hungarians holding important court offices and playing important roles in both diplomacy and the army. The author notes that the phenomenon concerned not just representatives of old West Hungarian magnate families; indeed more and more East Hungarian and Transylvanian noblemen were arriving in the imperial capital, hoping for careers in the administration and the army. The establishment of the Order of St Stephen and the Hungarian Crown Guard created important tools for the Hungarian nobility's integration with the court. In addition, the Crown Guard provided an opportunity – especially for representatives of the poorer nobility – to receive an education, and opened up the prospect of continued service in the Imperial and Royal Army. The policy, pursued during Maria Theresa's reign, of strengthening the ties of Hungarian magnate and noble families to the Viennese court was obviously not associated with the ruler's gender: it was an instrument for strengthening the internal cohesion of the Habsburg monarchy.

Jan Kusber enquires into the role of favourites at the court of Catherine II. His view is that the authors of the literature on the subject have so far been too keen to focus on themes relating to sexuality. In fact, the favourites were not only intimate partners of the empress, but also persons with whom she could share her thoughts on philosophy and art and, above all, on domestic and foreign policy. Regardless of their official functions, they joined the ranks of the most important politicians of the empire; they were involved in key political actions (Grigorii Orlov's role in the deposing of Peter III) and became the empress's closest advisors (Grigorii Potemkin's influence on Catherine's Turkish policy). Thus, in political practice the empress needed a man. Nevertheless, irrespective of the strength of her affection, when the political position of a favourite became too strong she was inclined to replace him with a new one. Yet it is worth noting here that Potemkin, who reached an extremely high position, managed to hold on to it until the end.

Natalia Tuschinski seeks to examine the 'Greek problem', a plan according to which the Byzantine Empire was to be renewed in collaboration with the Viennese court, with Catherine II's grandson, Grand Duke Constantine, being installed on its throne. However, the author does not ask about the real

functions of the project, nor is she interested in its propaganda significance. Neither does she refer to new sources, especially hand-written diplomatic material that could shed new light on the problem she analyses, and does not use the canonical literature on the subject.¹

Werner Telesko is interested in the strategies for commemorating Maria Theresa's reign in literary works and fine arts. The historian analyses works and depictions originating in the empress's lifetime and shortly after her death. He points out that dynastic themes played a central role here. Sandra Hertel and Stefanie Linsboth wonder which traits of Maria Theresa's personality were highlighted in contemporary literary texts and in works of art. Hertel examines beauty as an aesthetic and moral category. In turn Linsboth, in analysing Franz Anton Müller's polychrome paintings in the Chapel of the Finding of the Holy Cross in Prague and Johann Adam Stockmann's engravings, considers the role of the *pietas austriaca* in the propaganda activities of the Viennese court. Linsboth's attempts do not bring any new findings to the scholarly discussion: beauty and piety are constant qualities attributed to a good ruler, regardless of that ruler's gender. Following the literature on the subject, Irma Straßheim discusses a selection of caricatures depicting Catherine II, and printed in the English press between 1787 and 1796 — caricatures already analysed in earlier studies.

The studies included in the book under review are uneven in terms of their quality: those that should be regarded as outstanding are the analyses by Braun, Kókényesi and Schnettger, based as they are on a wide range of sources. As we read the volume, we can see that the introductory thesis concerning the unique determinants of 'female rule' has not been substantiated. As Bettina Braun rightly notes, not all monarchs in the early modern era took the trouble to command their army on the battlefield in person. As is evidenced by Matthias Schnettger's article, nor was gender of great importance to the Italian diplomats following the political actions of the Viennese court in the first few weeks after Charles VI's death. Nor, as it would turn out, did gender determine Maria Theresa's capacity to cast the Bohemian electoral vote in the college of electors. In the fine arts, too, it is hard to find elements that would be characteristic solely of 'female rule': in the early modern period beauty as a moral and aesthetic category concerned women and men in equal measure. Gender did not play any major part in propaganda either. The image of the empress queen as the 'Austrian mother', so widespread today, originated only in the nineteenth century. Maria Theresa and Catherine II were

¹ I mean here primarily Alan W. Fisher's book, *The Russian Annexation of the Crimea 1772-1783*, Cambridge, 1970. The author also leaves out other fundamental studies: Derek Beales, *Joseph II*, vol. 2, Cambridge, 2009; Adolf Beer, *Die orientalische Politik Österreichs seit 1774*, Vienna, 1883; Isabel de Madariaga, 'The Secret Austro-Russian Treaty of 1781', *SEER*, 38, 1959, 90, pp. 114-45; eadem, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, London, 2002; Aleksandr S. Trachevskii, 'Das russisch-österreichische Bündniss vom Jahre 1781', *HZ*, 34, 1875, 2, pp. 361-96, idem, *Soiuz kniaziei i nemetskaia politika Ekateriny II, Fridrikha II, Iosifa II: 1780-1790 gg.*, S. Petersburg, 1877.

recorded in historiography not because of their gender: their long reigns came at an important time in the emergence of the Austrian and the Russian statehood and political identity.

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(Translated by Anna Kijak)

Piotr Puchalski, *Poland in a Colonial World Order: Adjustments and Aspirations, 1918–1939*, London: Routledge, 2021, 328 pp.

Polish colonial dreams and hopes of the inter-war period are usually thought of with embarrassment as a frivolous or, indeed, humorous fancy. The topic does not exist in the consciousness of contemporary Poles, mainly as it is considered unfitting to mention such bygone aspirations. Thus, the appearance of a serious monograph on the topic may be viewed with amazement. Piotr Puchalski proves the complete opposite, and I think this follows not so much from the fact that he carried out his task outside Poland as from the adoption of the perspective of the global colonial order. For this was a serious matter of considerable import in the years between the wars and duly appreciated by the Polish authorities. Such, it seems, was the author's intention: to demonstrate how Poland intended to realise its aspirations by adapting itself to the contemporary colonial reality. The fact that these attempts were unsuccessful does not prove their absurdity.

Statements that Poland never had colonies of itself and that Poles under the partitions were not subject to colonial oppression are standard and lie at the foundation of our good frame of mind. In this regard, revisionism usually tends in two opposite directions, both of which, in any case, I consider as misapprehensions. Namely, on the one hand, the Poland of old is presented as a quasi-state that was incapable of maintaining its sovereignty, whereas, on the other, the country is portrayed as a superpower that implemented a policy of colonial conquest. In certain instances, the partitioners considered the Polish-speaking or Catholic population like Indians and treated them accordingly. Further, the stances taken by Poles under the partitions may be compared with those known from the British colonies. In fact, the concept of the parallel fates of Poland and India in the nineteenth century is not as exotic as it may appear at first sight. Essentially, however, this does not contribute much either to a characterisation of the Polish consciousness in the age of the partitions or the assessment of colonial aspirations in the years of independence.

The subject of interest should first be the global colonial order, which Poland aspired to and tried to adapt. But the author has accepted that this order was already fixed and is sufficiently known today, just as are the tendencies that had as their objective its maintenance or subversion. He has therefore presented a most thoroughly elaborated dissertation on the place of Polish colonial aspirations. Its basis is his doctoral thesis, submitted in 2019 at the University of

Wisconsin-Madison. The source base, bibliography, and knowledge of global colonial affairs cannot be questioned. One could say that, as regards Polish colonial aspirations, the author has painted a detailed picture. Considering the extent to which these Polish ambitions were peripheral to contemporary politics, I have the impression that his image should be regarded as definitive.

Thus, the suggestion of a 'colonial reorientation' in Polish historiography may be deemed justified. The condition would be to find an approach or a concept explaining this type of colonialism. The author has not gone that far; instead, he intends to fit the Polish fate into the nineteenth-century colonial order. The result is successful, although it could have been somewhat more convincing. The old Polish Commonwealth was an original European concept, not an abortive copy. And it was placed 'in the east' because such was the sentence passed by Enlightened philosophers, not due to any defect in its 'civilisational code'. According to a contract, the Lithuanian and Ruthenian lands became part of the Republic — military subjugation played no role in the process. This has not been touched upon by the author, and understandably so.

In contrast, the partitioning powers did not engage in colonial expansion or overseas conquests. Only the German Empire embarked on this path. Finally, we must note that just as the old Polish kingdom did not involve itself in pre-colonial expansion, the country reborn in the twentieth century could, at most, aspire to participate in the modern colonial order. Much earlier, however, and with considerable success, Poles engaged in something that may be termed the 'colonial mentality'. It was assimilated — perhaps not consciously — in the process of modernisation while searching in the West for models that would be the opposite of the easternness imposed upon them. This issue has been researched to the degree that it releases the author from any obligation to make a broader exposition. There is also the interesting output of Polish 'post-colonial' studies. The matter is signalled in the Introduction but is not explored.

This proviso is necessary, for the author has focused on colonial politics in the interbellum, leaving relatively little space for a presentation of the contemporary colonial order. He commences with the statement that Poland, which re-emerged in 1918, was a post-imperial creation. Indeed, patriots viewed this as a rebirth, the casting off of shackles, whereas foreign observers saw the sewing together of fragments of three fallen empires. This categorical difference in comprehending the reality of Poland found reflection in the completely marginal colonial matter. Besides copying the colonial mentality, Polish economic emigration was the only form of association with the colonial system. This issue is dealt with in Chapter 1 ('Emigrants into Colonists: Channeling Emigration to South America, 1918–1932'), which irrefutably demonstrates the awareness that any form of 'superpower' thinking was baseless. The problem of the groundlessness of projects aimed at finding space for settling the surplus of landless farmers in post-war Poland is analysed in greater detail in Chapter 2 ('Between Periphery and Core: Remaking a Post-imperial State, 1918–1932'). Both sections amply clarify the essence of the reorientation from

South America to Africa and the attempts to adapt to changing circumstances in the age of the Great Depression. The hopes and disenchantments of Polish colonial experts are outlined in Chapter 3 ('European Solidarity: Settlement in Africa, 1928–1934'). There is a fascinating presentation of the unsuccessful endeavours to politically utilise Polish economic initiatives in Angola — a *sui generis* Polish participation in the Portuguese colonial project.

Successive chapters examine aspirations in a territorial order, suggesting that this was particularly important for their nature and realisation. The initial impression is concordant with the view that the actions undertaken lacked realism. But the author's achievement lies not only in connecting these manifold interests with the intricacies of Polish politics. Significantly, he has outlined the behind-the-scenes efforts to politically utilise *émigré* settlement in Brazil, recently uncovered financial machinations surrounding the idea of supporting the interests of Liberia, relations between Angolan plantation owners and government circles, and, finally, concepts of initiating and supporting the emigration of Jews. All of these activities involved a very narrow group of people, frequently associated with the intellectual milieu and, on the whole, strongly motivated by personal interest, whether financial or political. This does not mean, however, that the aspirations themselves should be treated with disdain.

It is worth noting the successful attempt at presenting Polish colonial aspirations as a phenomenon which the author has termed 'Promethean colonialism'. This was to have been an attempt at intervening in African politics (Liberia, Ethiopia), at once conducive to the realisation of Polish interests and opposed to contemporary forms of Western colonialism. The issue is analysed in Chapter 4 ('Prometheus Bound: Poland Mapping Its Own Course, 1934–1936'), in which the author presents attempts at harnessing African aspirations to establish Polish dominance in Liberia. This is the most exciting part of the dissertation.

Equally interesting, albeit perhaps less innovative, is Chapter 5 ('Reforming the Wilsonian System: Józef Beck and the Colonial Question, 1936–1939'), which concerns Józef Beck's attempts to make political use of the colonial question in the final years preceding the outbreak of war. Puchalski strives to demonstrate that the minister abandoned the Promethean concept in favour of the internationalisation of the colonial issue to find a path between German revanchism and British appeasement, both of which were being implemented at Poland's expense. The search for a solution to the tensions rising in Europe by a new arrangement of colonial relations had no chance of success; however, the author presents the rationality of this approach, incidentally following the interpretations put forward in the most recent works of Marek Kornat and Mariusz Wołos.

Chapter 6 is devoted to the place of the Jewish issue in colonial politics ('Useful Abroad, Unwanted at Home: Jews and Colonial Projects, 1936–1939'). The proposed approach is correct and departs from the usually accepted stereotypes. The author turns attention not only to the migrational aspect but also to the connections between colonial aspirations and Jewish financial circles. First and foremost, however, he considers the matter from the perspective of the state's

colonial interests, not of growing anti-Semitism. This necessitated an analysis of the stances taken towards the migration of Jews in the context of its potential usefulness for forming a Polish middle class. The author argues that in this final phase, the state's policy distinguished the colonial emigration of minorities based on the dissimilarity of their negative assessments in domestic politics (pp. 196–201). He also discusses the projects of settlement in Madagascar and their international ramifications in this very context.

The final, seventh chapter ('The Last Resort: Clandestine Economic Activities, 1936–1939') summarises the author's deliberations. In it, he discusses the last attempts made to overcome the difficulties which the colonial system raised for Polish aspirations. The author presents the reasons for the unsuccessful outcome of attempts at providing support for settlement in the Brazilian–Argentine borderland and at securing the independence of raw material imports from Ethiopia, the Congo and Angola. In the conclusions, he stresses those inter-war politics had to reject the anti-imperialist connotations of the motto 'For your freedom and ours'; however opportunistic attempts at adapting to the global system did not bring about the expected results. The author's fundamental conclusion is that the adaption policy was connected with modernisation attempts, not ideological justifications.

Polish colonial aspirations and the development of an atmosphere conducive to colonial initiatives comprised a whole that was intended to strengthen the conviction that the reborn state indeed enjoyed superpower status. In-depth research of these aspects is essential, for it enables a departure from the standard interpretations ridiculing the ambitions of the interbellum. The fact that endeavours undertaken to acquire colonies or participate as a mandatory power were unrealisable does not mean that they were at once devoid of sense. Moreover, the precise determination of ambitions, interests and conflicts provides us with a better understanding of the approach taken by Poles towards foreigners. By emphasising the autonomy of colonial policy, the dissertation under review marks a break with a particular unhealthy tradition in treating Poland's inter-war history.

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Anna Mazurkiewicz, *Voice of the Silenced Peoples in the Global Cold War: The Assembly of Captive European Nations, 1954–1972*, Boston and Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021, 446 pp.

American politics inherited from its past a strong tradition of providing assistance to societies which are in the grip of dictatorships. This tendency can be traced to the First World War and the concept of the 'Europe of Nations' (as opposed to empires), which was actively supported by President Woodrow

Wilson.¹ This gave rise to a long-standing political doctrine known as ‘Liberal internationalism’, practised by successive American presidents.² Today, the same concept – now one hundred years old – is experiencing a revival under the name of ‘democratic solidarity’.³ This notion constitutes the subject of a book written by Anna Mazurkiewicz, a researcher from Gdańsk, who has taken a closer look at how this ideological programme was implemented during the Cold War in relation to Central and Eastern Europe, at the time subjugated to the Soviet Union. As we know, politically-based migrations from the region started already in the nineteenth century, and only intensified during the twentieth. The process encompassed a rich mosaic of people, who displayed a wide range of views and were affiliated with a host of different organizations. Many of the latter developed under the discrete protection of the American government.

There is no doubt that post-1945, the United States did more than any other country to ensure the survival of the concept of free society in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, which had been politically degraded by Stalin to the role of Soviet satellites or, as was the case with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, deprived of their statehood altogether. Working in partnership with the American government, the émigrés could realize their political and cultural needs, acting as the voice of their countrymen behind the Iron Curtain. One of the most important and long-term elements of this anti-totalitarian front was the titular Assembly of Captive European Nations (ACEN). The author of the book reviewed here has presented the history of Europe in the global context – an approach that is relatively uncommon in the historiography of the continent, which usually places Europe (and not America) at the centre of its narrative. For years, Mazurkiewicz has focused her research on a quest for broader, extra-European horizons, and has now turned her attention to depicting the role of the United States as a creator of European unity. The events which she describes marked the genesis of today’s strategic transatlantic partnership.

Naturally, the transatlantic trend in Cold War historiography continues to develop. A vast body of literature has been written on the topic of transnational anti-Communism in the post-1945 era. The history of ACEN, however, has not been given a deeper treatment in the existing studies. The book under review serves to fill this void. Among its strongest points are its empirical layer and source base. The topic required the author to perform research into American and European archives over a period of many years. She has successfully managed to place the history of emigration from our region of the world in the context of American intercontinental politics. Her work also takes into consideration the Asiatic, South American and – albeit clearly less

¹ Larry Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe*, Stanford, CA, 2020.

² Tony Smith, *Why Wilson Matters: The Origin of American Liberal Internationalism and Its Crisis Today*, Princeton, NJ, 2017.

³ Hal Brands and Charles Edel, ‘The Grand Strategy of Democratic Solidarity’, *The Washington Quarterly*, 44, 2021, 1, pp. 29–47.

developed — African aspects of ACEN's activities. The author has developed a global perspective, and her book adopts a stance favourable to the message carried by political émigrés of the Cold War era and to the titular 'silenced peoples', that is, the societies of Europe existing behind the Iron Curtain, muzzled by the Communist dictatorships.

If historical writing is inevitably becoming a part of collective memory, then Mazurkiewicz's reflections constitute a respectable chronicle of memory about the exiles' struggle for a free and more democratic world. The author is an experienced archival historian and researcher of institutions and political processes, and this is reflected in the structure and methodology of her work. Certainly, Mazurkiewicz cannot be charged with displaying any penchant for excessive theorizing or essayistic disquisitions. Readers receive a most cohesive book — among other reasons because the author analyses one organization and processes a relatively homogeneous body of archival materials, generated in the main by a professional bureaucratic apparatus. But her study of the documents is presented in relation to more general reflections, to numerous books devoted to émigré and Cold War studies, and also to press sources, memoirs and letters. Furthermore, the author has not allowed herself to be dominated by written sources — exceedingly copious in the present age — but has conducted a good selection and overview of source materials. In essence, Mazurkiewicz's work is a skilful combination of various types of information without losing its uniform scholarly style.

The author has examined the effectiveness of ACEN's influence using statistical measurement tools (pp. 189–93), employing an approach that may be termed 'digital humanities'. Moreover, she has utilized the digital resources of the Congressional Records. Her method constitutes a valuable supplementation of the analysis of narrative documents, for it allows her to depict the scope of ACEN's influence over the long term on the basis of an extensive body of source materials — which a single individual would not have been able to process by means of the traditional technique, that is by reading document after document. It is worth noting here that American archives — both newspaper and documentary — have already been reliably digitized, which significantly simplifies accessing historical data. While working on the book, the author also made use of the digital collections of the United Nations Organization, the Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Wilson Center, and other institutions.

The structure of Mazurkiewicz's study allows readers to easily orient themselves with regard to the issues which she touches upon. The book comprises ten chapters, which are written in a problem-based, chronological order and have been made easier to navigate by their division into subchapters. Mazurkiewicz's publication has been painstakingly edited and printed by De Gruyter of Berlin — a publishing house whose origins date back to the times of Frederick the Great. Furthermore, the study under review has been provided with numerous aids — a bibliography, subject index, source annex, charts and lists. It does not, however, contain maps or photographs (apart from one on the cover).

In the initial sections of her book, the author places the object of her research in the broader context of the Cold Information War. Next she leads us through the most important aspects of ACEN's work — in the Free Europe Committee, the American Congress, the Council of Europe, and the United Nations Organization. The author also analyses the issue of ACEN's approach to the policies of Communist states. Separate chapters are devoted to the Assembly's relations with anti-Communist milieux in various parts of the world.

ACEN was a peaceful organization that gathered émigré experts and intellectuals who were opposed to Communist totalitarianism. The émigrés worked diligently to promote democracy and human rights. In cases when their compatriots faced times of difficulty in their mother countries (for example, during and after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956), members of the organization acted as a bridge, giving wide publicity to Communist persecution and lobbying both the Western media and authorities (see, *inter alia*, p. 83). It is however worth noting that the Soviet campaign against the West frequently had a more offensive nature than the author was able to present (pp. 75, 114, 302). In accordance with the ideology and practice of the totalitarian state, resort was made to violence in order to frighten opponents and enforce obedience within its own ranks. The Soviet Union spent millions of dollars on supporting global Communism — not only in Europe, but also in Africa, Latin America and Asia. While this is a topic for a separate book, it does constitute an important context for better understanding the assistance granted by the American government to the various freedom movements established by the émigrés.

At some points, Mazurkiewicz is critical of ACEN (see, for example, p. 48), and at others even questions emigration as a political project, but nonetheless her analysis is always factual. The author chooses her arguments with care, so as to ensure their relevance to the historical circumstances of the times. The fundamental weakness of all émigré communities was their propensity to internecine conflict (between parties) on both the international and national levels. As is often the case with people who work together, ambitions and emotions sometimes came to the fore, making agreement difficult. The chequered history of Central and Eastern Europe, with its experience of war and the re-drawing of borders, was often an encumbrance. But although there were many points of contention, that which was common prevailed. The two key elements cementing ACEN were the harrowing fates of the exiles and the joint enemy — Communism. Furthermore, regular and stable contacts with bureaucratic circles in the United States — which routinely provided suggestions and assessments — meant in practice that ACEN could more effectively overcome its own weaknesses (pp. 302–03).

It is interesting to read in various parts of the book how, thanks to American support, the émigrés from Central Europe turned into truly transnational actors, far outgrowing their pre-war experiences and capabilities. For example, they studied the situation of the new post-colonial states, gained an understanding of the complexities of international politics, and took upon themselves the role of

global heralds of freedom. Work for ACEN provided an excellent schooling in openness, tolerance and democracy — values cherished by the societies of the West. Interaction with politicians from around the world — for example, at the UN or the Council of Europe — boosted the confidence of the émigrés (pp. 110, 151). The mental transformation of these émigré elites in a Liberal direction was also impacted by living in New York and other Western metropolises. But let us ponder what would have happened if these people had been left to their own devices, without any opportunity for involvement in broader public activism. In all certainty, they would have remained closed within their national confines, bitter at the world and suffering because of the lack of understanding of their traumatic experiences (pp. 239–330, a paraphrase of an observation made by George Kennan).

Behind the scenes of the Cold War, there were also cold calculations on the part of ‘front line organizations’, and secret instruments that served the political game, as the author convincingly demonstrates (see, for example, pp. 51–99) by citing documents from American archives. But I think it is worth once again quoting the reflections of George Kennan — an eminent figure in American politics. According to Kennan, the Cold War policy of providing assistance to the captive nations was an evolutionary manifestation of the idealistic traditions permeating American history. When searching for the origins of the ethos of providing assistance to those fighting for freedom, Kennan offered examples from even before Wilson’s presidency, such as the United State’s support for the Russians who fought against the despotic empire of the tsars. Mazurkiewicz has found and published this Kennanite interpretation of history, viewing it as a beautiful testament of solidarity, not just between nations but, to put it simply — between friends in the struggle for a better world.⁴ Even though elements of idealism, moral impulses and extra-verbal sympathies are oftentimes difficult to trace in official documents, they still had a role in shaping this human dimension of American policy.

The author gives an in-depth description of the émigrés’ dependence on American policy (pp. 42, 68–70). The issue of the scope of their autonomy is very interesting, and it will probably continue to be a subject of unending discussion. There exists no multifaceted, source-based analysis of the issue. At the time, discretion was paramount, and not everything was spoken openly. This book will certainly interest those researchers who are experiencing similar difficulties, namely how to properly explain the nature of the state and social network in their own work. In my opinion, the émigrés had no reasonable alternative to an alliance with the USA. They achieved a great deal by ensuring the survival of their cause on the international arena, thereby earning themselves a place in the history of the Cold War. If not for the assistance which they received from

⁴ George Kennan’s letter to John Foster Leich (19 September 1989), Woodrow Wilson Center Digital Archive, private papers of John Foster Leich, submitted by Anna Mazurkiewicz.

the United States, their activities would have been scattered and insufficiently institutionalized, and conducted on a less broad scale; thus, they would have been less significant and more difficult for contemporary historians to properly describe.

Mazurkiewicz does not disregard the potential of social movements. Rather, she seeks an equilibrium between the grass-roots and top-down stimuli that engendered the development of ACEN. She notes that immediately after the Second World War the émigrés started to organize themselves on a grass-roots basis, which spurred American politicians to provide their initiatives with financial and organizational support. Importantly, governmental aid was subtle and all the while calculated at generating social movements, investing in networks of friends, and giving inspiration — not making the organizations dependent on USA. Mazurkiewicz has analysed this issue in an interesting way, making use of examples from Latin America, where ACEN sought allies among the local opinion-forming milieux (pp. 241–81). The local realities did not always turn out to be conducive to the promotion of democratic values, while actions aimed at making people aware of the threat of Communism exposed representatives of the Assembly to attacks and charges of co-operation with the USA. We may, however, assume that the greater the difficulties faced on the ground, the more the local activists of ACEN had to display independence, creativity and determination.

What is more, Mazurkiewicz skilfully presents the position of ACEN relative to other initiatives connected with the American concept of the cultural Cold War. The flagship project was Radio Free Europe (RFE), which was viewed as by far the most important element in the cultural struggle against the Soviet Union. RFE was the most effective tool for getting through to the ‘silenced people’ of Central and Eastern Europe. As the author notes, in the years 1949–71, Radio Free Europe received nearly 249 million dollars of American taxpayer money, whereas associations of émigrés — including ACEN — were granted 30 million. If we were to convert these sums to present-day dollars, their value would be considerably greater (pp. 59–60). But as Mazurkiewicz notes, the beginnings of the political activities of the émigrés were modest and to a large extent grass-roots based. Over time however the financial assistance granted by the American government became pivotal, and for some activists émigré politics became a profession. At the same time, the social factor did not disappear. The émigrés continued to be motivated to work for ACEN by the spirit of anti-Communist resistance: ‘give me liberty, or give me death’ (p. 235). It was thanks to their continuing involvement that the Assembly survived (albeit in a somewhat diminished form) the difficult year of 1972, when government subsidies were terminated (pp. 338–41).

What other reflections can we draw from the book? First and foremost, Mazurkiewicz has struck a serious blow against the line of reasoning whereby Poland and other countries in the region continue to be viewed as having been left to their own devices for the forty-five years following the Yalta Conference. Even a cursory reading of her study leads us to the conclusion

that such an approach, based on the concept of the ‘abandoned peoples of Central Europe’, is simply a myth. The view that the region freed itself of Communism solely due to the internal resistance of societies, without any significant outside help, must also be assigned to legend. The United States conducted a broad and far-reaching campaign in support of the freedom of the countries lying east of the Elbe. This endeavour was also supported by the states of Western Europe, which received the political émigrés and supported — oftentimes necessarily in secret — their actions aimed at freeing Central and Eastern Europe. The national historiographies of our region insufficiently emphasize the transnational and transatlantic factors which conditioned the process whereby the countries of the region regained their independence in 1989, and this book is a very factual reminder of the role played by the democratic world — by both social and governmental actors — in bringing about the integration of Europe.

Mazurkiewicz has devoted more than a decade of her professional career to the history of ACEN. Thus readers receive a work that is both mature and scholarly, and has been written without unnecessary haste — as if in response to the appeal of Mary Lindermann, who at the conference of the American Historical Association in December 2020 put forward the postulate of slow historical research, focused on lengthy and meticulous archival surveys that would help improve the quality of findings. For many, this will prove difficult to implement, as our times are mostly governed by haste and always under pressure to achieve results quickly, whereas everything that is good in history stems from activities that are, unavoidably, highly time-consuming.⁵

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Slavomír Michálek, *Československé menové zlato 1938–1982*, Bratislava: VEDA SAV, 2021, 472 pp.

After the Second World War, European countries’ restitution of monetary gold remains an under-researched subject. This includes cross-sectional views on the issue and the process of restitution by individual countries. A somewhat forgotten institution is the Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold, operating between 1949 and 1998, which considered claims of ten claimant countries. The Commission, established by the UK, France and the USA, dealt with claims and the distribution of gold found in the occupied zones of western Germany. An international conference was held in London

⁵ Mary Lindermann’s address — ‘2021 presidential address: Slow History’ — can be viewed on YouTube (accessed: 27 April 2021), and read in *The American Historical Review*, 126, 2021, 1, pp. 1–18.

in December 1997 in the wake of a scandal related to Switzerland's role in transactions made by the Third Reich with looted gold. The event accelerated political and academic discussion on gold plundered during the Second World War by Axis states, including both private and central banks' gold of occupied Europe (monetary gold). One of the conference's main postulates was to make all sources related to the topic available. Despite fulfilling this request by most of the countries, restitution has so far been researched in only a few cases: Albania and Italy,¹ and the Netherlands.² Arthur Smith partly described the activities of the Tripartite Commission; however, he did not have access to the Commission's records for obvious reasons: both editions of his book were published before the Commission's completion of its activities.³ Historians have left the field to amateurs, as is demonstrated by the numerous publications on Nazi gold, which are more sensational than academic.⁴ The restitution of looted gold remains important since it remains one of the longest unresolved relics of the Second World War and the Cold War.

It is all the more welcome to see the publication of the doctoral thesis of Slavomír Michálek. The author has a long-standing interest in American foreign policy, US-Czechoslovak relations and UN history. Michálek is Director of the Institute of History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (Historický ústav SAV).⁵ The author has spent several years researching the question of gold restitution in Czechoslovakia, producing two articles exploring various aspects of the subject.⁶ Czechoslovakia was one of the countries that had to wait a long time to recover its gold, as it was only returned to Prague in 1982.

The work includes an introduction, four chapters, a summary, appendices (primary sources and photographs) and bibliography. The author researched Czech, Slovak and American archives, where he obtained primary sources relating to Czechoslovakia's foreign policy, the activities of Czechoslovakia's central banks, US Department of State documents and CIA sources.

In the first chapter, the author describes the plundering of Czechoslovak monetary gold after the occupation of the Sudetenland in 1938 in various Third Reich actions that targeted the National Bank of Czechoslovakia, the National Bank for Bohemia and Moravia, and gold belonging to the Škoda

¹ Alessandro Roselli, 'The Question of "The Albanian Gold"', *Rivista di storia economica*, 2007, 2, pp. 183–208.

² Corry van Renselaar, *Partij in de marge: Oorlog, goud den de Nederlandsche Bank 1933–2000*, Amsterdam 2005.

³ Artur Smith, *Hitler's Gold: The Story of the Nazi War Loot*, Oxford, 1989.

⁴ For example: Ian Sayer and Douglas Botting, *Nazi Gold: The Story of the World's Greatest Robbery and Its Aftermath*, London, 1984; Alford D. Kenneth, *Monetary Men: The Allies' Struggle to Recover and Restore Nazi Gold, Silver & Diamonds*, Atglen, PA, 2015.

⁵ PhD Slavomír Michálek, DrSc. <<http://www.history.sav.sk/index.php?id=slavomir-michalek>> [accessed 1 July 2022].

⁶ Slavomír Michálek, 'The Tripartite Commission and the Czechoslovak monetary gold', *Historický časopis*, 65, 2017, 5, pp. 895–929; idem, 'The American Congress and Czechoslovak Monetary Gold 1980–1981', *Historický časopis*, 67, 2019, 5, pp. 879–904.

Works and Zbrojovka A.S. — two state-owned companies. This section also outlines the activities of the Tripartite Commission. This is the starting point for describing the negotiations with the Commission, which constituted the first stage of efforts to recover the gold. As the discussions dragged on, Czechoslovakia decided to approach the authorities of countries comprising the Commission directly. Descriptions of direct talks with the three Western powers form the next part of this chapter. Here, the author deserves credit for outlining this chapter's differences between the British and American positions. London opposed suspending the delivery of gold to Prague (p. 102). Michálek also indicates a sense of discrimination against Czechoslovakia during the negotiations with the Commission (p. 87) caused by the protracted talks and the delivery of gold to other claimant states. On account of to the American position, however, Czechoslovakia had to wait a long time for restitution.

The key to understanding Washington's attitude is to grasp its linking of gold restitution to the issue of compensation for the nationalisation of American property in Czechoslovakia after 1945, as well as the global regulation of the economic relations between the countries, described in the second chapter. Thus, recovering the gold was a part of Cold War relations between Prague and Washington and drove developments in their relationship. They constituted a cause-and-effect sequence which provoked successive retaliatory steps from each side. In this part of the book, the author explains how the US blocked the release of a wide-belt mill (industrial equipment) already purchased by Czechoslovakia and describes the link between economic relations and the case of William N. Oatis, a journalist working in Czechoslovakia who was accused of being a spy and imprisoned.

The third chapter describes direct negotiations between Czechoslovakia and the US, eventually leading to the restitution of monetary gold in 1982. Michálek divides the negotiations into three stages. In the first stage (until 1968), the US Department of State played a decisive role. It appeared possible that the talks might be finalised in 1964. The US did not agree with the amount claimed for compensation, however. Despite appearances, the Prague Spring did not facilitate negotiations. Following the Soviet intervention, the talks were halted until 1973. The US Congress played a crucial role in the next stage. Michálek's work reveals how different centres of power shaped foreign policy. In the third stage of the negotiations (1980–82), an agreement was reached, which regulated mutual financial claims, including monetary gold.

The final part of the work is devoted to transporting the recovered gold from Switzerland to Prague (Návrát 82). According to the agreement between Czechoslovakia and the US, the gold at the Tripartite Commission's disposal would be delivered to Prague from Zurich via the Bank of England and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. The author should once again be praised for reaching for archival materials of the Czechoslovak security service concerning the transport operation. This chapter also describes financial negotiations between Prague and London, analogous to those with Washington. These however, did not have such an influence on gold restitution.

The author explores a critical topic yet to be the subject of comprehensive research. The work reconstructs in detail, almost month by month, the epic tale of monetary gold restitution by Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, the book has several shortcomings, including the failure to consider certain topics that would contribute to an even greater understanding of the restitution of monetary gold.

The work has a relatively short bibliography. While Michálek is correct in stating that Czechoslovakia's subject of the restitution of monetary gold has not been featured in many previous studies, and lists Czech and Slovak publications, he omits a review of general historiography. Additionally, there is no mention of Artur Smith's work, which has fundamental significance even though it does not use the Commission's records. The same is true for the article by Alessandro Roselli, who also drew attention to the protracted negotiations with Czechoslovakia.⁷ Raymund Goy has pointed out that the reason for suspending the delivery of gold to Prague was the negotiations on compensation for the nationalisation of American property.⁸ As a historian, the author should have carried out a literature review even though he concludes that previous publications do not contribute anything new to the topic or are consistent with his findings.

Another problem is the source base of the work. The author uses records of the Tripartite Commission, held in the National Archives in the US. He does not however, mention that they are copies of original primary sources from the *Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de la Courneuve* near Paris. As is the case of the copies deposited at the National Archives, Kew (UK), they were placed there after the Commission's work was completed. While this is not a significant omission since these copies are a faithful reproduction of the original materials, the reader may conclude that the Commission's records are held in the US and not in France. In addition, there are some uncertainties in the footnotes. For example, in footnote no. 54 (p. 43) Michálek does not include the original name of the source, providing only the name of the record group and box number. Consequently, the reader cannot verify the primary sources used in the research. The author does not provide an archival reference for one source (the Final Report of the Tripartite Commission).⁹

After analysing the parts of the work based on the Commission's records, it can be concluded that the author did not consult some essential primary sources. Michálek used the Commission's Final Report from 1998; this was, however, a supplementary document to the more critical report from 1971 describing most of the Commission's activities. Similarly, the author does not analyse the minutes of meetings; this is not difficult to do, since an index was prepared for the American

⁷ Roselli, 'The Question of "The Albanian Gold"', p. 200.

⁸ Raymund Goy, 'Le sort de l'or monétaire pillé par l'Allemagne pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale', *Annuaire français de droit international*, 41, 1995, pp. 382–91 (p. 383).

⁹ p. 45, n. 45, the Final Report was not published by the Commission.

copies of the Commission's records. It includes a list of the major topic discussed during the Commission's subsequent meeting.¹⁰ Consulting the minutes, even if only from the Czechoslovakian perspective, would have made it easier for the author to extend the timeframe of his work to 1998. He marginalises the final distribution of gold in 1998, mentioning it only in a footnote on page 356. While it is true that the main restitution of gold by Czechoslovakia was completed in 1982, the final distribution had a major significance due to political and media interest in the topic of Nazi gold. The distribution of gold after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia was challenging for the Commission, which needed to consider how the final share should be divided between the Czech Republic and Slovakia.¹¹ Extending the timeframe would bring the study into line with analogous works devoted to the restitution of gold to the Netherlands and Albania (see above) which take the final distribution of gold seriously, and date the completion of the restitution as late as 2000.

Another interesting point missing from the book is the issue of the American citizen of Czech origin who entered into a dispute with the US government. In 1982, he requested that the US authorities disclose a detailed list of gold bars supplied to Czechoslovakia and the names of those responsible for the delivery. He claimed that in March 1939, Germans had looted his family's gold. The application was submitted based on the Freedom of Information Act. American authorities rejected the request because, in their opinion, the Act could not be applied to the Tripartite Commission's records, which were the property of the three governments. In 1988 the same person brought an action to the US Claimant Court against the American government. The court dismissed the claim because the claimant would gain nothing from the disclosure of such information.¹²

These are the only two topics I found which analyse the minutes of the Commission's meetings on the margin of research on gold restitution by Poland. It is interesting to consider how much more could be found if research were to be conducted regarding the restitution by Czechoslovakia. Further research is therefore required into the social context of this topic. Using the Commission's records can also broaden the perspective on restitution. Czechoslovakia's point of view dominates the book on negotiations.

¹⁰ Robert Lester and Blair Hydrick, *Records of the Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold, 1946-1998*, Bethesda, MD, 2001.

¹¹ Meeting no. 226, 15 May 1996; Meeting no. 238, 26 August 1997, Minutes of Meetings, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), DG 9/16 (Copies of Records Tripartite Gold Commission).

¹² Meeting no. 212, 28 October 1982, Minutes of Meetings, TNA DG 9/15 (Copies of Records Tripartite Gold Commission); Minutes of Meetings, Meeting no. 227, 18 September 1996, TNA DG 9/16 (Copies of Records Tripartite Gold Commission); Terry Breese to Emrys T. Davies, 24 October 1996, *Centre des Archives Diplomatiques de la Courneuve* Tripartite Gold Commission Parliamentary and public interest (déc 1954-déc 1997), 160Q089.

Although the restitution of gold mostly depended on negotiations with the US, the author also describes discussions between Prague and London. As such, he should have also conducted queries in British archives. Even an initial question in the electronic catalogue of the National Archives shows that primary sources on this topic are held in Kew.¹³ Additionally, sources held in the Bank of England Archive may say something about the restitution of gold by Prague.¹⁴ Similarly, a search in the Federal Reserve Bank of New York archives would have been desirable. Both banks held gold that became subject to restitution after the Second World War.

The author chose to include certain documents related to the restitution of gold in his work. However, the editing of the historical sources took place without any publishing instructions. Surprisingly, none of the attached sources is accompanied by information on which archive the material was taken from. The author limits himself to naming the document and translating the sources into Slovak. The published sources do not contain any references. One example is the Final Report of the Tripartite Commission from 13 September 1998 (pp. 378–88). For administrative purposes, the Commission used the services of the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company in Brussels. Describing the ending of the company's operations in Brussels, the report's authors stated that it suspended its services on the 'High Street' in Brussels. However, Michálek did not attempt to explain that this is not an address but a metonymy used to describe a financial centre — a street where many banks in the city are located. Publishing historical sources should not be limited to rewriting documents and their translations into the national language. The application of editorial rules considerably facilitates the work of historians.

Several stylistic and compositional approaches in the work hinder its reception. The author uses three abbreviations for the Tripartite Commission (TGC, TCRMG, TK), where it would have been simpler to use a single acronym. It would also have been helpful to move the explanation of the financial negotiations between Prague and London from Chapter 4 to Chapter 3, where the talks with Washington are described. This is justified because Chapter 4 is essentially devoted to the gold transport operation to Czechoslovakia. The book should also provide more extensive summaries after each chapter. The summaries are limited to a few sentences with no conclusions or recapitulation of the findings (for example p. 81).

Although the work does not claim to be a study of economic history, it would have been helpful to include a table summarising the amount of Czechoslovakia's claims and subsequent gold distributions. This could have been done at the expense of some of the photographs included in the book, which enhance the story

¹³ For example Czechoslovakia and the Tripartite Commission for the Restitution of Monetary Gold, TNA Foreign and Commonwealth Office 28/8393.

¹⁴ Czechoslovakia: Claims against, Bank of England Archives, 3A126/2.

but are widely available (for example photographs of the Bank of England building and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York).

The book also lacks a description of the restitution of gold by Czechoslovakia in a broader context, particularly in comparison with other claimant countries. Other Central and Eastern European countries could have been good points of reference. While the absence of such a comparison can be explained by the low number of studies on the subject, the lack of a deep literature review by the author is revealing.

In conclusion, the author has studied an important topic which historians have not sufficiently explored. The book's greatest merit is its detailed description of the gold restitution process by which Czechoslovakia recovered the gold looted by Germany, which began in 1938 down to the actual return of the gold in 1982. The work is vital for developing research into the history of post-war compensation, diplomacy and the Cold War, particularly its economic aspects. Nevertheless, several weaknesses detract from its value. The book also fails to explore the subject in full, notably by failing to consult relevant primary material.

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