

ENDEAVOUR & RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HISTORIAN – CREATING AN ARCHIVE OF EGO DOCUMENTS IN REGIONS OF HIGHLY CONTESTED MEMORIES

Georg GROTE

Eurac Bozen,

Viale Druso, 1 / Drususallee 1

39100 Bolzano / Bozen

Italija

Georg.Grote@eurac.edu

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In this contribution I argue that the South Tyrol minority question, which was pacified by Italy's granting of a wide-reaching autonomy from Rome, could be further consolidated through the creation of a social archive comprising ego documents from all ethno-linguistic groups throughout the 20th century in order to create a basic mutual understanding for the needs and fears of individuals in this era. Ireland's folklore collection serves as a historic example of a fitting blueprint for the archive which is being created.

Keywords: Historiography, 'nation'-building, collective identity, archive creation, collective memory, history from below, ego documents

Ključne riječi: historiografija, izgradnja 'nacije', kolektivni identitet, stvaranje arhiva, kolektivno pamćenje, povijest odozdo, ego dokumenti

Parole chiave: storiografia, costruzione della „nazione“, identità collettiva, creazione di un archivio, memoria collettiva, storia dal basso, autodivulgazione

Introduction

Archives are the backbone of historical research. They also quell the curiosity of many non-academic researchers. Archives serve as vaults of the collective re-/collections of societies, groups and associations. Generally, archives house primary source material for academic enquiry allowing each generation of historians to re-examine aspects of the past. However, recently historians have turned their attention somewhat away from traditional archives containing state, corporate and ecclesiastic artefacts documenting political and institutional change and have increasingly focused towards the inclusion of archives containing socio-historical and anthropological collections in order to reach more encompassing understandings of historical periods, but also to further reconciliation or greater understanding between divided communities. Social history archives can contain material that enables historians to contextualize competing narratives in multiple ethnic and/or post-colonial settings. In particular, socio-historical or ego documents (letters, diaries

etc.), employed to provide a micro-analysis of macro political events in the lived experiences of 'ordinary' people, can assist in depoliticizing contested pasts and creating further communal understanding and shared experiences.

Istria is home to a huge amount of multilayered, multicultural and multinational histories within a relatively small geographical area. Here, more than in many other European areas of cultural encounters, social archives and anthropological collections are potential net-contributors to societal peace and historical inclusivity. In this contribution I employ two examples from different historical eras and regions of Europe to explore the beneficial societal impacts of a social archive. In the first instance, I analyse the role of the Irish Folklore Collection in contributing to the stability of the young Irish nation-state after its inception in 1922. Then, I outline my own experience in collecting a digital social archive in the multilingual region of South Tyrol including the publication of some of its findings in a multicultural society which has been characterized by a colonial setup for most of the past century.

Ireland and its Folklore Collection

The potential for the creation of vibrant social historic collections is apparent in the Republic of Ireland, a state that came into being in 1922 as a result of a revolution against the British administration and subsequent guerilla warfare against British soldiers and institutions. As a young state, the new Irish Free State (as the present-day Republic was known until 1949), sought ways to reintroduce social stability. An important facet of this was reinforcing an "Irish" identity in a country that had been anglicized for centuries. Ireland's most distinctive "Irish" characteristic in the struggle for independence had been the Irish language, but despite efforts through the education system, Ireland has remained a predominantly English-speaking nation.¹

After its foundation, however, the Irish State attempted to create an all-Ireland Irish identity in the face of adverse conditions domestically and under pressure from outside. The outcome of the Treaty negotiations leading to the split on the island into the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland deepened divisions in the population which had existed long before 1922², and the post-independence trade war with the United Kingdom also worsened the young state's economic outlook profoundly. While the Irish State struggled with its mere economic existence and the Irish struggled with their daily survival amidst unemployment and poverty³, the Free State tried to define itself positively.

It was in the middle of this precarious situation that the Irish government decided to create a folklore commission to collect and archive aspects of Irish society, particularly

¹ The Irish language and native Irish sports, such as hurling and Irish football, had been subject to intense resuscitation efforts since the 1880s. Both the Gaelic Athletic Association (1884) and the Gaelic League (1893) focussed on reviving these core aspects of Irishness. See for a detailed analysis of this Irish renaissance: Georg Grote, *Torn between Politics and Culture. The Gaelic League 1893–1993*, Münster 1994.

² Ian McBride, "The Shadow of the Gunman: Irish Historians and the IRA," in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 46/2011, 686–710.

³ See: Lindsey Earner Byrne, *Letters from the Catholic Poor. Poverty in Independent Ireland 1920–1940*, Cambridge 2017.

rural Ireland, that were considered by contemporaries in the 1930s to represent “true” Irish culture. An important aim of this initiative was to preserve aspects of Irishness that people feared were dying out with the gradual urbanization of the country. The commission comprised Irish scholars and non-Irish experts, particularly from Scandinavia, because Sweden, Finland and Norway had already conducted similar pioneering folklore work. They also took into account similar efforts in Estonia and Germany. It was considered very important in composing the board of the leading Irish folklore commissioners that they had excellent personal and professional contacts with their European counterparts, because they held the knowledge in relation to the creation of scientific infrastructures to aid the dissemination of the scholarly findings, both for a domestic and international audience. It was considered essential that the national interest in the new collection went hand in hand with academic excellence of its publications.⁴

The commission’s field of work related to 14 different areas of public and private life covering all aspects of what was designated the “Irish world”. They were as follows: “Settlement and Dwelling; Livelihood and Household Support; Communications and Trade; The Community; Human Life; Nature; Folk Medicine; Time; Principles and Rules of Popular Belief and Practice; Mythological Tradition; Historical Tradition; Religious Tradition; Popular Oral Literature; Sports and Pastimes”. The commission conducted its business through traditional methods of collection in relation to folklore, such as observing and describing, as well as oral interviews and the use of questionnaires, but they also made use of new technologies such as tape recorders and film cameras, which were particularly useful in gathering material related to dance and music.⁵

Another distinct feature of this project was its longevity: the process of collecting material lasted from 1935 to 1971. Then the entire collection went to the National University of Ireland in Dublin for permanent keeping. It is still housed there and forms the backbone of University College Dublin’s Department of Irish Folklore – an academic centre for research and teaching. The mere existence of this collection has inspired Irish research in the areas of history, ethnography, anthropology, languages as well as art history and musicology. It continues to have relevance for new fields of academic research such as gender history and memory studies. Furthermore, the collection has had a tremendous influence on the creative art scene in Ireland, especially on poetry, language, writing and Irish music. It would be hard to imagine both the outstanding artistic work of Nobel prize laureate

⁴ “Séamus Ó Duilearga’s contact with Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (Lund), Dag Strombäck and Åke Campbell (Uppsala), and Reidar Th. Christiansen (Oslo), turned out to be of fundamental importance for the later setting up of structures in Ireland...” See: Mícheál Briody, *The Irish Folklore Commission 1935–1970. History, Ideology, Methodology*, Helsinki 2016.

⁵ The *Irish Folklore Commission* is considered a highly successful organisation, both in its academic output and its collection endeavours. Its original head, Séamus Ó Duilearga, focused on elevated scholarly standards in its publications and the use of modern technology to record oral sources as truthfully as possible and to preserve them for posterity. Initially, the commission employed gramophones, and then tape recorders to preserve the voices of contemporary speakers and their music. The commission’s archivist, Seán Ó Súilleabháin, had learnt his trade from experienced Swedish anthropologists. He organised the collection systematically and published the commission’s first significant academic publication in 1942: *A Handbook of Irish Folklore*.

Seamus Heaney and the renaissance of Irish folk music in the 1970s without the existence of the Folklore Collection.

The Department of Folklore at University College Dublin also claims that in recent times of hardship, for example, the 2008 financial crash, which Ireland experienced particularly acutely, it observed an increase in members of the public consulting the collection possibly by way of consolation and reassurance. It is interesting that the department believes the folklore collection continues to play a role in contemporary Ireland's sense of identity, particularly in times of crisis. The Irish Folklore Collection has, from its inception, been a culturally affirming exercise in the face of tremendous poverty, economic uncertainty and large-scale emigration. It has been a legitimacy exercise of the new state and a post-colonial re-appropriation of Irish culture from the coloniser to the colonised. But it has also come to being a significant inspirational source for the Arts in Ireland and an all-encompassing interpretation of the Irish past and an invitation to all citizens of the State to examine their individual and collective cultural roots.

South Tyrol's Memory Contests

South Tyrol's equivalent to the Irish Republic's foundation in 1922 was the year 1972⁶ when the Province obtained a far-reaching and internationally guaranteed autonomy from Italy. Since then the Provincia di Bolzano has pursued a policy of carving out ever greater political autonomy within the Region Alto Adige / Trentino and, particularly since the millennium, has displayed a growing engagement in the Europaregion Tirol-Südtirol / Alto Adige-Trentino. The autonomy of South Tyrol displays a number of significant parallels with Ireland's independence process, albeit in a different historical and political European setup.⁷

Despite the obvious differences in the development towards obtaining these respective variations of self-determination in Ireland and South Tyrol, there are striking similarities in their respective "post-revolutionary" and "post-colonial" realities – post-1922 and post-1972 – which allow for a certain comparability, and which also allow South Tyrol to "learn" from the historic blueprint that Ireland represents. The 1972 statute of autonomy devolved many legislative competencies from the state to the provincial level of South Tyrol. After 1972, South Tyrol renewed its efforts to preserve local traditions and dialects, for example, to support the Ladin language and the Ladin culture. There is, however, no institution in South Tyrol that is comparable to the Irish Folklore Commission. The lack of a socio-cultural archive documenting the lives of ordinary people in the Province may be a surprising fact, given that academic interest in the history of South Tyrol has been significant throughout the 20th century and that both the Institut für Zeitgeschichte at the Austrian University of Innsbruck just north of the border with South Tyrol and the Institut

⁶ Historiography in South Tyrol is dominated by the German South Tyroleans' view that 1972 marks the culmination of their struggle for political and cultural distance from Italy and that the statute of autonomy is the foundation myth of today's model for successful minority protection in Europe.

⁷ See Georg Grote, *I bin a Südtiroler. Kollektive Identität zwischen Nation und Region*, Bozen 2009 and *The South Tyrol Question 1866-2010. From National Rage to Regional State*, Oxford 2012.

für Regionalgeschichte, created in 2011 and attached to the Province's own Freie Universität Bozen have conducted intense research into many aspects of life in South Tyrol from the Middle Ages to the present day. However, their research focus has largely remained political and economic and has not included a systematically planned establishment of a socio-historical archive, be it in digital form or as a collection of hardcopy samples from the past. Central Italian institutions, be they in Rome or elsewhere, have neither created such a collection in South Tyrol, albeit other areas of Italy have done so, such as the Istituto Storico Popolare in neighbouring Trento.

The Province's institutions, on the other hand, have continuously supported local music traditions and there is an impressive open air museum displaying life in bygone times, but an encompassing display of the social history of its collective identity has so far only been realised by Ladin institutions. The Ladin cultural institute Micurá de Rù aims to strengthen the Ladin culture across the regional boundaries in order to preserve and revive Ladin culture and language – a task that has been an uphill struggle.⁸

After obtaining autonomy from Italy in 1972, South Tyrol's main aim was the preservation of its Austro-German language and cultural heritage which had been under threat in the Fascist period of the 1920s. In effect, preserving and reinforcing the German-South Tyrolean collective identity meant stressing its non-Italian characteristics. The autonomy statute was supportive of this because it stressed and stipulated that all three ethno-linguistic groups in the Province should develop independently from each other and not obstruct each other in their cultural development. This was regarded as hugely progressive at the time, however, the consequences are that some 50 years later South Tyrol displays two, if not three, separate populations which hardly ever contact each other meaningfully.

The greatest success of the 1972 statute, the creation of societal peace and co-existence in South Tyrol is potentially undermined by the fact that the Province's 500,000 strong population is not cohesive. In particular, Italian-speaking citizens often feel disenfranchised by the Statute and claim that all its benefits have gone to the German-speaking population. The fear is that the separate cultures within South Tyrol, so important to peaceful co-existence, might actually undermine the stability of that peace in times of political and economic crises, thus reigniting old ethnic battles at the heart of Europe.⁹

South Tyrolean Correspondences

In this regard, it is worth exploring what historians, and in particular, archives could do to facilitate greater cross-community engagement and understanding. Essentially, a vari-

⁸ It has not been possible to date for all Ladin people to agree on a standardised written version of their language – a prerequisite for a vibrant print culture considering that all Ladins account for no more than 30,000 individuals. See Georg Grote, "1809/2009 – Tirol und die Ladiner," in: *Der Schlern. Monatszeitschrift für Südtiroler Landeskunde*, Vol. 2, 84/2010, 64–72.

⁹ The return to a past that was considered closed in Northern Ireland has recently demonstrated how fragile the social peace between warring factions is and how eruptive the fault lines between old foes are. Nationalist policies, which also exist in Italy and, to a lesser degree, in Austria, have a potentially destabilizing influence on the fragile equilibrium of power and societal peace in South Tyrol. Economic challenges can act as catalysers to accelerate political instabilities.

ant of the Irish Folklore Collection might help build a new sense of collective identity based around the history of the “lived experiences” of those who have settled and/or originated in South Tyrol. What I am proposing is an active exercise of archival creation which seeks out sources from the private, domestic and personal arena, which reverse the traditional focus on high politics by focusing on the *impact* of that politics on people’s lived experiences. As Simon Gunn argues, if you change your perspective to consider not just who had power, but the effect of that power, your focus shifts from the centre to the margins.¹⁰ The high politics of the centre is nuanced and complicated by the lives of people effected by that politics. Here I draw upon my own research project *Südtiroler Korrespondenzen*, based in South Tyrol’s vibrant research hub EURAC.

Work on the project began in 2013 with a call to all 116 local libraries in South Tyrol and a newspaper article in the biggest regional German and Italian-language newspapers, *Dolomiten* and *Alto Adige*. Since then, I have travelled around South Tyrol collecting and listening to the region’s history and stories of ordinary people. My method of collection has been digitization, which enables the donators to keep the physical copy of their families’ archives. I have currently digitized over 15,000 documents comprising letters, diaries, postcards, military post cards and photographs covering the long 20th century. The overwhelming majority of these are sources in German, only very few Italian citizens of the region have participated to date – an issue that needs to be addressed in order to create an encompassing social history of South Tyrol in the 20th century.

However, even the sources that have been collected reveal the nuance such “ordinary” people’s sources can lend to the history of South Tyrol. These personal accounts are contemporaneous with the “big” historical events of the 20th century, for example, the region’s separation from Austria in 1918, the Italianisation era of the 1920s and 30s, Fascism and National Socialism, World War II and the post-war fallout and into the early 1960s, when South Tyrol was on the brink of civil war. These sources do not just allow us to explore the complexity of human experience, they also reveal how bigger political issues intersected with, were interpreted by, and lived with, by ordinary people with little power to change events.

Creating such an archive and publishing its findings also poses challenges to the professional historian who is both responsible for the material uncovered, but also for the ethical use and display of this source material some of which is highly sensitive. Positioning the archive in South Tyrol’s academic and public landscape is a challenge in itself - the historian’s arena is full of challenges: Does s/he call the area Südtirol or Alto Adige? The choice is highly political and polarizing, one term is used by the German minority, the other one exclusively by their Italian counterparts. Does s/he contextualise the archival findings in a national – Italian – or in the regional – South Tyrolean – environment? As outlined before, both interpretations are, to date, mutually exclusive. More issues arise: How does the historian address the issues of minority protection and the collective emancipation of South

¹⁰ Simon Gunn, “From hegemony to governmentality: changing conceptions of power in social history,” in: *Journal of Social History*, 39: 3 (Spring 2006), 705–720, 716.

Tyrol? How to deal with state-induced nationalisms in the period of Italian Fascism and German National Socialism?

All of these issues need to be considered carefully in order to ensure the project is ethical. And the publications to emerge from the archival collections face a very diverse population, both in South Tyrol and beyond. The audience in South Tyrol is challenging as there exist various perspectives steeped in diverging historical interpretations and perceptions. The historian is forced to position him/herself. For the first of the three volume publication on South Tyrol in the 20th century – focussing on the period 1900–1918 – I have chosen the position of the German-speaking South Tyroleans who experienced the division of their country Tirol as a result of loss of war and the London Treaty of 1915. Volume I ends in November 1918 and comprises material largely uncontested in South Tyrol. Both successive volumes draw on material from the period when Italy has a firm grip on South Tyrol and when the area is home to two ethno-linguistic groups representing the coloniser and the colonised. Positioning becomes a challenge for the historian drawing on ego-documents originating largely only from the group of the colonised.

Volume II covers the period 1922–1942 and thus deals with the highly contentious era of Italianisation and the advent of the National Socialists in Germany as well as Germany's victorious phase of warfare. As the overwhelming majority of document contributions came from the German-speaking South Tyroleans, I decided to portray their social history and their path through Fascism and National Socialism, yet in a way that explains how people came to support Nazi Germany as a result of the Italianisation they had been subjected to.

This volume deals with potentially explosive material: the private display of support for Hitler's Germany and the embrace of the resettlement agreement between Germany and Italy in 1939 – both of which were historical facts that Italy used to discredit the German-speaking minority in South Tyrol after the war. In this publication I attempt to explain, not excuse, from an individual perspective why there was such strong support for Germany. This support is expressed in written documents, but all the more obvious on photographs taken by young South Tyrolean men who opted to serve in the German Wehrmacht and who took their photographic cameras to their war stations and battle fields glorifying their activities. Presenting their artefacts is a task demanding a high degree of sensitivity, all the more so as the overwhelming majority of German-speaking South Tyroleans, those who did not serve in the Army and those who rejected the forced resettlement plan drawn up by Mussolini and Hitler in 1939, are not present on the pages of this publication – they had no reason to write to one another in their home villages, and took no photographs. To explain the lop-sidedness of these archival findings to a wider readership is challenging.

Yet, this kind of presentation of a much disputed past is necessary for today's South Tyrol, because by bringing the focus of analysis to the individual level of ordinary people, it is easier to accept individual people's motivations in their decision-making and understand the driving forces of those who opted for Germany and who, after the war, became the target of much scorn and rejection by those who had stayed. Explaining and creating an

understanding is a delicate task, but there is hope that also those South Tyrolean citizens who bear Italian origins and who will have learnt German at school, may develop tolerance for what happened more than 80 years ago. It is highly likely that, if they understand individual people's motivations, they will judge the German-speaking South Tyrolean collective less harshly.

Finally, I want to give three examples of challenging material I have encountered, varying in their significance for the collection and people's engagement with the material:



Picture of boy on ski – Buon natale/Sieg Heil

This postcard dates to the mid-1930s and was part of the private archive of a South Tyrolean young man, who, at that time, served his compulsory military service at an Alpini Regiment in Turin/Torino. He was thus fully embedded in the Italian army, the language and its lifestyles. In 1939, he opted for Germany, resettled to Innsbruck in Austria and joined the German Wehrmacht early in 1940. The postcard, which he sent to his family for Christmas 1936, reflects both his current situation – life in the Italian army, living far away from his homeland, his cultural and linguistic environment –, but the added “Sieg Heil” wish reveals his strong allegiance to his native German language and, even more significantly, his political leanings towards the German Nazi movement which had at its core the “Heim ins Reich” (back home to the Reich) idea. Bringing all German people back into the Reich was something most South Tyroleans hoped for after having endured the period of Italianisation in the 1920s and ‘30s under Mussolini. Hitler seemed to promise just that,

and he found widespread support in a population whose cultural and linguistic roots had been suppressed and violated.

To include this document in a publication analysing the 1930s in South Tyrol requires a lot of contextualisation in order not to alienate Italian readers and confirm their suspicion that “all South Tyroleans had been Hitler supporters”, which was the predominant view after 1945. It requires the careful explanation that the Nazi war slogan “Sieg Heil” in this case was not necessarily always pro-Nazi, but decidedly anti-Fascist, based on the experiences of the previous period.



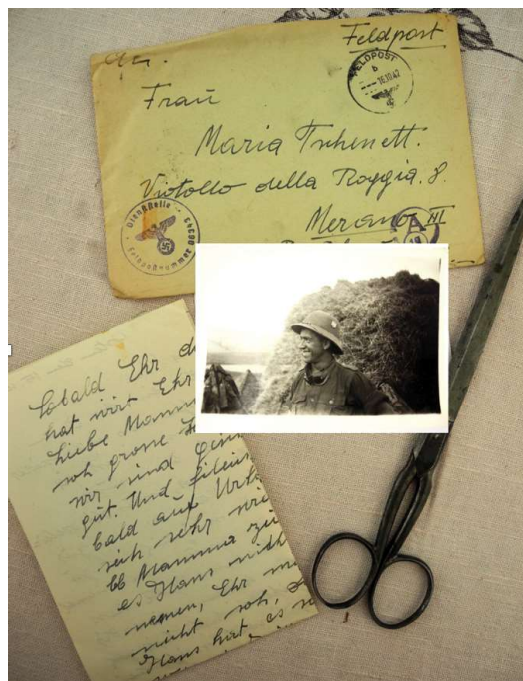
Kompatscher – Book Cover

This document is a very interesting find, but a very challenging document to include in a publication on World War II. It is the cover of the recollections of a South Tyrolean soldier of the German Wehrmacht, who opted for Germany in 1939 and then fought on various fronts as part of a notorious army battalion which was involved in certain atrocities against civilians and Russian partisans. He revisited his war notes in the 1970s, put them together in typed form and had these memories disseminated among members of his family. The caption on this picture reads “Lucky Luis. Alois Kompatscher’s Letters and memories” and it depicts a young Luis in Wehrmacht uniform donning a medal for “bravery in the face of the enemy” on his chest.

This document is problematic because its author never addresses the notoriety surrounding the regiment he served in in any of his memories. Nor did the selection of the

front picture and the choice of title reflect any awareness of the prevailing post-war judgment that Hitler's war was criminal right from the beginning and that the Wehrmacht committed atrocities which would permit anyone from claiming that he may have been a happy member of the German army, let alone being "Lucky Luis", a man lucky to be in German service during the war. This complete lack of reflection combined with the heroism displayed for the German campaign in the East make it almost impossible to present this document to both a German-speaking and Italian post-war South Tyrolean population. Neither will an international audience have much time for this type of individual memory. It is an example of a clearly divisive and polarising contribution to the digital archive. Nevertheless, its existence cannot be negated and neither can the notions behind it – it is an uncomfortable truth that coming to terms with the past has never been very high on the Italian agenda, and South Tyrol has happily availed of being part of Italy in this case after the war.

Luis died in 2019 at the age of 101, he may have been of the last people to have been actively involved in World War II. The death of World War II participants and culprits will allow to contextualise these kinds of memories over time.



The unopened letter

Finally, there is the unopened letter – both literally and metaphorically unopened letters pose a challenge to the generation of children and grandchildren who happen to come across them. This one was found in a collection of letters from a South Tyrolean soldier

fighting for Germany in 1942. I came across this unopened one and asked the owner of the private archive, the author's niece, if she knew about the existence of this letter and what to do with it. She considered it for a little while, brewed another strong coffee and then invited me to cut it open and look at the content. We found a letter and the attached photograph.

In this letter the soldier announced that he was coming home to visit his mother within the next fortnight. My host informed me that by the time he posted the letter, his mother fell gravely ill and died subsequently, so when he arrived in his home village in South Tyrol his mother had already died and he buried her on the local graveyard. There was no further need to open the letter and he filed it with all the others he had sent her before. It took almost 75 years for it to be opened, but the effect was surprising: My host, at this stage an elderly lady herself, had tears in her eyes and sobbed as she told me the story of her uncle and his mother who never received either the letter or the attached photograph of a smiling young man on the battlefield.

This last example reveals the possible current impact of this contemporary material. The past is never fully gone, it is never over and often present in the way we engage in everyday life. It is another argument for the significance of a social archive in the context of a collective identity, be it a national or a regional one. The past shapes the way we live together – building bridges among different collective identities helps to create a more understanding reality today, and this is what I intend to do in the context of South Tyrol through dissemination such as newspaper articles and publications of public regional interest and international academic publications, too. The digitised archive has already become a treasure trove for both audiences, and it is still growing. It would be my hope that the Italian citizens of the region soon engage with it as enthusiastically as the German-speaking South Tyroleans have already done.

It could then become part of the “South Tyrol Story”, the successful pacification of an ethno-colonial conflict in the heart of Europe, which hails itself to be a blueprint for similar situations elsewhere in Europe and possibly beyond. This digitised collection could play its role in this context as it displays how ordinary people mastered the 20th century in the face of adverse effects of high politics. Varying recollections of the past through the focus of individuals from different ethno-linguistic origins enable imagination, understanding and reconciliation – the true value of social archives.

SUMMARY

Endeavour & Responsibility of the Historian – Creating an Archive of Ego Documents in Regions of Highly Contested Memories

The Irish folklore collection is a national social archive and has been an important focal point and a stabilizing influence on the development of the Irish collective identity after the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922. This historic blueprint has been adapted and modified to fulfill a similar role in the emerging collective identity of South Tyrol in Northern Italy, where a challenging minority issue was pacified through far-reaching concessions and a regional political and cultural autonomy. This contribution outlines that establishing a social archive in this area of contested memories and conflicting interpretations of the history of the 20th century poses many challenges to the historian, ranging from the respect for individual recollections to the adoption of internationally accepted interpretations of the Fascist past in Germany and Italy. It concludes that despite these challenges, a social archive might be the appropriate instrument to foster reconciliation and mutual understanding.

SAŽETAK

Nastojanja i odgovornost povjesničara – stvaranje arhiva ego dokumenata u regijama vrlo spornih sjećanja

Irska folklorna zbirka nacionalni je društveni arhiv i važna je središnja točka koja je imala stabilizirajući utjecaj na razvoj irskog kolektivnog identiteta nakon osnutka Irske slobodne države 1922. godine. Ovaj povijesni model prilagođen je i izmijenjen kako bi ispunio sličnu zadaću u nastajanju kolektivnog identiteta Južnog Tirola u sjevernoj Italiji, gdje je izazovno manjinsko pitanje pacificirano dalekosežnim ustupcima i regionalnom političkom i kulturnom autonomijom. Prilog ističe da uspostavljanje društvenog arhiva na ovom području spornih sjećanja i oprečnih tumačenja povijesti 20. stoljeća povjesničaru postavlja brojne izazove, od poštivanja individualnih sjećanja do usvajanja međunarodno prihvaćenih interpretacija fašističke prošlosti u Njemačkoj i Italiji. Zaključuje se da bi, unatoč tim izazovima, društveni arhiv mogao biti odgovarajući instrument za poticanje pomirenja i međusobnog razumijevanja.

RIASSUNTO

Sforzi e responsabilità dello storico – creazione di un archivio di ego-documenti in regioni di memorie altamente contestate

La Collezione del folklore irlandese è un archivio sociale nazionale ed è stato un importante punto focale e un'influenza stabilizzante sullo sviluppo dell'identità collettiva irlandese dopo la fondazione dello Stato libero irlandese nel 1922. Questo modello storico è stato adattato e modificato per soddisfare un ruolo simile nell'emergente identità collettiva del Sud Tirolo nell'Italia del nord, dove un arduo problema delle minoranze è stato pacificato attraverso concessioni di vasta portata e un'autonomia politica e culturale regionale. Questo contributo sottolinea che la costituzione di un archivio sociale in quest'area di memorie contestate e interpretazioni contrastanti della storia del XX secolo pone molte sfide allo storico, che vanno dal rispetto per i ricordi individuali all'adozione di interpretazioni del passato fascista in Germania e in Italia accettate a livello internazionale. Conclude che, nonostante queste sfide, un archivio sociale potrebbe essere lo strumento appropriato per favorire la riconciliazione e la comprensione reciproca.