



Giovanni Alberto Cecconi, *Barbari e pagani: Religione e società in Europa nel tardoantico*, Bari: Editori GLF Laterza, 2022 (Cultura storica), XXII + 268 pp.

Giovanni Alberto Cecconi is a historian of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, working at the University of Florence. One of the topics he frequently addresses is the Christianization of Western Europe in late antiquity, and his latest book, *Barbari e pagani*, follows directly from these research interests and focuses precisely on the process of Christianization, when the tribes ceased to be the eponymous barbarians and pagans.<sup>1</sup> To some extent, the reviewed work marks the closure of Cecconi's *Pagani e Cristiani nell'Occidente tardoantico: Quattro studi*,<sup>2</sup> written ten years earlier. In that book, he analysed mainly Greco-Roman paganism and its relations with Christianity. Together, the two volumes — although they can be read separately — constitute an important compendium of knowledge about the Christianization of Western Europe in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

It is worth noting here that Cecconi's work is distinguished by the fact that, to a much greater extent than other publications on the transformation of the Roman and barbarian worlds, he does not limit himself to a specific segment of the process. Historiography is dominated by either writing about Christianization itself, or the barbarian identity.<sup>3</sup> Cecconi, on the other hand, shows that the best way to understand what happened in those times is to take a view that at once gives much greater consideration to religion. His approach is not about methodological innovations, but rather in the attempt to take a more synthesizing approach. The merit of this work lies, therefore, in the collection and collation of sometimes well-known material, whereby it offers a new insight. Moreover, Cecconi does not position his book as a polemic, but rather as a lecture about his interpretation of the sources. A discussion with other authors is usually conducted in the footnotes.

It must be stated at the outset that this book, although fully scholarly in nature, is also addressed to a wider audience. To some extent, it is reminiscent of the *Origins of Civilizations* series published in Poland, as it is a summary of scholarship given in an engaging way. Cecconi's highly visual language and

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<sup>1</sup> Cecconi makes it abundantly clear that the term 'pagans' is a *sui generis* simplification, pp. XV–XVI.

<sup>2</sup> Giovanni Alberto Cecconi, *Pagani e Cristiani nell'Occidente tardoantico: Quattro studi*, Rome, 2012 (Saggi di storia antica, 35).

<sup>3</sup> A good example of this is the *Transformation of the Roman World* published in Brill's series, whose many volumes are essentially bereft of an analysis of religion as a key element of the said transformation.

numerous cultural and literary references make the book a pleasure to read, at once ensuring that it will satisfy the most discerning members of the reading public, who expect a scholarly publication. The first sentence of the volume invokes the Italian sword-and-sandal (*peplum*) film *La furia dei barbari*, directed by Guido Malatesta in 1960. This is not only a matter of linguistic ornamentation, intended to encourage the amateur reader, but also a look at a rather important problem; namely, the question of the image of pagans and barbarians. The title of the film has been translated into English as 'Fury of the Pagans'. This surprising interchangeability of the two terms is worthy of special linguistic attention, and is developed by Cecconi in his book.

Cecconi's work is divided into six chapters, which in turn are broken down into subchapters. The first chapter deals with the migration of the barbarians and begins with a look at Tacitus' remarks on the religion of the Germans, which is the traditional approach to the subject. Next there follows a discussion of the functioning of the barbarians within the borders of the Roman Empire, and of a problem usually overlooked by historiography: that is the coexistence of barbarian paganism with the concurrently existing Roman paganism. At the time of the first major contact between Christianity and the barbarian Germanic tribes, the process of Christianization of the Roman Empire was relatively fresh. Moreover, Cecconi demonstrates that there were instances where 'barbarian pagans' converted to pagan beliefs, but of the Greco-Roman world, and not in the form of an expansion of the pantheon of gods, or a process of identifying their own gods with those professed in Rome.

The second chapter tells the story of the settlement of barbarians in the territory of the Western Roman Empire between the fourth and sixth centuries. Cecconi's point of departure is the Huns. As a result of their migration, successive waves of barbarians appeared on Roman soil, of whom the Goths — to whom Cecconi devotes a subchapter — were particularly important. Cecconi then writes about the state and functioning (or, rather, the non-functioning) of the imperial administration in the territories where the barbarians settled, and their interactions with the Romans.

The following, third, chapter deals with armed conflict in the context of inter-religious relations in the broadest sense. The author writes about the situation of captives in communities religiously foreign to them — both Christians among barbarians and pagans among Christians. Here, Cecconi rightly points out that armed conflict with the barbarians weakened the structures of the Church in areas affected by the fighting and invasions. What interests him most, however, are the instances of Christian prisoners who abandoned Christianity due to their captivity. At the same time, he uses the example of Saint Patrick to present the opposite situation, as his Christian faith was strengthened by enduring being in pagan captivity. Cecconi also pens a more extensive analysis of the population subjected to barbarian rule. In this regard, he mentions the persecution of Christians by pagan rulers. Living in a pagan environment involved, as Cecconi points out, following specific religious rituals. Thus, the author writes about the issue of eating meat

from offerings made to pagan gods, which may have been a way of making sure that the population was not in fact Christian. Furthermore, the fact that Christians lived in areas ruled by pagans, and were therefore detached from the rituals and elements of Christian worship, meant that many of them must have lost their connection with their religion, and in some cases probably adopted pagan beliefs.

The fourth chapter touches upon the matter of the remnants of traditional perceptions or beliefs, and when a person can be said to be a pagan and when not. Cecconi recalls that the process of Christianization was not tantamount to the simultaneous disappearance of pagan beliefs. Between the extremes there was a large space in which there functioned both nominal Christians and Christians in whose daily life the remnants of pagan teachings played some role. The first subchapter deals with the most extreme phenomenon, namely, human sacrifice, an act that largely distinguished the pagan barbarians. Although the Romans did make human sacrifices, they were the exception — not the norm. At the same time, Cecconi points to the ritual executions of impure vestal virgins, which were held even in the Christian Roman Empire, as an example of how practices of this type functioned. Nonetheless, the special nature of these sacrifices in Rome contrasted with their much more frequent occurrence among barbarians. Cecconi, using the case of, for example, Procopius of Caesarea, reminds us that such practices were present even among theoretically Christianized barbarian peoples. In the next subchapter, the author continues his analysis of this inconstancy of beliefs, and — more specifically — of the co-occurrence of rituals or ritual behaviours derived from pagan beliefs within Christianity. He focuses particularly on how canon and secular law reacted to various suspicious non-Christian practices. The result is a very carefully presented panorama of activities and opinions expressed on the subject in the early Middle Ages. The chapter also considers the phenomenon of the equation — in the early Middle Ages — of the terms ‘barbarian’ and ‘pagan’.

The penultimate chapter, by far the longest of the entire book, is devoted to specific insights into paganism in various regions of Western Europe. Here, Cecconi takes up the topic of, among other things, the conversion of the British Isles. He also discusses the situation in the regions where pagan beliefs had long persisted, namely the Lower Rhine and Frisia. Another focused insight concerns the persistence of pagan beliefs according to the story of Wulfilaich, a sixth-century Lombardian deacon. According to Gregory of Tours, upon seeing that the inhabitants of a certain region continued to worship Diana, he became an eremite and a stylite. In this chapter, the author points to a surprisingly large number of traces of pagan practices throughout Western Europe. Hence, there is no question in the analysed period — which in this chapter goes up to the Merovingian epoch — of a complete Christianization of these lands. In this time frame, of course, the author is discussing local functioning, and not the existence of pagan beliefs as some kind of frequent phenomenon.

The final chapter is devoted to how paganism was viewed in the already Christianised — albeit in the Arian rite — barbarian kingdoms. An important issue in this section concerns the codifications and legislative activity of the Arian

rulers, such as Alaric II. The codification prepared upon his instruction, *Breviarium Alaricianum* (*Lex Romana Visigothorum*), omitted the anti-pagan provisions found in earlier Roman laws. This fact seems to indicate that the Arian leaders attached much less importance (compared to Roman times) to the threat that paganism could pose for social norms. What should be stressed, as Cecconi points out, is that the barbarian legislation of the Catholic Franks seems to point to the frequent occurrence of paganism among them too — a situation that was sometimes tolerated by the Frankish rulers.

Cecconi carefully builds up a picture of how the borders between Christian and pagan Europe were by no means obvious. This shows that the process of Christianization was not uniform, and that the early medieval world, although nominally Christian, was more complex than traditionally viewed. We cannot always speak of paganism as such; more often it seems that a better term, as to certain extent suggested by Cecconi, would be ‘post-pagan superstitions’. For some readers, such a thesis may seem quite obvious, but the book’s additional value lies in its careful documentation, using a great variety of evidence, which ranges from chronicles, through hagiography and Roman and barbarian legislation, to archaeology.

At the same time, in spite of the broad spectrum of issues touched upon by the author — and quite thoroughly at that — this is nonetheless a concise work. The body of the text comprises 183 pages, with endnotes accounting for an additional sixty-seven pages. The author makes good use of literature, and is not afraid to go beyond the chronological and thematic frame work whenever he considers that the information thus obtained allows readers to better understand the analysed topic. Unfortunately, since the publication has no listed bibliography, the reader is forced to use the endnotes, which makes reading somewhat difficult.

In summary, Cecconi’s book is, on the one hand, a solid summary of the state of research, and on the other hand an elaboration and supplementation of the author’s previously published ruminations and opinions. It appears that the natural next step would be to look at how paganism and barbarism functioned as concepts in Constantinople. All the more so because, while in the case of Western Europe in this context we are referring to the Goths or the Franks, in the East we have pagan Persia, which Agathias considered ‘barbaric’.<sup>4</sup> This fundamentally affects the functioning of the two terms there. That, however, is a topic for a separate study.

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<sup>4</sup> Scott McDonough, ‘Were the Sasanians Barbarians? Roman Writers on the “Empire of the Persians”’, in *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World: Cultural Interaction and the Creation of Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Ralph W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer, London, 2011, pp. 55–65.

Agata Błoch, *Wolni i zniewoleni: Głosy grup podporządkowanych w historii imperium portugalskiego* [The Voices of Subaltern Groups in the History of the Portuguese Empire], Toruń: Fundacja na rzecz Nauki Polskiej; Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2022, 451 pp.

Agata Błoch's book deserves the unquestionable accolade of being published in the prestigious Foundation for Polish Science series, for at least two reasons. Firstly, the author examines the important and difficult subject of the subalterns; secondly, she does so in a way that combines new orientations with respect for the traditions of historical analysis. Well-versed in the currently prevailing trends, Błoch has decided to follow the path of a 'conservative stance with regard to historical sources'. As she writes in the Introduction, 'I merely wish to enrich the contemporary historiographic narrative on the colonial past with an analysis of the grassroots activity of subaltern groups as a conscious colonial subject in their formal relations with authorities' (p. 21). She has fulfilled this promise by following the path set by Marian Małowist.

An overview of the theoretical perspectives and contemporary practices can be found in Chapter 1, 'Subaltern Groups — Concepts, Theories and Research Orientations'. It is a concise, but well-conceived analysis of concepts that are useful though not dominant. They include, first of all, the findings of subaltern studies by Ranajit Guha and his circle, with corrections by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and their Latin American continuators. Błoch regards their theoretical achievements as a framework for the study of peripheral societies in the Portuguese empire, a guideline for research but not a matrix to be replicated. Hence the importance of Chapter 2, 'Research Orientations Towards Subaltern Groups in the Portuguese Colonial Empire'. This is not a classic overview of research, but rather a much-needed introduction to an issue that has been virtually absent from the Polish scholarly literature. Błoch treats this fragment as an introduction to the perspective of subaltern groups. She expands on this intention in Chapter 3, 'The Mosaic of Colonial Society'. This is a comprehensive introduction to an issue fundamental to the Portuguese multicontinental monarchy, namely diversity — and multiple diversity at that, not just one based on skin colour or origin. The author notes that individuals suffered discrimination on many levels simultaneously. In her view, the identity of the excluded was dynamic and changed as a result of cross-cultural contacts. 'Exiting the subaltern zone was possible, provided one accepted the rules imposed by the Portuguese colonizers' (p. 157). This is what gave the subalterns the opportunity to speak, to be 'heard'. This point forms the basis for further reasoning, in which Błoch presents cases of the 'others' speaking. Her argument leads towards the thesis that 'Portuguese colonialism — to a certain extent — brought different individuals together, and did not just exclude' (p. 18).

Chapter 4, 'Voices from the Periphery: The Role of Subaltern Groups in the Construction of the Portuguese Colonial Empire' (pp. 159–266) is the basis of the study. In it, the author makes use of correspondence, extracted from

Portuguese and Brazilian archives and libraries, addressed by the subalterns to the ruler, primarily on matters relating to their status. In this and the following chapter, 'Could the Subaltern Speak' (pp. 267–339), the author uses the method of correspondence network analysis. In addition, she supports her argument with a graphic presentation of the correspondence collected in a database, which she took an active part in constructing. The 'Appendix' includes eight graphs depicting various aspects of correspondence addressed to the ruler. These interesting presentations considerably strengthen her arguments.

The author documents in detail her concept of examining the network as a strategy based on deliberate efforts from both sides of the colonial society. Using various examples, she demonstrates how the elements that made up the network influenced and defined each other, creating a process that corresponds to the political strategy adopted. Bloch has succeeded in presenting a convincing vision of a conscious strategy employed by people who made up subaltern groups in the empire. This is thanks to her focus on free and non-free Native American and African societies, excluding religious groups (Jews, Muslims as well as converts, and the Romani and all minorities). Graphs 1 and 2 (discussed initially on pp. 169–71) present the correspondence by specific individuals from both communities addressed to the monarch or his representatives in Lisbon. The author concludes that the individuals in the community may have created a unique consciousness and sense of belonging 'by the inhabitants of the periphery to the colonial empire, from which they derived certain benefits for themselves as well. I think that the subaltern's subjective agency was embedded [...] in a social structure based on an interlinked world [...] and the subaltern consciously constructed their place within these structures' (p. 171).

The author's analysis of petitions from 1706–55 enables her to show not only the multiplicity of cases of communication between the subalterns and the authorities, but also the complexity of the circumstances surrounding efforts to be heard.

In the same zone we also find African male and female slaves, as well as Native American male chiefs, who could 'speak', were listened to, and, in addition, negotiated their place in space, obviously remaining in an asymmetrical relationship with the Portuguese authorities. Thus, despite their shared ethnic or 'racial' characteristics, their possibilities stemmed from their place within the network in which the behaviour of social actors was rooted (p. 338).

The author concludes that colonial society was not just a hierarchical structure based on the dependence of one stratum on another, because in the network format the various elements not only influenced each other, but also co-defined each other.

In her 'Summary' the author explains that the quantitative analyses, so important in her research, did not determine her conclusions. Instead, they helped her to confirm that 'Afro-Latin American and indigenous communities were active

agents building not only their own past, but also the history of South America' (p. 343). Consequently, the positions of both Spivak and the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group have been verified. Bloch also suggests the need for caution in applying post-colonial theories in historical research. Summarizing her reflections, she rightly observes that relations in the Asian part of the Portuguese empire may have been shaped differently. This circumspection in no way detracts from her accomplishments.

The book has been compiled and published with great diligence, with a solid bibliography and indexes, of which the subject index is particularly noteworthy. Agata Bloch's book provides plenty of material for consideration going beyond the subject of the Portuguese empire. It is worth recommending, particularly to researchers studying Polish subaltern relations, not only in the early modern period.

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Ewelina Tarkowska, *Wielka Emigracja we Francji: Polacy w bretońskim departamencie Côtes-du-Nord* [The Great Emigration in France: Poles in the Breton Department of Côtes-du-Nord], Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, 2022, 546 pp., 23 plates/tables

The historiography of the Great Emigration has been expanded in recent years by the addition of both solid monographs<sup>1</sup> and syntheses.<sup>2</sup> Their authors' research into hitherto little known aspects of the history of the post-uprising emigration (to mention only studies of the language and political imagination of the émigrés) has made a substantial and interesting contribution to scholarly reflection on the subject. Published in Olsztyn in 2022, Ewelina Tarkowska's book is part of this trend of original research into the Polish political emigration after the November Uprising.

<sup>1</sup> Idesbald Goddeeris, *La Grande Émigration polonaise en Belgique (1831–1870): Élités et masses en exil à l'époque romantique*, Frankfurt am Main, 2013; Piotr Kuligowski, *Radykałowie polistopadowi i nowoczesna galaktyka pojęć*, Cracow, 2020; Jerzy Kuzicki, *Nieść wiarę i nadzieję na obcej ziemi: Polskie duchowieństwo katolickie w życiu religijnym i polityczno-społecznym Wielkiej Emigracji we Francji (1831–1863)*, Rzeszów, 2014; Piotr Wierzbicki, *Dywizja Kozaków Sultańskich: Polityczno-wojskowe koncepcje stronnictwa Czartoryskich w okresie wojny krymskiej (1853–1856)*, Cracow, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Radosław Żurawski vel Grajewski, 'Polskie emigracje 1831–1918', in *Historie Polski w XIX wieku*, 4 vols, Warsaw, 2013–15, vol. 4: *Narody, wyznania, emigracje, porównania*, ed. Andrzej Nowak, 2015, pp. 115–276.

The author precisely defines the framework of her scholarly analysis. Her attention is focused on the fate of those members of the Great Emigration who in the 1830s found themselves in the Breton department of Côtes-du-Nord. It is impossible not to notice that they made up a tiny part of the Polish community in France, estimated at 5,000 or so in total. As Tarkowska has established, 119 Poles settled in the Côtes-du-Nord department for longer or shorter periods. The group was at its most numerous in the summer of 1833, when 69 Polish refugees resided there (p. 9). Drawing on Polish and French archive resources and the émigré press and literature on the subject, the author has carried out a comprehensive analysis of various dimensions of their existence in exile.

The book consists of three parts, divided into chapters and subchapters. In Part 1, comprising two chapters, Tarkowska describes the circumstances and paths which brought participants in the November Uprising first to France, and then to the Côtes-du-Nord department on the Atlantic coast. Most of those who reached the region had previously spent some time in the large *dépôts* for émigrés in Besançon and Bergerac, successively dispersed by the French authorities in 1833. The Poles who found themselves in Brittany also included participants in the failed Portuguese expedition of the Polish Legion organized by General Józef Bem. In Chapter 2, the author presents France's policy towards the November Uprising veterans. In an insightful manner she discusses the legal status of the refugees and the scope of assistance for them, comparing Paris's treatment of political émigrés from Poland, Italy and Spain. Following changes in the French benefit policy, Tarkowska rightly concludes that the system of benefit payments was a tool deliberately designed for controlling the politically uncertain element, that is the foreigners in France (p. 71). In addition, she stresses the significant fact that after the European upheavals of 1848–49 the new French authorities clearly limited financial assistance provided to political refugees (p. 98).

The second part of the book is considerably longer than the first. It also consists of two chapters. Chapter 3 — the longest, constituting more or less two-fifths of the entire book — is devoted to the everyday life of Poles in the department of Côtes-du-Nord (pp. 107–305). It contains subchapters concerning the attitude of the authorities and the local community to the émigrés, their financial situation, employment, and family matters, as well as their perception of the milieu in which they found themselves. In the fourth chapter the author seeks to determine the scale of the Côtes-du-Nord Poles' involvement in the socio-political life of the Great Emigration, as well as the intensity and nature of their contacts with their homeland. She presents information about the political sympathies and antipathies of members of the group in question, as well as their reactions to events like the 1846 Uprising in Cracow or the Crimean War.

The third part of the book is different in nature from the other two. It is made up of a substantial, one-hundred-page biographical dictionary of the participants in the Great Emigration associated with the department of



Côtes-du-Nord (pp. 397–506). The biographical entries differ in length, but in most cases they make it possible to follow the individual life stories of their protagonists, both before and after the November Uprising. The book ends with a conclusion summing up the main threads of the author's analysis and is complemented by a bibliography, list of tables, list of abbreviations, and a French-language *résumé*.

What constitutes the main strength of Tarkowska's book and deserves particular praise is the author's extensive source base. Tarkowska draws not only on hand-written resources (well known to historians of emigration) from the Polish Library in Paris, the Czartoryski Library in Cracow, Wrocław's Ossolineum, Warsaw's Central Archives of Historical Records or the central archives of the French ministries of foreign affairs and war. The documents kept in these institutions are obviously extremely important and can still be a source of scholarly surprises, but in the pursuit of the goals Tarkowska set for herself they were of secondary importance. Her primary research materials are the resources of the provincial archives of the Côtes-du-Nord department in Saint-Brieuc, the Ille-et-Vilaine department in Rennes, the Finistère department in Quimper, the Morbihan department in Vannes, the Loire-Atlantique department in Nantes, and the Doubs department in Besançon. The author's survey of the provincial archive holdings is complemented by her study of the contents of the municipal archives in Saint-Brieuc, Rennes, Saint-Malo, Quimper, Vannes, Nantes and Besançon. It has to be said that none of the scholars studying the history of the Great Emigration in France has used these resources as extensively as Ewelina Tarkowska. They have enabled her to capture and describe many previously unknown events, processes, and conduct of Polish émigrés living in the French provinces.

Among the author's most valuable findings are, in my opinion, her remarks concerning the attitude of the authorities and inhabitants of the Côtes-du-Nord department to the newcomers from Poland (pp. 116–29). Tarkowska describes campaigns organized there to aid the Poles; cites evidence of the friendly attitude of public officials and ordinary Bretons to the émigrés; and offers examples of French-Polish family relationships. Her reflections on the relations within the Polish community are of particular interest. They were not free from tensions and conflicts, with the latter caused not only by differences in political views (pp. 143–52). The author does not shy away from describing the pathologies plaguing the Polish community in Brittany such as, for example, public disorder caused by alcohol abuse or the refusal of some émigrés to pay back the debts they incurred with the French (pp. 166–69). What becomes important to the author's reconstruction of the actual standard of living of Poles in the French provinces are her findings concerning the Poles' purchasing power. To this end Tarkowska compares the government refugee benefits with the average salary and prices of basic consumer goods in France at the time (pp. 189–93).

Another important contribution made by the author — and useful to other researchers — is her biographical dictionary included in the third part of the book. It

contains numerous entries concerning people who did not distinguish themselves in any way in public life. And yet it was their life stories that made up the phenomenon described by historians as the 'Great Emigration'. Reconstructed by Tarkowska, elements of their biographies can be of considerable significance, not just to further prosopographic research into the post-November Uprising diaspora, but also to individual genealogical studies. All biographical entries are accompanied by valuable source references. Collecting and organizing this condensed information must have cost the author considerable effort, which should be duly appreciated.

Ewelina Tarkowska's book is marked by a disciplined and precise language along with meticulous editing. It is hard to find in it even the slightest typographical errors, not to mention more serious stylistic flaws or translation shortcomings. I stress this with full appreciation, and I hope I will not be regarded as being spiteful in pointing out that the author has made an error in the title of my book on the Great Emigration in the British Isles, which she cites twice. The end date indicated there is 1863, not 1861 as Ewelina Tarkowska writes (pp. 171 and 528). Some incidental errors in the spelling of place names ('Biatignolles' — p. 353; 'Côtes-du-Nord' — p. 408) are of no importance, because the author spells the names correctly elsewhere. More consistency could be recommended for the information appearing in the biographical notes of the émigrés and concerning the military decorations they received. The author usually writes about the Golden Cross of the Order of Virtuti Militari in the correct way, that is using capital letters (pp. 401, 406, 428, 438, 441 f.). However, occasionally she fails to capitalize parts of the name of the order. The form 'golden cross of the Order of Virtuti Militari' (pp. 410, 419, 457) can sometimes be found and it should be corrected. A more significant shortcoming is the book's lack of an index — which seems essential in this type of a book.

Having said the above, I hasten to point out that Ewelina Tarkowska's monograph is a valuable and excellent book. I am convinced of this despite the fact that the author's narrative choices sometimes seemed debatable to me, and that some of the topics tackled by her would have benefited from further elaboration. For example, instead of information — repeated after other studies — about émigré associations or the history of the Free City of Cracow, I would prefer to learn more about the perception of the Polish 1831 insurgents by the Bretons themselves. As I have mentioned, Tarkowska writes about the specificity of peaceful, rural Brittany and the warm welcome of the Poles by its inhabitants. She suggests that one of the reasons behind this welcome may have been a shared strong attachment of both groups to Catholicism (p. 510). I wish she had delved more deeply into this interesting topic. This would have required her to go beyond the sources she has studied — of the prefectures and town halls — and investigate the private and church archives, as well as carry out a more thorough analysis of French memoirs and the Breton press. The fact that Tarkowska leaves out the local press (including *Gazette de Bretagne*, *L'Auxiliaire Breton*, *Le Dinannais*, *L'Armoricaïn*, *Le Journal de Rennes*, *Le Progrès de*

*Loudéac* or *Le Quimpérois*) from her book is the most serious shortcoming in her source base.

There is no doubt that such research would have been painstaking.<sup>3</sup> However, it would have created opportunities to show more completely the spheres, contents, and dynamics of bilateral contacts between the newcomers and the hosts. The way in which the Polish view on Brittany is presented in the book is not entirely satisfactory. The title of subchapter 3.6 — ‘Brittany in the Eyes of Polish Émigrés’ — unfortunately promises more than it delivers. It contains observations taken almost exclusively from the letters kept in the Polish Library in Paris — mainly those of the brothers Stanisław and Napoleon Poniński to their friend Florian Chaborski. Their observations are indeed interesting; but firstly, the chronological framework of the correspondence is limited to the period 1842–44; and secondly the horizon of observations presented in them was determined by the activity of just two individuals. I understand that the author had to face the problem of insufficient sources on this topic. In that case perhaps she should have chosen a different title for the subchapter? It should be kept in mind that the family saga and the opinions of the Poniński brothers were related to their specific situation — they enjoyed a much higher standard of living than most Poles because they were financially supported by their family from Poland (in 1842 they lived in a rented chateau in Kersa near Paimpol, and shortly afterwards Napoleon married Melanie Morand, who came from a wealthy French family). Owing to this, their case is not very representative and perhaps does not add much when looking for answers to the question of how Brittany was perceived by the refugees living there.

I conclude this review with one more remark of a general nature. In the introduction to her book Ewelina Tarkowska writes that her aim was to ‘consider the position of Polish refugees in France after the fall of the November Uprising from the point of view of the life stories of ordinary émigrés living in the French provinces’ (p. 9). This statement seems overly broad and somewhat misleading. Does it mean that the Olsztyn scholar treats her findings concerning the 119 Poles living in Brittany as a set of observations concerning the entire Great Emigration in France? This would be risky given that among those who settled in the Côtes-du-Nord department there were no outstanding émigré politicians, poets, journalists, priests, or engineers — in other words no one from the groups which largely determined the image of Poland’s post-November Uprising emigration. In fact, there is no need to treat the Brittany émigrés as the Great Emigration in a nutshell. What makes her book so valuable is the fact that by referring to hitherto unknown sources, Tarkowska has reconstructed the everyday life of a large group of ordinary émigrés living in the French provinces. Thanks to the results of her research readers are given a more complete picture of what

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<sup>3</sup> A model example of analysis of the local foreign-language press is presented by Zdzisław Jagodziński in his study *Anglia wobec sprawy polskiej w okresie Wiosny Ludów 1848–1849*, Warsaw, 1997.

happened within the Great Emigration outside the Paris, Brussels, or London circles of great leaders, great texts, and great events. The book *Wielka Emigracja we Francji: Polacy w bretońskim departamencie Côtes-du-Nord* is an excellent case study, and for that its author deserves full credit.

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