

Die jederzeit gut nachvollziehbaren Analysen und vor allem die Bewertungskategorien sind nicht nur zentral für das Verständnis der Ikonen in Russland, sondern auch für die forschungsgeschichtlich teilweise unterrepräsentierten Werke im Königreich Polen, Großfürstentum Litauen oder in Ruthenien – trotz des divergierenden Verständnisses der Zugehörigkeit zur Orthodoxie nach 1453. Die immer wieder hervortretende polnische Perspektive des Buches, die sich u. a. in der intensiv genutzten polnischen Sekundärliteratur äußert, lässt sich darauf zurückführen, dass die Publikation eine wortgetreue Übersetzung einer bereits 2007 erschienenen Dissertation¹ bildet. Trotz der neun Jahr später erfolgten Veröffentlichung in englischer Sprache tut dies der Arbeit keinen Abbruch. Ganz im Gegenteil ist zu hoffen, dass sie nun die ihr gebührende Rezeption erfährt.

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¹ ALEKSANDRA SULIKOWSKA: *Spory o ikony na Rusi w XV i XVI w.* [Die Auseinandersetzungen um Ikonen in Russland im 15. und 16. Jh.], Warszawa 2007.

Lech Mróz: Roma-Gypsy Presence in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. 15th-18th Centuries. Central European University Press. Budapest – New York 2015. VIII, 321 S. ISBN 978-615-5053-51-1. (€ 52,-.)

This book by the prominent Polish scholar Lech Mróz is an abridged translation of a work that was published in Poland in 2001.¹ It is the result of a painstaking and time-consuming search for and analysis of archival records in Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine that shed light on the status of Roma in pre-partition Poland. While some readers may have reservations about some of the conclusions drawn, the discovery of dozens of previously unknown documents—many of them reproduced in the text—makes this work a milestone of Romani historiography.

The book consists of eight chronologically arranged chapters. The first three provide a very interesting overview of the arrival of several waves of Roma in the early 15th and 16th c. and their adaptation to local conditions. The most remarkable aspect of this early history as presented and elaborated by M. is the largely unproblematic ‘integration’ (to use a term much in vogue these days) of the newcomers and their co-existence with members of the majority society. Contrary to the stereotypical accounts of impoverished and criminally-inclined itinerants conveyed by mainstream historiography, the Gypsies that emerge from the documents examined by M. seemed unremarkable and fully enfranchised residents of cities, towns and villages where they worked as artisans, traders and farmers. Some amassed such wealth and influence that they became magistrates, councillors, and even advisers to the king. Several belonged to the ranks of the lower nobility. Unfortunately, the documentary evidence does not disclose more than fragmentary information about these exceptional individuals, making it impossible to trace their ascent and, even more importantly, the fate of their descendants. But even the limited material at hand prompts M. to suggest that late medieval Poland constituted an exceptionally tolerant society by wider European standards.

Possibly in consequence of Poland’s reputation as a safe haven, it became a favourite destination for Gypsy refugees from Western European countries where prejudice and repression had become the norm, such as Germany. M. documents the appearance of the first Polish signs of anti-Tsyganism (‘anti-Gypsy’ feeling) in the second half of the 16th c. and, he seems to suggest, these were not triggered by fears and conditions within Poland but were, rather, an import from the West. Yet the arrival of impoverished Gypsy fugitives seems to have triggered a minor moral panic that led to the issuance of first government

¹ LECH MRÓZ: *Dzieje Cyganów-Romów w Rzeczypospolitej XV-XVIII w.*, Warszawa 2001.

statues banning Roma from living in Poland. These edicts were repeatedly re-issued throughout the 17th and 18th c., but their effectiveness seems to have been limited, and Roma continued to reside in the commonwealth.

By late 17th c., Poland-Lithuania harboured several categories of Roma, some settled, others itinerant, including a large contingent of recently arrived Vlach Gypsies. In order to manage the growing numbers, keep peace within their ranks, and minimize conflict with the majority population, in 1656 the king instituted the office of an overlord—referred to popularly as a ‘Gypsy king’—that survived until the partition of the state. Nevertheless, the author identifies the early 18th c. as a watershed in inter-ethnic relations. It was marked by a sharp rise in the number of complaints about Gypsies as a source of criminal behaviour, and this led to their increasing marginalization and isolation from mainstream society. M. attributes this widespread ire to stereotypes that were used by nascent nationalists to nourish xenophobic suspicion of and opposition to ‘others’—a sharp departure from traditional tolerance made easier by the loss of independence and partition of Poland-Lithuania. M. sees the ensuing marginalization of Roma as the impetus for their ‘exit’ from society at large and the creation of their own institutions, such as judicial tribunals, in response to their loss of confidence in the impartiality and benevolence of those controlled by the state.

Although this book is a very valuable addition to the literature about the history of Roma in Poland and Central Europe, it is unfortunate that the author does not pursue some of his observations beyond the narrow confines of Polish Romani studies. Reading M.’s arguments about the alleged Polish ‘exceptionalism’ regarding the tolerant treatment of Roma during the late Middle Ages, I was reminded of similar views expressed earlier about Polish Jews. Several authors² have tried to make a case for the exceptionally favourable conditions encountered by Jews in Poland up to the 18th c. In both instances, the local nobility is credited with defending the ‘others’, partly perhaps out of self-interest (both Roma and Jews were frequently employed on the estates of the *szlachta*), but partly also out of the nobility’s inherent distaste for petty parochialism and the base xenophobia stemming from it. Was it, then, ‘nationalism’ as such that undermined the status of Roma (and Jews) as autochthons, as M. seems to suggest, or its bourgeois variant as it replaced the cosmopolitanism of the gentry in the course of the 19th c.?

Returning to the core of M.’s argument about the exceptional degree to which Roma were integrated into pre-modern Polish society, there are reasons to examine it more comprehensively from a comparative perspective. Perhaps the most surprising indicator of the robust presence of Roma in respectable circles of Polish society was their alleged representation in the ranks of the (lower) nobility. But this was not at all a distinction unique to Poland. There were nobles carrying the designation ‘Gypsy’ in Hungary, including present-day Slovakia, as well as Bohemia and Moravia. Although this phenomenon remains largely unexplored, the few sources that mention it for Bohemia and Moravia—where the appellation ‘Gypsy’ found its way into the titles of not only lower but also higher nobility—reject the view that such designations imply Romani ethnicity. Instead, it is seen as an exotic term that certain nobles appropriated or received as nicknames at a time when Gypsies were seen as a mysterious and brave people who could enhance the image—and at times the crest—of a local noble family. Alas, the evidence supplied by M. does not suffice to prove that the Polish practice deviated from this standard and that the country boasted nobility of Gypsy ethnicity.

Even the appropriation of the Gypsy ethnonym by local gentry would provide support for M.’s central thesis that 15th century Roma were held in much higher esteem than their descendants later on. Was this something unique to Poland, as M. suggests? One of the few Czech authors who mention the phenomenon of ‘Gypsy’ nobility in Bohemia and Mo-

² See, for example, EVA HOFFMAN: *Shtetl: The Life and Death of a Small Town and the World of Polish Jews*, New York 1997.

ravia argued more than a century ago that it was there that Roma persecuted in 15th c. Western Europe found an oasis of tolerance of safety.³ This is said to have changed only by the mid-16th c., when anti-Gypsy edicts and measures started appearing here as well. Was the Polish case so exceptional?

This brief reference to historical evidence that undermines some of M.'s central claims demonstrates the need to tackle them in a more comparative manner. One work of particular significance in this respect is Jiří Hanzal's overview of the history of Roma in Moravia, with particular emphasis on their relationship with local nobility—a topic close to M.'s heart.⁴ As it covers exactly the same period as M's work, the 15th to 18th c., his failure to even mention it is hard to understand. All these critical remarks must not overshadow M.'s very significant contribution to our ability to piece together the complex puzzle of Romani presence in late medieval and early modern Central Europe.

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³ FRANTIŠEK VYMAZAL: Cikáni v Čechách [Gypsies in Bohemia], in: Časopis Matice Moravské 11 (1879), pp. 105-124.

⁴ JIŘÍ HANZAL: Cikáni na Moravě v 15. až 18. století [Gypsies in Moravia from the 15th to 18th Centuries], Praha 2004.

Gerald Volkmer: Siebenbürgen zwischen Habsburgermonarchie und Osmanischem Reich. Völkerrechtliche Stellung und Völkerrechtspraxis eines ostmitteleuropäischen Fürstentums 1541-1699. (Schriften des Bundesinstituts für Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa, Bd. 56.) De Gruyter Oldenbourg. München 2015. 648 S., Kt. ISBN 978-3-11-034399-1. (€ 69,95.)

In seinem sehr umfangreichen Werk nähert sich Gerald Volkmer der völkerrechtlichen Stellung des Fürstentums Siebenbürgen an der Wasserscheide zwischen islamischen Völkerrechtsvorstellungen (*siyar*) und dem *ius gentium* Europas. Die Monografie lässt sich in drei Teile gliedern: eine Beschreibung der verfassungsrechtlichen Ordnung Siebenbürgens und ihrer Entstehung (ca. 10 Seiten), eine Diplomatie-/Ereignisgeschichte Siebenbürgens 1541-1699 mit einem Fokus auf die völkerrechtliche Beziehung zu Habsburg (ca. 440 Seiten) und eine Betrachtung der völkerrechtlichen Stellung Siebenbürgens aus osmanischer Perspektive (ca. 90 Seiten).

V. stützt sich dabei mehrheitlich auf eine ältere, deutsch- und rumänischsprachige Forschungsliteratur sowie jüngere deutsche, ungarische und rumänische Forschungen, wobei er die ungarischen Arbeiten in deutscher oder englischer Sprache rezipiert hat. Obwohl immer wieder verstreut die Problematiken nationalgeschichtlicher Interpretationen thematisiert werden, bleibt eine systematische Analyse der historiografiegeschichtlichen Implikationen des Themas aus. Sein Quellenmaterial ist durch den Rückgriff auf die umfangreichen Editionswerke des langen 19. Jh. geprägt (z. B. die Editionen der Eudoxiu-Hurmuzaqi-Sammlung, oder die von Andrei Veress herausgegebenen Dokumentensammlungen).

Die Stärke des Buches liegt in Transfer und Synthese. Es eröffnet dem deutschsprachigen Leser einen breiten Einblick in die rezente und ältere rumänischsprachige Historiografie. Zudem bedient vor allem der mittlere und umfangreichste Teil das Bedürfnis nach einer modernen Ansprüchen genügenden, zeitlich umfassenden ereignisgeschichtlichen Überblicksdarstellung der Geschichte des Fürstentums Siebenbürgen. Besonders hervorzuheben ist hierbei seine Darstellung des sog. „Langen Türkenkrieges“ (1593-1606), der in der Forschung bisher höchstens partielle Beachtung gefunden hat. Diese Syntheseleistung wird zukünftige Forschung in und um Siebenbürgens Geschichte erleichtern.

Wie der Titel schon andeutet, liegt der Fokus der Arbeit auf der Rekonstruktion der völkerrechtlichen Stellung Siebenbürgens aus der Völkerrechtspraxis heraus, was dem Umstand fehlender völkerrechtlicher Diskurse zu und aus Siebenbürgen geschuldet ist. V. hat sich konzeptionell gegen den Weg über eine kritische Edition der Vertragstexte als