

eastern Europe, but it also offers a critique of Chris Wickham's Marxism-inspired thesis on the peasant mode of production. The first part of the book presents the above-described socio-economic questions by regions, while the second half of the volume discusses the afore-mentioned topics.

The varying availability of material means that certain topics and regions are treated in greater or lesser detail than others. Regarding questions of landholding patterns, for instance, the only archaeological evidence available to Curta is ditches unearthed in the Carpathian Basin, as exclusive artefacts with inscriptions bearing the holder's name also suggest private ownership. Data on communal or corporate ownership are more elusive: grain storage facilities or corporate burials, even the fur hunters of the taiga exhibit significant wealth differences.

In chapter 17, Curta proceeds to consider the question of subsistence economy, describing the slash-and-burn agriculture in the forested areas of eastern Europe and the large agricultural surpluses in Wallachia or Bohemia. The author argues that the privileged status of craftsman in the Carpathian Basin and the forest belt is well-visible from lavish burials containing both tools and weapons. Curta interpreted large settlements specialized for pottery or iron production as evidence for attached specialists working for the elite.

Curta presented various forms of trade and exchange that vary from gift exchange of the elite through the state-driven military annona to the fur trade in the taiga. Curta applied a model by Alain Testart for third type transfers when describing a forced exchange or tribute without reciprocity. He suggests that the long-distance transfer of luxury items fits the wealth exchange between the elites usually realized through marriages.

The final and probably the core topic of the volume is social change in eastern Europe, studied through burials by the author. Mortuary houses and communal burials represent the family as the most important social unit. However, individual values and self-achievement became increasingly important, emphasizing warrior values and the display of martial qualities as mirrored by high-status weapon burials.

At the end of this overarching analysis, Curta concludes that he finds no evidence that there existed in early medieval eastern Europe a peasant mode of society. This prompts him to question the validity of various widely-circulating theories about social evolution, and to show how impoverished studies of history of the transition from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages are that omit the region of eastern Europe from their analysis.

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The Dragoman Renaissance: Diplomatic Interpreters and the Routes of Orientalism. By E. Natalie Rothman. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2021.

xxiii, 419 pp. Notes. References. Index. Figures. Tables. \$24.95, paper.
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In this ambitious and erudite monograph, cultural historian E. Natalie Rothman examines the role of dragomans, “diplomatic translator-interpreters” (1), in shaping Renaissance diplomacy and in producing and disseminating knowledge about the Ottoman empire, specifically, “elite Ottoman perspectives on politics, language, and society” (3). Rothman's dragomans belonged to a distinct professional group of

Istanbul whose members sometimes descended from dragoman dynasties. A product of Mediterranean statecraft since antiquity, dragomans in the Ottoman context served as intermediaries between the sultan and his subjects as well as foreign rulers, “ritual figurations of sovereignty itself” (5) and “embod[im]ents of] Ottoman alterity” (6) to their foreign employers.

Rothman’s methodology is interdisciplinary and much of the research is based on digitized collections and materials housed in archival repositories and libraries in multiple countries. Sensitive to the challenges of translation in a work of this kind, Rothman helpfully provides transcriptions or transliterations of translated passages in the notes, which are both generous and helpful. The same can be said of the bibliography and index. Of the book’s seven chapters, parts of six of them have been previously published in earlier forms, but there is great value in bringing the parts together within the covers of a single volume.

Rothman shows that in order to make sense of Ottoman politics, society, and culture, early modern European diplomats had to rely extensively on local intermediaries, of whom dragomans constituted the largest and most politically connected group. Her point is that not only has the scholarship on Ottoman-European diplomacy neglected this important dimension of early modern *Turcica*, it has also obscured dragomans’ role as independent diplomats and shapers of discourse concerning matters Ottoman.

As the book’s title suggests, Rothman also aims to contribute to knowledge about Orientalism. She does this in part by emphasizing the dialogic condition of Orientalism’s emergence and the need to understand the categories of “Europe” and “the East” relationally. While acknowledging the importance of Enlightenment thinking and European metropolitan milieus in shaping Orientalism, Rothman discerns some of its most distinctive features in an earlier period—in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—and in a different context—the diplomatic milieu of Istanbul. She borrows William Hanks’s idea of commensuration to explain how complex processes of semiosis, communication, and knowledge production resulted in the creation of “the Orient” as “a coherent and cohesive subject” (11). Rothman powerfully demonstrates both that and how trans-imperial dragomans played key roles in these processes.

The book uses the biographies and semiotic practices of Istanbulite dragomans to explain the production of early modern Ottomanist knowledge. Chapters address dragomans’ recruitment, training, and employment in the *bailate*, the Venetian consulate in Istanbul (Ch. 1); diplomatic gift-giving, “kinshipping,” and the role of dragomanate women therein (Ch. 2); dragomans’ textual and visual self-inscription (Chs. 3 and 4); the institutionalization of Ottoman language studies in Europe (Ch. 5); dragomans’ translation practices, including intertextuality (Ch. 6); and the role of dragomans in producing and circulating Ottomanist knowledge in ways that connected the early Republic of Letters to the Porte (Ch. 7). The book’s epilogue considers dragomans’ role in institutionalizing Ottoman studies in European capitals, where they served as interpreters and translators, Ottoman manuscript commissioning agents and catalogs, and builders of academies for Oriental languages.

Rothman uses a rich array of sources to substantiate the book’s claims. A few examples will have to suffice. Rothman uses a miniature painting of the Venetian consulate in Istanbul ca. 1660 to show how the Istanbul dragomanate was a space of “transformative socialization for future dragomans,” whose “Venetocentric, circum-Mediterranean, and Ottomancentric practices for mediating language and power” produced knowledge about Ottoman empire for European audiences (21). She deploys Venetian Senate records to underscore the centrality of gift-giving and kinshipping, exchanging and relating, in dragomans’ trans-imperial

embeddedness, “a constitutive and enduring prerequisite of [their] successful diplomacy at the Porte” (79). She uses four Venetian dragomans’ reports (*relazioni*, “dragomans’ most impactful writings, and certainly the most circulated” [83]) to show how dragomans mediated between Venice’s political class, on the one hand, and Ottoman society and culture, on the other, and thereby contributed to both the development of early modern Mediterranean diplomacy and the production of formative and enduring knowledge about the Ottoman and the Safavid worlds (112). Rothman also uses textual-cum-visual artifacts to foreground “practices of cultural mediation, commensuration, and boundary-making” in early modern Venetian-Ottoman relations (139).

None of the figures referred to in the text appears in its print version. Having to move from book to website, however, is a minor inconvenience that in any case introduces the reader to the Dragoman Renaissance Research Platform of the University of Toronto Scarborough. Most important, the figures are richly incorporated into the analysis. The care with which the author attends to every text and image discussed, every turn of phrase on the page, and analysis and explanation makes the book both intellectually edifying and a pleasure to read.

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After the Peace Treaty of Versailles (1919): New Order of Central Europe. Ed. Dariusz Makiła and Miloš Řezník. Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau Quellen und Studien, vol. 39. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2020. x, 208 pp. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. € 54.00, hard bound.
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Following the wave of renewed interest in the wake of the First World War centenary, recent years saw an increasing number of studies devoted to the peace settlement and new order in Europe, post 1918. Some of these studies offer new perspectives on previously understudied questions, such as concepts of non-territorial autonomy, cultures of defeat, and expert cultures. Others capitalize on more traditional research aiming at recapitulation of the state of the art in diplomatic and political history of the inter-war period. The volume edited by Miloš Řezník, director of the German Historical Institute in Warsaw, and Dariusz Makiła, co-head of the Management Board of the Foundation for Polish-German Cooperation, and with contributions by a couple of other high-ranking representatives of the Foundation, belongs to the latter category. Originating from a conference held in 2019 in Poznań, it is not an attempt at a coherent interpretation of the pivotal moment in the history of central Europe but rather a collection of summaries and small contributions.

The volume consists of a short preface, fifteen articles, and a list of contributors, roughly half of whom are Polish. There seems to be no clearly identifiable common explanation to their selection, besides, probably, having taken part in the 2019 conference. Among the contributions to the volume, most general are those of Vittoria Calabrò on Italy’s war and postwar history; Dušan Kováč’s German language description of the transformation of the Slovak society in the wake of the First World War; Marek Kornat’s bulky text on the Polish minority treaty and its reception by political elites of the country; Ralph Schattkowsky’s (again, German-language) article on Polish-German post-1919 relations; and Małgorzata Gmurczyk-Wrońska’s contribution on French internal politics after the war. More specific topics are dealt with by Miloš Řezník (Ladins, Kashubians, and Lusatians in the context of the Paris Peace