

BOOK REVIEW

Vercamer, Grischa, and Dušan Zupka, eds. *Rulership in Medieval East Central Europe: Power, Ritual and Legitimacy in Bohemia, Hungary and Poland*

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Rulership in Medieval East Central Europe is a collection of nineteen contributions from leading scholars in the field of East Central European medieval history and edited by two experts in the field, Grischa Vercamer and Dušan Zupka. The book specifically concerns the interwoven relationship between power, rituals, and legitimacy in East Central Europe (i.e., Bohemia, Hungary, and Poland) and how this relationship was demonstrated in theory and in practice. It addresses important questions such as whether differences between the expression of authority and legitimacy in Western and Eastern Europe existed, in addition to considering regional differences between the territories of East Central Europe (4).

The introduction (Part 1) to the book is comprised of two parts, each written by the editors. Zupka, in the first chapter, addresses the concept of rulership in medieval East Central Europe from a holistic perspective, while Vercamer's follow-up considers rulership and power from a theoretical and conceptual point of view. These two chapters are rich in their source material and command of the diverse scholarship necessary to outline such broad topics, and they set the stage for the remainder of the volume. Following the introduction, four subsequent parts form the main body of the book.

The following section (Part 2), composed of three chapters, concerns the development of legitimacy and rulership from the beginning of the first dynasties in medieval East Central Europe until c. 1200, from the emergence of powers on the eastern territories of the Carolingian Empire (Martin Wihoda), the rise of the Árpáds (Márta Font), and the Piasts (Zbigniew Dalewski).

Part 3 then addresses the relationship between political authority and ritual expression of said authority in the High and Late Middle Ages and is made up of four contributions. It addresses several complex topics, ranging from the relationship between ritual and martial authority (Zupka), ritual practices of power in Bohemia (Robert Antonín), the language of power and communication in Poland (Marcin R. Pauk), and political representation among the rulers in the Holy Roman Empire and East Central Europe (Julia Burkhardt).

Following such a deep analysis of language and ritual, the focus of part 4 is the structure of power in the Later Middle Ages. It begins with a consideration of the "Illuminated Chronicle" (c. 1358) and how this unique text depicted the power and authority of the Hungarian kings (Vinni Lucherini). From here, we are led to consider the legitimization of rule among the Piasts in the fourteenth century, when the dynasty was in its end phase (Paul W. Knoll). The relationship between royal authority and military administration is then addressed in great detail (Attila Bárány). Part 4 closes with an analysis of the system of governance in Poland during the fifteenth century (Bożena Czwojdrak).

The fifth and final part of the volume addresses the external influences on rulership from other regions. The first chapter considers the political and cultural influences of Byzantium on rulership (Panos Sophoulis). From here, we move slightly to the north with the analysis of the theoretical model of rulership in the Kingdom of Rus' and its place in medieval Europe (Christian Raffensperger). Felicitas Schmieder's chapter then considers the imagery and political reality of the

Mongol experience in the Later Middle Ages, assessing the cultural and political impact of the Mongols on the territories in East Central Europe that they conquered. Vercamer then discusses the politics and influences of the Holy Roman Empire on East Central Europe in the High Middle Ages, while Stephan Fleming's chapter discusses these factors in the Late Middle Ages. The final chapter of part 5 (and of the book) is written by Monika Saczyńska-Vercamer on papal authority and rulership over East Central Europe in the Late Middle Ages.

This volume is particularly noteworthy for its depth and engagement with several regional historiographies that often get overlooked in "mainstream" historical scholarship on the Middle Ages. The level of analysis from practical and theoretical perspectives also deserves considerable praise. The topics and methods that form this book are not easy to communicate effectively. An area for improvement, however, is the quality of the English copyediting and proofreading. Some sentences and concepts are presented rather densely and might make the non-expert shy away from the subject matter. This is not meant to be a critique of the individual authors and the editors, however. Finally, the maps and images provided in the text are also noteworthy for their quality and usefulness to the reader.

Overall, this book will be of great use to scholars and graduate students seeking to engage their respective fields of expertise with potential avenues of comparative research. The efforts of the authors and editors deserve the highest praise with respect to their willingness to open this rich field of research in medieval studies to a wider audience.