

put enormous strain on social relations leading to isolation on the one hand and self-selective sorting on the other. Beyond sorting, it remains unclear, however, what precise work particular kinds of social relations do for recognizing specific moral understandings.

In the short epilogue, Hilmar makes plausible the relevance of his findings for understanding the rise of populism. He rightly points to the appeal that populist leaders and parties derive from their recognition of cultural insiders as deserving their skills and contributions they make to society.

In sum: *Deserved* offers a seldom undertaken comparison which generates genuine insight. And it is a good read at that.

Eduard Mühle. *Slavs in the Middle Ages between Idea and Reality.*

East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, vol. 89. Leiden: Brill, 2023. xvii, 610 pp. Bibliography. Index. Maps. \$208.00, hard bound.

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doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.368

Professor Eduard Mühle's synthesis offers not only a survey and analytical narrative of the Slavic-speaking cultures and polities emerging between central Europe and the Volga basin sometime after the western Roman empire's disintegration and the Eastern empire's impairment. He also examines notions of an overarching Slav identity, along with historical writing of the medieval era and more recent times, taking his story up to the demise of the USSR and beyond. This entails scrutiny of the linguistic and archaeological evidence for any distinctive grouping, notably the settlement-patterns and material culture—semi-underground houses and hand-modelled pottery—discernible between the Elbe and eastern Ukraine from the seventh and eighth centuries onwards. Mühle goes on to recount the formation of Slavic-speaking political structures at the hand of dynasts—themselves not Slavs in the cases of the Danubian Bulgars and the Rus'. The Rus' *Primary Chronicle* does envisage Slavic-speakers as a *iazyk*, a term meaning both "language" and "people." But this is not a recurrent theme in the *Chronicle*. Instead, it addresses such questions as how the Rus' land came into being and who first reigned in Kyiv, demonstrating the pivotal role of "Varangian" (Nordic) princes. And prominent among the *Chronicle's* eleventh-century villains are fellow-Slavic-speakers, the *Liakhy* (Poles). For their part, the Poles showed no sense of solidarity with fellow-Slavs like the Pomeranians. Just one other medieval work envisages the South Slavs as having constituted an entity, the text from the Dalmatian coast known as the "Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja." But this, Mühle argues, was probably written by way of countering the ambitions of the Nemanjids in the later twelfth century.

The Nemanjids themselves exemplify the general *lack* of any sense of pan-Slav solidarity. Tsar Stefan Dušan drew on East Roman ideology and visual imagery by way of legitimizing his hold over miscellaneous Slavic- and Greek-speakers and Vlachs. Only Charles IV sought systematically to present himself as rightful emperor of Slavs as well as of German- and Romance-speakers. He furthered Slavic saints' cults and perhaps even contributed himself to a work recalling Slav unity, the *Chronicle* he commissioned from Pulkava of Radenin. Charles is, however, something of an exception proving the rule: this Prague-born son of John of

Luxembourg sought to legitimize his hegemony in local Slavic-speakers' eyes. Since premodern texts propounding Slavic unity are so sporadic, we rely on descriptions by outsiders, hardly any of them well-rounded or sympathetic. "Slav" features effectively as synonym for "underling," whether one consults Arabic geographers or western churchmen. When writers like Adam of Bremen denote neighboring populations as "Slavs," rather than using a tribal name, the term is largely pejorative, while *Sclovania* and *provinciae Slavorum* are geographical designations based on linguistic kinship, rather than denoting a Slavic-speaking community. This has not dimmed scholars' and political figures' visions, from Johann Gottfried Herder's idealization of the stateless unity of the early Slavs to Iosif Stalin's propagation of the "Slavic Idea" to legitimize Soviet domination reaching to the Elbe. The "Idea," if not its enforcer, lives on (for example, the International Congress "St Petersburg and the Slavic World" in 2017).

Merely outlining principal themes and vignettes from this work should indicate its erudition and chronological range. No less awesome is the marshalling of sprawling source-materials into well-organized sections, presented in jargon-free terms. Without ignoring the diversity of interpretations of many items of literary evidence, Mühle offers a clear, consistent thesis. His "Epilogue" sums this up: "Neither the individual Slavic-speaking communities nor the Slavic-speaking people in general developed during the Middle Ages an awareness of belonging to or affinity with 'Slavdom' in terms of a community of all the speakers of a Slavic language" (401). What hinders wholehearted endorsement of this conclusion, besides the etic nature of nearly all our written evidence for early Slav self-awareness, is what Mühle himself calls "the astonishingly fast and far-reaching Slavicization of East-Central, South-Eastern and Eastern Europe," involving both demographic expansion of "what initially had been a rather small 'Slavic people'" and "cultural transfer" of household pottery and language (71). Yet the surface-area of supposedly Slav settlements excavated is often modest, while scientific standards have not always been high. So one wonders whether sixth-century Byzantine historians' and commanders' descriptions of loose-knit Slav warbands' ferocity and trickiness deserve the dismissal as *topoi* they now generally receive. After all, as Mühle points out, their accounts of roving Slavs' "wretched huts" and cattle-breeding correspond with archaeological data quite well. Could such warbands—open to virtually all-comers—not have spread fast across the power-vacuum left by the likes of Attila's Huns? Hopefully, rigorous archaeological investigations on a massive scale may help answer such questions.

Samantha K. Knapton. *Occupiers, Humanitarian Workers, and Polish Displaced Persons in British-Occupied Germany.*

London: Bloomsbury, 2023. xii, 246 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. £76.50, hard bound. £61.20, eBook.

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doi: 10.1017/slr.2024.462

In 2023, after many years of absence, thanks to Samantha K. Knapton's monograph, the topic of Polish Displaced Persons (DPs) in Germany, specifically in the British occupation