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This volume provides insights and relevant material for practitioners of European studies, sociology, and political science. Researchers and other students of politics, sociology, the Balkans and specifically Kosovo will find this book very useful and helpful in order to better understand the relationship between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo and the historical context of state-building in the country. This volume makes a contribution to the extensive literature for scholars who are focusing their research on state-building in Kosovo and the path to reconciliation.

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Roumen Daskalov / Alexander Vezenkov, eds, *Entangled Histories of the Balkans. Volume Three. Shared Pasts, Disputed Legacies*, Leiden: Brill 2015 (Balkan Studies Library 16). 498 pp., ISBN 9789004271166, €160.00

With the passing of the symbolic centennial year of 2014, the momentum for the integration of the Balkans into Europe has clearly been lost. The current political situation is characterized by a search for a viable programme to provide direction and a sense of meaning. Southeast European Studies, predominantly in the German tradition of area studies, faces a similar 'identity crisis' of sorts. The crisis is not apparent in PhD theses and monographs on specific nations, states, social groups, and events. Why would a study of the peasantry in Albania, informed by state-of-the-art historiography and theoretical notions, be less legitimate than a similar study on France? Why should one write yet another study of the 1848 revolution in Austria, but not in Romania? A decade ago, a 'Historikerstreit' gave Southeast European studies

a rallying point and a sense of mission. Are the historical specificities and coherence of the Balkan region weighty enough to justify regional studies? And if so, should one compare the individual Balkan state entities, or should the focus be on transfer and entanglement? These principled debates seem to have subsided and, in the meantime, more than a handful of comparative studies crossing the well-established East-West or East-Southeast divide in Europe has been published.

Typically, the crisis sketched out above is most pressing in more ambitious multi-volume and multiyear projects. The organisers of the six-volume history of Southeastern Europe currently in the making at the Leibniz-Institute for East and Southeast European Studies in Regensburg¹ have chosen to devote an early-modern and a modern history volume to each of the areas of political, socioeconomic and cultural history. Within each volume, special 'stills' of cross-country comparison and entanglement as well as thematic *longue durée* chapters are used to break out of a classic nation-by-nation chronological narrative. The *Entangled Histories of the Balkans* series, in which four volumes have been published since 2013, is both a complement and an alternative to the Regensburg project.² Some topics, such as nationalism and nation-building from volume I, are well represented in the Regensburg volumes, too. Overall, the editors of the *Entangled Histories* series, Roumen Daskalov, Diana Mishkova, Tchavdar Marinov, and Alexander Vezenkov, have adopted an approach that places a greater emphasis on the history of ideas and concepts. More importantly, the Brill

¹ See <http://www.ios-regensburg.de/en/ios-publications/standard-works/handbook-of-the-history-of-southeast-europe.html>.

² See <http://www.brill.com/entangled-histories-balkans>.

volumes' editors have opted for open 'essays' rather than textbook chapters.

In volume III, on the use of the past in shaping the present and future (and vice versa, at least in how we understand the past), the five essays (all but one—Bernard Lory's chapter on the Ottoman legacy—written by the editors) are by no means comprehensive or fully representative, nor were they meant to be. Instead they explore, probe, and reimagine with great fervour. The five chapters (ranging from 50 to 150 pages) follow a chronological order in terms of their object of historiographical study: ancient Thrace (Marinov); Byzantium (Mishkova); Middle Ages (Daskalov); the Ottoman Empire (Lory); and post-Ottoman national revival (Vezenkov and Marinov). In their concise introduction, the editors explain their choice of historiographical objects. The new nation-states of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries faced the challenges of appropriating history and compartmentalised their histories into national narratives. The pre-national eras were particularly taunting in this respect, riddled with 'transnational' entanglements and populated by ignoramuses who refused to commit unequivocally to one nation and yet had to be turned into national heroes, and were thus saved from 'a quite different and rather "messy" picture' (1). Arguably, Balkan historians competed in claiming historical persons, events, and territories. In doing so, their arguments and outlook became remarkably uniform, the editors argue. There is a certain paradox here. The editors and authors take issue with both the exclusive national narratives of the nascent nations of the nineteenth century and the long historiographic tradition that uncritically kept dividing world history into neat, non-entangled national grand narratives for most of the twentieth century. But because of their debunking

and negation, the nation, nationalism, and nation-building still or yet again take centre stage in this volume. The editors' and authors' claims of not 'endorsing the national standpoint or trying to arbitrate the "truth" on the issues' (4) and not 'taking a stand and arguing for or against any of the positions taken and engage in the debate myself' (277) hardly needed stating in this framework. Concepts, ideologies, and schools of thought other than those directly related to the nation are relegated to the background (or to other volumes in the same series).

In line with the essayistic form of the volume, Roumen Daskalov's chapter on the Middle Ages does not strive to cover every topic of historiographic interest and controversy in this period. Nor does he attempt to give a balanced overview of history-writing on the Middle Ages since the nineteenth century from each and every national academic community in the region. Instead, he focuses on Bulgarian-Romanian historiographical controversy with respect to the Middle Ages without claiming that this case study is representative or even typical of Balkan history-writing. In the 1860s Bulgarian historians, construing a synthesis of national history, noticed to their dismay that (some) Romanian historians asserted that the medieval Bulgarian kingdoms had in fact been ruled by Romanians (Petăr being Petru, etc.). The author argues that it is 'very instructive to study this issue and the Bulgarian-Romanian controversy on the Middle Ages in general' (276) in its various stages, including its silencing under Stalinism and its revival under Ceaușescu's and Živkov's national communism.

His retelling of the controversy between Nicolae Iorga and his Bulgarian colleagues as to whether the Romanized populace south of the Danube had organised or dispersed during the Middle Ages

is fascinating first and foremost because of the fuzziness of both politicised claims and the scarcity of contemporary sources that might by any stretch of imagination 'prove' either position academically. Other scholars later joined the trench warfare laid out by Iorga and his adversaries, but they did so under different ideological-political auspices. Depicting the internationalist Stalinist views on either side of the 1950s in merely a few pages, the author moves on to the moderate nationalism of the 1960s and the eventual hypertrophy of nationalism under communism in Bucharest during the 1980s. The 'entangled' historiographical chapter demonstrates the curious co-existence of an academic command of the relevant medieval sources and historical literature with antennae sensitive to the political *Zeitgeist* in these protracted controversies. Daskalov concludes that '[t]he past thus served as a playground for contemporary claims and conflicts against a historical backdrop in which the sources served mainly as arguments to support one's own cause' (343). The historians' ability to claim historical truth and objectivity for themselves, while accepting their political responsibility in nation-building (much like Prussian historians did in the nineteenth century) without ever addressing the apparent contradiction, will continue to faze twenty-first-century colleagues.

Does volume III live up to Sabine Rutar's praise of the first volume? '[It] reads like one would wish all histories of South-eastern Europe to read: deconstructivist, de-essentializing, focused on processes, entanglements, shared history [...], provid[ing] South-eastern Europe with the historiographical position it deserves: an exciting place in world history'.³ The answer is yes,

although one might wish for a longer introductory reflection on their agenda as well as on the pitfalls and the new venues for nationalism studies in historiography. Followers of the classic national paradigm are not likely to turn to this volume and series. For those well aware of the deconstructivist and de-essentialising agenda in nationalism studies, the authors may be preaching to the converted. The well-researched and erudite case studies may be situated well within an established new paradigm, but they are good reads and provide alternative takes on the region's history without doggedly 'flogging the dead horse' of exclusivist national history-writing. In sum, this is not the kind of book one needs in one's study as an encyclopaedic go-to reference (a tall order anyway, at €700 for four volumes), but will rather serve as a source of orientation and inspiration in Southeast European Studies.

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³ Cf. Sabine Rutar's review of Roumen Daskalov / Marinov Tchavdar, eds, *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, H-Soz-Kult, 4 Febru-

ary 2014, <http://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-21253>.