



Apostles of the Alps: Mountaineering and Nation Building in Germany and Austria, 1860-1939

By Tait Keller

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Though the Alps may appear to be a peaceful place, the famed mountains once provided the backdrop for a political, environmental, and cultural battle as Germany and Austria struggled to modernize. Tait Keller examines the mountains' threefold role in transforming the two countries, as people sought respite in the mountains, transformed and shaped them according to their needs, and over time began to view them as national symbols and icons of individualism.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Alps were regarded as a place of solace from industrial development and the stresses of urban life. Soon, however, mountaineers, or the so-called apostles of the Alps, began carving the crags to suit their whims, altering the natural landscape with trails and lodges, and seeking to modernize and nationalize the high frontier. Disagreements over the meaning of modernization opened the mountains to competing agendas and hostile ambitions. Keller examines the ways in which these opposing approaches corresponded to the political battles, social conflicts, culture wars, and environmental crusades that shaped modern Germany and Austria, placing the Alpine borderlands at the heart of the German question of nationhood.

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Review

An insightful study, written with verve and pace, that explores the contradictory role of Alpine peaks as both a dividing frontier and a shared landscape in the German imaginary. It will be of interest to historians of German nationalism and Austro-German relations, and offers particular promise as an accessible and intelligent rendering of the particularities of German nationalism for an undergraduate audience.--*German History*

An excellent example of how to study the 'conquest of nature.' . . . Very convincingly demonstrates how the ecoregion of the Alps was transformed.--*H-Net Reviews*

A useful overall account of developments [in the Alps], filling his narrative with verve, enthusiasm, and numerous interesting vignettes. . . . An original contribution through [the] extensive use of association periodicals and focus on the work of Alpine activists.--*German Historical Institute London Bulletin*

Does an excellent job in teasing out many of the contradictions or at least tensions that Alpinism created in simultaneously promoting nature and access to it.--*American Historical Review*

Review

Fluid and impressively researched, *Apostles of the Alps* makes powerful and innovative contributions in many fields.--Shelley Baranowski, University of Akron

This book will make for a welcome addition to our collection of works in environmental history, the history of technology, the history of tourism, and the history of mountaineering. This well-researched, clearly argued text fills a void in our literature.--Frank Uekotter, University of Birmingham

About the Author

Tait Keller is assistant professor of history at Rhodes College.

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