

**Patrycja Trzeszczyńska. *Łemkowszczyzna Zapamiętana: Opowieści o Przeszłości i Przestrzeni*** [*The Lemko Land Remembered: Stories About the Past and Space*]. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013. Anthropos, edited by Czesław Robotycki. 444 pp. Tables. Bibliography. PLN 41,24, paper.

**T**he Lemko community is one of the most important and widely described ethnic minorities in Polish sociological and anthropological literature. In the over four-hundred-page book under review, Patrycja Trzeszczyńska makes the argument that there is still much to say about the history and culture of this group of Carpathian highlanders—the Lemkos. At one time, these inhabitants of the Lower Beskyd Mountains—categorized variously by scholars as a Polish ethnic minority, a Ukrainian ethnographic group, or part of the Rusyns—became the subject of violent postwar politics, which resulted in their deportation and dispersion across western Poland and parts of Ukraine. Through a substantial and well-crafted study of the village of Komańcza and the memories of its previous inhabitants, Trzeszczyńska also strives to tell a bigger story, namely that of remembrance and recognition—the struggle of many minority groups in that part of Europe after the fall of Communism. Yet the broader context of traumatic experience and identity formation, of remembering and forgetting, shared by so many groups—such as the Vlachs in Romania, the Crimean Tatars, and the Bosniaks in the former Yugoslavia, just to mention a few—is somewhat absent in her analysis.

The main focus of *Łemkowszczyzna Zapamiętana* (*The Lemko Land Remembered*) is the construction of the collective and cultural memory of the Lemko community from the village of Komańcza. Through a careful and reflective examination of 66 diaries and 57 interviews with current and former residents of the village, now living in Poland and Ukraine (mostly in the Tarnopolin district), Trzeszczyńska shows how the Lemkos remember their past and represent their own identity (118). According to her, the past is not “a scarce resource”—to use Arjun Appadurai’s formulation—but a lived part of the present. Throughout five dense chapters, she argues that the members of the Lemko community in Poland and Ukraine developed different, diverse, and very often contradictory mnemonic strategies, which, at the same time, all centre on the traumatic experience of deportation. In this regard, the narrative community (the term that Trzeszczyńska prefers to use instead of *collective memory*) of the Lemkos shares a memory of the Lemkos’ ancestral land—*Lemkovyna*. This almost mythical region seems to be at the centre of the Lemkos’ representation and image of themselves as a group. Thus, Trzeszczyńska suggests that, in the case of the Lemkos, space

might be the most important element of their cultural identity(ies). This is probably the reason why she ends her book with drawings of the Komańcza village of the past. But she, unfortunately, does not fully analyze this question. One would expect a deeper analysis of the multi-layered relationship between memory, space, and identity formation in the case of the Lemkos.

Trzeszczyńska positions her book mostly within Polish academic disputes over the identity and history of the Lemko community. She carefully reviews the most important Polish sociological, historical, linguistic, and ethnographic works concerning the Lemkos (at times, even in excess). Trzeszczyńska rightly points out that in the case of the Lemkos, memory is still an underrepresented field of study and that the way Lemkos culturally represent and define themselves, especially through documentary literature, has not been the subject of serious academic work. She insightfully combines written material with oral history and interviews that she conducted with present and former residents of Komańcza (though it is not exactly clear why she omits those resettled in Western Poland). Her style is subtle, as she very often lets the memoirs speak for themselves and leaves them open to interpretation. However, one might hope for even more from this already dense work, specifically an analysis of the relationship between commemorative practices, mnemonic strategies, and the role of material culture in the Lemkos' representation of themselves.

It is arguable that *Łemkowszczyzna Zapamiętana* constitutes one of the best reviews of Polish academic literature concerning the Lemkos. The same treatment and systematization of Ukrainian scholarship (not to mention works produced outside of the region) would be a welcome addition. Although, throughout the book, Trzeszczyńska gives reference to the most important Ukrainian works concerning the Lemkos, including the two-volume *Lemkivshchyna*, the reader is still left with only a vague idea of how the study of Lemkos developed in Ukraine; of current academic perspectives; and of important authors in the field. Further exploration would be especially useful and relevant given the fact that the Lemkos and Lemko identity have been at the centre of various political agendas and ideologies (as the author, herself, rightly points out). Nevertheless, Trzeszczyńska proves that Lemko studies is a passionate field of scholarship and that there is much to say about the culture and history of this group—one of the most researched groups of Carpathian highlanders.

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## Works Cited

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