



Harald Heppner and Sabine Jesner, eds., *Die Personalfrage in neuen Provinzen: Das Banat im regionalen Vergleich* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2020), 348 p.

The volume recently published in the series Schriftenreihe des Instituts für donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde is the result of a project of the University of Graz developed between 2015 and 2018, financed by the Austrian Scientific Research Fund, with the theme “Personnel Management in a New Province.” Starting from the case of Banat seen as an experimenting ground for the establishment of modern bureaucracy on a domain of the crown, the volume coordinated by Harald Heppner and Sabine Jesner places the province integrated into the Habsburg Empire in 1718 in a comparative regional and European perspective, with

examples referring to similar developments from Serbia, Slovenia, Galicia and Bukovina, but also from Tuscany, Tyrol, Salzburg, the Swiss Confederation and the Ionian Islands. Harald Heppner also addressed the paradigm of “social change” applied to the comparative research of regional history in other works, among which the volumes coordinated in 2011, 2012 and 2014 can be mentioned.<sup>1</sup>

According to the mentioned historian, the phenomenon of the transition of dominion over a territory can be approached from various perspectives, starting with the ideational one, regarding the maxims of governance, continuing with the material one, then with that of human personnel, which includes aspects of social structure, migrations, career building and ethnic and confessional dimensions, with the perspective of organizational, administrative, legal and spatial planning, as well as the functional perspective, with regard to the meanings attributed in time to the change (“Einleitung,” 14-15). Such research involves the inquiry of a wide diversity of sources, from those with character of representation (diaries, memoirs, monuments, portraits, press, etc.) to those with a proper informative status (political acts, journalism, travel journals, etc.), which gives historians the opportunity to capture in depth the characteristics of the human dimension of the phenomenon of change of political dominion and the evolution over time of a new system of dominion (ibid., 17-18).

Starting from these premises, the two contributions that give coherence to the volume in relation to the assumed theme address the issue of the personnel from an

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<sup>1</sup> Harald Heppner, Peter Urbanitsch and Renate Zedinger, eds., *Social Change in the Habsburg Monarchy – Les transformations de la société dans la monarchie des Habsbourgs : l'époque des Lumières* (Bochum: Dieter Winkler, 2011); Harald Heppner and Eva Posch, eds., *Encounters in Europe's Southeast. The Habsburg Monarchy and the Orthodox World in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Bochum: Dieter Winkler, 2012); Christian Promitzer, Siegfried Gruber and Harald Heppner, eds., *Southeast European Studies in a Globalizing World* (Zürich, Münster: LIT, 2014).

imperial perspective (Sabine Jesner) and the proper structure and characteristics of this personnel (Vasile Ionuț Roma), for the period of administration of the province through military and chamber authorities (1718-1753). It is worth mentioning that a very appropriate addition to this research, equally relevant in the context of a volume devoted to new sources and methods in the field of historical research, is the critical edition of the correspondence of the first civil president of the provincial administration, Francesco de Villana-Perlas, Count of Rialpo (1753-1768), exchanged in the first years after his appointment with the President of the Viennese Aulic Chamber, Karl Ferdinand von Königsegg-Erps, the edition being elaborated by another renowned researcher of the history of Banat, Benjamin Landais.<sup>2</sup> Interesting in this case is the way in which the phenomenon of the transition from the military to the civil administration of the province is reflected, in the context of the Viennese Court's orientation towards the reform policy, through a semi-official correspondence. This goes beyond the character of administrative reports, due to the personal notes inserted in the text of the letters and the lack of a cultural distancing from a society that the author of the letters knew as he integrated into its structure, without, however, losing his capacity as a representative of the Court.<sup>3</sup> Thus, (also) offering something more than a more rash reader would expect, the sources made available to researchers by Benjamin Landais's edition confirm Harald Heppner's above-mentioned assertion about the diversity of sources by which the practice of governing a Habsburg imperial province from the pre-modern period can be studied.

The problem of changing the model of dominion in Banat in the first half of the eighteenth century is addressed by Sabine Jesner in terms of institutional structure and the path of incumbents, from the manner of selection and design of the function to the cessation of activity and evaluation of performance. The distancing from the explicit or presumed normative models, by applying some innovations, is pursued in the sphere of administration and economy, where they needed the emphasis placed on the populist policy towards recruiting specialists on health security and diplomacy, with a growing role of medics and interpreters, especially during the period of military conflicts.

Sabina Jesner's research is relevant by the manner of capitalising on primary sources (coming from the Austrian archives, first of all the Aulic Chamber Archive and the War Archive, and from the Hungarian and Romanian ones related to Banat) in the service of identifying the administrative solutions applied in one of the southeastern

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<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Landais, *Gouverner le Banat habsbourgeois au milieu du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle. Édition critique de la correspondance de François Perlas, président du Banat, avec Charles-Ferdinand Königsegg-Erps, président de la Chambre Aulique (1754-1756)* (Brăila: Istros Publishing House of the Carol I Museum of Brăila, 2020). Among his more recent contributions, can be mentioned: "Land-Plot Mapping and the Construction of an Ethnic Patchwork in the Banat (1773-1848)," *Catastrum* 6, no. 4 (2019): 3-16, and "Comment gouverner les 'nations' ? Conceptions et pratiques politiques aux marges orientales de la monarchie habsbourgeoise à l'époque moderne," in Yves Lignereux and alii, eds., *Ethno-géopolitique des empires. De l'Antiquité au monde contemporain* (Rennes : Presse Universitaire de Rennes, 2021), 125-147.

<sup>3</sup> Landais, *Gouverner le Banat habsbourgeois*, "Introduction," 13-14, 23-24. The editor mentions that Francesco Perlas had inherited a possession in Croatia, attributed to his father via fideicommissum, consisting of the confiscated properties of the Zrinski family, and he himself acquired indigenat in the Kingdom of Hungary. *Ibid.*, 7.

territories, newly integrated in the Habsburg Empire. An essential issue, stated in the conclusions, which still needs to be fathomed, is that referring to the relationship between the personnel recruited, especially from outside the province during the analysed period, and the local elite.<sup>4</sup> The extent to which the gradual transition to civil administration met or not the expectations of the latter confirms the relevance of the comparison with the volume devoted to the correspondence of Count Perlas, which I have proposed above. Equally appropriate is the reference suggested by Sabine Jesner to the conclusions of the visit of Emperor Joseph II to Banat in 1768, analysed by Krisztina Kulcsár,<sup>5</sup> which allowed an evaluation of the results of the civil administration period. The emperor's proposal to integrate the province into the Kingdom of Hungary, put into practice in 1778, proves that this evaluation was unsatisfactory.

In addition to this analysis, the reconstruction of the structure and evolution of the personnel made by Vasile Ionuț Roma represented an objective of a complexity that required the construction of a database, comprising the names of about 1,200 military and chamber officials who were activated during the period subjected to the analysis.<sup>6</sup> Along with the other studies included in the volume, the two contributions offer a model of analysis that can be extended, in terms of documentation – in addition to traditional sources of an epistolary, memorialist, political, statistical, etc. nature – through the use: of material sources from museums and private collections (various artefacts from the researched period); of the constructions built in the public space with a military or memorial character, including the names given to streets and squares; and of the urban development characteristic of the new centres of the provincial administration, examples being Belgrade, Temeswar (Timișoara, RO) Czernowitz (Chernivtsi, UA) and Lemberg (Lviv, UA).<sup>7</sup> The suggestions concern both the possibility of supplementing the present research and the possibility of carrying out similar work.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 108-109. It is about the work “Kaiser Joseph II. und die “übereifrigen” Beamten im Temeswarer Banat, 1768,” in Wynfried Kriegleder, Andrea Seidler, and Jozef Tancer, eds., *Deutsche Sprache und Kultur im Banat* (Bremen: Edition Lumière, 2015), 147-172.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>7</sup> Harald Heppner, “Schlussfolgerungen,” *ibid.*, 332-333.