



<https://doi.org/10.18778/2084-140X.13.46>

MARCELLO GARZANITI, *Słowianie. Historia, kultury i języki* [*The Slavs. History, Cultures and Languages*], trans. J. GROBLIŃSKA, K. KOWALIK, A. MAKOWSKA-FERENC, ed. Z.A. BRZOWSKA, P. KRĘZEL, J.M. WOLSKI, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2023, pp. 566.

This book is in all respects uncommon. Its author, Prof. Marcello Garzaniti (born in 1956) a long-time lecturer at the University of Florence (Università degli Studi di Firenze) and an internationally recognizable scholar specializing in medieval Slavic literatures, undertook the titanic task (actually beyond the strength of one man) of presenting the history, cultures, literatures and languages of all Slavs – Western, Southern and Eastern – in one volume, beginning with the depths of its prehistory and through to the widely outlined Middle Ages and the present-day era.

Written with a view to developing Slavic studies at Italian universities, the book, intended for students, was designed by the author as the first academic textbook to collect in one volume all the important issues of the Slavic cultures and history. Its narrative framework draws on the material that Prof. Garzaniti has gathered over the years of teaching at the Department of Education, Languages, Interculturality, Literatures and Psychology of the University of Florence (Dipartimento di Formazione, Lingue, Intercultura, Letterature e Psicologia), including, among other things, the recordings of his lectures edited by Prof. Francesca Romoli from the University of Pisa. The book is enhanced by the insets that contain brief characterizations of various issues and some respective bibliographical references. The insets were prepared in the years 2006–2009 by a team of scholars that included (apart from the author) Alberto Alberti, Maddalena Betti, Adele Cilento, Maria Chiara Ferro, Claudia Pieralli, Lorenzo Pubblici, Francesca

Romoli, Elena Dell’Omo, Aleksandra Filipović and Marco Scarpa. Prof. Romoli also wrote chapter 5 and assisted the author in preparing chronological tables found in appendix 1 and Prof. Alberti from the University of Bologna had a hand in editing chapters 6 and 7. The work was published in 2013 by the prestigious Roman publisher (*Carocci Editore*) in a series devoted to academic textbooks. It was quick to gain in Italy the status of the fundamental position on the Slavic history and cultures, introducing the reader, especially the younger one, to the specificity of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans. The work’s second and revised edition was issued in 2019 by the same publisher. This modified version was translated into Polish and published by the Łódź University Publishing House.

In Poland, a Slavic country, the presented book can never be regarded as the first source of knowledge on the history of Central and Eastern Europe. Nor can it be used, for obvious reasons, by students of history, Slavistics and, especially, Polish philology as an academic textbook. From the Polish viewpoint, it can be considered to be of value only as providing the perspective of a non-Slavic outsider and created specifically for non-Slavic readers. As such, it will be of great use for scholars who specialize in the history of historiography or intercultural studies and who are interested in examining how the image of Eastern Europe produced outside of the Slavic world changed (or, quite the contrary, was, for some reason, petrified) over longer periods of time. It is certainly worthwhile to fathom the author’s intellectual world,

trying, for example, to answer the question of what Western Slavists know about us and our neighbours, how they perceive our world and what factors shape their perception.


The initiative of transplanting Garzaniti's thought 'from Italy to Poland' and entrusting the publication of the book to the Łódź University Publishing House was put forward many years ago by two scholars from the Faculty of Philology of the University of Łódź: Prof. Georgi Minczew from the Department of the Slavic Philology and Prof. Artur Gałkowski from the Department of Italianistics of the Institute of Romance Studies. Young scholars from the latter unit: dr Justyna Groblińska, dr Katarzyna Kowalik and dr Aleksandra Makowska-Ferenc were entrusted with the task of translating the work into Polish, while the process of editing it was given to the historians and simultaneously the Slavists: dr hab. Zofia A. Brzozowska (Department of Slavic Philology), dr Piotr Krężel (Department of Slavic Philology) and dr Jan M. Wolski (*Ceraneum* Centre).

Given the nature of the project – translating and publishing the work of a foreign author – our role in determining its text and conception has only been secondary. It should be stressed that Prof. Garzaniti, knowing Polish, has checked the translation, and the final form of it is the fruit of his collaboration with the editors. Some terms and phrases used in the translation have been introduced in accordance with his suggestions. In an effort to place the Italian scholar's thought in the context of Polish humanities,


the editors have provided the text with information regarding the Polish translations of the sources quoted and discussed in the work and supplemented it with references to Polish works and Polish translations of works by foreign authors. It is of course clear that since the work expresses the author's independent views, the editors and the Polish publishing team are not responsible for its content.

Bringing the book into the reader's hands, the editors may only suggest that it be looked at from the perspective from which the author has presented the Slavic history and cultures – that is, from a certain distance. Looking at ourselves with the eyes of other man, using his vision as a mirror in which to look at our reflection, even if it sometimes entails the necessity of going out of our 'comfort zone', is a cognitively and intellectually enriching experience.

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