

---

## BOOK REVIEWS

---

**IOAN BOLOVAN** and **RUDOLF GRÄF**, eds.

**Istoria Banatului: Compendiu**

(A history of Banat: A compendium)

2<sup>nd</sup> edition, rev. and enl.

Commendation by Acad. IOAN-AUREL POP

Foreword by Acad. DAN DUBINĂ

Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane;

Editura Școala Ardeleană, 2023

---

**I**N 2023, Timișoara held the honorable title of “European Capital of Culture,” which occasioned the organization of numerous artistic, cultural, musical, scientific-academic and spiritual-religious events intended specifically to illustrate and popularize the rich cultural heritage of Timișoara in particular and of the Banat region in general. The dynamics of this pursuit to rediscover and highlight the beauty of this European and local cultural capital would have been incomplete without the historians and without specialized historiography in Romanian and German, representing two of the four great cultures that have left a fundamental mark on the historical development of the city on the Bega River and of the region between the Danube, the Tisza, the Mureș, and the Southern Carpathians. Thus, in the first half of the year 2023, the following volumes were issued by the Friedrich Pustet publishing house of Regensburg: *Kleine Geschichte des Banats: Umkämpfte Grenzen im östlichen Europa*, by Irina Marin of Utrecht University, and *Temeswar/Timișoara: Eine kleine Stadtgeschichte*, by historians Konrad Gündisch and Tobias Weber, both aimed

at the German-speaking general public eager to (re)discover the history of Timișoara and of the border region of Banat, located at the confluence of several cultures, religious denominations, ethnic groups and states in Southeast Europe.

To their credit, contemporary historians from Banat and Transylvania did not fail to keep up with their abovementioned Western-European colleagues and, under the coordination of Professors Ioan Bolovan and Rudolf Gräf of Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, who are also directors of the George Barițiu Institute of History of Cluj-Napoca and of the Romanian Academy’s Institute of Social Sciences and Humanities in Sibiu, created the first compendium of its kind, i.e., a synthetic exposition of the history of Banat from Antiquity to contemporary times. It is precisely in this scholarly enterprise that the originality or novelty of the historiographical-editorial project lies, namely, in the fact that it is the first synthetic, unitary presentation in Romanian of the history of Banat from ancient times up to the present, the compendium being mainly intended for the general public and less so for specialists, whose representatives are very well acquainted with the rich and diverse historical literature, both old and new, available in Latin, German, Romanian, Serbian, and Hungarian, which depicts well-defined and clearly outlined historical eras and periods, with a clear predilection for Roman Antiquity (thanks to the efforts of Banat archaeologists) and the Modern Era, marked by the major transformations

generated by the integration of Banat into the Habsburg Monarchy. The compendium was published under the patronage of the Timișoara branch of the Romanian Academy, in two editions, in the spring and summer of 2023, thanks to the concerted efforts of the Center for Transylvanian Studies and the Școala Ardeleană publishing houses of Cluj-Napoca, printed in impeccable graphic conditions with the financial support of several public, administrative and cultural institutions of the counties of Arad, Timiș, and Caraș-Severin, three territorial-administrative units of the historical region of Banat. It is no coincidence that the compendium is dedicated to the memory of the late Professor Nicolae Bocșan of Banat, “distinguished historian, school founder, mentor, one of the foremost promoters of the history of Banat,” whose guidance shaped the training not only of the two editors, but also of some of the authors of the chapters, as well as of other historians, museographers, archivists, and teachers from Transylvania and Banat.

In the commendation and in the foreword to the compendium, Academicians Ioan-Aurel Pop and Dan Dubină point out the importance, relevance and novelty of the volume for the Romanian readers of today, as well as the place that Banat and its inhabitants occupy in the history of Romanians and Romania, and so do the two editors in their foreword addressed to the readers. The latter two argue the need for the creation of such a volume in 2023, then move on to emphasize the text’s broad scope and sketch the portraits of the contributors, along with the profiles of the institutions where they conduct their activities, followed by a brief introduction into the historiography of modern Banat (18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> century), a period depicted by

Romanian, German, Serbian, Jewish and Hungarian historians, whose works, cited in this volume as well, make for valuable contributions to the knowledge of the history of the region and its inhabitants from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The volume is divided into nine sections, each with its own chapters and sub-chapters, dedicated to different historical eras and developments, all illustrated with maps, images, old and new photographs of the highest quality, representing landscapes, settlements, personalities, objects, and buildings from the history of Banat, which are particularly useful to readers with varying degrees of familiarity with the geographical, archaeological, historical, demographic, architectural, artistic, urban and rural realities of the region. Last but not least, the chapters are followed by a detailed bibliographical list, where the reader can find specialized literature providing in-depth information on the subjects and periods discussed.

Section I, “The Natural Environment” (pp. 35–47), is written by Petru Urdea, a professor at the West University of Timișoara, who highlights the physical and geographical landmarks of the region, describing the landforms, climate, hydrography, vegetation, and soils of Banat. Section II, “Banat in Antiquity (Up to ca. 400 AD)” (pp. 49–140), comprises three chapters: “Banat Up to the Dacians,” “The Dacians in Banat” and “The Romans in Banat,” written by two internationally and nationally recognized specialists from Banat: Florin Drașovean, professor at Babeș-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca and researcher at Titu Maiorescu Institute of Banatian Studies in Timișoara, and Adrian Ardeț, archaeologist and researcher at the same academic institute of Timișoara. Sections III, “The

Early Migrations (5<sup>th</sup>–6<sup>th</sup> Century)” (pp. 141–159) and IV, “The Crystallization of Medieval Society (6<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> Century)” (pp. 161–183) are written by Daniela Tănase, archaeologist at the National Museum of Banat in Timișoara. The medieval period, titled “Section V. Medieval Banat (1000–1715)” (pp. 185–282), is tackled by two of the best contemporary medievalists in Banat, spouses Adrian and Livia Magina, who carry out their research at the West University of Timișoara, at the Institute of Banatian Studies, and at the Banat Mountain Museum in Reșița, and comprises the following sub-chapters: “Banat in the Kingdom of Hungary: Political and Historical Evolution,” “Administrative Structures,” “Banat’s Defense System,” “Habitat and Population,” “Society,” “Urban Networks, Trade and Economy,” “The Impact of Culture and Civilization Models: Church and Culture,” and “Banat in the Ottoman World.” Section VI presents “Modern Banat (1716–1918)” (pp. 283–385) across two large chapters: “Imperial Banat (1716–1778)” and “Banat in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century,” written by Professor Rudolf Gräf and Sandra Hirsch, research assistant at the West University of Timișoara. They capture the modernization of the region under the tutelage of the House of Habsburg, presenting demographic, economic, administrative, religious, educational and artistic developments, followed by the organization of the Military Border and by the national, revolutionary and workers’ movements of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Section VII presents the historical developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century under the title “Contemporary Banat” (pp. 387–541), comprising two main chapters: “The Interwar Period: The Second World War and the Establishment of Communism,” written by Vasile

Râmneanțu, a lecturer at the West University of Timișoara, and “The Postwar Period: The December 1989 Revolution: The Timișoara Moment: Post-Revolution Developments in Banat,” by Miodrag Milin, researcher at the Romanian Academy’s Institute of Banatian Studies in Timișoara. Section VIII brings to the attention of contemporary readers the biographies of 27 “Emblematic Personalities of Banat” (pp. 543–630), hailing from all the ethno-cultural and religious environments of the historical communities of Banat, who left their mark on the region’s history, culture, music, art, literature, historiography, and science from their Romanian, German, Serbian, Hungarian, Jewish and European perspectives, from the Middle Ages (Paul Kinizsi), through modernity (Vincențiu Babeș, Damaschin Bojincă, Traian Doda, Adam Müller-Guttenbrunn, Nikolaus Lenau, Constantin Diaconovici Loga, Felix-Bódog-Srećko Milleker, Alexandru Mocioni, Eftimie Murgu, Dositej Obradović, Zsigmond Ormós, Dimitrie Țichindeal, Traian Vuia) and all the way up to present day (Béla Bartók, Ana Blandiana, Sever Bocu, Elie Miron Cristea, Constantin Daicoviciu, Stefan Walter Hell, Ioan Holender, Ștefan Jäger, Romul Victor Ladea, Herta Müller, Augustin Pacha, Johnny Weissmüller, Phoenix). These biobibliographical miniature portraits are compiled by the abovementioned authors, alongside Ioan David, who represents the library of the Timișoara branch of the Romanian Academy, the late Professor Corneliu Pădurean of the Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad, and historian Doru Sinaci of Arad. The final section provides an extremely useful “History of Banat in Chronological Dates” (pp. 631–676), listing the main “chronological benchmarks,” organized into major eras or periods of

European and Banat history: “I. The Pre-historic Era” (Paleolithic–Iron Age); “II. Antiquity” (5<sup>th</sup> century BC–mid-5<sup>th</sup> century AD); “III. The 5<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> Centuries” (the Migration Period); “IV. The Medieval Era” (10<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century); “V. The Modern Era (1718–1918)”; “VI. The Contemporary Era (1919–1944)”; “VII. The Contemporary Era (1945 to the Present).”

The chronological section is compiled by Alexandru Kósa, scientific researcher at Titu Maiorescu Institute of Banatian Studies, and by Tatiana Ostroveanu of the Iris Special Theoretical High School in Timișoara.

The volume *A History of Banat: A Compendium*, published in 2023, at a time when Timișoara was the European Capital of Culture, emerges as a new calling card for the history of that province geographically outlined by the Danube, the Tisza, the Mureș, and the Southern Carpathians. The work is coordinated by two nationally and internationally acknowledged modernist historians and written in a clear language accessible to the general public by 15 specialists (geographers, archaeologists, historians) pertaining to different generations, ethnicities, and schools of historiography, brought together by a shared passion for the fascinating history of Banat from Prehistory and Antiquity, through the Migration Period and the Middle Ages, all the way to modernity and the contemporary times. In time, by expanding the number of specialists and detailing the historical eras, the synthesis now proposed to the Romanian reader may become a monograph which can be the starting point of a genuine treatise on the history of Banat, a desirable goal proclaimed by historians and scholars from Banat in the last three decades.

□

MIRCEA-GHEORGHE ABRUDAN

ANDREI CORBEA-HOIȘIE and RUDOLF GRÄF, eds.

**Limbă și cultură germană în România (1918–1933): Realități postimperiale, discurs public și câmpuri culturale**

(German language and culture in Romania, 1918–1933: Post-imperial realities, public discourse and cultural fields)

2 vols. Iași: Polirom, 2023

**T**HE WORK we briefly present below is the result of a comprehensive research project conducted by a group of renowned specialists (historians, linguists, etc.) from both Romania and abroad, addressing an extremely complex topic, namely, the German language and culture in Romania (1918–1933). Based on two key concepts of cultural studies, “intercultural communication” and the “contact between cultures,” the authors chose to investigate the relationships between Romanian and German culture by presenting and analyzing some specific historical events or processes. The existence of a significant number of connections between the two cultures entailed the study and analysis of both individual and collective communication networks, as well as the identification of the factors that underpinned the flows of cultural “transfer,” “import,” and “export” among the actors involved in the social and cultural landscape of Romania during the chronological period under investigation.

Beginning with the three main directions outlined in the subtitle of the work, namely, the “post-imperial realities” of a Greater Romania that incorporated the historical provinces (Transylvania, Bukovina, and Bessarabia) along with the entire material, legislative, and cultural heritage of the Austro-Hungarian and Tsarist empires, of which they were a part until 1918, the “public discourse” as a vector of cultural