



Isabella Löhr, Roland Wenzlhuemer. *The Nation State and Beyond: Governing Globalization Processes in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*. Berlin: Springer Verlag Berlin, 2013. ISBN 978-3-642-32934-0.

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I. Löhr u.a. (Hrsg.): *The Nation State and Beyond*

This book, adorned by a photo of the Exiles Water Polo team of Aden, is a new addition to the Springer series *Transcultural Research - Heidelberg Studies on Asia and Europe in a Global Context*, edited by Isabella Löhr (formerly Heidelberg University, now Basel University) and Roland Wenzlhuemer (Heidelberg University). It brings together contributions to a conference at Heidelberg in 2009. For a workshop report, see Tagungsbericht: Workshop “The Nation State and Beyond: Governing Globalization Processes in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century”. 03.12.2009-05.12.2009, Heidelberg, in: H-Soz-u-Kult, 07.05.2010, <<http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=3110>> (20.06.2013).

In the introduction, Löhr and Wenzlhuemer immediately spell out the main message of the book: “the history of globalisation is anything but a no-frills affair” (p. 2). The editors define globalisation as ‘the process of gradual detachment of patterns of socio-cultural interaction from geographical proximity’. Instead, they argue that the process of globalisation both connects and fragments, does not follow a clear and unidirectional path, and has an uneven spread over the globe. Going beyond simply introducing the contributions in the volume, the authors base themselves on a close and careful reading of the state-of-the-art on this topic in a number of languages. The main question addressed by the volume reads: where does the nation-state fit into these globalising forces, in a climate where historians try to overcome methodological nationalism? All chapters speak to this issues and thus answer what Löhr and Wenzlhuemer call for, namely ‘another reading of the role and significance of the nation state’, as it certainly has not disappeared under the forces of globalisation. Ibid., 9. At the same time, none of the chapters simply assume the primacy of the nation-state as an historical actor.

The book is clear and well-structured. The introduction is followed by ten chapters, divided into four parts:

Economies, Technologies, Education, and Borders, each consisting of two to three chapters. The chapters present a wide-range of case-studies, each tackling a different set of historical actors and/or developments, and using a different set of questions and concepts related to globalisation and the nation-state. On the whole, the chapters are well-written and based on extensive empirical research. They devote quite some space introducing their subjects, but have rather short conclusions.

The part entitled *Economies* clusters two chapters dealing with monetary and financial affairs, which are among the best of the volume. Guido Thiemeyer discusses the Latin Monetary Union as a form of monetary internationalism, exposing a close-knitted cooperation in the 19th century. This type of internationalism eroded national sovereignty in monetary affairs. Madeleine Herren applies a transcultural approach on the history of the International Bank of Settlements, exposing the Bank as a hub for international organisations, commerce, as well as an important information carrier.

Part two, on *Technologies*, primarily deals with communication technologies and their organisation. Norman Weiss studies the International Telecommunication Union, and the link between the rise of administrative unions and technological innovation. E. Thomas Ewing’s chapter on the telegraph as a transnational instrument of imperial control examines the ‘loca’ responses to the coming of modern means of control. In one of the most interesting contributions, and one of the few looking beyond Europe, Ewing shows how the telegraph was a potent weapon for those in charge, but also for those challenging the coloniser. Simone Müller-Pohl takes the perspective of cable transnationalism, and touches upon vital business interests. She shows how cable agents sometimes got along, went against, and adjusted to nation-state interests.

Education is the subject of part three. Heather Ellis counters the usual nationally framed history of academic

networks. She shows, first, how a scholarly transnational space existed between Germany and Great Britain, and second, explains how nationalisation and nationalism was a response to this. In a more biographical piece, Klaus Dittrich describes how French education expert Ferdinand Buisson operated within transnational circles, on the European and North American continent. Buisson actively appropriated new knowledge from abroad in France, and subsequently came to represent the educational acknowledgements of the Third Republic.

The final part, entitled *Borders*, opens with a fascinating chapter on the notion nation-state/empire, centring on Japan. Tomoko Akami goes against the grain of International Relation-theorists by stressing the nexus between nation-state and empire, rather than its assumed opposition. She subsequently analyses Japan's 'maturation' as a nation, and its rise to empire in Southeast Asia. James Casteel's history of the development of Siberia reflects on 19th century notions of backwards and modernity, with particular for German ideas on this vast region. The last chapter by Thies Schulze deals with the tension between the national presence and transnational organisation of the Catholic Church. Examining South Tyrol and Alsace-Lorraine, Schulze shows how the clergy often was torn between regionalism and Catholicism.

How should we evaluate the added value of the chapters and the volume as a whole? On the one hand, the

diversity of the book is one of its major pluses - it will cater many students of globalisation, transnational history, and world history. Most of the contributions have a single conceptual focus, explicitly go beyond methodological nationalism, are often based on original archival works, and hence present new findings. It hence presents the state-of-the-art on this topic, in a pleasantly readable and accessible way. On the other hand, the same diversity also is the weakest point. Whereas the introduction opens the black box of globalisation, and the chapters testify to its multi-directional and diffuse character, there is no final chapter that draws everything together in order to accumulate the wide range of insights. Although this is the fate bestowed on many edited volumes, in this case a concluding, or even a comparative chapter drawing on all concepts applied in the individual pieces would have been a real plus. Clearly, this book shows that the nation-state still has a significant role in a globalised world, but leaves aside a further specification, and perhaps even a periodisation, of that role. A last non-content-related weakness of the book is its price. Although some might get access to a digital version via their institutional subscriptions, the paper version is over € 100. This will hopefully not prevent scholars interested in globalisation, transnational history, and transcultural entanglements, and the role of the nation-state herein, from taking stock of this volume.

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