

# **The German Sense Of The Past 1700-1900: Unraveling the Historical Narrative**

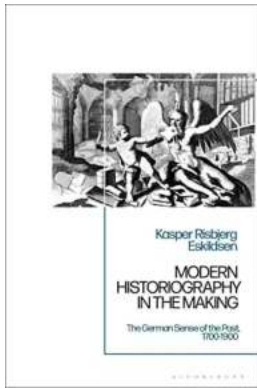
Germany, a country rich in history and culture, has always displayed a deep sense of connection to its past. From the 18th century to the 19th century, the German sense of the past underwent significant developments that shaped the country's identity. This article delves into the historical journey of Germany during this period, unraveling the factors that influenced the German sense of the past and examining the lasting impact on its society and national consciousness.

## **The Enlightenment and Historical Scholarship**

In the 1700s, the Enlightenment era brought about significant changes in Europe. Germany, too, experienced intellectual advancements that deeply influenced its perception of the past. As German scholars like Leopold von Ranke pioneered scientific methods of historical research, the nature of historical inquiry underwent a transformation. The emphasis on objectivity and empirical evidence brought a new level of academic rigor to historical scholarship in Germany. This scientific approach to history laid the foundation for the German sense of the past.

## **The Emergence of Nationalism**

In the 19th century, Germany witnessed the rise of nationalism. The quest for a unified German state fueled a resurgence of interest in German history and heritage. Figures like Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Wilhelm Grimm sought to revive a national consciousness by exploring Germany's cultural heritage, folklore, and language. The idea of a distinct German identity, rooted in its historical past, gained momentum. This newfound sense of nationalism shaped Germany's perception of its own history, reinforcing the importance of the past in defining its present and future.



## Modern Historiography in the Making: The German Sense of the Past, 1700-1900 by David Scott(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

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Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Print length : 241 pages  
Screen Reader : Supported



### Historical Revisionism and Political Influences

Throughout the 19th century, Germany experienced seismic political shifts. The rise and fall of the various German states, including the Napoleonic occupation and the subsequent establishment of the German Empire, prompted a reevaluation of the past. Historical revisionism emerged as a powerful tool for political agendas. The reinterpretation of historical events allowed different factions to assert their claims and establish legitimacy. The German sense of the past became entangled with political motivations, often used to generate support for specific movements or ideologies.

### Industrialization and the Collective Memory

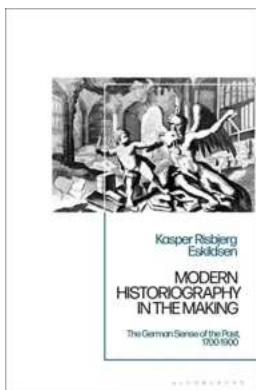
Industrialization brought about significant societal changes, and the German experience was no exception. The rapid urbanization and transformation of traditional rural communities impacted the way Germans perceived their history. As people moved away from their agrarian roots, nostalgia for the simpler, rural past grew. This fascination with the past fueled a desire to preserve and document German cultural heritage, resulting in the establishment of museums, heritage sites, and archives. The industrial era further solidified the German

sense of the past, creating a collective memory deeply rooted in nostalgia and heritage.

## Memory and the Shaping of National Identity

Germany's sense of the past played a crucial role in the shaping of its national identity. The collective memory of historical events, both glorious and painful, became intertwined with the notion of being German. The intensity of Germany's historical consciousness can be seen in the way events like the Battle of Waterloo or the French occupation still resonate in the national psyche. The German sense of the past served not only as a source of identity but also as a cautionary tale, reminding the nation of the consequences of past actions.

The German sense of the past during the period from 1700 to 1900 was shaped by various factors: the Enlightenment and the scientific approach to history, the rise of nationalism, the political influences on historical interpretation, and the impact of industrialization on collective memory. These elements reflected the deep connection between the German people and their historical heritage. Understanding the evolution of the German sense of the past provides valuable insights into the formation of German national identity and the lasting impact history has on a nation's consciousness.



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At the end of the 19th century, German historical scholarship had grown to great prominence. Academics around the world imitated their German colleagues. Intellectuals described historical scholarship as a foundation of the modern worldview. To many, the modern age was an 'age of history'. This book investigates how German historical scholarship acquired this status.

Modern Historiography in the Making begins with the early Enlightenment, when scholars embraced the study of the past as a modernizing project, undermining dogmatic systems of belief and promoting progressive ideals, such a tolerance, open mindedness and reform-readiness. Kasper Risbjerg Eskildsen looks at how this modernizing project remained an important motivation and justification for historical scholarship until the 20th century. Eskildsen successfully argues that German historical scholarship was not, as we have been told since the early 20th century, a product of historicism, but rather of Enlightenment ideals. The book offers this radical revision of the history of scholarship by focusing on practices of research and education. It examines how scholars worked and why they cared. It shows how their efforts forever changed our relationship not only to the past, but also to the world we live in.



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