

movements in the region, built their nations on platforms of cultural and education rights, autonomy, and political voice in civil society spaces (5).

This is not “a story of triumph,” Rybak concludes, but it is one “in which activists fought to change the world and the fate of the Jewish people” (245). This book helps us to understand ways they sought to navigate “that colossal madhouse,” and maybe make the world a bit better.

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***From Europe's East to the Middle East: Israel's Russian and Polish Lineages.* Ed.**

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The present volume results from two scholarly gatherings in Tokyo in 2015 and one year later in Baltimore. The fourteen individual contributions to this transregional compendium are divided into four thematic sections and are mainly written by historians from Israel, Japan, and the US; there is only one east European (Polish) scholar. Moreover, Yuri Slezkine's seminal work *The Jewish Century* (Princeton, 2004) is not mentioned once in it—even though one strand of his tripartite argumentation is devoted to the Zionist movement and Jewish migration from Russia and the Soviet Union. This may be because of the essayistic approach Slezkine took in his much-praised (but also sharply criticized) work, which is literary-critical, anthropological, and exceptionally well written. An imposition on classical historians, it seems. Despite this limitation, the present volume is an excellent example of a transregional approach, highlighting movements of ideas, peoples, and practices across conventional areas and nation-states. It is highly recommendable for anyone dealing with Jewish history, the history of Zionism, eastern Europe, Palestine, and Israel. The editors and authors of this volume deliberately distance themselves from the prevailing “west-fixation” of many transnational studies that still tend to feature the presence of central Europe/the west as one constant variable when analyzing contacts across areas.

In their contributions, the authors explore the historical continuities and disruptions in eastern Europe and the east European heritage and its influence on and entanglement with the Jewish societies of Ottoman and British Palestine and Israel. They trace the impact of imperial and national east European political settings and ideological formations on Jewish intellectuals, settlers, communities, and various religious and political groups and organizations. The central question is about the relationship between east European (namely Russian, Polish, and Ukrainian) Jewry and the consequences of shifting Zionist ideas and practices from an east European environment to the Middle East on Jewish political culture, networks, and institutions. Following the three editors of the anthology, these questions are crucial for understanding the historical developments in Palestine and Israel, but remain largely neglected in the academic and general perception of Israel.

Most of the contributions deal not only with the fractured and violent past of eastern Europe and Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and with the “turbulent and entangled history of Eastern European Jewry” (14), but also with the changes in these ideas and social orders in their new environment in Palestine/Israel. In doing so, they offer fascinating insights into Jewish life and thought in imperial and post-imperial eastern Europe/Russia. All contributions deal with the period

before the establishment of the modern State of Israel—only one article (by Benjamin Nathans) deals with the period after the Holocaust. Despite this time gap, the overall structure of the anthology aims to identify various aspects and problems that continue to preoccupy Israel and Israeli society today and to make them both visible and understandable through a change of perspective. These questions and problems—the book’s central argument—cannot be answered and solved without referring to the traumas and traces that Israel inherited from eastern Europe/Russia and carries (unrecognized and unresolved) until today.

In their introduction, the editors singled out David Engels’s chapter as exemplary in this regard. In this fascinating piece, Engels shows how Polish nationalism of the interwar period conceptualized the state as the property of the Polish ethnonational community and how “Zionists contested but also adopted and imitated this approach” (3) and transferred and implemented this model of ethnonational statehood in Palestine—an attitude that shaped the actions of the founders of the state of Israel and subsequent Israeli governments toward both the Arab and Jewish populations.

The range of studies presented includes numerous topics, such as the various waves and patterns of migration from imperial and early Soviet Russia to Palestine from the 1860s to 1948 (Chapter 1, Israel Bartal); the crisis and collapse of the Russian empire that radically changed the status, self-conception, and the relation of the Jews towards others (Chapter 2, Taro Tsurumi and Chapter 3, Anita Shapira); the relationship of Polish and Jewish nationalism (Chapter 4, Marcos Silber). The second concentrates on groups and institutions, such as the “Russian” *Kibutz Ha-Shomer Ha-Tsa’ir* and the clash between Soviet experiences and Palestine realities (Chapter 5, Ziva Galili); the liberal beginnings of the now ultra-Orthodox Beit Yaakov network of girls’ schools (Chapter 6, Iris Brown); the differences of prewar Polish to Israeli Hasidism (Chapter 7, Benjamin Brown); the *He-Haluts* immigrant organization and its struggle to create a single “Polish Jewry” (Chapter 8, Rona Yona). Part 3 traces the “Formations of Political Culture,” with a focus on Poland. It starts with David Engel’s chapter on “Israel’s Polish Heritage” mentioned above; Kamil Kijek (Chapter 10) and Mihály Kálmán (Chapter 12) trace the consequences of rising political and anti-Jewish violence in interwar eastern Europe for Jews and the Zionist movement and how the Yishuv became an attractive destination for immigration (Chapter 11, Kenneth B. Moss). Part 4 and its final two chapters (by Chizuko Takao and by Benjamin Nathans) deal with Jewish experiences before and after Stalin and how Soviet Jews remained linked with Jewish organizations outside the Soviet Union.

The abundance of consistently well-crafted and strongly source-based historical research shows that it is not easy to characterize this collection in its entirety—just as it is impossible to look at the experience of the Jews of eastern Europe since the late nineteenth century from only one point of view. Nevertheless, this anthology offers a thoroughly successful entry into a fruitful examination of Israel’s east European past. Hopefully, this path will be continued and applied to other groups and their influence in shaping and moulding the societies of Palestine and Israel.

It should not go unmentioned—the editors address it themselves in their introduction to the volume—that what is most lacking in current research is an Arab-Palestinian perspective, and I might add—since it is the main interest of the author of this review—the perspectives of non-European Jews on Israel and Zionism which are still marginalized, if not ignored, in the dominant narrative that still defines “Israel as a Western enclave” (1).

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