The establishment of Medieval Christian culture in the east Baltic region determined distinct cultural experiences for several centuries to come. Initially, they relied on contacts between those who disseminated Christianity and those for whom it was intended. They were subsequently transformed into contacts between the social and cultural elite and the ‘indigenous’ peasants. Further changes were mostly stimulated by the ideas of the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, and the ideas of the Enlightenment and nationalism in the 18th and 19th centuries. What was the impact of the latter on the understanding of the local elites of what kind of region they lived in? A collection of articles edited by Anne Sommerlat-Michas offers an insight into this issue, by taking us back to the changes in the 18th and the 19th centuries, defined by the subtitle of the volume as a transition ‘from the colonial perception towards a national discourse’.

The editor of the volume, a historian of literature and culture, published an excellent book in 2010 on the Age of Enlightenment in Courland.\(^1\) It provides a horizontal look at the Republic of Letters in the Duchy in the Commonwealth of Two Nations at the time: internal networking, institutions, topics of debate, the approach to the lower strata of society, and the political context, and finally, through the genre of travel literature, an ‘external’ evaluation of society. Her analysis of the intellectual activity of the erudites in the region must have led Sommerlat-Michas to the topic of these thematic articles. Most of the authors brought together here examine the discourse of the German-speaking elite, and through it try to understand how they perceived themselves, their region, and the ‘others’ who lived in the region.

In the introduction, the editor suggests reading the 14 articles that make up the book, based on presentations at a conference in Amiens in 2013, as a quaternary structure. Part One, considered as an introduction, discusses ‘imaginary projections and cross-cultural constructs in the Baltic Sea region’. The essay by the historian Jörg Hackmann dealing with the genesis of the specific German term *Baltikum*, whose basic arguments are known from the previously published texts, is complemented by York-Gothart Mix’s assumptions, which are presented as an introduction to his research project, and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink’s paper, offering a discursive analysis of regional historiography at the turn of the 19th century. These are followed by


*VERBUM MOVET, EXEMPLUM TRAHIT. THE EMERGING CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN THE EASTERN BALTI* C

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