

Book Review: Migrations in the German Lands, 1500-2000 by Jason Coy, Jared Poley, and Alexander Schunka

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Coy, Jason, Jared Poley, and Alexander Schunka, eds. *Migrations in the German Lands, 1500-2000*. New York: Berghahn, 2016. xii + 257 pages. Hardcover, \$110.00.

Migrations in the German Lands, 1500–2000 is a well-curated volume that seeks to both elaborate on known historical themes and to provide a critical counterpoint to the discussion of immigration and migration today. Within the preface of the book, the editors, historians Jason Coy, Jared Poley and Alexander Schunka, mention that “the refugee crisis of 2015-16...has overshadowed the final stages of the preparation of this volume” (p. xi). However, rather than ignoring the real-world context and implications of this book, as a number of editors may have done, they embraced the new circumstances. The editors’ note that “the present volume intends to raise an awareness of the historical dimensions of migration to and within Germany, demonstrating that German society and culture is not dealing with such phenomena for the first time” (p. xi). Due to this focus on the historical context for current events, this book is applicable to a wide range of disciplines and fields including social science, economics, history, German studies, and migration studies. While *Migrations in the German Lands, 1500–2000* may not sound especially timely or critical, this book provides a new lens for looking at the present within the context of the past.

The articles in the book fit into one of two major categories: religious migration or economic migration. The articles on religious migration provide a degree of focus and clarity to well-known issues in German history. Martyrs, Catholics, Huguenots, and Jews are all represented with attention paid to lesser-known attributes of these migrations. However, economic migration is where this book truly shines, making relevant connections to Germany today. Penal migration and variations on the guest worker system through the ages shows that sixteenth-century German lands bear a number of similarities to the Germany of today. Echoes of Turkish immigration and *Gastarbeiter* in the 1970s are found in the Polish field hands of the nineteenth-century. We see that the German lands, as they have gone through their various political iterations, continue to regularly pull workers from different areas of Eastern Europe—from before World War I, in the interim during the Weimar Republic, and continuing after World War II.

This excellent text discusses immigration and cyclical movements. Although the title may suggest otherwise, very little time is spent on the emigration of Germans. Indeed, these movements are well-documented elsewhere, especially in the context of the United States; however, at least one chapter on emigration would have provided more depth to the book. In addition, with the advent of the Syrian refugee crisis, *Migrations in the German Lands, 1500-2000*, by the editors’ own admission, became far more relevant to current events than previously anticipated. Yet, the text would have been strengthened had the editors solicited additional articles and provided even more historical context to the unusual events happening in Europe. Specifically showcasing issues of migration and xenophobia (the fear and distrust of anything

perceived as foreign or strange) could have elevated the book's relevance to an even greater extent.

Coy, Poley and Schunka's book is topical and indispensable, providing a wide-ranging and critical discussion. This text stretches across disciplines and is a crossroads for multiple scholars within migration studies. *Migrations in the German Lands, 1500-2000* is a significant work for scholars, both now and in the future.

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