The cultures of the peoples of Central Europe differ significantly from the cultures of Western Europe. The region is characterized in particular by a diversity of languages, religions, and power structures.\footnote{See the preface to the series by Ignác Romsics (viii.).} It is vital for the historians of Central Europe to ensure that their findings and research are accessible to the wider international community. The series entitled \textit{Atlantic Studies on Society in Change}, which publishes current research on the history of Central Europe, has been an essential contribution to this effort since its founding in 1977. Published by Columbia University Press and consisting now of some 140 volumes, this English-language series addresses not only readerships in Great Britain and the United States, but now, given the spread of English, an increasingly large global audience. As part of the series, a three-volume work on the history of Transylvania was published one decade ago under the editorship of Béla Köpeczi and Zoltán Szász.\footnote{Zoltán Szász and Béla Köpeczi, eds., \textit{A History of Transylvania from the Beginning to 1919}, vols. 1–3, Atlantic Studies on Society in Change, no. 106–108, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000–2002).} It continues to represent a fundamental work of scholarship on Transylvania. The theme of this collection of essays, \textit{Studies in the History of Early Modern Transylvania}, is more narrow in its focus. The essays concern the history of Transylvania in the early modern era, i.e. the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Most of the authors are Hungarian historians living in Romania who have studied the history of the region they regard as home.

In the introduction, Gyöngy Kovács Kiss, who is also the editor of the collection, offers a brief historical overview of the Transylvanian Principality. It is not easy task to provide a pithy characterization of the political circumstances and constitutional state of the princedom, since questions pertaining to its status continue to be subjects of debate today. The fact that Kovács Kiss herself refers to Transylvania as a “semi-independent” vassal state of the Ottoman Empire in the opening lines and then, not much later in the text, as an independent state that existed from the middle of the sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth (i.e. until the expulsion of the Turks) is a clear illustration of this. In her brief overview she nonetheless captures with keen insight the essence of the double-dependencies of the princedom (Habsburg on the one hand, Ottoman on the other), and she provides a balanced depiction of the principal
characteristics of the reigns of the individual princes. She guides her reader through the political history of Transylvania up until the end of the eighteenth century. The introduction concludes with a description of the nascent Romanian national movements and offers a concluding paragraph on the early nineteenth century, the Napoleonic wars, the Congress of Vienna, and the Metternich Era.

According to the introduction, the essential goal of the essays is to present new perspectives on the complex history of Transylvania in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. The contributors to the volume have set aside questions of domestic and foreign policy and focus instead on issues pertaining to social, administrative, cultural, and everyday life. The book is divided into three sections. The first is entitled, “Structure and Organization – Society – Interpersonal Relations.” It includes topics such as the history of the princely court, the organization of the counties, and various social strata.

A study by Annamária Jeney-Tóth entitled “The Transylvanian Princely Court in the First Half of the Seventeenth Century” is the opening essay of this section. True to its subtitle (“On the Basis of the Account Books of Kolozsvár”), the essay presents the structure of the prince’s court during its stays at various times in the city of Kolozsvár (Cluj in Romanian, Klausenburg in German) and the different groups of court society on the basis, first and foremost, of account records, with a separate chapter on the court nobility, court stewards, and court “school,” where the children of the nobility prepared during their years in the court for the later roles they were to assume as adults. In addition to offering portraits of the prince’s postal service, retainers, soldiery, and Master of the Horse, Jeney-Tóth also touches on people (musicians, kitchen staff, people affiliated with the chancellery) who were not strictly part of the court, but who often were with the court during its time in the city. In the conclusion to the essay Jeney-Tóth summarizes the most important elements of the court, determines the approximate number of people belonging to it, and establishes that the composition of the court, which was diverse and complex, depended to a great extent on the personality and family of the individual princes. A separate table offers an overview of the data concerning the courts of each prince. This essay, a valuable contribution based on thorough source work, is missing only a brief introduction to the secondary literature on the subject and an examination of the development of the princely court.3

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3 One finds these, however, in another writing by Jeney-Tóth: Annamária Jeney-Tóth, “A fejedelmi udvar az Erdélyi Fejedelemségben” [The Princely Court of the Transylvanian Princedom], Korunk 24, no. 3 (March 2013): 27–33.
Veronka Dányé, an expert on the official organization of the counties of the Transylvanian Princedom, uses the records books of Torda county as the foundation of her examination of the judicial practices in the county and the institution of the Lord and Deputy Lieutenant (the főispán and alispán). The essay clearly traces the formation of the county sedria in the seventeenth century and Dányé demonstrates that the “golden age” of Transylvanian history (the age of Prince Gábor Bethlen) bore witness to important attainments in the administration of justice (one might think of the achievements in the standardization of legal practice of the 1619 Diet). We must state however that while there were some similarities between the organizations of the individual counties, they nonetheless varied substantially and one should not venture any general conclusions on the basis of only one or two counties.

In the next essay in this chapter Mihály Sebestyén (Spielmann) presents “The Tragedy of Dénes Bánffy.” As the brother-in-law of the prince, Dénes Bánffy established relations on his own authority with the Ottomans and the Hungarian Kingdom, presumably with the goal of averting threats to the security of the Principality. His actions, however, gave rise to the suspicion that he was aspiring to assume the throne. His enemies, a group of influential Transylvanian aristocrats with chancellor Mihály Teleki at their head, looked with mistrust not only on his machinations in foreign policy, but also on the fact that he had acquired enormous estates. In the end the prince had him executed. This is the only essay in the collection that addresses a question pertaining to the higher nobility, although the internal conflicts of the Apafi era are given an even larger role in the story. The author offers a narrative of Bánffy’s fall (1674) on the basis of the available sources and the secondary literature. Sebestyén offers new insights into the story by revealing and explaining the interrelationships between the aristocrats of Transylvania.

Mihály Hermann Gusztáv continues this presentation of the varied social layers in a fascinating essay entitled “The Virtual Székely Past.” He guides the reader through a later centuries on the basis of the Csíki Székely Krónika [Székely Chronicle of Csík] and legends from other forged chronicles. It would have been

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interesting to have included, alongside this excursion into Geistesgeschichte, an essay on the role of Székely society in the early modern era.5

In his essay on the Romanian nobility of Transylvania in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries Ioan Drăgan offers an overview of the nobility of Romanian descent in the early modern era. He demonstrates that the upper echelon of the Romanian nobility essentially abandoned its Romanian identity and became Hungarian. This process of assimilation among the elite took place in parallel with the immigration of broader Romanian masses from the areas around Kővár (Chioar in Romanian), Fogaras (Făgăraş in Romanian, Fugreschmarkt in German), Zaránd (Zarand in Romanian) and Bihar. The members of this broader social group belonged to the poorer nobility, and in time they came to replace the older nobility of Bánát (Banat in Romanian), Hátszeg (Haţeg in Romanian), and Máramaros (Maramureş in Romanian). In the nineteenth century they were closer to the Romanian speaking population and became part of the Romanian national movements. It might have been nice to have had, alongside this essay on the Romanian nobility, a contribution on the role of the higher and middle Hungarian nobility in the history of Transylvania as well, building for instance on the research that is underway even at the moment on social elites. There are also no essays on the Saxons either, the so-called “third nation,” a regrettable omission given the prominence of their role in the economic, social, and political life of Transylvania.

Judit Pál has contributed an essay on the Armenians of Transylvania in the eighteenth century. As she persuasively shows, the arrival of Armenians in Transylvania cannot be tied to any concrete date. Her thoroughly-footnoted essay acquaints the reader with the story of the spread of the Armenian community, the foundation of Armenopolis, their conversion from the Armenian Church to Catholicism, and the role they played in economic life.

Sándor Pál-Antal looks at the social composition of Marosvásárhely (Târgu-Mureş in Romanian, Neumarkt in German), a Transylvanian city that could hardly be characterized as typical, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Marosvásárhely was the only civitas of the Székely Land, in other words the only settlement to be given the status of royal free city, which it was granted in 1616. One of the distinctive features of the city was the mix of burghers and members of the nobility. The nobility enjoyed a number of privileges, but

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5 The author does this in an essay that was published later: Gusztáv Mihály Hermann, “Pillantás Erdély fejedelemség kori társadalmára” [A Glimpse of Transylvanian Society in the Era of the Princedom], Korunk 24, no. 3 (March 2013): 43–49.
the burghers dominated the bodies of municipal government, so the differing rights and privileges led to conflicts. It might have been nice to have included something on the long, gradual process of change as the settlement grew into a city. This process slowly freed Marosvásárhely from the influence of Marosszék and created conflicts between the city and the Székelys.

The last essay in this chapter was written by István Imreh (1919–2003), a scholar on the laws in the Székely villages. Regrettably, it is not made clear whether this essay was simply part of his bequest of manuscripts or possibly an extract from one of his writings published in the 1960s and 1970s (these writings are listed in the first footnote). The dominant concept of economic history in the article implies an approach that dates back some forty or fifty years and therefore should be regarded as out-of-date if not obsolete. It seems a bit out of place in a volume that promises to offer “new perspectives” in the study of history. The article provides a brief presentation of the statutes in the Székely villages and the villages belonging to demesnes. There is also some discussion of the regulations in cities and a short presentation of some economic instructions of the demesnes and of the estates belonging to the princes.

The theme of the second section of the book is the intellectual, cultural, and religious life of the era. According to the title there are three topics: “Scholarship – Culture – Architecture.” In the opening essay of this section Dezső Buzogány examines the Reformation in Transylvania from the perspective of theological history. This superb essay acquaints the reader with the eras in which the ideas of the Reformation spread to and took hold in Transylvania. One of Buzogány’s fundamental theses is that the Reformation was not a renewal of faith, or more precisely that the adherents of the Reformation did not demand the establishment of a new Church, but rather sought to restore the medieval Church and return to the model of the Church of the first centuries of Christendom and of the Bible. The formation of a new Church structure was a response to the hostile reaction of the Catholic Church.

In his essay, Gernot Nussbächer’s examines the life of Johannes Honterus (1498–1549), a saxon humanist, polyhistor, church organizer, and reformer. Born in the city of Brassó (Brașov in Romanian, Kronstadt in German), Johannes Honterus was a scholar, pedagogue, publisher, and lawyer all in one, a great figure of the Reformation with a variety of talents. The essay is complemented by a bibliography on Honterus’ writings and the secondary literature on his life and work. Nussbächer is a devoted scholar of Honterus’ work, and he has published numerous articles and monographs on his findings. However, this essay, which
essentially offers a summary, seems to have been written as something of an overview for non-experts (as is indicated by the complete lack of footnotes), and it was published in German and Romanian in 2009.

The inclusion of an essay written some twenty years ago by Zsigmond Jakó (1916–2008) is another indication of the heterogeneous nature of the volume. The essay, which examines the life and work of bishop Ignác Batthyány, was originally published in 1991 in *Erdélyi Múzeum*. Its republication in this collection represents a gesture of respect for and commemoration of its author. Jakó establishes that the bishop’s ambitions to become a historian did not begin to take root in the Collegium Germanicum et Hungaricum in Rome, but rather during his years at the University of Nagyszombat. He acquaints the reader with Batthyány’s work collecting sources on Church history, which was an integral part of the Jesuit school of history at the time. One of the indisputable indications of the high standards Batthyány set in his work as a collector is the fact that, of the medieval Latin codices in Romania today, 80 percent are from his library. His death at an early age was a tragedy in part because it prevented him from realizing further plans to create a society of scholars and maintain an astronomical observatory. With his “far-sighted, wide-ranging cultural conception” (p.301), Batthyány was a worthy heir to the cultural and educational efforts of István Báthory, Gábor Bethlen, and György I. Rákóczi. It is regrettable that there is not a single essay on any of the latter three Transylvanian princes in the collection.

An essay by acclaimed art historian András Kovács summarizes the findings of research on the city of Gyulafehérvár, offering a detailed presentation of the history of the most important buildings of the city in the course of the sixteenth century. Kovács begins with a brief discussion of the complexities of research on architectural history and then examines the topography and fortifications of the castle on the basis of available sources, touching on the complexities of establishing a water-supply system and the formation of an armory and a canon foundry. The reconstruction of the seat of the principedom, which was created out of the buildings of the medieval bishop’s palace, raises many questions to which only archeological excavations could give precise answers, such as the date of the construction of the “inner courtyard” or the ground-floor corridor. The illustrations nicely complement the text.

Klára P. Kovács’ essay on the sixteenth-century bastion fortifications is a thorough summary of modern architectural history Kovács takes both pictures

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and written sources into consideration in her study, but she does not use archeological data, which might have enabled her to provide a more thorough and detailed examination of the subject. The early dating on the basis of written sources of the construction of the castle of Szamosújvár (Gherla in Romanian) seems dubious. The supplemental illustrations are a useful inclusion and complement the text.

The chapter on culture comes to a close with an essay by Albert Fekete in which he examines the garden culture of the early modern era from the perspective of landscape architecture. His goal is not simply to present the sources on Renaissance garden culture, but to present the tools that were used at the time to shape the landscape and to examine how this continued into the second half of the eighteenth century. His principal thesis is that the Transylvanian garden culture (of the Székelys and the Saxons, of the prince’s court and the aristocracy) had a decisive influence on the natural environment. The essay offers numerous illustrations of how prominent gardens (the gardens of castles and curiae) transformed the surrounding areas and how important they were from aesthetic, ecological, and economic perspectives. While this second part of the volume is interesting and at times contains new findings, as an overview it is nonetheless flawed, as it presents only a small slice of the rich cultural life of Transylvania and the research that has been devoted to it.

The third and final chapter, entitled “Claudiopolis – Transylvaniae Civitas Primaria,” presents the social and cultural world of the city of Kolozsvár, quite rightly referred to as the most important city in Transylvania. The essays offer insights into the various social layers of Kolozsvár and the everyday lives of the denizens of the city. These essays were already published in the first decade of the twenty-first century in Hungarian, with the exception of the essay by András Kiss, only the first part of which had already been published.

The essay by László Pakó examines the conflicts between the burghers of Kolozsvár and the members of the nobility who settled in the city. The denizens of the city tried many times and adopted various strategies to prevent the nobility from purchasing real estate in the city, and when a member of the nobility succeeded in buying a house, they attempted to purchase it back from him.

In her essay Ágnes Flóra presents the elite of Kolozsvár in the early modern era. She touches on historical precedents, the so-called “geréb patricians,” and the rotation of the Saxon and Hungarian nations in the governance of the city. Endogamy was common among the elites of the city, as Flóra demonstrates
with the example of the daughters of Tamás Budai, a Kolozsvár goldsmith. The lifestyle of the elite of Kolozsvár resembled the lifestyle of the nobility in the rest of the country. Renaissance tastes prevailed and book collecting was a common passion. Flóra also notes that while the meaning of the word patrician varies from case to case, there are general criteria, and the burgers of Kolozsvár in the sixteenth century did not meet these criteria, since they did not constitute a closed community possessing privileges, unlike for instance the burghers of Nuremberg. In time, the more influential families would leave the city and integrate into the nobility.

The essays by Gyöngy Kovács Kiss and András Kiss take the reader into the world of everyday people of Transylvania. Kovács Kiss provides insights into the everyday lives of the citizens of Kolozsvár. The first part of her essay deals with games and leisure spaces. It presents the practices surrounding wine retail and the regulations pertaining to the importation of wine. The customers in the taverns in Kolozsvár came from various backgrounds and social layers. Alongside the local burghers one also found soldiers and “idlers.” The shooting range was another site of leisure activity. Young men came to indulge in target practice with bows and arrows. The essay also informs the reader which games were popular among the people of Kolozsvár in their free time (dice, cards, ninepins, etc.). The second half of the essay examines the modes of gossip and slander (accusations of witchcraft, lechery, debauchery, and illegitimate pregnancy) and the most important sites. The reader is acquainted with the market, where various implements and remedies were sold, the public bathhouse, the mill, and the bakery.

An essay by András Kiss constitutes a fine conclusion to the collection. He recounts the story of the first and last witch trials of Kolozsvár and examines the social and psychological motives behind witch trials in general. In the first trial the accused, Prisca Kewmies (Piroska Kőmíves), was a midwife who was condemned to death in 1565, before Klára Bócy, who earlier had been seen in the secondary literature as the first woman to have been burnt at the stake in Kolozsvár. Kiss suspects that one of the people who may have played a significant role in instigating the trials was a tailor named Péter Grúz, and he identifies some of Grúz’s possible motives. The last “witch,” a hapless beggar named Kata Kádár, was executed in February, 1734. Kiss provides a vivid and well-documented account of her life, the gruesome tortures to which she was submitted, her beheading, and the incineration of her body. This chapter, gripping as the stories are, would have been more interesting had it not been
limited to the city of Kolozsvár, but rather had also included the cities around the salt mines, the Saxon cities, Marosvásárhely on the western fringes of the Székely Land, and the princely capital of Gyulafehérvár. This would have given the reader some perspectives on the scholarship of the last few decades concerning urban history and urban society.

One of the strengths of the collection is that it contains biographical details at the end of the essays concerning the more important historical figures mentioned. This represents a useful complement to the essays themselves, and it is followed by brief introductions of the authors, a selected bibliography, and an index of places and proper names. Regrettably, there are inconsistencies in the use of English. For instance the term főispán is translated as “lord lieutenant” in some articles and “main county head” in others.

There are some printing mistakes in the volume, as well as typos, for instance, the contention according to which Dénes Bánffy was born around 1630 but nonetheless was 54 or 55 years old at the time of his death in 1674. According to another contention in the essay Mihály Apafi was freed from Tatar captivity sometime around 1600 (in fact this happened 60 years later).

Nonetheless, considering the thoroughness of the essays, this volume constitutes a valuable collection that will be highly useful to scholars both in and outside of Hungary.

Translated by Thomas Cooper

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