

Establishment Of Disputed Territories and Shared Truths in The Region of Schleswig-Holstein

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Abstract. The world has a history of division that spans vast periods and numerous cycles, resulting in ongoing disagreements among political entities and social groups. One of the most challenging issues to have unanimity on is whether the identity of an individual is genuine or mythical historically. In this way, despite being a contentious concept in historiography, the relationship between myths and truths plays the most important role in shaping history writing and historiography. Schleswig-Holstein, a region with a long history of conflict, experienced a millennium of disputes before achieving redemption. Different institutions, religions, regimes, and languages led the process to go into a state of pandemonium during the development of history. However, is this kind of analysis of territories and collective identities no longer required in this era of peace? Have those problems been conclusively solved? This paper argues that further analysis is still necessary and valuable by providing summaries and reviews of relevant literature and resources.

Keywords: Nationalism; territory; Schleswig-Holstein; collective identity.

1. Introduction

Collective identities are often shaped by the shared memories of a group of people in a particular region. These identities include not only historical events that are per se true but also shared religious beliefs that may not be scientifically proven and could even be considered myths. In historical research, myths and truths have diffused into every corner of historiography and historical interpretations, making the boundaries between them sometimes ambiguous. Therefore, it is very important to understand how to define and recognize them to comprehend the nuances of objectivity and subjectivity in historical narratives. Herodotus implied that the purpose of history is to illuminate historical myths rather than to dispel them in this statement [1]. Results from different facts and methodologies used, in some cases, what looks true to one historian will seem untrue to another, thus even while it is being said, what one historian believes to be true becomes myth [2].

However, neither consensus nor unanimities are easy to reach, and, thus, it is important to establish the boundaries of historical explanations in particular situations. This helps to determine whether a particular historical interpretation is mythical or factual, subjective or objective. The region of Schleswig-Holstein, which had been contested for over a thousand years, provides insight into why minds have been fragmented and arguments persist on various issues. Linguistic, political, religious, and inheriting problems had made this territory disputed for a long period of time. A huge number of historians have dedicated their lives to narrating the Schleswig-Holstein history in a reasonable sequence for more than a century, and no matter what kind of methodologies have been employed by those that either were experiencing that particular period of time or ones providing interpretations in recent years, nevertheless, pure objectiveness has been so hard to be reached.

This paper aims to evaluate the prevailing consensus and interpretations offered by historians. It draws from both primary historical resources and contemporary literature to provide objective summaries, explanations, or interpretations.

2. Historical Background and Territorial Disputes in Schleswig-Holstein

The region of Schleswig-Holstein had been contested for over a thousand years, offering valuable insights into why opinions remained fragmented, and arguments persisted on various issues. The fact

that the Danish minorities in predominantly German areas and the German minorities surrounded by Danes highlighted the conflicts and differences between the two people. Consequently, the history of Schleswig-Holstein is one of border and sovereignty disputes and, more recently, attempts to accommodation. Knowing the question's historical context is required in order to comprehend this relationship. In particular, it's important to understand the details of the union between the two duchies and Denmark, as well as the duchies and Denmark's succession laws [3]. The so-called "Schleswig-Holstein Question," which would be crucial to German unification and shape the border region until the middle of the twentieth century, was brought into the center of European politics despite the revolt's ultimate failure to change the duchies' political status in the short term [4].

Schleswig-Holstein is located between Denmark and Germany. Schleswig adjoins Northern Jutland, while Holstein borders Germany to the south. In the 12th century, Schleswig was a part of the Viking age and later became a duchy of Denmark. It remained under Danish control from the 13th to 14th century, with Denmark repeatedly attempting to rebuild Schleswig into the Danish Kingdom. Holstein, the northern part of the Schleswig-Holstein area near northern Jutland, was a fiefdom of the Holy Roman Empire. From 1460 on, the two regions were under the sovereign of the same Duke who also governed the Danish region.

The German Confederation was established in 1815 after the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. In the year 1848, Frederick VII of Denmark announced the integration of the region Schleswig to Danish sovereignty while its local autonomy was preserved. This move irritated the majority of the German people in Schleswig to raise a rebellion for political independence. Though the rebellion soon received support of Prussia's army, the First Schleswig War ended with the winning of Denmark. The conflict was followed by the London Protocol, which admitted the duchies' legal status.

In 1863, Christian IX, the Danish heir of King Frederick VII, claimed sovereignty over Holstein, which broke the London Protocol. This action triggered the Second Schleswig War, ultimately ending with the Duchies' incorporation into Germany. After Germany's defeat in WWI, northern Schleswig was finally reunited with Denmark.

Despite the persistent disputes in this region, the fusion of the ethnic groups of German and Danish went along with the isolation of both duchies. This complexity within the historical narratives of the region can make it challenging to grasp the whole picture of truth. However, by examining the perspectives of key figures at the time, this paper provides insight into the royal family's stance on territorial disputes in the region and the Kingdom of Prussia's (Germany) understanding of territory.

3. Resource Summaries and Literature Review

In the early nineteenth century, the Napoleonic Wars awakened the national sentiments of the Germans, and the Schleswig-Holstein people intended to establish their own state. In the following few decades, territorial disputes continued to exist. After the German-Danish War and Seven Weeks' War, both Schleswig and Holstein became part of Prussia.

During this period of time, it is necessary to take a deeper look at what did King Frederick William the Fourth, the King of Prussia, and Bunsen, who served as the Prussian Minister in London do to deal with any of these political crises. Although Bunsen was ordered to sign the Treaty of London, he himself deemed it entirely unjust. In fact, the Treaty of London played an important role in the post-First-Schleswig-War period that, in one way, and it successfully made the region come to an equilibrium of peace; but on the other hand, it appeared to be a fairly straightforward and reasonable plan of action to expel Denmark and Germany, but it actually caused much more problems than it solved [5]. It is found interesting that while peace was achieved, further interpretation of this diplomatic phrase is required.

Regardless of the views the Prussian government may have had in the future, King Frederick William the Fourth of Prussia made it clear in a letter to Duke Christian August of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg that he recognized the two Duchies as separate but connected principalities

that were the male line's proper heirlooms [5]. This royal utterance remained steadfast, even as the inhabitants' armed resistance was finally being conquered with assistance from Austria and Prussia. "Bunsen declared with the most prophetic insight that the first cannon shot fired in Europe would tear that iniquitous document into tatters [5]." Bunsen, then Prussian Minister in London was compelled to sign the document in the name of the Prussian king, even as Emperor Napoleon himself denounced it as "pure injustice". Following the death of Frederick William IV of Prussia in early 1861, the Danish government found it difficult to believe that the German Confederation, a member of which was the Duchy of Holstein, would remain passive in the face of Holstein's violent separation.

Scholars have also some discoveries about institutions in terms of feudal law and minority rights. The referendums on Schleswig held at the beginning of 1920 would be presented in terms of minority rights and peoples' right to self-determination under contemporary international law. But the 'Schleswig-Holstein dispute', which challenged the European Concert for two decades in the middle of the 19th century, has its roots in medieval law. Thus, it is connected to a concept of "international law" primarily determined by the interactions between the reigning princes and kings [6]. Though in the same region of Schleswig-Holstein, huge differences in the terms of feudal laws for institutions existed. These differences contributed to the conflicts between the two territories. Obviously, "feudal laws" were affected by the conventionalities of European monarchs and institutions of Schleswig and Holstein respectively, which led to differences in cultural development.

Throughout the 19th century, institutions had also changed substantially, allowing the citizens of Schleswig-Holstein to make a choice of which life to live, a right that had previously been reserved solely for the monarchy [7].

Besides the study of international relations, scholars also delved into other aspects. These included the crisis of competition between the main languages, such as German, Danish, and many other analects of the same language family, as well as political institutions, inheritance laws, public voting, and minorities' rights. Though this paper cannot cover all these genres comprehensively, they all have facets that are even analogical: they cement the people's collective identities while they may have taken some division along with it. A historical revolution is developing in the circulation of complex gyres instead of along a straight line. Even when similar elements are introduced, they can yield different outcomes, influenced by the subtle variations in the political context and cultural background, like different fertilizers and varying amounts of sunshine affecting the growth of a plant.

4. Enlightenment and Suggestions

As discussed earlier, the Schleswig-Holstein problem epitomizes a typical conflict rooted in ethnic collective identity, stemming from disputed territories and ethnic narratives. The Schleswig-Holstein region had been a point of contention since earlier times in the Medieval ages, and situations were able to be alleviated through the implementation of political dialogues, concessions, and many other methods. These methods had not only played great important roles in fields like historiography and social science, but also in international relationships and archeology. Analyzing primary resources and history interpretations from different eras allows researchers to reconstruct the actual situations and circumstances of particular historical periods.

Moreover, while historians strive for objectivity, there is always an element of subjectivity in historical interpretations and history writings. An objective historical account aims to portray a comprehensive view of the "truth" of history. In contrast, interpretations with a high degree of subjectivity would bring more recreation to society, introducing an element of perspective that can be valuable for the further development of an ethnic group or a particular facet of a territory. This is because a subjective interpretation of history for one specific social group might appear mythical to another historian or individuals from a different social group. However, even if not entirely accurate, it could still be explained in certain contexts.

It is essential to strike a balance between subjectivity and objectivity in historical interpretations. Excessive subjectivity can lead to divisions within larger social entities, but these interpretations, even if seemingly mythical on the surface, can help cement the collective identity of a group.

5. Conclusion

In Schleswig-Holstein, a region plagued by disputes for nearly a thousand years, researchers and historians have laid their eyes on the conflicts and differences among ethnic groups since those problems are urged to be solved to alleviate diplomatic, international relationship, and national conflicts problems in the formation of a nation. However, it is important to note that instead of being completely separated from each other, people and political entities at that time existed in a dynamic interplay of separation and fusion. One significant aspect of this interplay was the language problem in Schleswig-Holstein. Research has shown that the widespread use of German caused the extinction of Danish in Schleswig around the 1780s. Interestingly, the wide use of the German language not only advanced the daily communication of the Danish people but also contributed to the evolution of the language itself.

During the First Schleswig War and the Second Schleswig War, territorial boundaries between Denmark and Germany varied from time to time. While much attention has been given to the separation of the people, the fusion of ethnic identities, such as the combination of languages and conventions, has often been overlooked. The relationship between peace and conflict in this region is akin to the blurry line between myth and truth: “that in order to know what the Egyptians really are, the historian must know what they really believe in [8].” It can be ambiguous. Just like myths help historians learn the truths, peace, and conflicts, most of the time, co-exist.

Issues related to international relationships in the region of Schleswig-Holstein have been a concentration of many scholars, for example, some very respectful European historians. In this case, problems in this genre left very few things to discover [9]. Just as the quote mentioned, the Schleswig-Holstein problem is obviously not as severe as it once was, thanks to the advancement in political institutions, a well-developed economic environment, studious history scholars, and an inclusive society that embraces various religions. But “As long as there was the remotest possibility of the question being reopened, the old controversies were bound to be kept alive [10].” While it may not be entirely resolved, a delicate equilibrium with an undetermined longevity has indeed been achieved.

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