banu at the Alexandru D. Xenopol Institute of History in Iași explores Turkish records collected by Romanian Turcologists to show that the Ottoman Empire endeavored to assure that aristocratic boiers in the Danubian Principalities were “totally subordinate” to the fanariot governing regime of voievods appointed by the sultans’ grand vezirs from 1711 to 1792 so as to ensure justice for all of the empire’s subjects. Ernest H. Latham, Jr. at the Department of State in Washington, D.C. sketches the involvement of a “fiery suffragette” E. Sylvia Pankhurst in introducing British readers to the great Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu with a translation of ten of his poems (1930) and her visit to Constanța four years later to commemorate an anniversary of his death. Gheorghe Florescu at the Xenopol history institute in Iași examines a host of English-language reference tools, compiled in America from 1939 to 2000, to illustrate the impoverished and misleading coverage – except by the British savants E. D. Tappe and D. J. Deletant – and occasional “lacunose and aleatory” bibliographies afforded to Eminescu’s poetic works. Ioan-Cristinel Teșu at the Alexandru Ion Cuza University in Iași discusses contemporary Orthodox Christian notions through the views of the patriarch of Romanian theology Dumitru Staniloae and some of the Church Fathers to signal a transition from the passive slavery of mortal passions, starting with self-love, to accidental sins along with human efforts to replace such relapses by specific steps via individual cleansing to illumination from the Holy Spirit and purification from God.

This book’s title vaguely identifies the grab bag nature of its contents, which had originally been presented orally in July 2000 at a conference in Iași. Although our review omits divers chapters, the topics are in all wide-ranging on the past and present of Romanian politics, diplomacy, society, literature, and religion. Few authors adduced archival or even published documentary evidence to sustain theses. Several of them attached bibliographies instead of footnote citations. Some pieces were highly stimulating while others were platitudinous, reflecting what one might expect in a miscellany.

Frederick Kellogg


How did the tillers of fields in the Austrian province of Galicia come to think of themselves in national terms? Keely Stauter-Halsted’s sophisticated work of social history probes the transformation of the (Polish-speaking) serfs of 1848, who for the most part still thought that “Poles” were their despised lords, into conscious members of a modernizing Polish nation. (The author does not deal with the Ruthenian/Ukrainian peasants of the eastern half of “Austrian Poland,” the subject of John-Paul Himka’s excellent study, Galician Villagers.) Ample evidence that this transformation was neither automatic nor inevitable is provided in Part I, “Politics in the Postemancipation Galician Village.” Chapter I
chronicles the unpromising starting point of the peasants following the emancipation in 1848. It also – importantly – details “the great occupational diversity” (p. 36) of peasant society: members range from peasant farmers of varying degrees of wealth through craftsmen to landless rural wage laborers. The next chapter provides a sense of the peasant’s world of superstitions and traditions; it includes a discussion of views of outsiders (Germans, Ukrainians, Jews, and so on) found, for example, in folk lyrics. These two fine chapters set the stage for the promised “politics.” Chapter 3 discusses the peasants’ initial experience in the Austrian and Galician parliaments. The social divide is quite obvious here, with noblemen checking the credentials of the newly elected peasant deputies, clearly bent on discrediting and/or marginalizing them. The legalism and focus on paper documentation of the dominant upper classes contrasts sharply with the peasants’ sense of equity and ethics. Chapter 4 discusses communal self-government (initiated in 1866), a veritable school of politics for the peasants. That these communes were cut free from the nearby estates, which contributed nothing to their upkeep, also served to deepen the social divide. From this vantage point, one cannot be surprised that many peasants saw no reason to think of themselves as Poles.

How this situation changed is the story of Part II, “The Construction of a Peasant Pole.” In chapter 5, views of the peasantry are gleaned from two bodies of literature: the new (if not unbiased) science of ethnography and the realistic novel (where fuller depictions of the peasants can be found). In chapter 6, a plethora of village/agricultural organizations are examined as potential sources of “Polish”-peasant cooperation. Peasants, however, proved not to be the docile followers of their social superiors, picking selectively from among the pieces of advice given from on high (whether from Father Stanislaw Stojalowski, members of the liberal intelligentsia, or the conservative gentry). A more effective means of bringing the two different “civilizations” together was anti-Semitism, as evinced in the so-called Christian store movement. Stauter-Halsted’s analysis of this phenomenon, which helped transform what was perceived by the peasants as an economic issue into a national one, is insightful.

The final two chapters probe the increasing interaction between nation and village. Chapter 8 shows how peasants learned about “Poland” from two main sources: the popular press and historical commemorations and celebrations. This crucial chapter also demonstrates the importance of the new, educated, peasant elites (a tiny but influential minority), who served as intermediaries between the traditional village and the broader Polish nation. They emphasized the moral values that peasants brought to the nation (in part to transform more recalcitrant – that is, less sober or industrious – peasants). They also recast Polish history by emphasizing moments when peasants were shown to play an important role – for example, the Kosciuszko Insurrection of 1794. The nationalization of the peasantry is shown to be a negotiated process, with peasants contributing to the modern understanding of what it meant to be a Pole. The last substantive chapter examines the growing politicization of the peasantry through high politics, as seen in the founding (in 1895) and activities of the Peasant Party (Stronnictwo Ludowe).