
Francia. Forschungen zur westeuropäischen Geschichte
Herausgegeben vom Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris
(Institut historique allemand)
Band 17/1 (1990)

DOI: 10.11588/fr.1990.1.53899

Rechtshinweis

Bitte beachten Sie, dass das Digitalisat urheberrechtlich geschützt ist. Erlaubt ist aber das Lesen, das Ausdrucken des Textes, das Herunterladen, das Speichern der Daten auf einem eigenen Datenträger soweit die vorgenannten Handlungen ausschließlich zu privaten und nicht-kommerziellen Zwecken erfolgen. Eine darüber hinausgehende unerlaubte Verwendung, Reproduktion oder Weitergabe einzelner Inhalte oder Bilder können sowohl zivil- als auch strafrechtlich verfolgt werden.

Herwig WOLFRAM, *Die Geburt Mitteleuropas. Geschichte Österreichs vor seiner Entstehung 378–907*, Berlin (Siedler Verlag) 1987, 584 p., 7 maps.

Herwig Wolfram, Director of the Institute for Austrian Historical Research and Ordinarius for medieval history and the auxiliary sciences in the University of Vienna, has written a massive volume intended, by and large, to discuss the history of the region, once dominated by the Habsburg multi-ethnic state, during the period 378–907. Wolfram covers a vast array of material beginning in part one with the period 378–536/68, i.e. from the coming of the Huns to the Lombard invasion of Italy. Part two focusses upon the Agilofinger (vor 555–788/94) while parts three and four deal with the Carolingians until 907 and the Magyar »annexation«. The fifth and sixth parts of ›Geburt‹ treat the various peoples who made an impact on ›Mitteleuropa‹ and their institutions, respectively.

In the context of treating the various noteworthy peoples of the region, it may perhaps be regarded as an act of courage, given the present climate of opinion in Austria, that Wolfram managed to include a short page on »Die Juden«. They do not appear, however, in the otherwise rather fulsome index prepared by Heinrich Berg. Comprehensiveness does not appear to have been a goal in the bibliography as works in English, for example, appear to have been given comparatively little attention. My ›Merovingian Military Organization‹ (1972); ›History of the Alans in the west‹ (1973); and ›Early Medieval Jewish Policy‹ (1977) are all ignored.

›Geburt‹ can profitably be examined on at least two important levels, conceptualization and content. The former leaves much to be desired. The latter, by contrast, despite lacunae which are to be expected in any work that is so wide-ranging as ›Geburt‹ and some peculiar views on noteworthy issues, pretty much adheres to the state of the question. With regard to the early period, the ›status questionis‹ is what Wolfram has established in his now basic ›History of the Goths‹ and many articles.

I found Wolfram's conceptualization to be perplexing for two major reasons. First, once we leave behind the Orient Express and novels in the ›Prisoner Zenda‹-genre what is the purpose of the construct ›Mitteleuropa‹? To put it more conventionally, what does ›Mitteleuropa‹ however defined, and Wolfram's limits are not uncontroversial, have to do with the early Middle Ages? If Wolfram is merely trying to tell his fellow Austrians about their »roots« in the land on which they now live, why not say so? A title such as the »Austrian space« in the Early Middle Ages would have served well. This is certainly a legitimate purpose of public pedagogy, and Austrians should benefit from knowing more about the multi-ethnic and even the asiatic elements in their collective gene pool if not in their high culture. Indeed, one reason why it is so difficult to be sympathetic to Wolfram's ›Mitteleuropa‹ is because he is so successful in demonstrating its diversity and lack of unity.

A second major problem with the conceptualization is its biologic metaphor, i.e. ›Geburt‹. As the subtitle of this work makes clear this is ›A History of Austria Before its Formation‹. In short, the birth of ›Mitteleuropa‹ would seem to be put forth as the necessary pre-condition for the ›Entstehung‹ of Austria. ›Mitteleuropa‹ thus is a kind of multi-ethnic ›Ursippe‹. Yet there would appear to have been a multi-century dormant larval stage between the ›Geburt‹ of ›Mitteleuropa‹ and the ›Entstehung‹ of Austria. We certainly cannot speak of a Middle European, as delimited by Wolfram, ›Zusammengehörigkeitsbewußtsein‹ in the era following 907. The chronological gap between ›Geburt‹ and the further development of ›Mitteleuropa‹, much less of Austria, seems immense. Does Wolfram really want us to see the Magyar ›Landnahme‹ as the ›Kindheit‹ of central Europe? I would suggest that middle Europe's ›Geburt‹, as Wolfram conceptualizes it, was still born after 529 years of labor and 548 pages of text and apparatus.

Specialists in various areas will undoubtedly find particulars of Wolfram's historical account with which to take issue. For example, I would like to see greater attention given to the Roman

substratum of society and particularly to the topographical impact of the empire. The relative success of the Carolingians in the Danube region is debatable, in part perhaps, because no really clear criteria for success have been adumbrated. The entire treatment of institutions is far too brief and in any case these data should be integrated into the narrative as a whole. The twelve pages devoted to »Wie und wovon lebt der Mensch« provides a good example of the problems caused by the neglect of material culture. Indeed, Wolfram uses »evidence« from the Utrecht Psalter and the Bayeux Tapestry to illustrate various points. The latter was produced in Canterbury, England, sometime between 1066 and 1082. Fortunately, such obvious lapses are rare.

Finally, I will risk one observation on the very volatile Moravian-question. It seems to me that various writers during the early Middle Ages have differing views of where »Moravia« should be located. For example, the author of the Annals of Fulda would seem to see the geography very differently from Constantine Porphyrogenetos. A careful examination of the other texts likely will show that the location of Moravia is source-controlled much in the same way as *Francia*.

›Geburt‹, on the whole, provides a useful collection of linked information on a rather important area that traditionally is not available in a single volume. The text is readable but the notes are difficult and have a »rushed« sense about them. Translation of ›Geburt‹ into English and French, stripped of the potential for misinterpretation as a bit of Austrian nationalist mischief, would be useful for students who, lacking German, do not have easy access to information on this region.

Bernard S. BACHRACH, Minneapolis

Joachim EHLERS, *Geschichte Frankreichs im Mittelalter*, Stuttgart, Berlin, Köln, Mainz (Kohlhammer) 1987, 430 p.

Le choix de l'image illustrant la jaquette de ce livre – la tête couronnée de Charles V, détail d'une statue en provenance soit des Quinze-Vingt, soit du couvent des Célestins, soit du décor sculpté du Louvre et aujourd'hui conservée au Musée du Louvre –, indique d'emblée le thème central, privilégié, de l'ouvrage: même si l'histoire démographique, économique, sociale, religieuse et culturelle est très loin d'être absente, c'est l'histoire politique et même, par moments, résolument événementielle, qui domine. Il s'agit de suivre le devenir de l'État et des structures étatiques à travers un demi-millénaire. La monarchie capétienne, ses institutions, son emprise, son rayonnement en France et hors de France, ses fondements idéologiques, ses relations avec ses amis et ses ennemis, ses vassaux et ses sujets: tel est le cœur du propos. Pratiquement chaque roi a droit à un développement spécifique, depuis Charles le Simple jusqu'à Charles VIII, au moins jusqu'à son mariage avec Anne de Bretagne – dernier épisode du livre, qui finit ainsi un peu abruptement.

Pour réaliser cette puissante et élégante synthèse, dont il faut admirer le constant équilibre et la remarquable qualité de l'information, l'auteur a eu recours à une vaste bibliographie, d'environ six cents titres, au sein de laquelle les ouvrages anciens n'ont pas été systématiquement éliminés. C'est ainsi qu'y figurent le livre de Boutaric sur Philippe le Bel et la somme de du Fresne de Beaucourt sur Charles VII.

Quelques cartes, des tableaux généalogiques, une chronologie complètent l'ensemble.

Issu de l'*Imperium* carolingien, rappelle l'auteur, le royaume de France a trouvé plus tôt que l'Allemagne et que l'Italie les éléments de sa conscience nationale et de son unité étatique: c'est en fonction de ce point de vue que l'ouvrage ne part ni des Gaulois, ni de Clovis, ni même du traité de Verdun mais des dernières années du IX^e siècle. L'option est parfaitement défendable, encore qu'elle aille à l'encontre de l'idée que les médiévaux eux-mêmes se faisaient de leur passé.