

English summaries

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ENGLISH SUMMARIES

JEAN-FRANÇOIS BERGIER, "FROM THE ALPINE PASSAGE TO THE ALPINE AREA"

The foundation of the International Society for Historical Alpine Research is the fruit of a long process of maturing that took place in the course of more than 20 years of numerous meetings and publications. Nevertheless one can still count survey studies on the fingers of one hand. Indirectly this foundation also pays tribute to Fernand Braudel, a profound expert on the mountain range that, to his way of thinking, formed a space complementary to the seas. The society will quite directly contribute to the overcoming of regional, historiographical and linguistic obstacles by simplifying access to the extant literature. For a long time the mountains were looked upon by historians as an obstacle or, at best a stretch of the route. At present the perspectives are changing. The Alps are no longer looked upon as a transitory passage, but as a living-space in the true sense of the word.

RENÉ FAVIER, "THE HISTORY OF THE ALPS IN FRANCE. A SURVEY OF WORKS AND RESEARCH DIRECTIONS"

This brief panorama of historical research on the Alps in France is divided into three parts. The first indicates the plenitude of scholarly and research publications and periodicals. The second, more essential, part attempts to go over contemporary research, both in the sphere of archaeology (with classification according to periods: pre-history, proto-history, history) and that of history. It contains especially a short, thematically arranged presentation of the most important dissertations produced during the past ten years in French universities (on agrarian history, urban history, ecclesiastical history, industrial history). The third part is devoted to the various research groups taken up with the alpine world. Most of them derive from Grenoble, but also to be stressed is the originality and significance of the groups from Nice (especially in archaeology) and in Aix-en-Provence.

GAURO COPPOLA, "THEMES AND PROBLEMS OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF ALPINE REGIONS"

Unsatisfactory about the state of research on the Italian alps is less the number of studies than certain methodical approaches, an exaggerated fragmentation and sectoral gaps in research. A geo-anthropological approach often over-stresses the self-sufficiency and conservatism of the alpine regions. Of interest, however, are the most recent studies of communal statutes and feudal inter-relations among towns, communities, estates and regional states. Agrarian history has thus far devoted itself more to the valley regions than to the mountain zones and their cattle-raising. The – unequally explored – trading, craftsmen and commercial sector is to be seen in close connection with agriculture. Historical demography is still in its earliest stage. On the whole the supposed peculiarity of the mountain region is to be approached with caution: The "alpine civilization" can only be understood when the conditions of relations and exchanges it was involved in are taken into account.

LUIGI ZANZI, "TOWARDS AN ECOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE ALPS"

In order to understand the situation of alpine historical research it is useful taking a look at the history of historical treatises. The, at various times, fashionable avant-garde subjects have brought about consequent new interests in alpine research. This holds true for economic history, taking in anthropological and political institutional studies and ending up with ecological history. Despite this dependence on the changing interests of the science some progress can also be observed: the Alps are more and more being considered as a region with an identity of its own, the investigation of which calls for particular approaches and concepts. From this point of view the history of the environment is of special importance. It should not be tackled in the traditional manner, but should take into account natural events, and look upon nature as a leading figure in alpine history.

JON MATHIEU, "ALPINE DISCOURSE AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH PRACTICES IN SWITZERLAND"

In Switzerland the Alps count among the most important of all national symbols, and, at first sight, one would assume that alpine historical studies had acquired a corresponding status. This is not so: The more densely populated midland areas are, in practice, much more often a subject of study than the mountain regions. Nevertheless, research on the Swiss alpine regions over the past decades may be termed active, and the intensity thereof is on the up-grade. In contrast to ethnology and geography, which both traditionally apply themselves diligently to the Alps, historical studies should concentrate on the question of change and stability. An overall alpine perspective offers them in return additional opportunities of comparison.

ROGER SABLONIER, "ALPINE STUDIES FROM THE HISTORIAN'S POINT OF VIEW"

This contribution documents the perspectives of the historian in the context of interdisciplinary alpine studies (it was composed for the 2nd National Alpine Studies Congress of the Swiss Academy of Natural Sciences in Hergiswil, 27th October 1995). The concept of alpine research can be useful in determining territorial bounds. But it is unacceptable for it to suggest a historical unity of alpine development which should be credited to environmental pre-conditions. Such a unity would first have to be ascertained. There is no doubt that the variety of regional societies in the Alps is particularly marked. This "socio-diversity" (not in the sense of a normative image of what is worth preserving as in bio-diversity) makes the historical research thereof particularly attractive. The main aim thereby is an expansion of cultural orientation knowledge in the form of structural analogies.

FRANZ MATHIS, "INVESTIGATION OF THE ALPINE REGION IN AUSTRIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY"

Whenever, in Austrian historical writings so far, things went beyond the bare description of historical developments and the question of causal conditions was raised, it was other than "alpine" attempts at explanation that were clearly in the forefront. Individual manifestations were either termed Austrian, Tyrolean, Salzburgian, Styrian etc., or attempts at explanation were made via the ethnic structure of the population, or, at best, via the geographical pre-conditions – mountains or lowlands. Whether, in addition, there were also typical alpine structures and attitudes, can only be revealed by a comparison of the various alpine regions and of the non-alpine territories – a vast field of future historical research.

UTA LINDGREN, "REVIEW OF THE PRESENT STATE OF RESEARCH INTO THE HISTORY OF THE ALPS AND CURRENT PROJECTS IN GERMANY"

National reports on alpine history stumble over the difficulty that national boundaries are often no criterion of boundary-drawing in research. This may be true of Germany particularly since the Bavarian and Swabian share of the Alps is small. Thus the Alps play a correspondingly small role in national historical research. This need not be so, however, as the activities, for example, in the town of Kempten show. The German Alpine Association is aiming for an alpine-historical centre in a wider sense through the setting-up of a museum in Munich. Apart from that one can point to a series of historical publications that are devoted totally or in part to the German alpine region.

DARJA MIHELIC, "ON THE RESEARCH INTO THE ALPINE REGION OF SLOVENIA"

This contribution provides an overall view of research in historical sciences and other branches on the Slovenian alpine region. The focal points are the characterization of the research organization and a listing of definite projects.

The most important institution is the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, which is composed of 14 institutes. The History Institute deals with source editions and various long-term research projects, especially on the historical topography and colonization history of the Slovenian territory and on the economic and social history of the Slovene people. For international coordination in the sphere of historical research on the Alps this research centre would appear to be the most suitable of all.

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