

*Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives*, edited by Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka. New York: Berghahn Books, 2009. vii, 294 pp. \$90.00 US (cloth).

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Over the past couple of decades historians of Germany have carried out more or less acrimonious and more or less productive debates over the relative values of, on the one hand, comparative history and, on the other, "entangled" or "transnational" historical approaches. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka have been vocal defenders of the former's value. In particular, they have insisted that the most fervent adherents to the newer approaches have over-stated their break with the past and, in the process, have ignored the sophisticated ways that comparative methods have long addressed many of the "newer" questions being raised. In this volume, the editors try to resolve this debate by illustrating how comparative and entangled histories are not mutually exclusive, but rather have much to teach one another. As a whole, these essays illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of comparative history, present strong arguments for new insights that can come from a focus on historical entanglements, and offer some instructive suggestions on bridging the gap between the two.

The editors' introduction announces that their volume intends to argue for the value of comparative history, both in its own right and in a productive exchange with newer methods. The essay offers an excellent and nuanced discussion of comparative history's fundamental assumptions and approaches, its strengths and weaknesses, its possibilities and limits. They praise the comparative method for its theoretical sophistication, analytical rigor, and its value for testing historical generalizations. They also reject the production of simplistic, rigid, or teleological frameworks that can result – especially unduly discrete and coherent "national" examples – even as they note the value that these have had for opening new avenues for research. Most of the essay summarizes how one does proper comparative history and praises the field as a challenging one, a field only for "conceptually explicit, theoretically oriented, analytical historians with a certain distance to the classical historicist tradition." (14-15) While this might leave some of their critics cold, the larger point that comparative history still has contributions to make to German history goes without saying, especially when those comparisons pay due attention to the various complexities outlined here.

Haupt and Kocka suggest that "it is the task of the future to better combine comparative and entanglement history," and, to this end, their work book brings together theoretical pieces with more focused case studies. (21) Some were written for the volume, but most are important contributions on ongoing debates that have been lightly revised and made available in English for the first time. Hartmut Kaelble briefly reviews these debates and argues for an integrated approach, while Philipp Ther goes one step further. He suggests that practitioners of East Central European history have long integrated comparative with transnational approaches *avant la lettre* and uses their example as a model for European history as a whole. Jürgen Osterhammel thoughtfully specifies how transnational approaches might contribute to the history of society while also cautioning against expanding these perspectives into an autonomous "Transnational History."

Others are far more critical when it comes to the shortcomings of comparative history and forceful in advocating the advantages of transnational methodologies. Monica Juneja and Margrit Pernau make the case that comparative history, when applied to the non-European world, has served to reify the implicit superiority of European models. They suggest a way out in an entangled historiography, that is, a collaboration of European and non-European scholars translating and interrogating each other's paradigms. Sebastian Conrad's and Shalini Randeria's essays illustrate the shortcomings of a comparative focus when considering the rise of modernity. Both argue—Conrad through a general discussion of Germany's colonial entanglements and Randeria through a focused examination of specifically Indian forms of communitarian civil society—for a relational model that focuses on mutual and unequal exchanges functioning outside the framework of the nation. Andreas Eckert concedes that one should not over-state Germany's entanglement with Africa, but notes that one can see clear impacts in realms such as science, citizenship, migration, and popular culture that cannot be addressed in comparative terms.

Where one might expect more forceful defenses of comparative history, the volume provides two case instructive case studies that do not necessarily serve the volume's high goal of integration. Dieter Langewiesche's contribution uses a broadly comparative study of nation-development to establish a thought-provoking typology of "communities" within the nation, but his generalization illustrates the risk of presuming the nation's ultimate triumph. He ignores the wide variety of legitimate non-national state forms inside and outside of Europe, not the least of which is empire. Thomas Welskopp's excellent narrative survey of the history of labor in Germany and the United States illustrates the value of comparison for revealing distinctive and similar dynamics, but he leaves one wondering if there are not linkages that might also reveal new features.

By contrast, Jörg Requate's study of economic and social planning in the 1960s in both Germanies and in Czechoslovakia suggests ways to integrate the comparative and entangled. He describes a conversation that crossed the boundaries of state and bloc but also is sensitive to the features and potentialities specific to each state. Dirk Hoerder's survey of migration historiography also offers a bridging strategy through his proposed concepts of transregionalism and transculturalism, which require attention to shifts in context from one locale to the next as well as an appreciation of migrants continuing links to each.

Scholars or students looking to refresh their understanding of the methods and challenges of comparative history and to learn how German historians discuss transnational approaches will find much to appreciate in this collection, which is particularly well suited to the needs of graduate seminars. If this book helps end the overblown and sometimes petty arguments over which method will reign supreme and helps us take advantage of the obvious benefits of each approach, Haupt and Kocka will have done us a great service.

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