

Seit Adam Mickiewicz hier studiert und gewirkt hatte, galt Wilna als ein wichtiger Ort der polnischen Nationalbewegung. Seine Bedeutung nahm allerdings mit Schließung der Universität 1832 ab, so dass Moniuszko sich verstärkt in St. Petersburg und vor allem in Warschau nach neuen Wirkungsmöglichkeiten umsah. Nachdem 1846/47 sein *Halka*-Projekt in Warschau noch gescheitert und es nur zu einer konzertanten Aufführung der Oper in Wilna gekommen war, verlegte er sich zunächst auf die Komposition von Liedern und Kantaten, vornehmlich auf litauische mythologische Motive. Der triumphale Erfolg der überarbeiteten *Halka* 1858 in Warschau brachte Moniuszko dann nicht nur die lange ersehnte Anerkennung ein, als eine Leitfigur der nationalen Bewegung wurde er zum Warschauer Operndirektor berufen, was ihm eine glänzende Laufbahn als Opernkomponist in Polen eröffnete. Wie sich diese Karriere in den darauf folgenden stürmischen Zeitaläufen weiterentwickelte, welche Rolle die *Halka* etwa in der Auseinandersetzung der polnischen Nationalbewegung mit der russisch-imperialen Staatsmacht spielte, wie Moniuszko seinen Weg als Opernkomponist unter den sich wandelnden Bedingungen fortgesetzt und wie die fehlende Anerkennung im Ausland sich auf die Reputation des Komponisten ausgewirkt hat, diese Fragen verfolgt Rüdiger Ritter mit seiner stupenden Geschichtskennntnis höchst aufschlussreich, so dass nicht nur ein vielschichtiges Lebensbild, sondern auch ein Panorama der Sozialgeschichte Polens entsteht, das den Leser zu fesseln vermag. Die übergreifende Thematik des Zusammenhangs zwischen Nationsverständnis und künstlerischer Konzeption von Nationalmusik behandelt er ebenso wie die Rezeptionsgeschichte der *Halka* bis heute. Die Lektüre kann nur empfohlen werden.

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Poslednij pol'skij korol': Koronacija Nikolaja I v Varšave v 1829 g. i pamjat' o rusko-pol'skich vojnach XVII–načala XIX v.

[The Last Polish King: Nicholas I's Coronation in Warsaw in 1829 and the Memory of the Russo-Polish Wars of the 17th to Early 19th Centuries]

Moskva: NLO, 2022. 559 S., 32 Abb. = *Historia Rossica*. ISBN: 978-5-4448-1849-7.

According to an influential school of thought, the tsarist and Soviet regimes were autocratic only in appearance, because no government could function without public support. Building on this idea, historians have studied court ceremonies, heraldry, and other forms of symbolic communication to understand what Richard Wortman has called the “scenarios of power” of Russia's rulers. Ekaterina Boltunova's book about Russia and the Congress Kingdom of Poland is a valuable addition to this literature.

Boltunova's starting point is a curious and little-researched fact: in 1829, Nicholas I went to Warsaw to be crowned as King of Poland. Why did he do this? The search for an answer takes Boltunova deep into the history of the ideas and emotions of Russia's rulers in the early 19th century.

According to Boltunova, historians misunderstand the Russian-Polish relationship because they treat Alexander I as Poland's protector and Nicholas as its oppressor, take Polish statehood for granted (thus not asking why Russia created the Congress Kingdom in the first place), and ignore how Russian ideas were shaped by historical memory. Boltunova argues, on the contrary, that Nicholas continued Alexander's policies, that the Kingdom owed its existence to the two emperors' inner emotional experience, and that the Russian elite's attitude toward it was formed by the memory of Polish aggression during both the Time of Troubles and Napoleon's Russian Campaign. More broadly, the book takes issue with what it sees as simplistic notions of Russian oppression and Polish victimhood.

The book rests on a massive base of scholarship and of Russian and Polish sources. It is a cultural history inasmuch as it works with the history of emotions and memory, and, following Wortman, the symbolism of monarchy. But it also goes beyond cultural history: it looks at the personal history of Alexander I, Nicholas I, and their brother Konstantin Pavlovich (the quasi-viceroy of Poland) to study how key cultural constructs originated; it uses ego-documents and press accounts to understand how these constructs were received by the elites; and it studies the workings of the Russian government to see the effects of these constructs in everyday reality.

The book is divided into two roughly equal parts. Part I is about Nicholas's coronation in 1829. Across five chapters, it explores two important complexities of his relationship with the Congress Kingdom.

One complexity was the Kingdom's ambiguous position in the Russian Empire. The Poles regarded themselves as a separate state, not a Russian possession. This attitude was shared by Konstantin Pavlovich, whose relationship with Nicholas was tense and who was thought to want to become king of an independent Poland. There were also rumors that the Poles expected Austria to go to war against Russia in support of Poland's reunification, and that the son of Napoleon was a contender for the Polish crown. For Nicholas, especially in the aftermath of the Decembrist revolt, securing the loyalty of his Polish subjects was crucial. This is why he went to Warsaw to have himself formally crowned as King of Poland.

The other complexity was how to explain the nature of the Russo-Polish relationship that the coronation was supposed to cement. In the delicate negotiation between Russians and Poles, according to Boltunova, Nicholas gave an inch and the Poles took a mile. Nicholas sought religious compromise by keeping Orthodoxy out of the coronation; the event's Polish organizers responded by injecting a heavy dose of Catholicism. Nicholas treated Poland as a semi-independent state; the Poles refused to acknowledge any bond with Russia. Nicholas thought that, by overcoming his inner hesitations as autocrat and promising to honor Poland's Constitutional Charter, he had earned the Poles' gratitude and loyalty; to the Poles, on the contrary, this was the bare minimum they deserved from those who had partitioned their country.

Part II of the book, also composed of five chapters, is about the origin of the effort to win Polish hearts and minds that culminated in Nicholas's 1829 coronation. It is mostly about Alexander I's reign, making it quasi a prequel to Part I.

The arc of Part II begins with Alexander's emotional trauma in 1812. When the French invaded, he failed to take a military leadership role, and this humiliating failure in turn triggered memories, in both him and his people, of his earlier moral failure when he helped to plot the murder of his father Paul I in 1801. The events of 1812 left him angry and bitter. Believing himself unfairly rejected

by his Russian subjects, he “felt driven to look for new subjects who would be unconditionally loyal, who would not remember his recent conspicuous dishonor or talk behind his back about the last palace coup” (p. 269). The defeated Poles fit the bill: his generosity would earn their gratitude, and in addition, they were Europeans and thus more civilized than the Russians.

Alexander’s anger at the Russians and desire to be loved by the Poles formed, according to Boltunova, the basis for his postwar policy. In the name of Christian love and Slavic brotherhood, he told the Russians to forget their anger over the Poles’ barbaric behavior in 1812; from the Poles, however, he demanded no apology for 1812, instead giving them an amnesty and praising their bravery. He gave a constitution to Poland but not Russia, and his economic policies benefitted Poland at Russia’s expense. All of this was continued by Nicholas right down to the Polish uprising of 1830–31; even then, Nicholas tried his best to limit the conflict, and he resumed the policy of conciliation as soon as the revolt was suppressed.

The book closes by reiterating the weakest part of its argument: the pervasively one-sided treatment it gives to the Russian-Polish antagonism. It continually implies that Poland’s guilt for joining Napoleon was profound whereas Russia’s guilt for the Partitions of Poland was ancient history and thus irrelevant, and that the Poles had a moral duty to accept the loss of their independence because Russian rule was generally benign. In a remarkable coda, the book tries to show that the same pattern continued in the 20th century: after the 1920 Polish-Soviet War, the Poles extorted reparations from the Soviets for their country’s alleged exploitation under the tsars, yet Stalin after World War II, like Alexander and Nicholas after 1812, repaid them with generosity by burying the hatchet and extending the hand of friendship.

While Boltunova does not really draw a larger conclusion from her history, she nonetheless leaves us with considerable food for thought. One of her book’s great strengths consists of its marvelous set pieces: for example, the chapter on the history of Polish monuments celebrating Russia’s humiliation in the Time of Troubles is a model of detective work and cultural analysis. She also invites us, more broadly, to rethink what we know about imperial Russian history: in particular, what happens to our understanding of the era of Alexander and Nicholas when we center it on Poland and the two monarchs’ inner emotional experience? This is an erudite and thoughtful book, and one that amply rewards the interested reader.

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