In this article, some tentative conclusions are drawn on the relationship between history writing and national identity formation in the Scandinavian countries in the period from the eighteenth century to the present day. It is based on the results of a European Science Foundation programme on the writing of national histories in Europe and of accompanying publications, in particular the eight-volume book series 'Writing the Nation' published by Palgrave Macmillan between 2008 and 2015.
I am not a historian of Scandinavia, so what is presented here is very much an outsider’s view of national history writing in the Nordic countries, i.e. impressions formed during twenty years of comparative engagement with the topic of national history writing in Europe. Directing a European Science Foundation programme entitled ‘Representations of the Past. The Writing of National Histories in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Europe’ was particularly important in my own intellectual development, as it allowed me to discuss the Nordic national histories with many wonderful colleagues and first-class experts on the region and the topic. Initially, I was under the impression that the Nordic historians of historiography knew all about the development of the historical sciences in the whole of Scandinavia, especially as there have been excellent attempts to put the Nordic historiographical experience in a comparative perspective. Hence, I was surprised to realize how nationalised the work on historiography was, even in this well-known meso-region of the European continent. Experts on Sweden were not necessarily knowledgeable on Denmark. Colleagues with a deep knowledge of Norway did not necessarily know much about Finland. And experts on Icelandic historiography came mainly from Iceland. Of course, there have been exceptions to the rule, but I was nevertheless surprised that even in a region often talked about as if it were one large unified part of Europe, nationalisation of historical writing had been so powerful that it often excluded neighbouring nations that were assumed similar. It seemed to underline the power of national histories in modern European historiography.

What I do in this article is discuss my perceptions of the development of national histories in Scandinavia in a wider European framework and highlight some differences and commonalities between the Scandinavian national historiographies and between Nordic national histories and national histories elsewhere in Europe. The concepts of Scandinavia or the Nordic Countries or Norden are, like all spatial concepts, contested, and what they each mean shifts in time and place. Is Finland part of

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Norden, when linguistically it clearly is not and might rather be grouped with Estonia? Iceland is often forgotten in Scandinavian histories. Do Sweden, Denmark and Norway form a core of Nordic countries? All of these questions can be answered differently, but for the purpose of this article we refer to developments in Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland. The most difficult aspect is the exclusion of Estonia, which in many ways can be regarded as part and parcel of Norden. In a brief article like this, it is impossible to be comprehensive and systematic; hence, I concentrate on just a few themes and arguments related to the contextualisation of Scandinavian national historical narratives in a wider European scenario. Undoubtedly, there are many aspects that I have not touched on here.

In early modern Europe, national history was often dynastic history commissioned by monarchs, and nationalised dynastic historiographies developed in intense rivalry with each other. In Scandinavia, they evolved in the context of competition between Danish and Swedish narratives. From the fourteenth century onwards, Swedish vernacular chronicles expressed strong royal interests, while in Denmark Saxo Grammaticus’s (c. 1150–1220) *Gesta Danorum* (*The Deeds of the Danes*), written around 1200 and appearing in print for the first time in 1514, was widely used in emphasising Denmark’s proud claim to ancient and powerful nationhood. It was particularly useful in justifying the Kalmar Union, which brought together Sweden and Denmark under Danish rule between 1397 and 1523. Swedish histories, for example the one by Johannes Magnus (1488–1544) around 1530, emphasised the origins of the Swedes in the ancient Goth kingdom. A positively accentuated Gothicism was contrasted with the negative portrayal of anything Danish. The Swedes and their love of liberty were locked in a struggle against Danish greed for power. Magnus’s history inspired a Danish response by Arild Huitfeldt (1546–1609) which in turn provoked a Swedish riposte by Erik Jöransson Tegel (1563–1636). All of these nationalising narratives ignored the fact that the network of aristocracies in Sweden and Denmark often crossed national borders, which, at least until the sixteenth century, made wars between the two Scandinavian nations look more like civil wars than wars of separate nation states. In other words, national histories were programmatic statements for new governments as much as they were national in the modern sense of the word. The office of royal historiographer was established in Denmark in 1594 and in Sweden in 1640, and the practice of the king commissioning national histories to glorify dynastic rule...
and legitimate territorial claims was widespread in both Scandinavian kingdoms much earlier. The many scholarly debates about the origins of runes in ancient Denmark or Sweden, and the vexed question of the origins of the Icelandic saga manuscripts also demonstrated the extent to which early Scandinavian national histories were developed in competition with each other from very early on.

It was only in the European Enlightenments that the strong dynasticism of national history writing gave way to a philosophical form of history writing seeking to locate the universal progress of mankind in national histories. In other words, nations and often nation states were perceived as historical actors working in line with notions of progress and improvement. They often built on humanist traditions and they combined in their work commitment to Enlightenment values of progress and civilisation with the desire to highlight their own nation’s scientific, cultural, economic, social, political and military achievements. In Denmark, the Norwegian-Danish author Ludvig Holberg (1684–1754), professor of history at the University of Copenhagen since 1730, was one of the early representatives of Enlightenment historiography. He published a history of Denmark between 1732 and 1735 which focused on political and military history but included much information on economic, cultural, legal, moral and religious developments. Holberg was keen to stress the progressive nature of the development of Denmark. However, even during the Enlightenment the ambition of the universal could easily get lost behind the smokescreen of the national and the patriotic. For example, Ove Malling’s (1747–1829) Store och gode handlinger af Danske, Norske og Holstenere (Great and Good Deeds by Danes, Norwegians and Holsteinians, 1777) promoting state patriotism largely consisted of case studies of how national sentiment had benefited the Danish state. Given the different nationalities that lived under its roof,

4. Peter Aronsson, Narve Fuhås, Perti Haapala and Bernard Eric Jensen, 'Nordic National Histories', in: Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz (eds), The Contested Nation. Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories (Basingstoke, 2008), 256–82, is arguably the best attempt to relate the writing of national histories in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark to each other and provide a sustained and succinct comparison.
it was particularly important to demonstrate how all nationalities had contributed to making the Danish state strong, thereby benefiting their own national communities. The book endeared Malling to the Danish king, who made him Royal Historiographer in 1809.7

The major representative of Enlightenment historiography in Sweden was Olof von Dalin (1708–1763), who started his career as a poet and editor of a literary magazine before being commissioned to write a history of Sweden by the powerful Swedish estates who had come to dominate the Swedish state in the so-called Age of Liberty (1719–1772). Between 1747 and 1762 he published his three-volume history critical of the non-progressive medieval Catholic Church and spent much time describing the customs and beliefs of the people. Drawing on geology, archaeology and linguistics, Dalin promoted a view of national history which put the gradual development of freedom, honour and the law centre stage on the civilisational panorama he unfolded. Supportive of enlightened monarchical rule, Dalin reserved his highest praise for reforming kings who promoted learning and research and kept the country out of war.8

Enlightenment histories searching for universal progress in national histories were most prominent in the powerful European states of the eighteenth centuries to which both Denmark and Sweden belonged. By contrast, stateless nations – such as in nineteenth-century Scandinavia, Finland, Norway and Iceland – also had representatives of the Enlightenment, but in writing history they often sought to put their respective nations on the map of Europe and this meant far more attention to what was specific about the nation rather than how the nation carried universal progress. A good example of this was the Professor Eloquentiae at the University of Turku, Henrik Gabriel Porthan (1739–1804), who was one of the earliest champions of Finnish folk culture (especially language and poetry) and was thus later given the title of ‘Father of Finnish Historiography’. Porthan was one of the most prominent representatives of Enlightenment thought in Finland. Strongly influenced by the neo-humanism prevalent at the University of Göttingen and a pupil of his direct historiographical predecessors, Algot Scarin

(1684–1771) and Johan Bilmark (1728–1801), Porthan was committed to scientific history, in particular source criticism, in order to demonstrate that the Finns had arrived in their ‘homelands’ several centuries before the first Swedes arrived in Scandinavia. His books arguably became classics in Finnish historiography, because he had ‘scientifically’ shown that Finland possessed a ‘golden age’ of national history before the arrival of the Swedes. In addition, he was seminal in listing those ethnics which he saw as making up the Finnish ethnic community, in which he incorporated the Samis and even the Hungarians, seeing them as part and parcel of the Finno-Ugrian language family.

In his linguistic theories he drew on eighteenth-century Finnish historians such as Scarin and Daniel Juslenius (1676–1752), both professors at the University of Turku who had already argued that it was the distinctive Ugrian language and customs that set the Finns apart from the Swedes. This separatist historiography was later extended by the works of Romantic, so-called Fennophile, historians who glorified Finnish folk culture. The Enlightenment historian Porthan had thus given Finns a foundational national history based on language and ethnicity which subsequent Romantic historians in Finland would refer to time and again. More than that, by dividing the Finns into foreign Swedes, decadent lowlanders, arguably too much influenced by Swedes, and the authentic Finns of the highlands, Porthan laid the ground for later nineteenth-century nationalist glorification of the highlanders as the ‘authentic, untainted Finns’ who had preserved the national soul in their idealised agrarian hamlets and forests. Thus Karelia in particular became the truest expression of ancient Finnishness in many Finnish nationalist accounts produced by such eminent nineteenth-century historians as Johan Ludvig Runeberg (1804–1877) and Elias Lönnrott (1802–1884).¹⁰ Thus, in stateless nations in Europe, such as Finland, there was a much closer relationship between Enlightenment and Romantic national history than there was in powerful state nations. In the latter, Romantic national historiography, intent on establishing what was specific about a particular nation state, looked very different from an enlightened national historiography, where the specific was pushed to the sidelines in a grand narrative estab-

lishing how the nation state had been at the forefront of universal human progress.

Across Europe it had been the Romantic national historians who developed the key characteristics and canons of national history writing in the modern age, often drawing on older tropes and themes that ranged back to the middle ages.11 Romantic national historians paid much attention to defining the territory of the nation. The landscape that made up the territory was now itself nationalised. In Norway, for example, the long Atlantic coastline and the ‘natural’ Eastern borderline with Sweden, following largely the mountain range known as the Keel, has led to constructions of Norway as an Atlantic nation – a nation of explorers and seafarers, especially of the polar and arctic regions. François Walter (*1950) has characterised the period from 1760 to 1850 as the ‘age of landscape’, indicating the extent to which national identities were being forged around notions of the ‘natural’ environment right across Europe.12

In many parts of Europe, including Sweden, historians now related the term ‘fatherland’ to a variety of local and regional Heimats; in other words, the older regional and local sentiments of belonging were brought into line with a new emphasis on national identity in national history writing.13 In the Norwegian case, regional museums were important supplements to the emerging national storyline, often preceding the setting up of national museums, as was the case with the museums in Bergen (1825) and Tromsø (1872). This underlines the importance of regional narratives as building blocks for the national master narratives across Europe. Understanding the nation through its localities and regions continued throughout the twentieth century. In Norway, for example, the state generously funded a Norsk lokalhistorisk institutt (Norwegian Institute for Local History) in 1955, which continued the work of the Landslaget for by- og bygde-historie (National Association for Local History) – an association that had sought to unite the strong local history movement in the inter-war period.14 Professional historians from the universities often set themselves

up as mentors to regional societies to ensure that the new professional standards were adhered to. In Denmark, for example, a National Council for Local History was set up in 1909 in order to coordinate the activities of regional historical societies and oversee their ongoing professionalisation.

Nowhere was it more important to define properly the territory of the nation than at its borders. Hence borderlands took on a particular significance in national histories. In the nineteenth century, whole nations could be borderlands of empires – with varying degrees of success in their attempts to emerge from the shadows of mighty empires. One of the more successful cases was Finland, which emerged out of the shadows of two empires, the Swedish and the Romanov, in the nineteenth century. For Finnish nationalist historians such as Yrjö Koskinen (1850–1905), the author of *Suomen kansan historia* (Lectures on the History of the Finnish Peoples, 1869), the transfer of Finland from Sweden to Russia in 1809 – as part of the Napoleonic territorial *revirement* – was a logical progression of the Finnish nation on its way to autonomy. Indeed, Koskinen, Professor of History at the Imperial Alexander University of Helsinki, and fellow Fennoman nationalists used the new state structures in the Grand Duchy of Finland to promote national(ist) history. Always careful to emphasise their loyalty to the Russian Tsar and avoiding anything that smacked of separatism, the Fennomans, young radical nationalists, remained, first and foremost, anti-Swedish. However, this was to change with the next generation of Finnish nationalists. Koskinen’s pupil and successor as leader of the Finnish Party was John Richard Danielson (1853–1933), who, contrary to Koskinen, praised Sweden for saving Finland from the ‘Asian yoke’ and ‘Slavic hordes’. Instead, Danielson directed his main criticism towards Russia, largely because of policies of the Russian centre to reduce the autonomy of the Grand Duchy and russify Finland in an attempt better to control the Romanov empire’s borderlands.15

Typical European borderlands that struggled throughout the modern period to establish their own nation state were often particularly vociferous in their denunciation of over-mighty neighbours. Constructing national histories that demonstrated how the time of imperial, quasi-colonial subjugation was just a temporary discontinuity of an otherwise

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proud national historical development was one weapon in the armoury of many smaller European nations seeking to emerge from empires and multinational states. Taking the example of Norway, historians such as Ernst Sars (1835–1917) linked attempts to legitimate a future independent Norway to the existence of an independent medieval Norway. While the medieval Norwegian state succumbed to the Danish invaders, because the Norwegian aristocracy was too weak to uphold it, the medieval and modern states were linked by the persistence of a free peasantry. Free peasants as the democratic nucleus of a past and future independent nation state became one of the key foundational myths of the historical national master narrative in nineteenth-century Norway. It was no coincidence that Sars’ chair in history was created and funded (as an extraordinary professorship) by the very nationalist groups he himself provided with historical legitimation. Nevertheless, Sars wrote his national history very much in relation to the histories of Denmark and Sweden, precisely to show how Norway differed from its erstwhile conquerors and rulers. And the celebration of Norwegian victimhood and suffering was as important for the national historical narrative as the celebration of eventual or foreseen victory. Thus, Norwegian national history would be unthinkable without the idea of the 400 years of darkness with which the period of Danish rule over Norway was routinely equated in Norwegian nationalist historiography of the nineteenth century.

In some cases, borderlands engendered veritable history wars in the nineteenth century. One of the best examples is the historical controversy surrounding the claims over the Danish provinces of Schleswig and Holstein, which divided Danish and German historians. The conflict of words was undoubtedly exacerbated by actual wars between 1848 and 1851 and in 1864. On the eve of the outbreak of the first conflict, a six-volume collection of essays was published in Copenhagen entitled the Anti-Schleswig-Holstein Papers, to which historians, including Carl Ferdinand Allen (1811–1871) and Hans Mathias Velschow (1795–1862), contributed prominently. They attempted to put the record straight and to rebuke the historical claims made by the secessionists. Allen and Velschow argued that the provinces had been part of Danish nationality since the late

middle ages. Allen followed up his essay in the collection with a monograph entitled *A History of the Danish Language in the Duchy of Schleswig or Southern Jutland*, which argued that the linguistic and national identity of Schleswig had been Danish and that therefore only Danishness could represent ‘the true soul’ of the people living in this contested province.18

It should also be noted that the tensions with Germany around mid-century over the borderlands of Schleswig and Holstein coincided with Romantic Nordic nationalism across Scandinavia, promoted by, among others, the *Götiska förbundet* (Gothic Society) founded in 1810 by the Swedish historian Erik Gustaf Geijer and attracting mass support in the 1840s and 1850s, especially among student and intellectual circles. The Swedish king had given a promise to the Danes that, in the event of war with Prussia, the Swedish army would join forces with the Danes. Swedish and Norwegian troops were mobilized and served as a peacekeeping force in Schleswig after the great powers had forced Prussia to withdraw and the Danes had beaten the secessionists. In 1864, the king again promised military assistance, but this time he could not get the support in parliament for such a move, which dealt political Scandinavianism a major blow. Nevertheless, cultural Scandinavianism remained strong and reached a high point during the jubilee celebrations of the Kalmar Union in 1897 (which united the three kingdoms of Norway, Sweden and Denmark under one monarch after 1397), when the Swedish historian Martin Weibull (1835–1902) and the Norwegian historian Sars were among many high-profile Swedes and Norwegians collaborating with the Danish committee preparing the celebrations.19 However, it should be noted that Sars had devoted a large part of his career to fighting cultural Scandinavianism, and had been explicit more than once that the Kalmar Union should not be mistaken as a model for the present. Hence, it might well be the case that Sars was on the committee in order to see that no political actualisation of Scandinavianism would result from the historical celebrations. Arguably, the historiographical harmony between historians from the three nations could still easily be disturbed, and it

18. Uffe Østergård, ‘Schleswig and Holstein in Danish and German Historiography’ in: Frank and Hadler (eds), *Disputed Territories*, 200–25.
should not be forgotten that the conflict between Norway and Sweden was at its most intense in the 1890s, as both countries and their historians put forward largely different and rival versions of national history. Nevertheless, and despite all this rivalry, it is interesting to observe that, around 1900, Norway, Sweden and Denmark all built their respective national master narratives on the common assumption that all three nations were free peasant nations that had a long tradition of choosing their kings. Hence a ‘people–king axis’ with liberal-democratic overtones was at the heart of the Swedish, Danish and Norwegian national narratives. And in all three narratives the nobility and the Catholic Church became internal ‘others’ that were excluded from definitions of the ‘folk’ that stood at the heart of the national historical master narratives.

So, were Scandinavian national histories first and foremost ‘folk histories’? A basic difference between national histories of Europe is their orientation either towards accounting the history of the state or identifying national history with the history of the people. Those national histories that could look back on a long and continuous history of the state tended to be more statist, whereas those that could not would often refer to the people. In Scandinavia, the Danish and Swedish historiographies were more state-centred, whereas Finland, Norway and Iceland developed their specific version of people’s histories. Having made that basic distinction, however, we can also observe attempts to write people’s history in state-centric historiographies. In Denmark, for example, Kristian Ėrslev (1852–1930) and Julius A. Fridericia (1849–1912), among others, reinforced the myth of the free peasantry as the backbone of the Danish nation precisely because they wanted to move away from dynastic towards a more socially inclusive nationalism, for which notions of the people were more functional than notions of the state. However, if we look to Sweden, Erik Gustaf Geijer (1783–1847) is a good example of a historian who could not conceive of the Swedish nation without the state and without state power embodied by the kings. In Romantic fashion, kings in mainstream Swedish national historio-

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20. I am grateful to Narve Fulsås for pointing out to me Sars’ positioning vis-à-vis Scandinavianism and for alerting me to the strong rivalry between Swedish and Norwegian national master narratives during the 1890s.


graphy increasingly represented dynastic legitimacy, but also the umbilical link of the nation with the people. The primacy of state interest, which could be represented by a people’s king but also by state bureaucracies and the rule of law, was to remain a guiding light of Swedish national history until challenged by a focus on society in the twentieth century. That this had some effect on the general historical consciousness can be gauged from a poll among schoolchildren aged 7–12 in 1912. When asked about their heroes, they came up with Swedish kings in places one to three: Gustavus Adolphus, Gustav Vasa and Charles XII.\(^\text{23}\) Given the importance of German historiography as a model for many nineteenth-century historians in other parts of Europe, German state-centric historiography and in particular Hegel’s intellectual influence contributed to making the state and the law guiding concepts of European national history-writing.

Many national histories, however, could not link their territorial claims to present or even past statehood. In such cases we often find a national history which was decoupled or at least semi-detached from the state and which focused instead on the history and culture of the people living in a given territory and (allegedly) aspiring towards statehood. If we take the example of Finland, the founding of the Finnish Literature Society in 1831 and the publication of the *Kalevala* in 1835 marked the moment when the Finnish nation found its national master narrative in poetry and folk culture.\(^\text{24}\) After that, the Fennomans wrote national history tied to these notions of folk culture and literary traditions. But ethno-cultural definitions of the nation almost immediately encountered problems with ethno-national dualisms. In Finland, for example, the question of how to deal with the Finnish–Swedish division of society arose out of the strong ethno-cultural definition of Finnishness.

The state, however, was not just an object in national histories, it was also an active agent in promoting national histories. Of course, across Europe, there have also been civil society initiatives in the realm of national historical education which often augmented and supported the initiatives of the state. In Denmark, for example, the Danish Folk

\(^{23}\) Ragnar Björk, *The Swedish Baltic Empire in Modern Swedish Historiography*, in: Frank Hadler and Mathias Meseinholzer (eds), *Lost Greatness and Past Oppression in East Central Europe: Representations of the Imperial Experience in Historiography since 1918* (Leipzig, 2007), 35–62. A similar poll in 2000 had Gustav Vasa still among the top three, but now together with children’s author Astrid Lindgren and botanist and scientist Carl Linnaeus. I am grateful to Peter Aronsson for pointing this out to me.

High Schools were inspired by N. F. S. Grundtvig’s (1783–1872) merger of Protestantism and Danishness to strengthen Danish national identity. Founded in the 1840s, they became bulwarks of national sentiment, in particular in the aftermath of the Danish–Prussian war of 1864.25 But in many cases the state was a very powerful supporter of national history initiatives. In newly founded nation states, history was invariably allocated the task of strengthening national consciousness. When Norway joined the union with Sweden in 1814 and ended its centuries-old ties to Denmark, its first university had just been founded in Oslo (then known as Kristiana) in 1811. Among its first professors were two historians appointed to foster Norwegian national historical consciousness, which was seen as a precondition for full national independence.26 Soon after Finland gained independence in 1917, the University of Turku was refounded (in 1920) in order to rival the Swedish-speaking and allegedly unpatriotic university in Helsinki (which had moved from Turku in 1828). The nationalist Finnish intelligentsia organised a nationwide fundraising campaign to endow the university, which was indeed to become one of the bulwarks of Finnish nationalist history, represented by Jalmari Jaakkola (1885–1964), in the interwar period.27 By that time, the University of Helsinki had already been a hotbed of Fennoman nationalist history writing for more than half a century, with two historians in particular, Georg Zacharias Forsman (1839–1905)28 and Zacharias Topelius (1818–1898), constructing the canon of Finnish national history.

Although the formation of Norwegian national history preceded the formation of the Norwegian state, it was the latter that established the historiographical infrastructure capable of working out a systematic and coherent Norwegian national master narrative after 1814. Gerhard Schøning (1722–1780), frequently portrayed as ‘the fatherland’s man’, wrote his Norges Rüges Historie (The History of the Kingdom of Norway) from 1771 until his death in order to promote national pride through showing the authenticity of Norway as a nation. He instigated a ‘national wave’ in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Norway. At the newly established University of Oslo, history was a subject that had to be
taken by all students regardless of what they were studying. The national archives were established in 1817. Norwegian statehood in the middle ages and the link to the Vikings became the most important topics for historical research as they promised to connect Norway with a proud and distant past, making the Norwegians one of the most historical peoples of Europe.29

Romantic national histories also set the patterns in terms not just of spatialisation of national history, but also periodisation. Thus the search for origins, which had long been a characteristic of national histories, now became paramount. ‘Rise and fall’ narratives became the standard for national history with the nation imagined in organicist fashion as a person with separate periods of youth, maturity, old age and even death, followed by resurrection and eternal life. With the exception of Italy and Greece, in most other European nation states the Middle Ages became the most important period for emergence and early development of the nation. Medieval uprisings, such as the one led by Engelbrecht Engelbrechtsson in Sweden became defining moments in national histories because they could easily be connected with struggles against alleged (foreign) oppressors and constructed as representations of popular national sentiment. Medievalism became one of the most enduring characteristics of Romantic national history writing, especially of course in those European nations – and Scandinavia was well represented here – that had ‘big’ middle ages.50 Danish national histories, for example, celebrated the Danewerk as an early anti-German protective wall.51

With Romantic national histories we also witness many attempts to create firm canons of national enemies and national heroes.52 In Denmark, Adolf Ditlev Jørgensen (1840–1897) published *Fyrretyve Fortællinger af Fædrelandets Historie* (Forty Tales of the History of the Fatherland, 1882), which contained forty portraits of national heroes and their patriotic deeds.53 Apart from individual heroes, national histo-

30. Evans and Marchal (eds), *The Uses of the Middle Ages in Modern European States*.
31. For an interesting analysis on the contested Danish cultural heritage, including the Danewerk, in Danish-German borderlands, see Florian Greßhake, *Deutschland als Problem Däneemarks. Das materielle Kulturerbe der Grenzregion Sønderjylland-Schleswig seit 1864* (Göttingen, 2015).
ries also defined social and ethnic in- and out-groups. Most Scandinavian national histories explicitly excluded the Sami from their national collectives, despite the fact that at the Skansen folk history museum in Stockholm Samis were represented right from the beginning (the museum was founded in 1891) and were part of the unity in diversity narrative that also justified the unity of Sweden and Norway.

The nation was portrayed in national histories as being endangered, harassed and threatened by enemies, usually foreign neighbours. That was no different in Scandinavia than anywhere else in Europe. In Denmark, for example, one of the most important national histories of the nineteenth century was C. F. Allen’s national history, published in the early 1830s and entitled *Haandbog i Fædrelandets Historie med stadigt Henblik på Folkets og Statens indre Udvikling* (Handbook of the History of the Fatherland with special attention to the inner development of people and state). Apart from endorsing the idea of a free Danish peasantry as the backbone of the nation, Allen established the time-honoured antagonism between the Danes and their neighbours to the south, the Germans.

Romantic national histories could often be politically ambiguous and difficult to locate on a left–right scheme of politics. Among them was an early liberal variant that could have had democratic overtones. In Scandinavia, for example, the ancient forebears of a nation like the Goths in Sweden were associated mainly with warrior-like behaviour, which, in a liberal age and among liberal historians, carried democratic overtones. Workers, craftsmen and artisans were rarely the object of national histories, however. In line with the social origins of their writers, national histories in the nineteenth century concentrated on national elites: the aristocracy, clergy and the nascent middle classes. In the Romantic age, there were plenty of references to ‘the people’, but, with the important exception of the peasants, they rarely took concrete shape as members of the lower social echelons. Peasants and their customs became a

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34. I am grateful to Peter Aromsson for pointing this out to me. See also, more generally, Veli-Pekka Leikhtola, *The Sámi People: Traditions in Transition* (Fairbanks, AK, 2004).

35. An exemplary study of the construction of such mutual enmities is Michael Jeismann, *Das Vaterland der Feinde. Studien zum nationalen Feindbegriff und Selbstverständnis in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1792–1918* (Stuttgart, 1998).

central concern for national historians, because peasants were frequently constructed as guarantors of national continuity. In nation states, in particular, where peasants had a strong political presence early on, such as Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland, national histories tended to operate with notions of ‘the people’ that were more inclusive and democratic than in nation states where peasants did not have such political clout. Indeed, for Sweden, it has been argued that such representation in national history foreshadowed the hugely popular Social Democratic idea of the ‘people’s home’ in twentieth-century Sweden.37 And, in Norway, two of Norway’s most famous historians, Halvdan Koht (1875–1965) and Edvard Bull Sr. (1881–1952), took office as social democratic foreign ministers in the interwar period, thereby continuing the strong politicisation of Norwegian nineteenth-century historiography. The close alliance between liberal democracy and historiography in the nineteenth century was to give way to an equally strong alliance between social democracy and historiography in the twentieth century.38

While the nation was sacralised by nineteenth-century national historians in Europe, religion was nationalised. One immediately thinks of Poland or Spain and Catholicism, or, indeed, Russia or Romania and Orthodoxy. In Scandinavia there was a particularly strong connection between Lutheranism and national history. Here, as elsewhere, where national history came to be associated with one dominant religion, the national master narrative either incorporated religion within its storyline to such an extent that it became entirely uncontroversial (e.g. Sweden and Lutheranism) or a liberal secular master narrative emerged which challenged the dominance of the religious one.39

Class histories began to emerge in the second half of the nineteenth century and had the potential to challenge the dominance of the national paradigm. But, everywhere in Europe, histories of class were thoroughly nationalised. However, with regard to Scandinavia, we can see how, largely in the twentieth century, a class-based approach redefined

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national histories in Denmark and Norway, whereas they failed to do so in Sweden and Finland. At a time when class and labour histories enjoyed tremendous popularity in the universities and academies of Europe, they were staunchly national in orientation, as were the many historical research institutes associated with labour parties, such as, in Scandinavia, the Swedish Arbetarrörelsens Arkiv och Bibliotek (Labour Movement Archive and Library) in Stockholm, and Arbejdsmuseet and Arbejderbevægelsens Bibliotek og Arkiv (Workers’ Museum and Workers’ Movement Library and Archive) in Denmark. The move to comparative and transnational perspectives in social and labour history only happened when this became a more general trend within the historical sciences from the 1990s onwards.

If the overall trend in the European history of historiography is towards thorough nationalisation, there was a parallel trend towards the definition of supra-national meso-regions of Europe that developed their own literature and was part and parcel of a distinguished tradition of transnational forms of history writing. A range of pan-histories was created by diverse pan-movements in nineteenth-century Europe. Pan-movements sought to establish commonalities in regions consisting of more than one nation. The construction of such transnational macro-regions contributed to the spatial ordering of Europe. Macro-regions were often characterised by a high degree of linguistic compatibility, common heritage and geopolitical interests and social networking across imagined or real national borderlines. Taking, for example, notions of Northern Europe: up until the eighteenth-century this would have comprised everything from the British Isles in the West to Russia in the East, including the German lands and Scandinavia. Only when the separate notion of Eastern Europe arose in the eighteenth century was Northern Europe reduced to the Germanic North: the British Isles, the German lands and Scandinavia. In the nineteenth century, pan-Slavism, pan-Turanism, Iberianism, Scandinavianism and pan-Germanism were all expressions of attempts to contribute to a spatial reordering of Europe

42. Matthias Middell and Lluis Roura (eds), Transnational Challenges to National History Writing (Basingstoke, 2015).
43. Troebst, Geschichtsregionen.
on the basis of perceived commonalities of transnational regions. Pan-
histories, which rose to prominence from the 1840s onwards, were geared
to either a cultural or racial understanding of ethnicity, and started
from the assumption that all peoples within a given macro-region shared
particular transnational characteristics. They aimed at the self-emanci-
pation and liberation of those peoples and encouraged transnational soli-
darities between them.

Scandinavianism was based on the assumption of a Nordic family of
nations whose histories had been interrelated for centuries. Danes had
ruled over Iceland and Norway, Swedes over Finland and Norway, Swedes
and Danes had been major competitors in the North for power and
influence, and all Scandinavian nation states had been influenced by the
Vikings (the most common unitary tale to be told across Scandinavian
nation states in the nineteenth century) and had built powerful welfare
states in the twentieth century (the welfare state arguably replaced the
Vikings as the single most important common element across Scandi-
navian national histories). There is a great deal of linguistic compatibility
in Scandinavia, with the linguistic proximity of Swedish and Danish on
the one hand and Danish and Norwegian on the other. Most Finns under-
stood Swedish and most Icelanders understood Danish. The last war
between two Scandinavian countries ended in 1814, and there has been a
consistent track record of scientific cooperation, including the historical
sciences, going back to the 1850s. It should also be noted that Scandi-
navianism was mainly employed as an ideological tool to defend the
Nordic countries against attacks from neighbouring empires, notably the
German and Russian.44 It did not succeed in establishing itself as a viable
alternative political framework to the nation state in Scandinavia itself.
Within the meso-region of Scandinavia, national histories triumphed
in constructing strong national identities forged around nation states to
which Scandinavianism could at best be a cultural accompaniment.

In many so-called meso-regions of Europe, the transnational coopera-
tion of historians produced perspectives which went beyond narrow
national confines. A good example is Scandinavia, which saw the estab-
ishment of two English-language journals in the post-war years deliber-
ately aimed at cross-national, Scandinavian comparisons: the Scandi-

44 Aronsson, ‘National Cultural Heritage – Nordic Cultural Memory: Negotiating Poli-
tics, Identity and Knowledge’, in: Henningse, Kliemann-Geisinger and Troebst (eds), Trans-
nationale Erinnerungsorte, 71–90.
The concept of ‘Norden’ (the North) was crucial in establishing the horizon for a Scandinavian meso-region and getting historians interested in national histories other than their own. In the post-war years, the strong association of the Scandinavian states with welfare and their alleged model character for other states contributed to the mutual interest and the making of this historical meso-region. The centenary of the dissolution of the union between Sweden and Norway in 2005 produced no nationalist pamphlets. Instead, historians served up sober scholarly evaluations on both sides of the borders reflecting on the balance sheet of this union lasting for almost a century. Often these assessments were even carried out in tandem between Norwegian and Swedish historians.45

Historiographical nationalism reached its peak in Europe with the two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century. The period in history which transformed Europe into the ‘dark continent’ left very different marks in the different Scandinavian national histories. If we take, for example, Sweden, alongside other so-called neutral countries in the Second World War it desperately positioned itself in a historiographical landscape that transformed Sweden rather magically to an eternal peaceful oasis on the margins of Europe, conveniently forgetting about her past as an early modern great power.46 Rather than participating in the horrors of the Second World War, Sweden, it was said, did the right thing in concentrating on the country’s build-up of its model welfare state. The home front was lovingly depicted as strengthening solidarity under the ideal of the ‘people’s home’. The only aspect of war that was depicted positively was the willingness of Swedish volunteers to fight alongside the Finns in the Winter War – against the old enemy of the Swedes, the Russians.47
In most of Europe, the Scandinavian countries being no exception here, the histories of war, civil war, occupation, collaboration and utter destruction left a range of taboos and silences that created a great urge for traditional national master narratives to be stabilised after 1945. As such, it is perhaps best to talk about a delayed break with nationalist variants of historical writing from the late 1950s onwards. This emergence of a more critical national historiography can be observed in Scandinavia, too. In Finland, for example, it was not a professional historian, but the author Väinö Linna (1920–1992), who started to unravel the complex story of civil war in 1918 and the alliance between Finland and Germany in the Second World War, which, to Finns, was better known as the Continuation War. The rise of a critical, but nevertheless decidedly national social history was highly visible in Finland thereafter, where research funding from the 1960s went predominantly into national research projects such as the Finnish civil war and Finland in the Second World War, i.e. topics that had been taboo before and where there was a perceived need for critical and ‘scientific’ perspectives. A Swedish example of such self-critical and self-reflective forms of national history writing includes research into the violations of neutrality during the Second World War. Sweden’s ‘Levande Historia’ (Living History) initiative, established in 1997, saw the state promoting Holocaust education in a direct attempt to learn lessons for the present from the dark history of the first half of the twentieth century. In Denmark, Marxist influences on historical writing also produced more critical reassessments of traditional national master narratives, for example in the pages of the journal The Historian of Jutland. In many West European countries, including the Scandinavian countries, the more critical national histories

now tackled issues such as collaboration and the holocaust. In this regard it is striking how little national historians of Denmark made of the effort of the Danish people and governments to save ‘their’ Jews from annihilation. By and large, these stories were subsumed in the larger stories of national resistance to occupation, and the Jewish population and its defenders were remembered not so much as Jews but as citizens of their respective nation states.54

If a coming to terms with the past was largely focused on the histories and pre-histories of the Second World War in Western Europe from the 1960s onwards, Western European historiographies during the Cold War remained largely hostile towards Communist Eastern Europe. Next to Austria, an exception was Finland, where Finnish historians developed more of a dialogue with Communist Eastern Europe, as theirs was a particularly complex history vis-à-vis Soviet history before 1945 and as they had a particularly urgent need to live peacefully with the Soviet Union. This also had historiographical repercussions. Thus, for example, the Finnish Eastern Border in Karelia was no longer discussed in sharp confrontationist style as a civilisational frontier – something stressed by the nationalist school of history writing in the interwar period as represented by Jalmari Jaakkola. Instead, the border was now seen by Kustaa Vilkuna (1902–1980) as a place of peaceful exchange and a contact zone between different peoples.55

Quite apart from and yet intimately related to the establishment of national historical narratives in modern Europe was the institutionalisation and professionalization of historical writing that took on a new complexion and dimension from the eighteenth century onwards.56 Enlightenment historians not only developed a new philosophical history, they also contributed in a major way to the institutionalisation of history writing in Europe. Across Enlightened Europe, systems of higher education were reformed during the second half of the eighteenth century, allowing history to become more anchored in state-funded institutions such as universities and academies. In Denmark, the historian Thyge Rothe (1751–1795) played a leading role in the foundation of the

Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab (Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters). The Kongelige Norske Vitenskabers Selskab (Royal Norwegian Society for Science and Letters) was established in Trondheim in 1760. As early as the mid-seventeenth century historical research at the Royal Academy of Turku served the purpose of legitimating the Swedish Royal Family and its rule. When the Academy was moved to the new capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1828, it became the Imperial Alexander University and its historians were soon in the forefront of promoting Finnishness.57

The rapid development of civil society in parts of Europe also strengthened historical cultures, as was evident in the proliferation of historical societies and journals. Thus, for example, Den Norske Historiske Forening (the Norwegian Historical Association) was established in 1869 and the Suomen Historiallinen Seura (Finnish Historical Society) followed suit in 1875. The Finnish organisation was extraordinary in that it even restricted its membership to historians who were experts in the national history of Finland and did not open its doors to non-national historians until 1962. In Finland, some Swedish-speaking historians were to become so disillusioned with Finnish nationalism that they eventually split the historical profession and set up their own historical association and their own historical journal in 1916. The Svenska historiska föreningen (Swedish Historical Society) was founded in 1880. In composite national states, historical societies could also work towards establishing national histories as means to achieving independent statehood. Many societies created their own national journals in which mainly research on national history was published. However, sometimes journals that carried the exclusive reference to history in their titles, such as the Danish Historisk Tidskrift (Historical Journal), founded as early as 1840, were not yet fully professional. The first issue of Historisk Tidskrift stressed its aim to cover a wide range of scholarly topics from literature to anthropology.58

Apart from societies and journals, national archives became important locations for the new national master narratives. The creation of the Danish national archives in 1663 is an example of the close link between premodern national archives and dynastic archives in early modern Europe. It was founded by the monarch, Frederick III, and housed, after 1720, in a building near the Royal Palace. Its origins can be traced to the Middle Ages, as the Gehejmearkivet (Secret Archive) was already established by royal decree in 1296. A truly national archive as conscious repository of the story of the national past, however, was only created in 1889. The examples of national archives which had their origins in medieval or early modern Europe but were founded as truly national archives only in the nineteenth century could be extended across many different parts of Europe. Vital for their establishment was the distinguished antiquarian tradition of learned men (and some women) who paid considerable attention to the collecting and preserving of documents and artefacts from the past across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sweden was in the vanguard of European archives introducing the principle of public access to the public record office as early as 1766.59 By that time, access was certainly not yet a right across Europe. Instead it had to be granted by state authorities.60

If we can observe strong trends towards the professionalization and institutionalisation of history writing from the second half of the eighteenth century onwards, around 1800 no clear borderlines existed as yet between a self-consciously professional, university-based historiography and its amateur other, market-oriented and serving a more popular audience. Historical fiction and factual representations of the past were still incredibly close. Novelists, dramatists and poets, including Esaias Tegnér (1782–1846) in Sweden and Adam Gottlob Oehlenschläger (1779–1850) in Denmark, all served historians as models of how to craft a gripping narrative.61 Other genres and scientific disciplines were struggling alongside history to establish a national historical narrative. In an age of nationalism, existing and emerging nation states needed physical proof of their antiquity. Archaeology was a useful science in this respect.

59. I am grateful to Peter Aronsson for pointing this out to me.
and it became fundamental to the national imagination in many parts of Europe. Denmark and Sweden had passed laws to protect their national antiquities in the seventeenth century. Many other European nation states followed suit in the nineteenth century. History paintings depicted mythical and ‘real’ events from the nation’s past, glorifying the nation’s achievements, sufferings and heroic deeds. In Denmark, Christian August Lorentzen (1749–1828) in his *Danebrog falder ned fra himlen under Volmerslaget ved Lyndanis 15. juni 1219* (1809) depicted the Danish flag falling from the sky during the battle of Lyndanise in 1219 – a famous incident in the national mythology of Denmark. Oscar Arnold Wergeland (1844–1910) in Norway, is another good example of the many history painters in Europe depicting aspects of the national historical master narratives on canvas. History and folk museums also played an important role in displaying and performing the national past. The Norsk Folkemuseum (Norwegian Folk Museum) opened in 1894, followed closely by the Historical Museum in 1902. It is significant that folk museums should precede or parallel the opening of history museums in a number of European countries, as folklore studies had a major role to play in establishing national identity and hence were closely intertwined with national history in many national master narratives across Europe, especially where national movements could not rely on a continuous state history. The Swedish folk museum in Skansen/Stockholm provided the model for all other folk museums in Europe.

If the borders to other disciplines and genres remained porous well into the nineteenth century and if ‘amateurs’ co-existed for a long time with ‘professionals’, by 1900 that situation had changed almost entirely, and there was now a rigid border in place between the ‘historical sciences’ and other forms of historical representation. Between 1850 and 1914 the institutionalisation and professionalisation of historical writing progressed significantly in many parts of Europe, but it did so at different pace. Thus, in Iceland, for example, the national master narrative continued to be tightly related to the sagas, which ensured lasting links between


national history and national literature.\(^65\) In Finland, the importance of the epic *Kalevala* (first published in 1835) was equally important in ensuring pride of place for literature. Poetry and folk culture were regarded as vital incarnations of national character and no national history could be written without reference to them.

And yet, professional historians began to draw a sharper line between history as a science and other forms of historical representation. In Denmark, Kristian Erslev (1852–1930) differentiated strongly between his own generation of professional historians and his predecessors not yet fully committed to scientific endeavour.\(^66\) Yet Erslev found it very difficult to avoid all national myths. So, for example, he did not question the idea that Danish national history could be traced back to the dim and distant past of the time of the great migrations in Europe after the fall of the Roman Empire. And professionalised historians were by no means less engaged on national(ist) projects than their predecessors, but they justified these projects less with reference to politics and more with reference to ‘historical science’, which ultimately only made their political interventions on behalf of the nation more effective. After all, in an age of science, who would dare to contradict the truthfulness of the professional historians’ account on whose basis they espoused their particular national(ist) politics? A historian such as Erslev was himself closely involved with publishing a six-volume national history *Danmarks Riges Historie* (*History of the Danish Reich, 1856–1906*), which contained many patriotic statements.

One of the most thorough exclusions that occurred with the movement towards the professionalization of historical writing was the exclusion of women from the historical profession.\(^67\) Only towards the end of the nineteenth century were women beginning to make some progress in getting the profession to open its doors to them. In many parts of Europe women were admitted to university studies between the 1870s and 1900s. In Sweden the historian Ellen Fries (1855–1900) was the first woman to obtain a PhD; this in 1885. It took almost another sixteen

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years, until 1898, before another woman, Lydia Wahlström (1869–1954), completed a PhD in history. In Denmark, Anna Hude (1858–1934) submitted a history PhD in 1892. Even if in most cases women could not climb to the height of full professorships, professional careers were possible, for example, through positions that became increasingly available in libraries. In Denmark, Ellen Jørgensen (1877–1948) became a senior librarian at Det Kongelige Bibliotek (Royal Library) in 1915. In many countries, however, the first female full professors were often appointed only in the post-Second World War years, e.g. in Denmark in 1945, in Norway in 1963 and in Sweden in 1965. But their numbers everywhere remained small up until the 1960s, when expansion of the higher education system and the rise of social and women's history brought new possibilities for the employment of women in universities. From the 1970s onwards, women's and gender history developed strongly in Western historiographies and Scandinavian women and gender historians were often at the forefront of developments here. In Norway, they even produced a national history from a gender perspective.68

Western Europe-wide expansion of higher education during the 1960s and 1970s influenced the development of the historical profession in Scandinavia. Seventeen history chairs in Denmark became 116. Completely new history departments were set up at Odense (1964), Roskilde (1972) and Aalborg (1974). In Finland, the University of Oulu was founded in 1958, colleges of higher education became full-blown universities in Tampere and Jyväskylä (both in 1966), and the Joensuu Institute of Higher Learning was established in 1969. The sheer number of new appointments across the discipline of history in Western Europe meant that it had become far more difficult for keepers of the holy grail of dominant national narratives to keep innovation and change at bay, including, first, developments to provide more critical perspectives on national history, and, second, to transnationalise historical writing.69

Arguably, by the beginning of the 21st century we have come full circle in regard to the dividing line between professional historians and amateurs or other historical representations where we have been witnessing the renewed and quite successful blurring of that borderline.70

However, attention has to be paid to regional differences in Europe, where some of the smallest nation states professionalised their historical writing relatively late in the day; where amateur and professional traditions co-existed for longer than elsewhere; and where the ‘historical sciences’ were less successful in erecting firm borders vis-à-vis other historical genres and ‘scientific’ disciplines. In Scandinavia, Iceland is a good example of this, as the slow emergence of a fully professionalised academic history writing after 1945 meant that nationalist historical narratives were being criticised only relatively late in the twentieth century.71

Before I conclude this brief attempt to contextualise the Scandinavian experience with national history writing in a wider European framework, I must mention one area of research in urgent need of further attention, i.e. the transnational networks and influences that impacted on national historiographies in Europe. Because of the strong nationalisation of the history of historiography, little attention has been paid to this important aspect of historiographical development. Thus, so far we get only tantalizing glimpses. Karl Lamprecht, well known to have had a stronger influence abroad than at home in Germany, through his pupils coming from a variety of different countries and often returning to their countries to implement ideas, inspired the Norwegian historian Halvdan Koht and Finnish historians such as Kaarle Väinö Voionmaa (1869–1947), Gunnar Suolahiti (1876–1935), and Arvid Neovius (1861–1916), who sought to establish a Lamprechtian cultural history in Finland in the 1890s. Fennoman nationalist historians, such as Georg Zacharias Forsman and Zacharias Topelius, were strongly influenced by Hegelian ideas.72 German models also dominated the institutionalisation of professional history writing in Sweden, where Harald Hjärne (1848–1922) began organising German-style historical seminars at the University of Uppsala in 1886. One of the Swedish founding fathers of historical studies, Frederik Ferdinand Carlson (1811–1887), was deeply influenced by his studies at the University of Berlin under Ranke.73 In

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71. Gudmundur Hafsteinarson, ‘Iceland’, in: Porciani and Raphael (eds), Atlas, 72, emphasises that History became a fully independent department within the University of Iceland only in the 1970s.
the nineteenth century, similar experiences, not necessarily restricted to Ranke and Berlin, had resulted in widespread calls for intellectual and institutional transfers from German historiography right across Europe. After the establishment of the German empire in 1871, a study period in Germany became something of a pilgrimage for aspiring historians across Europe, with Berlin as a scientific Mecca, although Leipzig, Göttingen and Munich were certainly not far behind in their popularity for foreign students.

By way of conclusion, it can be said that Scandinavia fits well within an overall European pattern of the development of national history writing. Many general characteristics of European national history writing are also present in Scandinavia, including the strong ties between early modern national history writing and dynasticism, the philosophical forms of national history writing during the Enlightenments, and many of the characteristics of national histories that emerge during the first great wave of modern national history writing in the Age of Romanticism. We have given examples of the ways in which national histories were spatialized and divided into time periods. The issues of borderlands and borders were particularly acute in Scandinavia because of mighty inimical neighbours, especially Germany and Russia, and also because of internal dependencies and colonialisations, in particular between the state nations of Denmark and Sweden, on the one hand, and the aspiring nineteenth- and twentieth-century nation states of Finland, Norway and Iceland on the other. Canons of national heroes and national enemies were constructed in all Scandinavian nation states. And the national historical master narratives were sacralised and incorporated religious, Protestant and Lutheran narratives just as the emerging class narratives were nationalised. All this is entirely in line with developments elsewhere in Europe. During the high point of historiographical nationalism in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, Scandinavia, with the exception of Finland, was not among those countries that witnessed an excess of historiographical nationalism. The neutrality of Sweden, the friendly occupation of Iceland by the US and relatively mild forms of occupation (certainly, if compared with East Central and Eastern Europe) in Denmark and Norway ensured relative continuity of national master narratives. A problematisation of aspects of national histories during the Second World War and its pre-history occurred only from the 1960s onwards and has remained, by and large, restricted to the national sphere. During the Cold War all Scandinavian countries, again with the
exception of Finland, located their national histories squarely within a normative community of Western states and developed strong anti-Communist sentiments. With regard to the professionalization and institutionalisation of the historical sciences, the Nordic experience can also be put squarely in the Western European mainstream, both regarding the processes themselves and their timing. Our discussion of commonalities between the Scandinavian and a wider European experience with national history writing is by no means comprehensive, but I hope it indicates that we can locate Scandinavia in many ways in the mainstream of European national historiographies.

Within Scandinavia, however, we can observe a split between the long-established imperial state nations of Denmark and Sweden, on the one hand, and the post-colonial latecomers in nation-state formation Finland, Norway and Iceland, on the other. For a start, only Denmark and Sweden could look back on a long and continuous state history, and as such its national historical master narratives were far more state-oriented than was the case in Finland, Norway and Iceland, whose histories had to come to terms with the loss of independent statehood or the fact that it had never existed in history. Hence their national histories contained elements of postcolonial narratives vis-à-vis either Denmark or Sweden and sometimes other empires, such as the Russian empire in the case of Finland. And they also contained many more references to the people (usually peasants) and to folk culture and cultural developments of the nation, as there was no state structure to fall back to. Yet, this differentiation between 'state national histories' and 'people's national histories' was not clear cut, as liberal democratic variants of both Danish and Swedish national history introduced elements of a people's history into the Danish and Swedish national histories. As in Norway, Finland and Iceland, Danish and Swedish historians could also construct a golden age of peasant freedoms and connect it with specific visions of (normally) a liberal-democratic vision of contemporary Denmark and Sweden. And new-found nation states in Norway and Finland were certainly adamant in building the infrastructure for strong national narratives and also putting the new state centre-place when it came to writing the contemporary or recent history of the Norwegian and Finnish nation state. Perhaps it is this prominent role of historiography in the nation-state building processes of both Finland and Norway that ensured a much more high-profile intellectual role for historians in both countries, when compared to Sweden and Denmark. Historians as public intellectuals were far
more noticeable in Finland and Norway than they were in Sweden and Denmark. Within the Scandinavian family of nations, Iceland alone is characterised by very late professionalization and institutionalisation of history as a ‘science’, which had important repercussions for its historical master narratives that remained, for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, oriented towards the sagas and towards folk culture. Finland’s national history is also unusual in Scandinavia, as it alone had to deal with a bloody and traumatic civil war and with its deep involvement as a combatant in the Second World War. Finnish exceptionalism continued into the Cold War, as it alone, of the Scandinavian states, developed a national narrative that sought to co-exist alongside a Soviet narrative. Whereas anti-Communism and a confrontational stance to Communist Eastern Europe characterised the other Scandinavian national histories, the Finnish one came to develop more contacts and more narratives that stressed commonalities and shared spaces of history. Overall then, despite the fact that the Scandinavian national histories can be located squarely within the mainstream of European national historiographies, there are many differences between the Scandinavian states, when it comes to the content and form of their respective national historical master narratives, which also explains why, under processes of intense nationalisation, these narratives developed alongside each other rather than in continuous exchange. Only more recently is this beginning to change.