H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Monika Baár. *Historians and Nationalism: East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 340 S. ISBN 978-0-19-157385-9.

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Published on H-Soz-u-Kult (December, 2010)

Throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, historians have been nation builders par excellence. Their national histories have sometimes been foundational texts for the national master narratives of their respective nation states. Historians of historiography have been exploring the relationship between nationalism and historical writing for some time. Among the earlier texts, see: Dennis Deletant / Harry Harnak (ed.), Historians as Nation-Builders. Central and South-Eastern Europe, London 1988; Erik Lönnroth / Karl Molin / Ragnar Björk (ed.), Conceptions of National History, Stockholm 1994; Stefan Berger / Mark Donovan / Kevin Passmore (ed), Writing National Histories. Western Europe since 1800, London 1999. The recent European Science Foundation Programme on 'Representations of the Past: the Writing of National Histories in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe' has published fourteen volumes in total on the subject and represents the latest research on this subject matter. For details of the publications and the programme see <http://www.uni-leipzig.de/zhsesf> (23.11.2010). However, they mostly have been doing this within the framework of the nation states, that means national historians exploring national historiographical traditions. The comparative turn of historiography since the 1990s has seen a number of pathbreaking comparative studies in the history of historiography which also dealt with the topic of nationalism and history writing. See, amongst others, Sebastian Conrad, Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Nation. Geschichtsschreibung in Westdeutschland und Japan, Göttingen 1990; Gela Lingelbach, Klio macht Karriere. Die Institutionalisierung der Geschichtswissenschaft in Frankreich und den USA in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts, Göttingen 2003; Linas Eriksonas, National Heroes and National Identities. Scotland, Norway and Lithuania, Brussels 2004. The current book by Monika Baár represents what is best about those comparative studies and is destined to become a classic study in the history of historiography.

She compares five historians from five different nations in East-Central Europe and the different historical national master narratives they have helped to constitute during the nineteenth century. In her first chapter she presents us with succinct biographical portraits of Joachim Lelewel (Poland), Simonas Daukantas (Lithuania), František Palacký (Bohemian lands), Mihály Horváth (Hungary) and Mihail Kogălniceanu (Romania). With the exception of Daukantas, all five were not only leading historians but also leading figures in their respective national movements. They were classical multi-taskers, whose historical writing went hand in hand with other scientific concerns, for example linguistic, anthropological and ethnological work or the collection of fairy tales, and with political and journalistic activities.

The second chapter locates these five historians in the European-wide context of a Romantic historiography 'in the service of nation-building'. Baár emphasises the democratic overtones in their historical writings: not only did they attempt to write the history of the people (rather than dynastic history), they also wrote in the vernacular languages and addressed not so much their peers as the subjects of their studies, that means the people allegedly forming national communities.

Four of the five national historians played prominent roles in the institutionalisation and professionalization of historical writing in their respective nations – topic of chapter three of the book (the exception again being Daukantas). They were important in setting up scholarly and patriotic societies and journals; they published source editions and they encouraged the production of more scholarly monographs – all this at a time when the universities cannot necessarily be described as motors of professionalization. They also played an important role in promoting auxiliary sciences, and were highly skilled at avoiding the interference of the censor.

The fourth chapter explores the intellectual background of the historians, stressing the complex ways in which Enlightenment and Romantic ideas merged in the thought of all five historians. In particular the German 'Spätaufklärung', as represented by the Göttingen historical school, was a major influence on the historical thinking of all five historians discussed here, but the Scottish Enlightenment historians, the French liberal historians and Nikolai Karamzin were all important inspirations, whereas Herder's influence has perhaps been overemphasised in the past. Baár can show that in important ways, 'her' historians' perception of the Slavs differed substantially from the view put forward by Herder. In particular their emphasis on the civic and political consciousness of the Slav nations was something that they would not have taken from Herder. Baár is surely right when she emphasises that the reception of so many different traditions of historical thinking and their orginal adaptation to East-Central Europe should be read as a sign of the intellectual vibrancy of historical thinking in the region. One of the major achievements of her study is precisely to draw our attention to this tradition and thereby contribute to a long overdue move away from the focus on British, French, German, and Russian historiographies, that means the big ones, which have dominated our textbooks on historiography for too long.

Baár concentrates in chapter five on highlighting the role of national languages put for the work of all five historians firmly before the previously used Greek, Latin and German. If national histories were to become part and parcel of nation-building, they argued that they had to be written in the people's languages. Several of 'her' historians were interested in translations, and they used translations very effectively to enrich their respective vernacular languages. What is more, as Baár rightly highlights, language was an ideal vehicle for emphasising the uniqueness of differing nations – and uniqueness or peculiarity was, of course, a key theme for all national histories in Europe and beyond.

Another was antiquity, and it therefore comes as no surprise that the nation-building efforts of all five historians were intricately connected to their attempts to constitute their nation's respective antiquity, which are explored in chapter six. Considering Nordic, Indo-European, Latin, 'Semi-Nomadic' and Slavic narratives of origin, Baár points out that notions of antiquity often followed a Tacitean model according to which early societies were characterised by social justice, equality, common ownership of land and selfless leaders. Such myths of origins provided cornerstones of national identity and were therefore of utmost importance to the national master narratives provided by the historians examined here.

A major focus of the national histories of all five national historians was the feudal period,

and chapter seven explores the role that feudalism played in the constructions of national histories. All five rejected feudalism as foreign to national traditions and were in favour of the abolition of serfdom. They championed property ownership and civic liberties for peasants and highlighted the role of medieval towns in fighting the ills of feudalism. In a sense all historians deployed national history in the struggle for the modernisation of their own societies. The belief in the inevitable growth of liberty made them look for evidence in the past which would support their optimistic belief in reform.

It was one of the key ideas of national historians to install pride in the readers of their national histories, and to this end they all constructed notions of golden ages for their respective nations. In chaper eight, Baár analyses those notions for her five historians. Whether it was the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the pagan period of Lithuanian history, the Hussite movement in Bohemia, the reign of Michael the Brave in Romania or the Hungarian reform age followed by revolution and the war of independence, Baár can show convincingly that the attributes her historians gave to their countries' golden ages were very similar.

In the final substantive chapter of the book, she discusses the historians' perceptions of others and their attitudes to European civilisation. National histories contained national overlaps (between, for example, Czech and German, Polish and Lithuanian or Hungarian and Romanian national histories) which produced contention and conflict. Neighbours were in fact the preferred enemies of the nation in all the national histories under discussion here. But all national histories also constructed internal enemies, and the Jews were the preferred 'other' in the national master narratives analyzed here. However, Baár shows that 'her' historians in fact constructed complex stories about Jews. They generally praised their nations for their hospitality towards Jews, and they also lauded the Jewish contribution to the commerce and industry of their respective nations. However, they also tended to look at Jews as a separate entity, not belonging to the nation and therefore they did not extend civic rights to Jews. The other group, often depicted as internal other in the national histories of East-Central Europe, were Jesuits. They were frequently depicted as the very incarnation of evil – a foreign body contributing to the decline of national fortunes. Baár also deals with the lack of attention given to women in the national histories of 'her' historians. Finally, she discusses the reception of notions of the 'West'. Depicting themselves as defenders of Western civilisation and arguing that their contribution to the emergence of the West has been undervalued, the author lends intellectual weight to the creation of an independent Wallachia.

Overall, Baár rightly emphasises that the traditions of East-Central European historiographies she analyses belong to the mainstream of nineteenth-century historical writing. As representatives of stateless nations and non-dominant ethnic groups, 'her' historians represented forms of historical writing that would have been recognisable everywhere in Europe. What makes this book such an outstanding example of the power of comparative history is its systematic comparison of five national historians and five national historical traditions along thematic lines. It would have been easy for the author to present the reader with different chapters on five different national historians and write a comparative chapter. Whilst this would still have been a major achievement, the current organisation of the material really brings out the striking commonalities and also the differences between the respective national traditions of nineteenth-century history writing in East-Central Europe. History writing does not come any better than this.

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Citation: Stefan K. Berger. Review of Baár, Monika. *Historians and Nationalism: East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century.* H-Soz-u-Kult, H-Net Reviews. December, 2010.

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