

Cluster Three focuses on the issues of controlling raw materials and economic nationalism. Sergey Ledenev describes the oil-related motives of the French in supporting the acquisition of eastern Galicia by Poland. Alessandro Sette analyzes the Italian efforts to control Albanian petroleum against British interests.

Cluster Four examines how the big powers sought to benefit from nationalist movements. David X. Noack examines futile attempts by Germany in the 20s to mobilize Carpathian Germans to push for autonomy in Slovakia and Ruthenia in order to undermine Czechoslovakia. Anne-Sophie Nardelli-Malgrand examines the shifting policy of Italy relative to the independence of Austria in the period 1918–33 and the factors behind that shifting.

The final Cluster addresses perceptions of the big powers. Stefano Santoro uncovers Italian efforts at cultural propaganda. The last piece, by Ian Nish, seems to shift focus but in fact shows Japan as playing a big power role and how Japanese perceptions of Germany and the USSR affected Middle Europe in the late 30s.

This book makes a significant contribution to the study of Middle-central-east European history.

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The Long Sixth Century in Eastern Europe. By Florin Curta. *East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, vol. 72.* Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2021. xii, 516 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. €156.00, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2022.238

The period known as the long sixth century, which lasted from ca. 500 until 680, was a time of profound transformation leading from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. Recent European historiography on the period has often focused on tracing the common Late Antique roots of European social and economic integration, but it is a drawback of much of this work that eastern Europe is frequently omitted from the picture. In recent years, an ongoing series of more than eighty volumes published by Brill under the general editorship of Florin Curta has attempted to fill this academic gap. The present volume, by Curta himself, is the crowning achievement of this project, offering as it does a synthetic history of eastern Europe throughout the sixth and seventh centuries.

Curta conceptualizes the topic in terms of the interaction between two vast geographical zones: the “Roman orbit” and the land beyond its reach. The former encompasses the territory of Eastern Roman Empire, namely the Balkans and Crimea, plus regions such as the Carpathian Basin, the Lower Danube, and the Pontic Steppe that had varying degrees of interaction with the Roman world. The latter region, by contrast, encompassed areas further to the north and east, from the Baltic to the Ural Mountains.

The volume focuses on socio-economic questions such as production, property, exchange, and social differentiation by analyzing a range of written and archaeological data. Archaeological material is of particular importance for studying the northern and eastern parts of Europe that lay beyond the scope of Byzantine or other written sources. Fortunately, the archaeology of early medieval eastern Europe was extremely well studied in the Soviet period, when the Soviet school of material culture placed particular emphasis on studying the social and economic life of non-elite groups. Curta’s book not only draws on such scholarly literature to provide a historiographical overview of the history and archaeology of late antique transformation in

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