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Visions of Illyria: The Illyrian Movement and the Construction of National Territory

Building on the dichotomy between civic/political and ethnic/cultural nationalism, studies of Slavic national movements in Central and Southeastern Europe have often emphasized the role of cultural – primarily linguistic – ideas in shaping modern national ideologies. This assumption rests on the underlying separation of the cultural and the political, assigning them to distinct spheres. Consequently, visions of (national) territory have often been understood as deriving primarily from cultural logic. The circulation of scholarly knowledge and political ideas, particularly those related to Slavic philology and (Pan)Slavism, contributed to the construction of ideologies that relied on neat systems of categorization and classification, especially of different "peoples," "nations," and "tribes." However, in practice, the situation was far more complex. National activists adapted to political circumstances as well as inherited traditions and ideas. By moving beyond the cultural-political dichotomy, we can examine the extent to which the concept of territoriality itself shaped cultural, ethnographic, and linguistic perspectives in the context of Romantic national movements in Central and Southeastern Europe. This paper explores the visions of Illyria as a national territory within the ideology of the Illyrian Movement – a Romantic nationalist movement active primarily in Croatia and Slavonia during the 1830s and 1840s, but with broader (South) Slavic connections. The Illyrian Movement developed a complex system of representations aimed at mediating a multilayered concept of national territory with the concept of scalar national identification, encompassing regional, "tribal," and national levels with fluid interconnections. These representations emerged from the interplay between transferred scholarly, cultural, and political ideas and the historical, administrative, and political circumstances of Croatia-Slavonia at the time. The resulting ideological constructs blended elements of different – and at times contradictory – traditions and logics, making them both flexible and adaptable to shifting political and social conditions.

Abstract for the *Central European History Convention*

Title: “By ‘nation’ we do not mean that narrow-minded catchword” Joseph Alexander von Helfert and the “Austrian nation”

One way or another, the nation and nation-ness have occupied an eminent place in the historiography of the Habsburg Monarchy. Imagined as omnipresent and a natural form of human community, the nation was made responsible for the downfall of the monarchy in early works, as the independent nation state was seen as a historical necessity. On the other end of the spectrum, more recently, scholars have convincingly argued that nation-ness was far from being relevant in all situations and for all people. However, much less attention has been given to the attempts made by the imperial center to implement an “Austrian” (imperial) national idea in its inhabitants. Nevertheless, the 1850s saw important developments in this regard: after the shock of 1848–49, leading Austrian statesmen recognized the need for a proper “Austrian consciousness” for evading a similar crisis. Among them the most important were the minister of culture and education, Leo Thun, and especially his secretary of state, Joseph Alexander von Helfert. The latter elaborated the ideological basis for the prestigious historical institution, the *Institut für österreichische Geschichtsforschung*. His main idea revolved around an Austrian *national history* which would be the central occupation of the institute and its elite pupils. This Austrian national history would then set the ground for a proper Austrian national consciousness. In this presentation, I will explore the helfertian concept of the Austrian nation, paying special attention to its roots in Bohemian patriotism, arguing for the necessity of a transnational intellectual history of the Habsburg Empire. Helfert’s concept of national history came into application in the book series, *Oesterreichische Geschichte für das Volk* which I will also analyze. Finally, I will discuss the possible reasons behind the helfertian concept’s failure as well as its reception in Hungary and Bohemia.

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Title: Belonging in Transition. Non-territorial autonomy in Austria-Hungary

Proposal: *Belonging in Transition: Non-Territorial Autonomy in Austria-Hungary* is the title of my book project, which offers a comprehensive history of non-territorial autonomy in the Habsburg Empire. For the first time, this history incorporates perspectives from Hungary, re-evaluating the history of non-territorial autonomy through its Hungarian friends and foes. The book is divided into two parts: the first, “Concepts in Flux,” examines how key concepts of belonging—*nationality*, *diaspora*, and *minority*—were debated in the late Habsburg Empire and during its dissolution. The second part presents three case studies that explore how communities and individuals from all corners of the Empire navigated their belonging during the turbulent months between the fall of 1918 and the spring of 1919. These months are often overlooked, as existing literature typically ends with World War One or begins with the interwar period. Combining intellectual and social history, the book connects macro- and microhistory, tracing shifts from state structures and political ideas to individual lived experiences.

In my presentation, I will provide an overview of the book project and outline its main theses. My talk will highlight what I consider the most novel and challenging aspects of this project. I will begin by exploring why Hungarian politicians and political thinkers rejected non-territorial autonomy when it first emerged in Austria—and, conversely, why it gained popularity in Hungary during the dissolution of the Dual Monarchy, just as Renner and Bauer were turning away from the idea. My paper concludes by asking what forms of belonging non-territorial autonomy was designed to accommodate. I will argue that, while scholars generally agree that the term *diaspora* was used almost exclusively in a religious context until the 1950s, in the early twentieth century, much like *minority*, it began to take on a more secular and ethnic meaning within the Habsburg intellectual sphere.