Martin Faber, *Sarmatismus: Die politische Ideologie des polnischen Adels im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau. Quellen und Studien. Band 35). Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, 2018, 525 p. ISSN 0947-4226; ISBN 978-3-447-10956-7

Martin Faber's monograph *Sarmatismus: Die politische Ideologie des polnischen Adels im 16. Und 17. Jahrhundert* (Sarmatism: The Political Ideology of the Polish Nobility in the 16th and 17th Centuries)¹ is devoted to an analysis of the circumstances and development of the ideology behind the multifaceted phenomenon known as Sarmatism. Historiography associates Sarmatism with the Central East European region, distinguishing primarily the nobility of the Kingdom of Poland, the culture it nurtured, the way of life, the world-view, the national consciousness and the ideology. A number of studies have been conducted in Polish historiography on this topic. That might be why the author raises the question in the preface of the book as to whether a researcher who is not a Pole takes a risk in choosing to analyse Sarmatism. He also notes that a trend has emerged whereby German historians are turning their attention to Poland's history, and German-Polish relations are becoming the focus of the research. Another reaction, in his view, could arise if a foreigner dares to analyse a phenomenon that is traditionally considered to be specifically Polish, and grew into the Polish consciousness far back in history. On the other hand, Faber admits that he was surprised that the research project on the Sarmatism of the Polish nobility met with greater disapproval in Germany than in Poland. The author does not explain why. We can only remind readers that in Germany, the theme of Sarmatism is not a new one: it has been analysed by the contemporary German historian Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg in the broader context of Central East European history and historiography. However, we will not find a meaningful discussion of that researcher's insights in Faber's monograph; only his publications on the theme of Sarmatism are given in his footnotes, where they receive brief comments (pp. 14, 21, 51, 147,

¹ Martin Faber's monograph is based on his habilitation paper prepared on this topic at Freiburg University, Germany, and defended in 2013.

154, 197, 222, 266, 267, 268, 399, 404). This is a shame, as the insights formulated in the habilitation paper that Bömélburg defended in 2005 merit discussion.² However, every researcher has the right to choose the method of communication with other researchers and their works. In explaining what prompted him to take up the study of the Sarmatism ideology, Faber is pleased to acknowledge that his Polish colleagues actually dispelled his fears, and encouraged him. He thought it was important to focus most attention on the ideology of the Early Modern Period, as no monograph on the theme has ever been published in the historiography on Sarmatism (p. 7).

Faber's research begins with the Union of Lublin in 1569, with brief excursuses made into the first half of the 16th century, and ends with the reign of John Sobieski (1674–1694), the ruler of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The monograph consists of a Preface (pp. 7–8), an Introduction (pp. 9–28), four chapters, *Zur Ausgangslage* (The Beginning, pp. 29–66), *Die Entstehung der sarmatischen Ideologie* (The Emergence of the Sarmatism Ideology, pp. 67–157), *Inhalte der Ideologie* (The Content of the Ideology, pp. 159–357), *Die Entwicklung der Ideologie bis zum Ende des 17. Jahrhunderts* (The Development of the Ideology up to the 17th Century, pp. 359–452), *Schlusswort* (Closing Remarks, pp. 453–463), a list abbreviations, a list of sources and literature, and an index. The chapters are further divided into sub-chapters, which are divided into paragraphs on the topic. This, at first glance overly scattered, structure of the text has allowed the author to consistently and comprehensively explain the development of the ideology of Polish Sarmatism, presenting the circumstances that formed it, and revealing how the ideology was expressed in various contexts. For this purpose, he refers to a broad collection of sources and literature.

In the introduction, the author presents the most important aspects of the Sarmatism ideology, which are at the centre of his research, and their interpretations in historiography. He refers to the existing historiography to account for the use of his chosen concepts and to justify these choices. A large part of the introduction is devoted to this explanation.

Faber begins by describing the concept of Sarmatism. He explains that the concept assumed its final state in the 18th-century literature

² Cf: A monograph was prepared based on this habilitation paper and published: H.-J. Bömélburg, *Frühneuzeitliche Nationen im östlichen Europa. Das polnische Geschichtsdenken und die Reichweite einer humanistischen Nationalgeschichte (1500–1700)* (Wiesbaden, 2006). Polish translation: H.-J. Bömélburg, *Polska myśl historyczna a humanistyczna. Historia narodowa (1500–1700)* (Kraków, 2011).

of the Age of Enlightenment. It was at this time that the word 'Sarmatism' was given meanings that associated it with the Polish nobility, its world-view and culture. In explaining the nature of Sarmatism, and in searching for the most accurate definition of it, Faber not only takes into account the contribution made by Polish historiography, but also presents the phenomenon in the broader context of European historiography, incorporating and discussing the insights of contemporary historians, and urges a search for the original meaning of the word 'Sarmatism'.

By identifying Sarmatism as a typically Polish phenomenon, the author explains that contemporaries actually called the Polish-Lithuanian state created by the Union of Lublin in 1569, Poland, which is what contemporary Polish historians call it as well. Most of the nobles who lived in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania had been culturally Polonised, so they were referred to as Polish nobles. He reminds us that the term 'Poland-Lithuania' is also inaccurate, as it conceals a much more varied ethnic population than what existed in the Commonwealth. This is why the Polish-Lithuanian state is usually called Poland in his work, and the nobles of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania are called Polish nobles. He also indicates that the title of the state 'Poland-Lithuania' is sometimes used in his monograph, alluding to the fact that it was nonetheless a joint compound of two states (p. 11, footnote 15). We will return to this position held by Faber at the end of the review.

Having pointed out that, in the academic discourse, Sarmatism is related to the concepts of the 'culture of Sarmatism' and 'Sarmatism ideology', the author explains the basis for these associations, as well as the root cause of their contention. He notes that the ideology may be the key to understanding Sarmatism and its culture, which numerous Polish historians have researched. On the other hand, when formulating the aims and objectives of his research, the author takes a critical view of the work by Polish researchers on the Sarmatism ideology, saying that Polish researchers often, when studying it, merely list and describe the ideologemes that characterise it, without revealing their inner connections, motives or development. Faber notes that the ideology's existence is often taken as a matter of course by researchers; however, in his view, it is much harder to find testimonials from the period under discussion that actually prove its existence. On the other hand, the author notes that historians often encounter expressions of the ideology when studying other issues (usually the various reforms), and draw attention to and analyse these expressions. Thus, he conducts very important preparatory work for studying the ideology of Sarmatism. However, he also notes that

when researching it, in order to learn about it and see its reconstruction, writings that were written over a long 200-year period had to be used.

The main research topics are formulated and presented in the introduction, which the author consistently and chronologically analyses in the main section of the book. In this sense, Faber's monograph is an example of research based on the classic German tradition of historiography, testifying to his research erudition, and his potential to take a new look at the information given in sources and in formulating insights. It would be difficult to discuss thoroughly all the chapters of such a multifaceted monograph in this brief presentation. So I shall try to focus on only the points in Faber's book that in my view, as a historian specialising in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, are novel, and those that raise some doubts.

In the context of the research on this topic, what is novel here is that when discussing the emergence of the ideology of Sarmatism, the author formulates a thesis indicating a specific brief period, from the Union of Lublin of 1569 to the first interregnum of 1572–1573, which began after the death of the ruler Sigismund Augustus, the last male of the Jagiellon dynasty. By explaining this choice, Faber says that an important stimulus in arousing the formation of the Sarmatism ideology was the executive Polish nobility's movement that began in the 1530s, and the provisions it created. In his view, during the first interregnum, when Poland (the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) did not have a king, the nobles (*szlachta*) and the magnates knew and learned to understand each other, and could co-exist. The *szlachta's* new consciousness developed simultaneously with changes to the positions they held in the state. This created a milieu that 'nourished' Sarmatism. The author notes that the agitational brochures and leaflets from the period 1572–1573 revealed all the main elements of the Sarmatism ideology that were to be used and developed in the future. Among them, he distinguishes the main catch-word 'Polish freedom'.³ Let us leave these insights of the author to a professional discussion by researchers of Sarmatism. Instead, we should discuss some of the statements worth discussing from Faber's concepts, which a historian of the Early Modern Period in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania cannot let go by unremarked on.

First of all, we should turn our attention to Faber's claim that five years after the Union of Lublin of 1569 was a sufficient period of time for one unified political nation of the Polish nobility to form in the newly

³ Cf.: The chapter of the monograph entitled 'Die Entstehung der sarmatischen Ideologie', pp. 67–157.

created joint Kingdom of Poland and Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This kind of statement could be made when talking about the political community in the Kingdom of Poland. In the case of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the statement does not reflect the realities of the 1560s, and no supporting arguments are given. In terms of contemporary historiography in Lithuania and Poland, the Union of Lublin was just the beginning, the origins of the future joint state of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and its political nation. Two mature, independent political nations that had nurtured different goals in the states of Poland and Lithuania entered the union, each one imagining their co-existence in the joint state in a different way. The ideological provisions of these nations were also fundamentally different. Nor should we forget the fact that the Lithuanian nobility did not cultivate an executive movement for the excution.⁴ Had the researcher into the Polish ideology of Sarmatism turned his attention to *Akta zjazdów stanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*,⁵ the publication of sources prepared by Henryk Lulewicz, along with his other sources, he would understand that to speak of one Polish political nation unifying the magnates and nobles of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and its ideology in the first decades after the Union of Lublin, is practically impossible.

When researching the Sarmatism ideology, the author forgets that in the early 16th century, Lithuania's political community wrote down in the Lithuanian Chronicles the myth of the origin of the Lithuanians in the Romans (the legend of Palemon), which challenged ideas inherent in Polish Sarmatism. Numerous studies by historians show that in the 16th century, the theory of the Lithuanians being descended from the Romans became a narrative that helped to explain many phenomena in Lithuanian society, inspiring it to strive for political independence, find a motivation for a political structure, and consider factors of ethnic

⁴ Cf.: H. Lulewicz, *Gniewów o unię ciąg dalszy. Stosunki polsko-litewskie w latach 1569–1588* (Warszawa, 2002); A. Zakrzewski, *Wielkie Księstwo Litewskie (XVI–XVIII w.). Prawo – ustroj – społeczeństwo* (Warszawa, 2013), p. 262–286; *Lietuvos istorija*, t. V: J. Kiaupienė, I. Lukšaitė, *Veržli Naujųjų laikų pradžia. Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė 1529–1588 metais* (Vilnius, 2013), pp. 206–266; *Lietuvos istorija*, t. VI: G. Sliesoriūnas, *Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė XVI a. pabaigoje – XVIII a. pradžioje* (Vilnius, 2015), pp. 15–62. A comprehensive bibliography on this research topic is given in the above publications.

⁵ *Akta zjazdów stanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*, t. I: *Okresy bezkrólewí (1572–1576, 1586–1587, 1632, 1648, 1696–1697, 1706–1709, 1733–1735, 1763–1764)*, oprac. H. Lulewicz (Warszawa, 2006); *Akta zjazdów stanów Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego*, t. II: *Okresy panowań królów elekcyjnych, XVI–XVII wiek.*, oprac. H. Lulewicz (Warszawa, 2009).

consolidation. The multinational political community in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania ensured the legend's reception in various ways, taking on different types of expression in the political culture. However this theory associated the entrenchment of Roman Lithuanians in the eastern lands and the genesis of the Ruthenian nobility, providing an ideological foundation for the integration of the Orthodox nobility into the Lithuanian state, making it possible for Orthodox believers to feel just as 'Roman' or 'Lithuanian' as other Lithuanians, since all their ancestors were descended from those 500 nobles who accompanied Palemon from Rome to the shores of the Baltic Sea. This is why it is not correct to ignore the narrative of the Roman origins of the nation that brought the Lithuanian political community in the Early Modern Period under one banner; this narrative cannot be identified with the myth of the origins in the Sarmatians. Competition between the myth of the Roman origins of the Lithuanians and symbiosis with the legend of Sarmatian origins is noticeable only at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, when the politically engaged community in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania became familiar with the legends of Maciej Strykowski, whose works written in the last decades of the 16th century showed possible links between the Sarmatian and Roman origins, as with its identification as citizens of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, that was itself incorporated into the joint Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.⁶

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⁶ Cf.: D. Kuolys, *Asmuo, tauta, valstybė Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės istorinėje literatūroje: Renesansas, Barokas* (Vilnius, 1992); A. Vasiliauskas, 'Antika ir Sarmatizmas', in: *Lietuvos Didžiosios kunigaikštijos kultūra. Tyrinėjimai ir vaizdai*, sud. V. Ališauskas et al. (Vilnius, 2001), pp. 13–31. Polish translation: A. Vasiliauskas, 'Antyk i Sarmatyzm', in: *Kultura Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego: analizy i obrazy*, red. V. Ališauskas et. al. (Kraków, 2011) (Wyd. II), pp. 1–21; *Lietuvos istorija*, t. IV: J. Kiaupienė, R. Petrauskas, *Nauji horizontai: dinastija, visuomenė, valstybė. Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė 1386–1529 m.* (Vilnius, 2009), pp. 489–490; *Lietuvos istorija*, t. V, pp. 580–581; J. Jurkiewicz, *Od Palemona do Giedymina: Wczesnonowożytnie wyobrażenia o początkach Litwy. Część I: W kręgu latopisów litewskich* (Poznań, 2013); J. Kiaupienė, *Tarp Romos ir Bizantijos: Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės politinės kultūros aukso amžius, XV a. antroji–XVII a. pirmoji pusė* (Vilnius, 2016).