

Adrian Magina, *Acta et documenta partes Regni Hungariae inferiores concernentia 1500–1552. Collegit et edidit Hadrianus Magina*, Editura Mega, Cluj-Napoca, 2020, 276 p.

‘It can happen that, without considering some decades in the 15th century, the researcher who proposed to collect medieval charters about Temesvár (today: Timișoara, Romania) besides his own findings can only count on blind luck and on the courtesy of other colleagues’.¹ This statement focuses on medieval and early modern Temesvár/Timișoara, however, clearly points to the late 20th century state of research regarding the region whose boundaries are set by the rivers Tisza, Mureș, Lower Danube, and by historical Transylvania. The present volume under review targets this research gap by making unpublished or partly published documents available to the public regarding the period 1500–1552. Adrian Magina is a senior researcher at the Muzeul Banatului Montan, Reșița, and teaches at the Universitatea de Vest din Timișoara. His work adds to the increment in Romanian research concerning the history of the region and continues the work of experts such as Costin Feneșan.² Adrian Magina’s contribution, therefore, is very welcome and improves our knowledge not only by new documents but also by its approach.

Magina claims that the above defined region that he calls – in accordance with the perception of Romanian historiography – consistently the ‘Banat’ should be examined as one unit throughout its history. This volume brings this idea further and kindles a scholarly dialogue that will certainly lead to the modern multidisciplinary historical assessment of the region which is undoubtedly a *desideratum*. As Magina explains in his *Introduction* (p. 18–19), the history of the region aroused the researchers’ interest from the first half of the 19th century. Authors, such as Gábor Fábrián, or Ágoston Bárány examined single counties, Arad, Torontál/Torontal and Temes/Timiș, respectively. György Fejér collected a number of charters in his *Codex diplomaticus Hungariae*. In the second half of the 19th century Frigyes Pesty pursued serious investigations

regarding a number of counties. But for all that, only part of his oeuvre has been published. In this respect, Adrian and Livia Magina made painstaking efforts publishing the second volume of Pesty’s charter collection about the county of Temes/Timiș. The consequences of the First World War disintegrated the region under discussion dividing its parts among Romania, Serbia, and Hungary. The disintegration, as Magina emphasizes (p. 18.), put an end to the previous thriving interest and work on the region which has gained a new impetus only recently. In this respect, Magina’s activities are pioneering by creating a cross-border network of colleagues. His work is very much visible in the acknowledgement section that is connected to the collection of his raw material which is dispersed in different archives of East-Central Europe.

Magina chose (p. 22.) the time-frame of 1500 and 1552. He argues for the first as the starting point of the century. As one can see in different projects, such as in the case of the ongoing complete edition of records relating to the kingdom of Hungary in the age of the Angevin kings initiated in Szeged, it is a plausible approach, nevertheless, in the case of a later analytical investigation, the course of political history, or the influence of ‘big events’ should also be considered. Presumably, the fact that Magina made available a number of documents between 1430 and 1470 by publishing Pesty’s above mentioned collection, gives an explanation for the starting date of the volume. The end date is perfectly justified as the advancing Ottomans absorbed the territory under discussion to their own administrative system in 1552.

In general the editorial approach to the edited texts is somewhat arbitrary, though it does not hinder the reader from understanding the documents. The editorial practice of reproducing the sources in the form as they were written, respecting, or rather fascinated by, the diversity of early modern Latin is arguable, however, conforming to rules of classical orthography and grammar only in certain cases (p. 22–23) is an odd practice.

Regarding the classification of the documents

¹ Petrovics 2003, 150.

² See, e.g. his most recent and significant source publication, Feneșan 2016–2017.

Magina asserts (p. 20–21) that the project grew from gathering evidence about violence in the region; afterwards, as the unpublished material is vast, there was no overarching organising principle behind the collection besides the spatial and temporal ones. Magina adds that he was trying to include documents which relate about the everyday life, furthermore, facilitates the use of 19th-century literature, or complements more recent results (p. 21). The topic of violence is not only in vogue (see the recently defended DSc thesis by István Tringli concerning the Medieval Hungarian Kingdom), but highly relevant as an organising principle to discuss the history of a border region which was also a transit zone for refugees. The volume includes charters and diplomas of different sort which are the highest in number, letters written in judicial and military contexts (Nos. 50, 54, 57, 67, 92, 105,³ 135, 136, 138, 139, 140, 141, 143, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150), begging patronage in religious (117, 118) or financial matters (137), finally, securing recommendation (113). The reader also finds an abridged statement about royal expenditures (70), extracts from the documents of the Royal Chamber (104), tax-statement from Zaránd/Zarand County (106), a list of a demised citizen's possessions from Szeged (113), and a similar one from the neighbourhood of Temesvár/Timișoara. This landscape is in accord with the nature of the raw material, as the narrative sources rarely tell about the region in much detail. The exceptions are, only to name but a few on the long time-scale, the presence of the court of Charles I of Anjou in the region between 1315 and 1323, the making of the papal census in the 1330s, or the Ottoman siege of Temesvár/Timișoara in the 16th c. that aroused interest on international level.

The indices are helpful, though, the volume would have benefited from a more sophisticated treatment of the toponyms, indicating the Latin versions alongside with the modern denominations. The classical work *The making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550–1700* from Robert Evans' pen is an outstanding example for this.⁴ Evans addresses his diverse audience by the versatile use of even the orthography of different national languages. Finally, I missed a map about the region under discussion when reading different parts of the volume.

Despite some minor deficiencies, however, I find Adrian Magina's volume a very valuable

research tool which, I believe, promotes the historical understanding of a fascinating border region.

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³ Certain parts of this document I found difficult to follow at l. 1: mei commendatione, and l. 7–8: the sentence vestram...ipsum is confused.

⁴ Evans 2002.