

Tutor's report of the M.A. thesis:

Juan Gabriel Ramírez Bolívar, *The hero and the image of nationalism in Colombia, The sculptures at "Parque del Centenario" (1883-1958)* (ÚSD FF UK, École des hautes études en sciences sociales (Paris), 2015, 112 pp.)

Juan Gabriel Ramírez Bolívar decided to pursue his research in the wide field of the study of nationalism. Concretely, he decided to explore the peculiarities of the problem of Latin American nationalism in the 19th and 20th century. On the basis of a case study – the efforts of the elites of Colombia to promote the image of “national heroes” for the general public and the transformations of this pantheon of national heroes through time – he was aiming at ascertaining the mechanisms of construction of the “imagined societies” divided by barriers of race, ethnicity and class and at the same time undergoing complicated processes of modernization.

The author opted for a very narrow delineation of the research problem: the case of one concrete park in the center of Bogota, the circumstances of its construction and subsequent remodelation, and especially the efforts of the local and national elites to materialize into this public space of their vision of national hero(e)s. For his analysis, the author used varied primary sources: archival, pictorial, maps, contemporary journals etc.

In the introductory part, besides offering a comprehensive overview and evaluation of these sources, he delineated theoretical and methodological background of his research and clarified the approaches he applied. He accentuated in especial the concept of image and the efficacy of image by Louis Marin and the notion of public space (here, of the various authors studying the problem, he chose the Spanish historian Francisco Sevillano Calero). It is praiseworthy that he resisted the ambition to integrate into the work too many theoretical concepts, so that he did not blur and dissolve the principal narrative; but he successfully used those he chose throughout his narrative.

The corpus of the work could be labeled “descriptive”. The author in the first place assembled, ordered and evaluated the factual information, some of it already knowns, but some new and hitherto unexplored. He was able to identify the authors and patrons, as well as the process of realization of each sculpture. However, he did not content himself with a mere inventarization of facts. Out of his detailed explanations arise broader structures of social and political development. This is one of the strong points of this thesis – it rests firmly upon the basic premise of historiography, namely, the change through time. Ramírez Bolívar followed up not only the transformations of the very concept of “national hero” in the Colombian nationalist discourse (starting with the sole focus upon Bolívar, then broadening to include other military figures and, later, also cultural representatives, poets and philosophers), but also the transformation of the notion of public space (from being the “shop-window” of national ideology to utility place dominated by highways).

Also, it needs to be mentioned that this thesis offers an example of interdisciplinary approach, combining historical method (archival study, study of periodical sources) with those of history of art and urban planning. The pictures and plans that complement the text are not mere illustrations, but constitute an organic part of the narrative.

In the first chapters, partial analyses were pursued, dealing not only with the statues themselves, but also with personalities who promoted the founding of the park and who commented its establishment (especially Alberto Urdaneta, embodiment of the “national spirit” of Colombia of the 1880s). Besides, the process of founding of the park is presented within the broader frame of the “Regeneration” movement, a rather unique effort of Colombian elites – in the context of the political developments in other Latin American

countries of the times – to reconcile political differences between conservative and liberal wings of political representatives, in favor of the needs of the nation as a whole, its modernization and economic and cultural advancement. In comparison with this detailed effort, the final part is rather sketchy, probably owing to the time pressure upon the author. Still, it offers inspiring views of the changing situation in Bogota, transformed from a provincial town to a local metropolis. The whole thesis thus fits to the general program of TEMA, not only within the frame of the study of nationalism, but also the study of the city as a unique social organism.

The text is well arranged. It is written in comprehensible English, even though some formulations show the impact of the native language of the author and also reveal his haste in the final phase of writing. All the sources used are precisely quoted in footnotes and in the final bibliography.

Juan Gabriel Ramírez Bolívar thus produced a thesis based on original research and meeting all the formal standards that can serve as a basis for future research and reference to other scholars interested in the topic. In spite of my partial criticisms listed above, I recommend the thesis for defense and propose its evaluation by **grade A** (Czech scale: výborně; French scale: 16).

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