

**Rezension zu: Brooks, A. & Mehler, N. (eds.) (2017). *The Country Where My Heart Is – Historical Archaeologies of Nationalism and National Identity*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. 356 pages, \$ 89,95. ISBN 978-0813054339.**

Christoph K. Streb

The general hypothesis that runs through almost all the chapters of Brooks and Mehler's volume can be summarized as follows: national identity is constructed, virtual and subjective, is constantly transforming and is easy to be manipulated from the top down. All the chapters deal with this issue by presenting a – sometimes more, sometimes less convincing – case for this position.

Indeed, one cannot argue with the constructiveness of any form of identity when considering the seminal publications in the field (e.g. ANDERSON, 1991; HASTINGS, 1997; RUSCIANO, 2003), nor would this review be the right place to do so. Despite the editors' clearly stated intention not to delve deeply into the minefield of the social constructiveness of national identity – which is wise – their premise would have benefited from a more critical stance and greater sensitivity towards such an emotional concept, considering that their assertion is deeply rooted in social sciences and is by no means indisputable (cp. CERULO, 1997).

The book begins with a comparison of separatist movements in Scotland and Bavaria, initiated, as the editors admit, by their personal experiences in these regions. Despite numerous similarities, especially a romanticisation during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, according to the authors, it appears striking that nationalist movements in Scotland increased after WW2, while the relevance of political separatism in Bavaria today is negligible. These deductions are derived mostly by comparing election results of various nationalist parties. Such exemplary contexts serve to define historical archaeology as that of the post-1500 period and to offer a different perspective on the interrelationships of modern political nationalism and archaeology by focusing on how the archaeological record is presented and communicated. The editors make clear beforehand that, although there is an intersection, nationalism and national identity are not the same. Unfortunately, this important distinction is somewhat omitted, or confused, in most of the chapters, as will be seen. The editors acknowledge and avoid the minefield of attempting to conclusively define the terms nationalism and nation identity by rather hastily settling on national identity as "*the development of a sense of shared identity and collective belonging within a state or geographical region*" and nationalism as "*the political use of national identity*"

(p. 8). While this is adequate, especially considering the necessary definitional leeway in an edited book, the editors extend the limits of such a definition by offering a number of examples mitigating the – perhaps felt – absoluteness of abovementioned definitions. The purpose of this becomes clear when they go on to conclude that "*national identity [...] is wholly subjective*" and propose the key theme of this book, i.e. "*recognizing and examining the artificial and subjective origins of a particular form of nationalism and national identity*" (p. 8 f.).

While this focus is in line with the currently dominating tenor in related studies (c.p. SABLES, 2017), and the editors acknowledge the "*political, cultural, and emotional power*" of national identity" (p. 8), a more neutral orientation of this volume would have benefited the book's overall aim. By postulating an agenda behind any construction of national identity, as suggested in most chapters of the volume, an own ideological stance is taken, although unfortunately not explicated.

The subsequent structure of the book follows this theme in three parts, which, appropriately for this purpose, refer to "*creation*", "*manipulation*" and "*absences*" of national identity. Since the three parts cover very different approaches and cases, a sequential structure is chosen for the remainder of this review.

As the first chapter of the first part, FOWLER and NOËL discuss Arcadian history in the context of the history of North America, especially the impact of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) on this community and the contributions of subsequent antiquarian archaeology and Victorian sentiment and romanticisation to a formation of national, or rather ethnic, identity to date. Symbols such as the Grand-Pré (Nova Scotia) landscape or Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's fictional character *Evangeline* contributed to an imagined collective history focused around the expulsion of the Grand-Pré's inhabitants by the British in 1755. As Fowler and Noël (p. 43 f.) point out, though, the beginnings of Arcadian national awareness remain controversial: before (e.g. GRIFFITHS, 2005) or after (e.g. PLANK, 2001) the expulsion? The experience of displacement as a result of "*GLOBAL POLITICS*" as well as the continuous relevance of such experience for national identity, may lead to the hypothesis that a key factor in the creation of a nation during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries can be assigned to globalisation's detrimental impacts on traditional forms of life and societal coherence (c.p. ANDERSON, 1999), as the authors agree. Nonetheless, the authors focus on the subjective nature of national identity and correctly deduct that it is possible that Arcadian leaders may use and in-

strumentalize antiquarian and archaeologist finds as symbols to create an ethnicity in the first place, providing national representatives with entitlement and power, illuminating the controversial role of historical archaeology in such a case and its entanglement with national identity creation. While such observations have substance, the issue is hardly novel or unique (e.g. ZERUBAVEL, 1995), as the authors dilute their arguments by highlighting the role of the tourist industry, beginning already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in creating “the Arcadians” and presenting their pre-expulsion society as a romantic ideal for marketing purposes. Since this is certainly the case, it leaves one with the question whether the described example is wisely chosen to describe a nation’s creation, or whether instead what can be observed here is an example of advanced tourist marketing. Needless to say, folklore does not equal nationalism or national identity.

KATARINA PREDOVNIK’s chapter discusses identity construction in the context of architecture and landscape, as a result of numerous Ottoman raids and attempts to conquer the Habsburg border regions from the late 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The main starting point in her argumentation is that identity-formation benefits from a common enemy, or in general, the clear indication of the “others”, a dichotomy in which the own self becomes clear and distinct. Clearly, the relevance of a common threat for the creation of national identities has been discussed abundantly before (e.g. TRIANDAFYLIDOU, 1998). Predovnik continues to show that the constant threat of the Ottoman cavalry has had – especially in the case of Slovenia – a significant impact on national identity until today. She continues to argue that such threat was actively imagined and manipulated, mostly to unify and stabilise the Christian world (p. 70 f.). Although such effect, and the political use Habsburg rulers may have drawn from such an external threat, cannot be denied, focusing on the constructive nature of the enemy here falls short of the reality and may be misleading to an uninformed reader: The threat of occupation by the Ottoman Empire, especially during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, did not need to be constructed. It was real and caused a serious threat to those people within range of such raids, aimed at destabilising the region before subjecting it to Ottoman rule. The author acknowledges (p. 72 and 74), however, that focusing solely on one factor may lead to the wrong conclusions, as the link to today’s Muslim community in Slovenia or EU accession talks with Turkey are somewhat surprising and unsubstantiated. The chapter would have benefitted from a more critical discussion of the

notion that today’s Slovenian landscape, with its numerous frontier fortifications dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, is not simply the result of manipulating frontier orientalism (c.p. GINGRICH, 1996), but of Ottoman aggression.

STEFAN EICHERT discussed how archaeological research and national identity interrelate in Carinthia, Austria. After defining national identity and differentiating it from nationalism, he sets out to illustrate what he calls the “political use of national identity” (p. 95) in this particular case. His starting point is his premise summarised in the sentence “national identity is virtual and constructed” (p. 112). He shows how his definition of national identity excludes any biological or genetic factors, but is also based on the individual’s image of one’s own past, while this identity is ever-changing. Thus, Eichert follows the volume’s overall definition of national identity as something subjective and beyond the rational, and he makes a convincing case. In the case of Carinthia, he mainly focuses on two examples of material culture, the Karnburg and the Prince’s Stone, which have been the object of controversy between Carinthia and Slovenia, since both groups claim national relevance, albeit under different connotations. By highlighting archaeology’s role in settling related disputes, or by kindling them, the author does an excellent job in unmasking underlying mechanisms. Importantly, EICHERT (p. 112) notes that, in this case, national identity found its origins in a collective belief in the interpretation of one’s own history. This form of identity finds its legitimisation by imagining this past reality. However, this image reinforces national identity today. While this interpretation of national identity construction makes sense, it begs the question, “Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Is national identity something constructed out of imagining a common past, for whatever purpose, or does de facto group awareness and identity precede any form of historical legitimation?” (EICHERT, p. 112).

KELLY JENKS does not take the detour of detailing a theoretical framework when arguing towards a subjective and constructed understanding of national identity. She begins by emphasising that Spanish colonial society of 19<sup>th</sup> century New Mexico was multicultural, thriving and forming an own form of ethnic identity, which only was contested when splitting from Spain and eventually becoming part of the U.S. While such context of the “other” strongly reminds the reader of the previous chapters as a prerequisite for the creation of a new national identity, the author maintains an idealistic perspective on Vecino society in which, according to her, “citizenship was ‘performed’ rather than ascribed” (p. 122) and supporting

this interpretation by archaeological research at San Miguel del Vado. Notably, the author talks about “civic identity” (p. 123) instead of national identity. Nonetheless, she highlights that newcomers to this village were “integrated” by being expected “to participate in [village] activities and, through them, were assimilated into colonial society” (p. 128), which apparently would support the relevance of a strong group identity for successful integration, by requiring any such newcomer to either join and become part of the society or be excluded by their own choice. The roles of racial prejudice by Anglo-Americans against Mexicans by creating an own identity as New Mexicans in that region is plausible. The main value of Jenks’ contribution lies in the argument for a historical archaeology that understands national identity as a possible bottom-up phenomenon, exercised and expressed by daily practices and shared rights and obligations, a form a societal entity, instead of something imposed top-down.

While this overall part’s main premise – the constructed nature of national identity – is clear, HAROLD MYTUM’S contribution about the emergence of nationalist identities in Celtic countries forms the entry to the “manipulation” part of the book. In general, acknowledging the volume’s broader definitional focus, he accounts the origins of the interest in a Celtic heritage in various countries to the antiquarian movement, as well as a certain form of folklore, similarly to Fowler and Noël’s chapter one the case of Arcadia. Mytum claims a multicultural heritage in Celtic countries, which appears to stand in contrast to any attempt to construct a “cultural purity” (p. 149). However, he also acknowledges the role of the “other” in gaining an understanding of own group identity, mentioning the example of the arrival of the Vikings in Ireland, making differences between groups and creating an awareness of own identity (p. 149). He elaborates his argument by focusing on the Isle of Man and the Manx people, showing the ambivalence of national identity creation along the variety of possible interpretations of symbolic landmarks such as the Tynwald mound, still the site of Manx parliament, but also Castle Rushen and Peel Castle. Suggesting that historically archaeology focuses on such symbols, at the cost of alternative narratives, Mytum carves out a purposefully arranged myth of nationhood, one that may not satisfy archaeological standards, but that works to create an identity. One could argue that the author, despite all criticism, accepts the realities of identity creation, while the reader may still wonder whether de facto group identity preceded the subsequent construction of national identity based on joint history and folklore.

AUDREY HORNING is less forgiving when delving into Irish historical archaeology. She describes Irish nationalism as a form of understanding of Irishness mostly derived from today’s interpretation of past oppression and perceived colonisation, as well as the experiences of famine and subsequent diaspora, that create an unrealistic picture of the Irish past, but one that gets activity advertised, for instance in the tourism industry, as well as politically instrumentalised. Horning critically reviews Ireland’s “colonial experience” and makes clear that such terminology is an overstatement. However, she ascribes the rise of nationalist sentiment to the experiences of the Famine and subsequent emigration, as well as the conflict referred to as The Troubles (1968-1998) (p. 176). She shows, quite convincingly, how the 1922 partitioning of Ireland took all sorts of nationalist excesses on both sides of the border, requiring numerous constructions of own identity as well as the “other” (p. 176 f.). Horning describes it as a crude oversimplification that being Irish meant to be “Celtic, Catholic, and rural” (p. 176) and that the topos of hardship and inferiority in relation to Britain was used to overstate the eventual role of independence. Historical archaeology, according to the author, supported this narrative by long excluding post-medieval archaeology, especially where findings could have conflicted with abovementioned narrative. Again, while this argumentation is convincing, it appears to solely focus on the political manipulation of such a form of identity construction – similar to Predovnik’s chapter – at the cost of certain historic facts that should not be downplayed or underestimated and should thus not be described as less real.

While the addressed issues are at the core of the topic of this volume, and explicitly of this second part, the sometimes biased dealing with underlying political perspectives of some of the authors must be criticised: Not all readers might consider this appropriate and might attest a lack of critical distance to own opinions.

MARGARET COMER’S contribution helps to illustrate this issue. She discusses the interactions of Danish royalty, Christian values and the current Danish welfare state, but unfortunately offers numerous statements that include a certain form of own ideology narrowing the perspective of a potentially very interesting chapter. Yet this is not the main problem; the lack of reflection is. While she begins in line with the book’s core paradigm of the constructed nature of national identity and the involvement of archaeology in creating this, along this case, she eventually takes a surprising turn in her argumentation when she proclaims the end of the “classical nation-

state" (p. 216) and blames Danish national identity as a hurdle to the integration of foreigners, before solemnly declaring worldwide linguistic and denominational multiculturalism. Considering strong nation-states in Eastern Europe or Asia, to provide common examples, such proclamations are surprising. While one can respect the author's opinion, it is questionable whether such political visions should be part of an edited volume aiming for a high academic standard with a readership novel to the topic, which would benefit from a more neutral approach. If objectivity and evidence is ignored, researchers could be guilty of the same ideological fallacies as the paradigms they seek to criticise.

That it is possible to argue in a different way is shown by MIKE BELASUS' chapter, based on clear argumentation and discussion of the relevant literature, showing how historical ship archaeology since the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been influenced by a political and nationalist agenda. Focused on the design and relevance of the cog ship type for the Hanseatic League, he proves how a lack of data, confronted with a nationalist political agenda, has not only prevented proper scientific archaeological work, but has also produced questionable typologies, evidence where there is none and, ultimately, a public image of the cog that is far from reality. As he calmly lays out, 19<sup>th</sup> century historians were mostly driven by the goal to educate people about their nations' past in order to create a new sense of unity and identity, rather than providing a critical analysis of their findings. An interesting overview of the historic development of relevant literature in historical ship archaeology from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until recently reveals not only political manipulation and personal agenda by authors, but also a lack of interest and proper archaeological work when opportunities to study ship wrecks presented themselves. In this sense, for the larger part of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Hanseatic League played a role in creating a notion of historic continuity and heritage. The 14<sup>th</sup> century ship found coincidentally in the river Weser in Bremen (Germany) in 1962 and the subsequent treatment of this find by historians is a point in case for Belasus (p. 233 ff.). His calm and grounded chapter ends with a call for more critical reflection on such research heritage and the resulting paradigms and prejudices, in order to allow for proper research.

SARAH NEWSTEAD'S chapter aims at deconstructing the national history of Plymouth. She claims that the focus on the city as an important place in the history of the United Kingdom has had some influence on the city's historical narrative,

as well as to how researchers have studied this past (p. 243). As a Canadian citizen, she feels especially suited to analyse the city's historiography and archaeology from an external – perhaps more objective – perspective, which is a bold claim (p. 245). Congenially, she relativizes this statement by referring to her own ideological predetermination and hypothesising that such historical cultural imprint is common. Newstead focusses on Sir Francis Drake as a representative of the extensive history of Plymouth. By referring to excavated artefacts and their subsequent treatment in an English national historical narrative, she shows that also this archaeological work was under the direct influence of such a narrative, struggling with findings that contradict the accepted interpretation of history. For instance, some archaeological finds in Plymouth indicate strong economic ties to the Iberian Peninsula, despite a historic focus on hostilities (p. 251 ff.). For the author, this is a welcomed opportunity to deconstruct some of this narrative. While it is crucial to do so, based on novel finds, and to provide alternative narratives, the archaeological record alone too may not be enough to do so, since it says little about the immediate mentality of people at a given time. The fact that trade continued with Portugal, even during times of hostility with Spain, as indicated by the large number of excavated ceramic sherds from that time that can be traced to Portugal (but not Spain), is not enough to challenge – or even contradict – the perceived conflict with a generalised Iberia. Business and trade don't necessarily follow the same rules as politics. Nonetheless, such an argument means splitting hairs, since the author's argument is sound.

LU ANN DE CUNZO refers to an interesting example of colonialism of the New World by Sweden, which maintained a colony in the Chesapeake region between 1638 and 1655. Although this official colonial status has long ended, the author asks why this former status may still be relevant and states that the case of Sweden as a colonial power in North America is interesting, since the Swedish Americans and the Swedish government seem to have come to a mutual agreement "*to metaphorically integrate the homeland and colony in a kind of neo-colonial imperialism, or re-colonization*" (p. 265). As the author elaborates, such a situation makes a critical treatment of Swedish colonialism difficult. As other chapters in this edited volume do too, the author elaborates on her understanding of nationalism, relying heavily on the work of Gellner (1983), who claims that nations are modern inventions that lack historical continuity (p. 265 f.). While the nation-state is a comparatively

recent phenomenon, and its origins are within the realm of the history of modernity, it is questionable whether denying this concept legitimacy will support any novel argument. It certainly cannot be a basis for the subsequent thesis – adapted from Hübinette (2012) – that Sweden’s struggle with a post-colonial identity is caused by its lack of acknowledgement of racism and colonialism. While there may be evidence for this, linking past colonial history and a lack of reckoning with such past directly to any forms of nationalism and national identity, limiting it to its “*fraught nature*” (p. 284), is a construct that would need a more solid theoretical basis – beyond ideology.

Part 3 of this book, referring to the absence of national identity, sounds very promising and novel, as the reader can expect to see the role of historical archaeology in the failed creation of national identity. This also implies that the creation of some sort of national identity is not necessarily negatively connoted.

FAHRI DIKKAYA focussed on historical archaeology in Turkey after the introduction of Kemalism as a result of the aftermath of WW1. He argues that, for the sake of creating a new, secular, Western-oriented and modernised nation-state, Turkish archaeology has consciously ignored the post-medieval past, for the benefit of the ancient times, attempting to identify a – Western-oriented – continuity where none existed. While his arguments detailing the prioritisation of Turkish archaeology are conclusive, he fails to provide evidence for deliberate intention, while the general purpose of related archaeological research to move Turkey closer to the Western world and to forge a Turkish national identity is clear, and he provides examples to support his point. However, describing the Ottoman Empire as a “*multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious*” counterpart to the – imagined – homogenous and secular Turkey under Atatürk (p. 297) means to define a spectrum between multicultural, cosmopolitan societies on the one hand and mono-ethnic, secular nation-states on the other, which does not exist in reality and provides an extreme positive view on the realities of the Ottoman Empire and its impact on its neighbours (IMBER, 2002; PREDOVNIK, in this volume). The author also appears to perceive secularism as a potential threat to Ottoman heritage, an aspect that appears several times throughout the chapter (e.g. p. 301 ff.). While it cannot be denied that secularism played a key role in Kemalist ideology and in the modernisation of Turkey, equating it with a false understanding of nationalism and calling for a revision of “*Republican nationalism*” in favour of a – potentially – equally ideologically driven idealisation of Ottoman grandeur and perceived multiculturalism is disturbing,

especially considering current political movements in Turkey. As the author suggests, it is important to shed all ideological shackles – or at least to try, as such a goal can never be achieved – but there is the risk of merely exchanging one ideology for another. As the author quotes Gellner (1964, 169), “*nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist*” – especially considering EICHERT, who shows (in this volume) that we might always find in history what we want to find, to help to explain who we are or want to be – one needs to caution against reinventing an alternative past, since even the best archaeology would not be able to retrieve reality (e.g. KAFADAR, 1995).

SCHÄVELZON and IGARETA address what they consider an aborted formation of national identity on the Eastern Islands. Under the impact of European colonialism, so they claim, the island’s inhabitants’ national identity was constantly hindered. Contrary to common belief, they perceive the abandonment of the construction of the famous stone sculptures – the moai – on the island not as an indication of the beginning of the end of local culture, but as a strategic and necessary adjustment of the island’s population to the environmental collapse and the resulting socio-cultural upheavals, even before the Europeans arrived in 1722. Since archaeology usually focussed on the pre-historic times of the island, the research has to date ignored the inhabitants’ adaptability to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, challenges and the roles of slavery and diseases in preventing any formation of national identity. The authors claim that the local culture was considered as “*dying*”, with only KATHERINE ROUTLEDGE challenging this perspective (p. 320), a result the author ascribes to the fact that she was female. While it remains unclear what disqualifies male researchers from reaching similar conclusions, the authors succeed in drawing a rough history of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century of the Eastern Islands inhabitants and show the difficulties in forming a national identity when all that history can provide are “*a few oral histories, a few costumes, and the almost miraculous survival of the Rapa Nui language*” (p. 327). Not only, so argue the authors, is it apparently not enough for an independent form of national identity, the problem is enforced by the lack of any other concepts that support nation-building, such as heroes or any foundational moments. This problem could be addressed by a historical archaeology that also considers the island’s most recent past. In this sense, this chapter reconciles the reader with some of the other chapters, questioning whether a national identity is something to strive for.

After this brief – and at times superficial – review of the single chapters, the following can be concluded: The volume edited by Brooks and Mehler is timely and interesting for anyone aiming to get a quick overview of the current discussion regarding historical archaeology's roles in nationalism and national identity. Indeed, this perspective opens the door for more honest criticism of the discipline. However, the reader would also benefit from an integration of more controversial perspectives in this context, ones that challenge the current paradigm of national identity creation or investigate the role of a strong national identity. Especially readers new to the subject would benefit from extending a critical perspective in this direction. It could also be discussed whether distinct political statements and authors' ideologies – if expressed purposefully – should form part of academic writing in this discipline, or if a more distant objectivity would be more suitable. If personal statements are permitted, simply deconstructing the phenomenon of national identity does not address the source of today's political challenges; also, it offers no alternative. Global capitalism is largely decoupled from the lives of the average human being on this planet, often benefitting the few but ignoring the powerless. Most visibly, we are experiencing social distortions and dispersion, hyper-individualisation, de-secularisation and terrorism, with increasing migration movements and all-accompanying challenges as symptoms. In short, although we may be just at the beginning of global social turmoil, while many countries find themselves turned against each other, elites proceed more or less as usual. Thus: What will the deconstruction of national identity under a new political paradigm change for the better? And is propagating further cultural globalisation a satisfying alternative? To open this discussion, this book makes an excellent beginning.

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Dr. Christoph Klaus Streb  
Maison des Sciences Humaines  
11, Porte des Science, 4366 Esch-sur-Alzette  
Luxemburg  
christoph.streb@uni.lu