

Nordidactica – Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education  
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Nordidactica 2013:1  
ISSN 2000-9879  
The online version of this paper can be found at: [www.kau.se/nordidactica](http://www.kau.se/nordidactica)

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**- Journal of Humanities and Social**  
**Science Education**

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## **Transformation of History textbooks from national monument to global agent**

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### *State-of-the-art*

*Abstract: It is my assumption that our way of understanding globalization in the last two decades has changed the subject matter of history. The focus has shifted from the regional and national to the global perspective. This is evident if we analyze German and Danish textbooks on history. This development and its consequences have only been vaguely reflected in the debates on history didactics. Perhaps we have accepted this development as unavoidable as it is often done in economic discourses? To my opinion it is an important matter to discuss in a context of history didactics: are we selling national history in order to accommodate to the new global standards? Or in a biblical sense: Selling our birthright for a mess of pottage - without reflections on the consequences? Or is focus on global development a didactical consequence of the-state-of-the-art of new modern historical consciousness? The question remains to be answered: have we gained or lost something?*

KEY WORDS: HISTORY TEXT BOOKS, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL HISTORY IN EDUCATION, GERMAN-DANISH RELATIONS, SCLESWIG-HOLSTEIN.

About the author. Harry Haue, 1941, Dr.Phil. professor emeritus, Institute for Cultural Studies, University of Southern Denmark. Member of the board of Nordidactica and International Society for History Didactics, and counselor for The Swedish Research Council in relation to pedagogic projects. Author of the chapter on History Education in Denmark in: E. Erdmann and W. Hasberg (ed.) *Facing, Mapping Bridging Diversity. Foundation of a European Discourse on History Education*, Vol. 1-2, Berlin 2011, and *Allgemeinbildung. Ein deutscher Begriff im Dänischen Gymnasium 1750-2007*, Odense 2008.

## **Nationalism and Globalization**

We have already at this symposium discussed the concepts of ‘nationalism’ and ‘globalization’. And therefore I shall just make a short comment. Firstly I think it is important to emphasize that if nationalism is about imagined communities as Benedict Andersson formulated it, the teaching of history has an important role to play in transforming our attitudes in order to join a dialogue on the relationship between the national and the global.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, it is important to comprehend the concept of ‘globalization’ as having a universal character that is not only to reflect on its economic aspects but also on its cultural implications.

The aim of this article is to focus on the development of history textbooks in Germany and Denmark from 1800 until today in order to detect the extent of national history compared to the description of the wider world in as well a pre national, a national and a post national era. The history of Schleswig-Holstein has been chosen as a case.

## **Schleswig-Holstein as a case**

In Danish national history Schleswig-Holstein has played a dominant role. The conflicts and wars with the German people became a cornerstone in our national self-perceptions – even more than our fights with Sweden. The first sources in Danish History reflect the tensions in relation to the Danish southern border between Charlemagne and the Danish king. In the late Middle-Ages the Danish king became the ruler of the duchy of Schleswig as well as the duchy of Holstein, however in a treaty from 1420 it was stated that the two duchies should be considered as a unity. In a pre-nationalistic era it was normally accepted that the ruler was bilingual, however that changed when nationalism became predominant. In the wake of the 1848-revolutions in Europe, the Germans in Schleswig-Holstein rose in rebellion in order to transform the two duchies into an independent land in union with the other German states. After three years of bloody civil wars, the Danish forces won, and the leading German state, Prussia, had thanks to international pressure, to leave the duchies to the Danish king. However a decade later, Fürst von Bismarck became a dominant figure in Prussian politics and mediated revenge. The opportunity came in 1863, when the Danish King under pressure from nationalistic and democratic movements separated Schleswig from Holstein. Then the war was unavoidable, and this time the Danish army was defeated and the duchies were incorporated in the new unified Germany. In 1920 the people in the Northern part of Schleswig had the opportunity to have a referendum and the Northern part of the duchy was incorporated in Denmark. These

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<sup>1</sup> R. Glenthøj (2012) *Skilsmissten. Dansk og norsk identitet før og efter 1814*, s. 19-38. Perhaps the theory of ‘imagined communities’ should, as Glenthøj suggests, be supplemented with the theory of ‘ethno-symbolism’, see p. 20-25.

nationalistic antagonisms influenced the teaching of history south as well as north of the German-Danish border and became an important part of the national history of both countries. In this article the following topics will be discussed:

- Nationalism and globalization
- National conflicts before and after 1850
- Moderate nationalism and Nordic history
- Denmark and Europe 1973-2000
- Integration of global and national history 2003
- A global discourse – a challenge for the subject matter of history

### **History textbooks in the pre-nationalistic era**

As late as in 1847 a Danish historian, C. Levinsen, translated a German textbook on world history into Danish.<sup>2</sup> This was a very popular textbook written by the Bavarian historian, Georg Weber. In the preface Levinsen gave his reasons for this translation: “that the book might be used as a textbook in schools and as well as a reading book for the Danish people.” The precondition for a translation was a deep rooted common culture, due to German cultural influence in Denmark. Weber stressed in his 1847-edition that “The inhabitants of the peninsula Scandinavia belongs to the German folk tribes, with whom they share an unlimited interest in freedom, enterprising spirit and urge to immigrate, as well as language, runic letters, religion and habits.”<sup>3</sup> Other authors indicated that the Danes were nearly as good as the Germans.

This positive attitude in the pre-nationalistic era did also include the Danish politics in the Middle-Ages. The Danish expansion in the Baltic in 12<sup>th</sup> and the 13<sup>th</sup> century were seen as brave acts in Wendenland. On the contrary the same expansive politics was in a textbook from 1865 considered as “a hatred Danish rule” in Northern Germany.

### **Schleswig-Holstein as a national cornerstone – German or Danish?**

The nationalistic turn in Danish textbooks became evident in 1843. The background for that could be seen in the preface where the author C.F. Allen wrote: “The youth in the school should know the history of the fatherland, both in olden and modern times, and through this knowledge develop their love and esteem for it.”<sup>4</sup> At the same time the debate on history didactics stressed that the precondition for the learning of history was the student’s interest for the subject matter. Love for the

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<sup>2</sup> G.Weber: Lærebog i Verdenshistorien med Hensyn paa Cultur,Litteratur og Religionsvæsen for høiere Skoler og til Selvbelærelse, 1847.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> C.F. Allen: Danmarks Historie til Skolebrug, 1843, preface.

fatherland could not be developed by rote learning, but by lively dialogue in the classes and the teacher's storytelling. Up to 1850 it was normal to have comprehensive textbooks, which contained world history as well as national history, however from then it became the rule in Denmark to edit special textbooks on national history. Consequently the national history got more attention in order to fulfill its function in nation building. Bigger and more powerful countries like France, Germany and Britain had normally comprehensive books, which contained as well the national as the international development. One of them was Weber's World History. This 800 pages edition for example from 1888 used 10 pages to describe the German-Danish war in 1864. The national history was often rather hostile against the other part. One example is Allen's description in 1874 of the German treatment of the Danish oriented population in Northern Schleswig: "Prussia showed its usual faithless policy by postponing the referendum (which was promised in 1867). It also practiced a disgusting tyranny against Danish people in Schleswig, so that in order to save themselves and to be secure several thousands of them had to flee to Denmark. The mistreatment of the people in Schleswig was so terrible that it provoked indignation and disgust in many European countries. At the same time the Danish language was repressed in church and school, and the Danish civil servants were dismissed and expelled from the country." <sup>5</sup>

Another example is Weber's description of the Danish government in Schleswig before 1864. Danish civil servants, vicars and teachers, often without culture, honor and sense of justice were engaged in Schleswig and their German predecessors were driven out of the country."The Danish people understood it as their national task to inflict their hatred and revenge on the Germans. Every single Dane saw the German Schleswiger as a personal enemy". <sup>6</sup> It should be born in mind that the aggressive formulations in the textbooks were supplemented by literature, songs and competitive use of monuments.

The nationalistic attitudes in Germany as well as Denmark was an important part of the nation building project, and in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century the national spirit was expressed not only as a strong positive self esteem but also a derogatory description of neighboring countries. Therefore the fatherland had a predominant place in history education, and the textbook had a central role to play. This nationalistic attitude was a vital part of the debate on history didactics. For example did emperor Wilhelm II in a speech to the headmaster's conference of the German gymnasium underlined that the reason why Germany could not yet be the leading power in Europe was the understatement of the heroic actions of the Hohenzollern dynasty in the history textbooks. Consequently the textbooks thereafter, as long as the dynasty was in power, had four supplementary pages, in which the Hohenzollern

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<sup>5</sup> C.F. Allen: Danmarks Historie til Skolebrug, 1874, p. 223.

<sup>6</sup> G.Weber. Lehrbuch der Weltgeschichte, Bd. II, p. 955.

dynasty was praised with use of a special typography i.e letters of double size and boldfaced types.<sup>7</sup>

In Denmark the nationalistic attitudes were more moderate compared to Germany. From 1890 the textbook on Danish history was changed and for decades Nordic history was included. Parallel to the history of the fatherland the pupils and students should learn about the main lines in Swedish, Norwegian, Finish and Icelandic history. This enlarged comprehension of the national, has been researched by Anders Elmersjö in his PH.D-thesis, which soon shall be published.<sup>8</sup>

## **Nation and textbook after World War II**

After World War I supranational institutions were engaged in correcting the history textbooks, especially their derogatory descriptions of other peoples and countries. This was also the case in the Nordic countries. After World War II the research in history textbooks were intensified, for example in International Schoolbook Institute, Georg Eckert, in Braunschweig. Peace and international understanding were the objectives. In Denmark Nordic history still was part of the national discourse. In the first decades after the war the Nordic countries developed a collaborative integration and the Nordic focus in history textbooks and teaching was well motivated. In the syllabus for the upper secondary school from 1963 it was required that:

“The teaching of history is based on text books with a coherent description, organized in a chronological way. “

The aim was that all students should know the whole Danish and world history from ancient times to the present; however the time before 1900 the teacher could omit certain aspects and periods. A reform in 1971 changed the demand for a chronological way of teaching, gave the students the right to participate in the choice of 3-5 topics and themes before 1930, whereas the time after 1930 should be treated coherently. Therefore it became possible to omit substantial parts of the national history, which often was the case because the students often preferred to read about witches or Incas instead of the wars with Sweden in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. After Denmark's membership of the EU in 1973, the inclusion of Nordic history was challenged and changed. In 1979 symptomatic the old Texts book on Nordic history was replaced by text books exclusively on the history of Denmark.

In the reprints of *Nordic History* the authors displayed a critical attitude to those Danes, who wanted to push the Danish-German border to the south. This could be seen as a revisionism of the national spirit, which developed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. And in the editions from the 1970s, it was stressed, in 5 pages out of a total of 200 that the Schleswig-Holstein question now had reached – for the first time in more than 100 years – a cooperative development on the basis of agreements

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<sup>7</sup> H. Haue: Danmark og danskere i tyske historie- og geografibøger, 1972, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> H-Å. Elmersjö: Norden, Nationen och Historien. Organisatoriska och historiekulturella perspektiv på föreningarna Nordens historieläroboksrevision 1919-1972, Lund 2013

between Germany and Denmark concerning the minorities north and south of the border from 1920. The *Nordic History* concluded in 1973 that: "During generations, actually since 1830s, as the Danish-German conflicts began, the two states had lived in a state of antagonism." However after the war this antagonism had vanished and an ideal cooperation between the two states and the minorities and their corresponding majorities was created. "The minorities developed a sense of confidence, and could especially in the cultural field participate in peaceful cooperation."<sup>9</sup>

*The new Denmark 1890-1978* appeared in 1979 and if the treatment of Schleswig-Holstein should be taken as a scale for national focus, 1½ page out of a total of 300, has been allocated to the time after the war. The development in Schleswig-Holstein after 1945 was critical, fugitives, hunger and homeless, and the textbook focused on the effect of those aid packages, which Danish organizations gave to the members of the Danish community south of the border. This aid persuaded many Germans to convert to the Danish movement. The textbook used the common denomination of these converters, i.e. 'Speckdänen', which of course had a derogatory meaning.<sup>10</sup> In fact this description expressed an anti-nationalistic attitude, which could be justified by the later development. After the establishment of the German welfare state in the 1950s the Germans left the Danish movement revealing a phony nationalism. The textbook's critique of what could be called Danish 'imperialism' was among Danish nationalists seen as a provocation, and a headmaster complained to the Ministry of Education and asked for withdrawal of the textbook. The Ministry answered by stating that censorship of textbooks was no longer practiced. In the 1970s the textbook was no longer an authority and its statements could as other texts be discussed and rejected or modified. The peaceful cohabitation north and south of the border was not mentioned.

The relations between the two national cultures could be a role model for many conflicting border areas. None the less many of the new history textbooks do not mention this ideal solution on the hundred year's conflicts and wars. Maybe this can be explained by the fact that peaceful and respectful cohabitation does not appeal to textbook authors and history teachers and students, and like the press and media they want to focus on the conflict, war and disasters, not on everyday life. If this is the case it is a deficit, which must be part of the agenda for history didactics. Another and perhaps a supplementary explanation is that what we call globalization has put national and regional history at a sidetrack. This is difficult to prove, however at the level of history textbook a quantitative estimation should be fairly easy.

In the after-war-years German nationalism was a problematic thing. The shadows from the Nazi-period were still visible and in the new West Germany the textbooks were rewritten and oriented towards the European cause, very much parallel to Germans reconciliation with the former enemy – Poland, France and Britain – and

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<sup>9</sup> P. Kierkegaard og K. Winding: *Nordens Historie*, bd. 2, Tiden efter ca. 1920, 12. udg., s. 118-123.

<sup>10</sup> H. Haue, J. Olsen og J. Aarup-Kristensen: *Det ny Danmark. Udviklingslinjer og tendens 1890-1978*, s. 226.

Denmark. The old national headlines – Schleswig-Holstein for example – had no special attention. One of the common used history textbooks – also in Schleswig-Holstein – *Kurzbuch Geschichte von der Antike bis zum Gegenwart* from 2000, the national tensions and collaboration after World War II in Schleswig is not mentioned, and the older history has only very lapidary remarks on the border conflicts. That is the civil war in 1848-50, the war in 1864 and the fact that 80.000 Danes in Nord Schleswig lived under German rule from 1864 to 1920. No derogatory language is used.<sup>11</sup> The conflicts and wars, which had a dominant place in older books, seem to be forgotten. The new dominant themes are the reunification, the European cooperation and the relations between Europe and the rest of the world. The German textbook on history has during the last century changed from national monument to global agent.

### **Reform 2005 – integration of the national and the global history**

Since 1830s history education in Denmark had been divided into two separate courses: a national-Nordic and an international. However, it was still more necessary to relate the national history to the international development and vice versa. Therefore it was felt in relation to the reform in 2005 required to change the syllabus in order to support integration in the teaching of national and the global history. In the normative text it is required that all national topics should be related to global relations and visa versa. In the mandatory text it was formulated in that way:

“At least two topics should have a starting point in Denmark’s history, one before and one after 1914. Topics, which have a starting point in Danish history, should be related to European history or world history, and topics which have starting point in European or world history should be related to the history of Denmark.”

In 2007 a new history of Denmark was published – now a combination of national and global history in accordance with the general rules from 2005 for the upper secondary level. *The world after 1914 – in a Danish Perspective* had only a short comment on the development of the Danish case in Schleswig, that is to say 4 lines, which concerned the connection between the Danish minority and the accept of West Germany as NATO-member. Denmark made it clear that it was only acceptable if the Danish minority was exempted from the 5 % limitation in the elections to the Schleswig-Holstein parliament. This Danish demand was accepted by the West German government in Bonn. Obviously this modern Danish textbook only contained few elements of the old story of the tensions between Danish and German in the border region, and in many ways the new-modern text book had the same construction as the pre-nationalistic text book. The new-modern book did not mention the peaceful cooperation and cultural competition, which developed from the end of the 1950s. Perhaps the focus on global problems has weakened our attention on national items?

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<sup>11</sup> H. Günther Arndt, D. Hoffmann, N. Zwölfer (hsrg.): *Geschichtsbuch Oberstufe*, Bd. 2. Das 20. Jahrhundert, 1996.

The global focus in the new history textbooks is in contradiction with the growing public interest in Danish history, especially the wars 1864, 1914-18 and 1940-45. Museum exhibitions cultivate the dramatic and conflict-focused parts of national history and the right wing political parties advocate a prioritizing of the national past in the schools. A canon for history teaching in the primary school was elaborated in 2006 and contained 29 topics, compulsory for grade 3-9. Half of them were on national history, and two of them were related to Schleswig: The German attack on Dybbel in 1864 and the referendum in 1920. Only ¼ of the classes should be occupied with the canon topics, however this was a remarkable reduction of national history compared to the extent of the history of the fatherland in the nationalistic period. The text books for the primary school displays the same trend as at the upper secondary level. In fact nobody knows how the actual history teaching functions. In order to know that it is necessary to collect a substantial empirical based research, which might change this picture.

The public was very interested in the canon matter, and a vivid debate took place. Most comments were positive; however, also a few critical voices accused the committee of creating a re-national focus on the teaching of history in the primary school. This was not quite fair because as in the upper secondary school, all national topics should be related to the global development and vice versa. For example the topic: the Nazi attack on the Danish Jews in August 1943 should be seen in relation to the general Nazi anti-Semitic policy. Of course the heroic saving of the Danish Jews by the fishermen in Øresund assisted by Swedish hospitality should be seen in a holocaust perspective.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion and perspectives

This short and sporadic presentation of the function of German and Danish history text books indicates a shift from a strong national discourse to a far more global trend. For the older period there are good reasons to believe that there were a corresponding development in the teaching of history, however since 1970s, when the text book became a text among others, it is difficult to estimate the impact of the text book on the content of the teaching of history. The change in syllabus also indicates a more global orientation.

If this is the case, the question remains to be answered by researchers of history didactics: Is this development a good thing or a bad thing for the subject matter of history? We have to consider and reflect on the following questions:

- Should the teaching of history follow the global trend and reduce topics of national history?
- Should consequently the syllabus and the teacher education focus more on global history?

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<sup>12</sup> Fælles mål 2009. Historie, Faghæfte 4, Undervisningsministeriet, p. 24-32.

- Or should the teaching of history form a counterbalance to the global challenge?
- How to qualify the student's historical consciousness in a global world?
- If the imagination of the fatherland is vanishing – shouldn't the teaching of history keep it alive in order to secure a basis for a qualified dialogue with the global challenge?

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