

Zitierhinweis

Evans, R. J. W.: Rezension über: Bálint Varga, *The Monumental Nation. Magyar Nationalism and Symbolic Politics in Fin-de-siècle Hungary*, New York: Berghahn, 2016, in: *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung (ZfO)*, 67 (2018), 2, S. 322, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/4a7ea4ea4fd6461e839a61699c73eafb>



copyright

Dieser Beitrag kann vom Nutzer zu eigenen nicht-kommerziellen Zwecken heruntergeladen und/oder ausgedruckt werden. Darüber hinausgehende Nutzungen sind ohne weitere Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber nur im Rahmen der gesetzlichen Schrankenbestimmungen (§§ 44a-63a UrhG) zulässig.

Bálint Varga: The Monumental Nation. Magyar Nationalism and Symbolic Politics in Fin-de-siècle Hungary. (Austrian and Habsburg Studies, Bd. 20.) Berghahn, New York – Oxford 2016. VIII, 286 S., Ill., Kt. ISBN 978-1-78533-313-2. (§ 130,-) – The fashionable research field of public commemoration and its cultures has already begun to look a bit passé in some quarters; not yet, however, in East-Central Europe, where it was slow to arrive. In good part that is because there were so few memorials for so long. In Hungary, public statuary only started to be constructed in the last decades of the 19th century. Then the situation was transformed by the 1896 Millennium: the great romantic extravaganza which celebrated a thousand years of the Hungarian state. That event is almost over-familiar in its cultural and architectural aspects: the vast exhibition held in Budapest's Városliget and the more or less closely associated building programme across the city (Heroes' Square, Parliament, the Underground Railway and others), all of it a massive self-congratulatory display of the achievements of Dualist Hungary's Magyar establishment. Bálint Varga has found an original slant on this story, a major but neglected millennial theme. He analyses a series of seven monuments which were erected, not in Budapest, but on the country's peripheries, deliberately positioned there to assert the power of the state and the thousand-year continuity of the *magyar állameszme*, i. e. the idea(l) of an integral, uniform constitutional kingdom of Hungary. The monuments celebrated the state's founder, Árpád, leader of the mounted tribes who allegedly accomplished their conquest of the Carpathian basin (the *honfoglalás*) in 896. The whole venture was the brainchild of Kálmán Thaly, the pre-eminent creator of a historical narrative suited to the pretensions of millennial Hungary as well as a chief political activist in that cause. Much of this was wishful thinking, if not complete fabrication (beginning with the claims for the year 896 itself). Hungary had in reality always been multi-ethnic, multi-confessional, fragmented and vulnerable. And rarely were its underlying weaknesses more imperilling than around 1896. So the enterprise was vainglorious and futile, a kind of anticipation of Robert Musil's fictional *Parallelaktion*. It yielded a set of tawdry memorials, each uglier and more tasteless than the one before. There is correspondingly little evidence that they made any lasting impact. Yet in the process of studying their local circumstances, V. uncovers something much more valuable and authentic. In a sequence of 'scenes from provincial life', for which he draws masterfully on sources in all the relevant languages and genres, he shows us a rich tapestry of indigenous conditions in Hungary's disparate regional townscapes. There, forms of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional working compromise had been brokered which the Árpád monument campaign, with its homogenizing ideology, deliberately set out to flout. Above all, V. highlights a range of nationality issues: Magyar populations were present in all of the municipalities concerned; Germans and Jews were present in most of them; there were Slovaks in Nitra, Ruthenes in Munkács, Rumanians in Brassó and Serbs in Semlin. Only around the Pannonhalma and Pusztaszer statues were Magyars alone to be found, but hardly anyone lived in those remote locations anyway. It was not so much the idea of commemoration that was tainted, V. concludes, but the centralized and doctrinaire way in which it was implemented. That is actually confirmed by the conspicuous and lasting success of the millennial constructions in the heart of Budapest, though he deliberately excludes those from consideration. There, the government's programme found a ready audience. V. is inclined to describe that programme, rather too glibly, as 'liberal' and 'progressive'. By the mid-1890s it had become mainly national-conservative and anticlerical. That was the chief message of its cult of Árpád and of his pagan Magyar warriors. Little more than twenty years in the future, both the monuments and the state lay in ruins.

Sunningwell, Oxon

R. J. W. Evans

Gabriel Berger: Umgeben von Hass und Mitgefühl. Jüdische Autonomie in Polen nach der Schoah 1945-1949 und die Hintergründe ihres Scheiterns. Lichtig Verlag, Berlin 2016. 191 S. ISBN 978-3-929905-36-6. (€ 14,90,-) – Mit dem schmalen Band liegt die in deutscher Sprache erste Darstellung über die jüdische Ansiedlung (Jischuv) in Niederschlesien unmittelbar nach Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs vor. Anlass, sich damit näher zu befassen, war für den Autor die eigene Familiengeschichte. Gabriel Berger hat von 1948 an als Kind selbst einige Jahre in Breslau (Wrocław) gelebt, nachdem seine jüdische Familie von Belgien nach Polen übergesie-