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Exploring Transylvania: Geographies of Knowledge and Entangled Histories in a Multiethnic Province, 1790–1918. By Borbála Zsuzsanna Török. Leiden–Boston: Brill, 2016. 286 pp.

In her book, Zsuzsanna Borbála Török undertakes to write a history of local knowledge production about Transylvania between 1790 and World War I in the academic field known as *Landeskunde* and to map out its institutional, social and political parameters, networks, sites, trajectories, and reception. The German concept of *Landeskunde* refers to any kind of research framed within a particular regional optic and carried out as part of an encyclopaedic description of the narrowly defined fatherland (*Heimat*). Growing out of the earlier notion of *Statistik*, it was meant to further the economic improvement of a given land and the patriotic education of its citizens. Depending on the German or Hungarian context, Török alternates between the original German term and its Hungarian equivalent, *honismeret*, but it is unclear whether she perceives any difference between the German and Hungarian uses. The extent to which the Transylvanian authors mentioned in her book themselves would have characterized their endeavors with such terms is similarly unclear, but doubt arises for example in the case of prehistoric and Roman archeologists.

Throughout the book, Török pays particular attention to two trends that unfolded in the long term: the replacement of polymath curiosity by scholarly specialization and the spatial concentration of knowledge production into national core areas. The former, she argues, galvanized *Landeskunde* research on Transylvania, rather than restraining it. The latter affected the Transylvanian Saxon and Magyar scholarly communities asymmetrically, due to a major transformation in the intellectual life of the province: the opening in 1872 of a Hungarian-language university in Kolozsvár/Cluj.

Two thirds of the book are dedicated to the parallel histories of the two most influential Transylvanian learned societies of the time, the Saxon *Verein für siebenbürgische Landeskunde* (*Landeskundeverein*) and the *Magyar Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület*. Török describes their organizational structure and their customary activities, she investigates the social and ethnic makeup of their memberships and conducts a content analysis of their journals in order to show the shifting patterns of their scholarly interests. She presents subsequent generations of members of the two societies through biographical vignettes about selected Magyar and Saxon scholars.

At its foundation in 1859, the membership of the *Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület* consisted in large part of aristocratic dilettantes, something that changed radically after the society placed its facilities at the disposal of the new university. Thereafter, its ranks were filled by the university faculty, and regular subsidies from the Hungarian state became a major source of its funding. The *Landeskundeverein*, on the other hand, which had enjoyed the support of Vienna during the neo-absolutist period, took a critical stance towards the Hungarian regime, and it could mostly rely on donations from civil society and on the revenue from its publications. Throughout its existence, its active members mostly came from the Saxon *Bildungsbürgertum*.

Its strong linkages to the university made the *Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület* more professionalized and thematically more diverse than its Saxon counterpart. During the Dualist Era, it was gradually divided into various sections. In contrast, the *Landeskundeverein* was better connected across the borders and was regarded with great interest in German academic centers, while its scholarly output fluctuated between positivist standards and provincial amateurism.

Although she regularly mentions parallel or contrasting trends among Romanians, Török chose to limit her focus to the Saxon and the Magyar societies and not to include ASTRA (the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People) as her third main object of study. She justifies her choice with reference to ASTRA's much wider range of activities and by its emphasis from the very outset on the *nation* rather than on the *fatherland*, which would make it less relevant for a history of *Landeskunde*. The first explanation is perhaps not terribly controversial, but attention given to works published by ASTRA or written by ASTRA functionaries that fit into the book's broad definition of *Landeskunde* could have put into relief the common features of Saxon and Magyar Transylvanian regionalist scholarship.

Admittedly, the terms *Landeskunde* and *bonismeret* had no counterpart in Romanian. However, a large segment of the original contributions to *Transilvania*, the association's review, effortlessly fall into this category, especially in the later decades. Far from putting ASTRA at odds with the other two learned societies, the Romanian-centered perspective of these contributions in fact also harmonizes with the similarly inward-looking bias of contemporary Magyar and Saxon *Landeskunde* research. George Bariț's *Părți alese* is certainly no less regional in scope than Georg Daniel Teutsch's *Sachsengeschichte*, and Silvestru Moldovan's cultural travelogues through Transylvania represent popularizing *Landeskunde* at its purest.

Török's omission of ASTRA stands on even more tenuous grounds when she claims that its dedication "to the more modern concept of the 'nation'" (p.3) was something singular. The assumptions behind this idea also represent the book's weakest points.

Török advances the hypothesis that the European Republic of Letters, which had been held together by scholarly solidarity and by the common use of Latin, and which had crumbled with the advent of nationalisms and with increasing disciplinary fragmentation, may have had an afterlife on the European periphery, and notably in Transylvania. This hypothesis proves wrong early on, and Török fails to take notice of this. From the moment when she takes up the thread of the story, scholarly activity was already mostly carried out in the vernacular and was compartmentalized along ethno-national lines, both in its social networks and its research agendas. The division only deepened over time.

During the Josephine period, an ethnically mixed, enlightened vanguard rallying in masonic lodges perhaps held the promise of a supra-ethnic *Landespatriotismus*, but the embryonic academic society of György Aranka, the Magyar offshoot of this milieu, promoted a Transylvanianism steeped in Hungarian noble nationalism. During the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century, attendance of Protestant German universities and the need to use one another's unpublished archives led to the formation of some bonds between Magyar and Saxon scholars, but both groups used their vernacular standards in their publications, and their ideological lines had irrevocably parted ways, with Saxons cherishing a cult of their community as an eastern outpost of civilization, first against the background of Austrian imperial patriotism and later turning to German nationalism. There was little overlap in membership between the two academic spheres.

Over the period under study, nationalism and regionalism did not so much stand in a relationship of contrast as mutually complement each other. The ideological horizons of the authors quoted usually range from regionally tinged nationalism to nationally tinged Transylvanian patriotism, and their ethno-national ideologies also left marks on their works of declared supra-ethnic, all-Transylvanian scopes. Therefore, a study engaged with the avatars of regional scholarship could have benefitted from a deeper analytical look at the ideological meanings underlying contemporary utterances in order to reconstruct genuinely implied or rhetorically framed combinations of Transylvanian patriotism and ethnic nationalisms. The book does not provide support for its claim that the European Republic of Letters had an afterlife in Transylvania in any non-trivial

sense. Rather than the earlier European Republic of Letters, other multiethnic lands of contemporary Europe would have made more suitable objects for comparison, where civil society became segmented along ethno-national lines as the shackles on the freedom of association and press were lifted. The Bohemian Lands come to mind first.

With all the shortcomings that I have pointed out, the nuanced and lucid comparison of the histories of the Saxon and Hungarian societies is certainly an important merit of the book in its own right. Moreover, and quite conveniently for a time and area on which information is scarcely available in English, Török sprinkles her narrative with abundant background knowledge, which will make her book useful as a history of the Magyar and Saxon cultural elites of Transylvania in the period.

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