

2011

Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey [book review]

Alexander Kitroeff

Haverford College, akitroef@haverford.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarship.haverford.edu/history_facpubs

Repository Citation

Kitroeff, Alexander. "Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey [book Review]." *Journal of World History* 22.1 (2011): 202-04. Print.

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the History at Haverford Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Haverford Scholarship. For more information, please contact nmedeiro@haverford.edu.



PROJECT MUSE®

Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey (review)

Alexander Kitroeff

Journal of World History, Volume 22, Number 1, March 2011, pp. 202-204
(Article)

Published by University of Hawai'i Press
DOI: [10.1353/jwh.2011.0013](https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2011.0013)



➔ For additional information about this article

<http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/jwh/summary/v022/22.1.kitroeff.html>

tigious than northern dialects in Italy, and that southern dialects are more dissimilar to standard Italian. Yet “Italian” was spoken not across northern and central Italy (even Romans spoke *romanesco*) but only in Tuscany, whose regional language, the language of Dante and Petrarch, became standard literary Italian and the national language of united Italy. Dialects have long been insulted in the north as well as in the south; for example, the *patois* of rural Piedmont is named for its supposed resemblance to animal gruntings. To the south in Naples, by contrast, the beautiful local language was celebrated in songs that remain famous worldwide. The dialects and languages of the mountains and valleys of northern Italy are just as rural, remote, rough, mocked, and dissimilar as the various southern Italian languages; in some cases, even more so, as in *veneto*, spoken in the region of Italy with the largest overall emigration, and *bergamasco*, as documented so effectively in the film *L'albero degli zoccoli* (The Tree of Wooden Clogs, 1978). In key scenes, a peasant farmer outside of Bergamo is ashamed and disempowered when he speaks in dialect before the priest and educated classes, with their polished Italian cadences. The priest orders him to send his bright son to school, because education is the only way he will break free from the poverty of sharecropping.

Carnevale neglects several issues that would make her work have more impact in the field of world history. She does not mention in the text Italy's high rates of return migration, about 50 percent, which further complicated the impact of language on both sides of the Atlantic. Nor does she treat other transnational relationships that connected immigrants with their friends and families at home.

Such issues may be addressed in future studies. To her credit, Carnevale's work raises the issue of immigrants' language, long neglected in studies of international migration or overly simplified to a useless caricature. This book points out the depths of meaning for an immigration experience lost in translation.

MARK I. CHOATE
Brigham Young University

Tormented by History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey. By UMUT ÖZKİRİMLİ and SPYROS A. SOFOS. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008. 320 pp. \$45.00 (cloth).

This comparative presentation and analysis of Greek and Turkish nationalism is an extremely ambitious undertaking. Its authors, Umut

Özkırımlı, a professor of politics at Istanbul Bilgi University, and Spyros A. Sofos, a senior research fellow at Kingston University in London, are both experts on the theory of nationalism. In this book they examine Greek and Turkish nationalism, a dual project very few other scholars have attempted and whose efforts they set out very clearly in their introduction. Their own approach blends theory with empirical data with the aim of pursuing an ambitious three-part agenda. They seek to provide a critical analysis of the emergence and development of the Greek and Turkish nationalist projects, a critique of the official myths and narratives of those two nationalisms, and relate those two cases to the debates on nationalism and also to theorize the respective nationalisms. This three-part goal is as daunting as it sounds for two reasons. The first, obviously, is because to cover such an agenda in a book-length study is more than challenging. The second is that there is a dearth of theoretically informed and empirical studies of both those nationalisms, and this makes the task of an overall synthesis even more difficult, although it must be said that the two authors have nonetheless marshaled an impressive array of secondary sources.

Özkırımlı and Sofos set about their considerable tasks by adopting a thematic approach. Following a first introductory chapter, the second one is on modernity and Westernization; the third is on culture, identity, and difference; the fourth is on the past—in terms of memory and history; the fifth is on space and territory; the sixth is on the ways minorities are regarded; and the seventh is a concluding chapter. Internally, each chapter is divided into two parts, one that examines Greek nationalism and the other Turkish nationalism. The authors take great care to demonstrate, time and time again, the constructiveness and internal inconsistencies of the two nationalisms, what they call at one point the “existential schizophrenia” of Greek and Turkish nationalism. In this respect, their insightfulness is one of the strengths of their study.

Viewed as a whole, each chapter consists of a juxtaposition of the two nationalisms rather than a comparison or even contrast between them. Thus they tend to stress the differences even more than the similarities of the evolution of these two nationalisms. What we get therefore is a parallel discussion of how each nationalism relates to the particular topic of each chapter. But the thematic focus of each is not arranged either in terms of its relative importance or in terms of its chronological significance. Despite the extraordinary range of empirical sources consulted, there is a top-down sense to the authors' approach, namely a privileging of the themes, that is, the aspects of nationalism they consider significant. A different, more explicitly historiographi-

cally influenced approach could have privileged the chronology and on-the-ground evolution of these two nationalisms, and this may have highlighted their parallel or divergent paths more clearly and perhaps teased out the dynamic of their mutual opposition over time. In its present form, this juxtaposition of Greek and Turkish nationalism reads somewhat like a collection of stand-alone articles with parallel tracks that treat the Greek and Turkish experience according to the thematic focus of the chapter. And as a book-length study, therefore, this plan makes for difficult reading even for those with a working knowledge of the overall trajectory of both these nationalist projects. There is overlap among them, a back-and-forth along a fairly long chronological plan. And concerned with doing justice to their ambitious agenda, the authors pack as much theoretical and empirical information as possible in each chapter. Long paragraphs, dense prose in some parts, and a succession of theorists and nationalist advocates mentioned by name but not always contextualized requires a great deal of dedication on the part of the reader.

Yet it is well worth the effort. Toward the end of the book the authors, assessing their own contribution, describe it as a modest one that sought to piece together repressed narratives, demonstrating that Greek and Turkish nationalisms, though different (and one would add, opposed to each other), shared a common meandering over common landscapes as these were constructed over the past two centuries. They have certainly achieved that and have, perhaps, set a new agenda by showing how it is possible to view two neighboring nationalisms through the same theoretical and empirical gaze.

ALEXANDER KITROEFF
Haverford College

Stalin's Police: Public Order and Mass Repression in the USSR, 1926–1941. By PAUL HAGENLOH. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. 480 pp. \$45.00 (cloth).

It is a pleasure to review a work such as this. On a basic level this book provides a history of Soviet policing from Stalin's rise to power to the start of the Great Patriotic War, preceded by a brief consideration of policing during the tsarist era and early Soviet period to provide context. This is not a social history, nor can it be classified as part of the wave of supposedly and self-consciously "bottom-up" histories