

Estonian Historical Writing from an Interwoven Perspective

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This essay discusses the possibilities offered by studying Estonian and Baltic historical writing from an interwoven perspective. Although some interwoven research projects and projects with themes on supranational history have been initiated in Estonia as well, more extensive discussion on these themes has thus far not begun among historians. Newer interpretations that would examine the history of Estonian-Baltic historical research from a broader and comparative perspective also appear to be lacking. Studies from a couple of decades ago of the indisputably significant effect of the Enlightenment on Estonian interpretation of history have overshadowed the effect of more conservative trends in Baltic German historical research on the Estonian nationalist treatment of history.

The authors argue that Estonian nationalist history is also closely interwoven with those treatments of history to which it is ideologically opposed, and that these interweavings merit broader discussion than has hitherto occurred. Having jointly taught the history of this region's historiography for several years, they have arrived at the conviction that 1) different versions of Baltic historical writing have a number of definite and shared *topoi* that need to be made sense of from the perspective of interwoven history; that 2) the themes that are considered the most characteristic of and inherent to Estonian nationalist history, and which have often generated sharp controversy, are also the most supranational and interwoven, tying together the narratives of the Estonian people with those of the other peoples of the Baltic region; and that 3) these very same themes are comprehensible not only in a regional context but are interwoven with considerably more global issues. Three examples are given to illustrate these claims. The first example touches on the fixation on colonial history: conquest and the differences in the civilisation of the conquerors and that of the conquered. The second example is connected with the narrative of the long night of slavery, and the third with the theme of rebellion and people's uprisings, which needless to say is closely connected to the discourse on slavery.