

Ábrahám, Barna, ed., *Magyar-Szlovák Terminológiai Kérdések / Mad'ar-Slovenské Terminologické otázky*. Piliscsaba: Pons Strigoniensis, 2008. 188 pp. (Hungarian), 182 pp. (Slovak).

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Since good scholarship requires clarity, terminological ambiguity can impede understanding. Terminology becomes particularly problematic if both historians and historical actors use the same concepts, slogans, or phrases. Ábrahám's volume, proceedings from two conferences held in 2006, explores terminological difficulties in Slovak-Hungarian historiography. The volume, a Hungarian initiative, was published at Péter Pázmány Catholic University with support from the Hungarian Ministry of Education and Culture and the St. Adalbert Central European Research Group. Ábrahám, however, has solicited participation from several noted Slovak scholars, intending the work to contribute to "a meaningful understanding of our shared past" (9/9), and striking a careful balance between Slovak and Hungarian perspectives. The book is completely bilingual, with all contributions printed in both Slovak and Hungarian; nine translated from Slovak, eleven from Hungarian. (References below give "Hungarian page numbers / Slovak page numbers").

Ábrahám has grouped the contributions into four sections, perhaps because some are very brief. The first section contains theoretical or historiographical ruminations on the importance of terminology. The second explores nationalism, either ethnonyms (e.g., the Hungarian word *tót*, the Slovak distinction between *uhor* and *mad'ar*) or words for "nation" (e.g., "political nation," the distinction between "nation" and "nationality"). The third section discusses ideologies (e.g., Pan Slavism, Slovak loyalism, and "chauvinism"). A final section examines the politics of place-names.

Despite the volume's ostensible aims, several contributors seem locked in a Hungarian/Slovak dichotomy. The volume, for example, provides readers with both a "Hungarian" and a "Slovak" perspective on the politics of naming Pozsony/Bratislava, but neither contribution engages seriously with German or Jewish experiences in "Pressburg," even if István Kollai briefly mentions the 1945 expulsions (168-69/160). Pavol Žigo's contribution, more troublingly, shows little interest in engaging with any non-Slovak historiography, or indeed with historiography generally. Žigo discusses purely linguistic questions, such as the vowel shift from the *e* in medieval *Breslava* to the *a* in contemporary *Bratislava*. He presents two moderately useful timelines (covering the years 907 – 1330 and 1773 – 1919) summarizing how various sources refer to the city, but, despite his apparent disinterest in the twentieth century, felt the need to describe the city as "the capital city of Slovakia" five times in three pages of text. One wonders why Ábrahám included Žigo's contribution at all: other Slovak scholars would surely have been more willing to promote understanding and reconciliation across national lines.

No Hungarian contributors match Žigo's provincialism, but some reproduce tired national tropes. Zsolt Vesztróczy regrettably conflates the orthographic Pan Slavism of Ján Herkel and Ján Kollár with the potential Russian expansionism that Lajos Batthyány and Miklós Wesselényi feared (87-92/85-89); later he derives Štúr's 1840 persecution at the hands of Magyar patriots from articles Štúr wrote seven years later (92-93/89-90). Given Ábrahám's careful balance over the Pozsony/Bratislava name dispute, one also wonders why both contributions on "Pan Slavism" come from Hungarian scholars based in Budapest. That said,

József Demmel, in one of the volume's stronger essays, provides a focused and useful study of what "Panslavism" meant in Jenő Komjáthy's 1888 poem "Hang the Panslavs!"

Several contributions summarize the terminology found in specific sources. Bence Tarján explains the placename conventions in Ábel Ferenc Xavér's eighteenth-century missionary notebook, providing a handy four-page chart showing the various names used then and now. Sándor János Tóth similarly discusses place names from the medieval *Gesta Hungarorum*. Both essays could help researchers locate relevant sources, but neither shed much light on the Slovak-Hungarian relationship. Karol Wlachovský's somewhat stronger essay discusses the translation of proper nouns, moving beyond city names to discuss street names and the translation of peace treaties. He briefly mentions Serbian, English, and French phrases to illuminate Slovak usage, and ends with the hope that his efforts may reduce "the tendency toward unproductive recriminations in Slovak and Hungarian coexistence in the Central European region of the European Union" (188/182).

Contributions focusing on national ethnonyms more closely address the volume's overall theme. Szelesti's study of the paired terms *Hungarus-Hungaricus* / *Magyarország-Magyar* / *Uhorský-Maďarský* shows that eighteenth-century Hungarians easily differentiated these concepts, even though difficult nineteenth-century Hungarian patriots professed to find the distinction obscure. In an enlightening second contribution, Wlachovský considers the ethnonym *tót*. Usefully avoiding an unproductive discussion about the term's pejorative connotations or lack thereof, he concentrates instead on word's origins, variants, and usage in various historic contexts, showing that the word had Panslavic undertones during the nineteenth century. Milan Majtán, finally, uses numerous primary sources to show how and when the Slovak terms *uhor* and *maďar* ceased to be synonyms and acquired the distinct meanings "citizen of Hungary" and "ethnic Hungarian." Disappointingly, Majtán only provides a schematic chronology in place of commentary or analysis; his essay is but an archive of relevant quotations.

Chapters from the opening "theoretical" section ponder how to create a joint understanding of the shared past. István Käfer provides a good summary of seventeenth-century Hungarian loyalism among non-Magyars, and while he acknowledges the reality of contemporary national states, he claims that "the reality of the Hungarian kingdom (*uhorsko*) lives on today" in the form of common culture and "spiritual creativity" (29/28). Peter Andruška's ruminations about pre-Trianon Hungary thoughtfully link the multilingual past to the European Union's globalized future. Peter Kónya's list of terminological difficulties, however, does little to promote a post-nationalistic historiographical understanding. Kónya provocatively claims, for example, that the term "Ukrainians" (instead of "Rusyns") is not merely controversial, but simply "incorrect" (34/33). Kónya also worries that some historical sources describe the Lutheran church as "reformed" while others use the term "evangelical" (33/32) without explaining why he considers these apparent synonyms problematic.

The longest and most useful contribution is Iván Bertényi's illuminating analysis of Hungarian "chauvinism." Bertényi's links Hungarian attempts to assimilate Slovaks to broader themes in nineteenth-century European nationalism, explaining Dezső Bánffy's striking advocacy of "chauvinism" partly by tracing the history of the word from its French roots, and partly by comparing Bánffy's national ideals to those of European contemporaries such as Bismarck, Cecil Rhodes, Roman Dmowski, and so on. By drawing on sources in Czech, English, French, German, Polish, Romanian, and Russian, Bertényi rests his conclusions on a firmer documentary foundation than other contributors.

Few essays in this volume engage with sources in languages other than Slovak or Hungarian. The nineteenth-century author Johann Csaplovics, for example, published mostly in German, but Peter Káša (note 9) and Milan Majtán (note 18) cite him from a Slovak translation. Only László Szelesti, to his credit, cites the original German (note 7). Authors occasionally refer to sources in Latin or German, but Anglophone scholarship is almost entirely neglected: Robert Pynsent is mentioned but not cited (36/34), and István Deák is cited from a Hungarian translation (Vestróczy note 15). Neither study of Pan Slavism mentions Hans Kohn, Michael Petrovich, or even Kirschbaum's *Pan Slavism in Slovak Literature*; neither chapter on the various names for Pozsony/Bratislava refer to Peter Bugge's excellent 2004 article.

Recent tensions make the Slovak – Hungarian relationship a matter of current concern, and Ábrahám surely deserves credit for trying to raise understanding between two divergent and contested national historiographies. The barriers between Slovak and Hungarian narratives nevertheless remain high, and the volume fails to achieve much synthesis between national narratives. Ábrahám's book illustrates that good intentions are not enough for good scholarship. While some individual contributions contain valuable insights, the volume as a whole embodies several faults common to conference proceedings. Some contributions are lackadaisical; several are too short to make a meaningful contribution. Only one contribution has more than ten pages; several are under six pages. Ábrahám would have done better to find higher quality submissions from fewer participants, and to insist that participants put greater effort into their contributions.

Works Cited

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