

Imaginations and Configurations of Polish Society. From the Middle Ages through the Twentieth Century. Hrsg. von Yvonne Kleinmann, Jürgen Heyde, Dietlind Hüchtker, Dobrochna Kałwa, Joanna Nalewajko-Kulikow, Katrin Steffen and Tomasz Wiślicz. (Poland: Kultur – Geschichte – Gesellschaft, Bd. 3.) Wallstein Verlag, Göttingen 2017. 383 S., Ill. ISBN 978-3-8353-1904-2. (€ 36,90.)

The work under review here is an inspiring volume of great import, covering the entire Polish history from its beginnings to the present day. Extremely rich and multifaceted, the work not only clearly presents its subject matter, but also explores complex meanings and contexts that are associated today with the terms “history” and “Polish.”

The book was created as a result of an international scientific conference with the same title, which was organized by the Alexander Brückner Center for the History and Culture of East Central Europe and took place in October 2014 in Leipzig and Halle. The authors of the articles represent a wide range of international research environments: Polish, Ukrainian, German and American. The multiplicity of perspectives and the vast time period the collection covers—from the Middle Ages to the present—does not mean, fortunately, that it is chaotic or random, as is often the case with post-conference publications. The collection has a clear leitmotif—the concept of community.

The presented texts mostly open up new perspectives and pose important questions, which are rarely as openly formulated in historical works.¹ They focus on the essential issue: how the image of the community formed over the centuries, how cultural, religious, political and social identities changed, what loyalty meant and how it was comprehended, and how all these variables determine or limit the understanding of Polish identity. Researchers consistently problematize the notion of “Polishness,” which over the centuries not only changed its substance and scope, but also its fundamental importance: for Polish rural population in the Prussian partition in the nineteenth century, for example, “Polishness” meant something different than for the representatives of the Orthodox Church in the eighteenth century. An extraordinary advantage of this volume for academic historiography is also its versatile analysis of the concept of “national history” and the national perspective. Moshe Rosman writes about this in his essay “How Polish History is Polish History,” aptly and convincingly deconstructing the canons of traditional historical writing. Therefore, the perspective of the book is not national, though it is also not defined by some unspecified universality; it is rather transnational and regional. The presented collection is a part of “history from below,” showing the complex processes of identity-building at the turn of the centuries in different geographical regions and in cultural areas that have rarely been the subject of scientific reflection. Political history here is distinctly balanced by social and cultural history.

The volume is not of systematic nature—it neither describes all eras, nor all important aspects of “community”—and, although this could appear as a certain lack to traditional academic historians with a positivist orientation, for whom this collection may seem too cursory and fragmentary, there are, however, sound arguments to refute such allegations. Obviously, the volume cannot be used as a history handbook, nor does it offer an elaborated concept of Polish society, but it does present new approaches and illuminates the phenomena it describes in an interesting way—combining a sociological and anthropological perspective with contemporary trends in historical research.

The work is intended not only for experts in Polish history and professional historians, but for anyone interested in this topic. Separate introductions to each section facilitate understanding, bring us closer to the era, but also analyze basic, underlying ideas and

¹ See BARBARA KLICH-KLUCZEWSKA, DOBROCHNA KAŁWA (eds.): *From Mentalités to Anthropological History: Theory and Methods*, Krakow 2012; ANDRZEJ KAPIŃSKI, EDWARD OPALIŃSKI et al. (eds.): *Gospodarka, społeczeństwo, kultura w dziejach nowożytnych* [Economy, Society, Culture in Modern History], Warszawa 2010.

stereotypical patterns of thinking. The material is arranged according to time periods. The first part introduces the Middle Ages, the second part modernity up to the eighteenth century, the third part the nineteenth, and the last part the twentieth century. The individual sketches also re-emphasize the issues of multiethnicity, the multiplicity of religions, and various national and social identifications. In addition, the last section confronts the image of the community with the categories of crisis, and thus violence, mobility and transformation.

The collection is methodologically rich—classical considerations of historiography (focused on political history) are accompanied by discourse analysis, anthropology, sociology, and memory studies. It belongs to the broadly understood revisionist trend², which questions well-established social constructs, such as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the nobles' rule of "Golden Liberty" or the Eastern Borderlands.

It is worth noting that these works have a clear axiological perspective, which manifests itself not only in the choice of topics, the described phenomena, and in terms of description, but also in formulated teleology: the perspective of fulfilled liberalism, the path to civil society, or liberal order treated as the natural horizon of the past. Obviously, this vision is an implicit rather than an explicit declaration of the majority of the texts and can itself be assessed and discussed. This does not mean, however, that the liberal perspective takes away from the collection's scholarly reliability. The volume takes a valuable position that enriches knowledge not only about Poland and its neighbors, but also about the state of contemporary Polish (and not only Polish) historiography.

Warszawa

Katarzyna Chmielewska

² See TOMASZ WIŚLICZ, EWA DOMAŃSKA et al. (eds.): *Historia—dziś: Teoretyczne problemy wiedzy o przeszłości* [History—Today: Theoretical Problems of Knowledge about the Past], Krakow 2014.

Regionalität als historische Kategorie. Ostmitteleuropäische Perspektiven. Hrsg. von Sabine Jagodzinski, Aleksandra Kmak-Pamirska und Miloš Řezník. fibre. Osnaabrück 2019. 367 S. ISBN 978-3-944870-62-5. (€ 39,80).

Der vorliegende Sammelband entstammt dem im Jahr 2014 am Deutschen Historischen Institut Warschau eingerichteten Forschungsbereich „Regionalität und Regionsbildung“, der die historische Kategorie der „Region“ von der Staats- und Nationalismusforschung trennen und als eigene Forschungsperspektive und analytische Kategorie entwickeln möchte. Er greift dabei Themen auf, die von der Frühen Neuzeit bis in die Gegenwart reichen. Dementsprechend behandelt auch der Sammelband eine breite Palette an Themenschwerpunkten und historischen Perioden, um die Begriffe „Region“ und „Regionalität“ zu schärfen und für weitere interdisziplinäre Forschung handhabbar zu machen. Die Hrsg. Sabine Jagodzinski, Aleksandra Kmak-Pamirska und Miloš Řezník betrachten, gemäß dem wissenschaftlichen Konsens, Regionen in der Tradition des sozialen Konstruktivismus. Sie untersuchen in ihrem Werk nicht nur territoriale Regionen, bei denen vor allem die geografische Komponente maßgeblich ist, sondern schenken auch verschiedenen imaginierten Räumen in Ostmitteleuropa, die durch kulturelle, kommunikative, religiöse oder konfessionelle Gegebenheiten als Region konstruiert werden, hinreichend Aufmerksamkeit. Insbesondere interessieren die Hrsg. die Entstehung, Konstruktion und Definition einer „Region“ samt der darauf Einfluss nehmenden Faktoren sowie die Frage danach, mit welchen Mitteln und aufgrund welcher identitätsstiftender Faktoren unterschiedliche „Regionalitäten“ entstehen.

In seiner einführenden konzeptuellen Reflexion rekapituliert Miloš Řezník die Thesen und Entwicklungen der wissenschaftlichen Debatte um den *spatial turn*, dessen Prämissen schon in den 1970er Jahren von dem französischen Philosophen Paul Virilio formuliert worden sind. Řezník zeigt auf, wie einerseits die wissenschaftliche Beschäfti-