

focusing on religion and the historic origins of the ‘Turks’. At the same time, Protestant and Catholic theological authors never considered this an end in itself but rather put the Ottoman and Islamic danger into the service of confessional polemics.

The book is an overview of the sixteenth-century perceptions of the Ottomans and Islam in the German lands. To some extent it rather summarizes research instead of presenting new findings. Unfortunately, some chapters rely quite heavily on outdated literature. What is problematic is that a number of recent and quite important works in German on the very topic of the book (such as Thomas Kaufmann’s ‘*Türckenbüchlein*’, or Johannes Ehmann’s *Luther, Türken und Islam*), as well as studies by Ottomanists, for instance on the Habsburg-Ottoman conflict in Hungary, have not been used. German-language quotes in the text and the bibliography are more often than not inaccurate, as are names of people, places and contemporary terminology (‘Skanderberg’, ‘Giovio’, ‘Reichstäge’, among many others). Several bibliographical references of primary sources in German and Latin are faulty. Nevertheless, the book contains useful information for English-speaking students of the subject. As far as particular details are concerned, it should be used with some caution.

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***Mitten in Europa: Verflechtung und Abgrenzung in der Schweizer Geschichte.* By Andre Holenstein. Baden: Hier und Jetzt. 2014. 288 pp. \$44.00 (hardcover).**

***The Swiss and their Neighbours, 1460–1560: Between Accommodation and Aggression.* By Tom Scott. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2017. 219 pp. £55.00 (hardcover).**

European historiography has been profoundly shaped by national frameworks of analysis since the nineteenth century, just as much in Europe’s smaller nations as in the larger ones. The tenacity of national perspectives results both from historians’ own practices and from their embeddedness in cultures that continue to treat national history as fundamentally important. This may be illustrated for Switzerland by the debates that broke out in 2015 over the relatively insignificant Italian War battle of Marignano of 1515, which had become an icon of neutrality in Swiss national historiography. Fiery debates in the media culminated in an avidly attended public showdown between the retired head of Switzerland’s main populist party, Christoph Blocher, and a leading liberal historian, Thomas Maissen.

The two works on Switzerland reviewed here also demonstrate the potency of national discourses even as each puts those discourses into question. Although very different in approach and audience, each represents a masterful historian’s effort to bring detailed historical evidence to bear on Swiss politics and identity both before and after Switzerland became a nation in the modern sense. Andre Holenstein’s *Mitten in Europa*, addressed primarily to non-specialists, confronts these issues directly over the entire course of Swiss history by identifying two interlocking historical processes, *Verflechtung* (interconnection) and *Abgrenzung* (demarcation), that shaped the emergence of Switzerland. Tom Scott provides a meticulously researched analysis

of the critical period from 1460 and 1560, focused on two problematic territorial additions to the Swiss *Eidgenossenschaft* as it existed around 1500, namely the Thurgau (1460) and the Vaud (1536). Both books end, notably, with references to Switzerland's position today in relation to the European Union that also imply that the Union's current circumstances share some similarity to the Swiss cantons' earlier discordant alliances.

Holenstein's *Mitten in Europa* traverses the traditional compass of Swiss history from the thirteenth century to the present, though from a novel perspective. After reviewing the unsustainable mythos of a thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Switzerland and introducing the Confederation's fifteenth-century foundations as currently understood by historians, Holenstein turns to two long chapters on the early modern Confederation, drawing on a wide-ranging historical literature. The first recounts the many ways the region that was becoming Switzerland experienced connections (*Verflechtung*) with its neighbours, including political alliances, mercantile ties, and the vital mercenary business. The second concentrates on a series of demarcations (*Abgrenzungen*) that increasingly set the Swiss apart (in reality or in their self-assessment); examples include neutrality, the notion that the Swiss represented peasants opposed to oppressive noble tyranny, and the growing sense in the eighteenth century that the Alps, frugality, and industriousness limned a distinctive Swiss national character.

Although Holenstein's dual approach effectively shows both the many connections between the Swiss and their neighbours and their own evolving sense of distinctiveness, certain problems lurk in his strategy. One the one hand, it seems paradoxical to critique nation-centred history writing by concentrating on the connections between the nation in question and the rest of Europe: the narrative's structure reproduces the very category it questions. On the other hand, the voices propagating mythical histories, which Holenstein seeks to confound, rarely deny that the heirs of William Tell experienced connections with their neighbours, but have argued since the early modern period that such connections depended on the *difference* between the Swiss and all others. The last two chapters in *Mitten in Europa* address these challenges directly, however, developing a nuanced and persuasive analysis of the Swiss predicament. Most importantly, Holenstein recasts the seeming binarity of *Verflechtung* and *Abgrenzung* by showing their complementarity. Indeed, drawing on extensive historical analysis by earlier national historians, he argues: 'Thus the Confederates also drew their idealized self-image from transnational connections in a fundamental way' (p. 249). By re-processing external views of Swissness—accusation of crude peasant rebellion in the 15th century transformed into the pious virtue of *frume edlen Puren*, or cultural and linguistic fragmentation recast as multi-cultural pluralism—Holenstein argues that the Swiss in fact constructed their own identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries largely from outsiders' perception of them.

At first glance, Tom Scott's *The Swiss and their Neighbours* seems less ambitious. The volume explores in painstaking detail how two significant regions, the Thurgau and the Vaud, came under the political control of the ramshackle Swiss Confederation of the late Middle Ages. For the Thurgau, Scott's focus is primarily juridical, demonstrating that the confused legal status of the Thurgau and its parts rendered it a lasting bone of contention for the Swiss and their neighbours, pre-eminently the nearby city of Constance. Whereas older historiography viewed the accession of the Thurgau as inevitable expansion towards a natural frontier (marred only because free-lancing military bands rather than cantonal authorities took the lead), and more recent accounts place it among the acquisitions that helped strengthen common Swiss institutions, Scott demonstrates convincingly that the serious gaps in legal authority that resulted from the Thurgau's irregular seizure as well as from Constance's strong legal position ensured that rule over the Thurgau spurred conflict

rather than coalescence among the Swiss. While some legal issues were resolved after the 1499 Swiss-Habsburg war, the Reformation once again turned the Thurgau into a bone of contention, now between Protestant and Catholic Confederates. Following the revisionist line on late medieval Switzerland championed by Guy Marchal and Roger Sablonier, Scott therefore demotes the Thurgau to an unstable buffer zone between entangled systems of governance, commerce and conflict in southern Swabia and the emergent Confederation.

Turning to the Vaud, a prize whose seizure by Bern and Fribourg is usually connected to the Swiss Reformation and the Protestantization of Geneva by Calvin, Scott once again offers a revisionist analysis, exploring the region between Geneva, the Jura, Bern and the Alps as a political playground among ‘a heptagon of competing powers’ (p. 64). Clarifying the course of events during the endless wrangling that included the Burgundian wars of the 1470s, the vicissitudes of Savoyard dominion, the uncertain status of the Franche Comté and the rivalry among Bern, Fribourg and Geneva is a challenge for Scott, and following the twists and turns remains a challenge for the reader, even with map in hand. Although Scott’s most straightforward claim—that there was no ‘conquest’ of the Vaud in 1536, and what did happen was only tangentially connected to the Reformation—is laid out convincingly, Scott does not entirely clarify the events involved, which will remain, as he characterizes them, ‘highly controversial’ (p. 173). What his meticulous analysis does do is undermine any notion that Bern’s expansion related to natural borders or some shared Swiss national interest, since no national perspective can be discerned among the entangled goals of the many actors involved.

It is striking that two books otherwise so different should both end by evoking today’s European Union as a possible *comparandum* to the early modern Swiss. Scott does so by evoking a sixteenth-century diplomat, Ascanio Marso of Venice, who characterized the Swiss Confederation as a ‘league of discordant members’ (p. 177). Discord can produce pragmatism and flexibility, however, as well as conflict and failure, Scott notes, injecting a hopeful note into his skeptical view of the Swiss around 1500 (and thus of the Union in 2015). Holenstein develops the point further when he concludes that ‘The formation of supra-cantonal as well as supra-national arrangements [*Ordnungen*]*—*the comparison is compelling—on a federalist basis requires time’ (p. 258). He thus recapitulates a form of *Verflechtung* that he earlier analyses, namely the argument that Switzerland’s own idiosyncratic history might have lessons beyond its borders. This idea was developed by diverse European thinkers who drew on the Swiss experience to promote their own agendas, which Swiss thinkers then employed to further a Swiss sense of national distinctiveness.

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***Wenn Hunger droht: Bewältigung und religiöse Deutung (1400–1980)*. Edited by Andreas Holzem. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. 2017. 324 pp. €69.00 (hardback).**

This edited volume examines how the Christian churches dealt both practically and theologically with the problem of hunger over six centuries in Germany. Compiled and introduced by the eminent Tübingen theologian and church historian, Andreas Holzem, and with contributions from ten church and profane historians, this volume originated out of one of the many