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**Review of Flóra, Á. (2019) The matter of honour: the leading urban elite in sixteenth century Transylvania**

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away to sea, is the subject of an informative chapter by Jeppe Mulich, focusing on the Caribbean but also drawing a wide range of comparisons. Maroons might become pirates or even slavers themselves, taking advantage of the interstices in jurisdictions which the author labels ‘colonial borderlands’. Catherine Phipps then takes us back to Japan in both later Tokugawa and Meiji periods, when (uniquely in world history, she claims) the country added substantially to its island territory and thus coastline and became an imperial power, strictly controlling foreign access to its interior, despite being bound by very unequal treaties with major western players. The Ottoman comparison might have been fruitful here, but after its opening flourish the chapter is resolutely Japan-centred. Lastly, in contrast, Lisa Norling essays a genuinely global survey of early modern women and subsistence fishing, and the gender dynamics of littorals. Women, it seems, are most likely to be found harvesting near the shore, as reef gleaners; but there have been exceptions, such as those who dived deep for shellfish and seaweed off some pre-Tokugawa Japanese villages; the chapter explores how these exceptions could arise and then be extinguished—by the usual male suspects.

The chapters are grouped under somewhat abstract headings such as ‘Currents’ or ‘Thresholds’ and could clearly have been arranged in a variety of ways. But certain themes emerge and are clarified in the editors’ very helpful Introduction and Afterword: countering Eurocentrism is one, the interaction of legal regimes another, the formation of sub-oceanic regions a third. The need for a maritime history with a strong terrestrial component is amply demonstrated, as is the requirement of global scope.

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*The Matter of Honour: The Leading Urban Elite in Sixteenth Century Transylvania*, by Ágnes Flóra (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019; pp. 284. €89).

Debates on urban governance in medieval and early modern Europe have proliferated in the past few decades, but this is much less the case with the eastern part of the continent, which is still largely seen as an urban no man’s land; studies on this topic have mostly been published in languages that are not easily accessible to non-specialist readers. Eastern European towns had—on average—less power in relation to central authorities than did western and central European towns, but the ways in which their elites organised themselves and interacted with their wider environments are not any less interesting, both for their unique qualities and for the commonalities they shared with other parts of Europe. Ágnes Flóra’s study of Transylvanian elites in the sixteenth century partly fills this gap and, perhaps more importantly, it offers English-language readers a rare glimpse into urban history east of the Habsburg world. The book focuses on Transylvania’s most important towns, namely Cluj and Sibiu, and it examines in detail the archontology and prosopography of their elites during the sixteenth century. This is done on the basis of an impressive number of unpublished sources, which uncover the careers and connections of over 260 people involved in urban governance in this period.

The introduction discusses at length the methodology of the work and the historiography of the topic. The many possible definitions of elites as a concept are also examined in detail, which is useful in so far as it reminds the reader that the matter is far from being settled, but also somewhat disappointing as the author seems to want to avoid making a choice for herself. A few other aspects deserve more attention than they received in the introduction. One example is the choice of the two towns, Cluj and Sibiu, which is logical for anybody who knows anything about early modern Transylvania, but could have been explained more clearly for non-specialist readers. Another point that needed more discussion was the relevance of the period under scrutiny, namely the sixteenth century, which is mentioned in passing as a 'high point of development' for these towns (p. 20); elsewhere the year 1600 is referred to, rather unsatisfyingly, as an arbitrary end date (p. 15). Yet the choice has a more compelling basis than that: in Chapter One it is explained that the period between 1488 and the end of the sixteenth century was when the urban structure and the patterns of self-governance were completed and refined in these towns, while the end of the sixteenth century was marked by the turmoil of the Habsburg–Ottoman wars (1593–1606); it was probably no accident that infringements on town privileges by rulers became much more frequent in the seventeenth century. In other words, focusing on the sixteenth century makes perfect sense, but this could have been explained more clearly by the author. Remarkably, the most important religious and political developments of the sixteenth century, namely the Reformation and the Ottoman conquests in the area, which led to important changes in Transylvania's internal and regional politics, 'had no major impact' on urban administration and jurisdiction (p. 62). This is an important argument that certainly deserves more visibility in the book. All these aspects are touched upon at various points in the work, but their broader relevance in connection to urban governance and the complex character of the chosen period should have been made more evident in the introduction (as well as the conclusion).

Chapter One delves into the background and development of town governments in Sibiu and Cluj from the fourteenth to the end of the sixteenth century. One of its most important arguments is a recurring clarification about the significance of town privileges and charters, namely that they confirmed pre-existing situations instead of creating them—a simple but fundamental point that we should always keep in mind when looking at this type of sources. The chapter is based on great empirical work uncovering the evolution of town institutions; when sources are lacking, educated guesses are made based on German and Hungarian examples. The political and religious turmoil of the sixteenth century is also discussed here. The changes of the Reformation are astutely presented as 'resting on historical traditions' rather than a 'purely innovative development' (p. 100), and confessionalisation is perceptively explained as *cuius officium eius religio* (the religion of those in power was turned into an eligibility criterion for high offices) in the case of the fascinating bi-lingual and pluri-religious town of Cluj (p. 104). The Jesuit presence in Cluj is also analysed here; calling the Jesuit college a 'university' is misleading, but otherwise this is a welcome addition to a story often told from a Catholic (or central) perspective. This part ends with an insightful conclusion, namely that political pressure from the ruler rendered the town 'ineffectual' in the absence of 'institutional background support', such as the backing of an estate, as was the case in Sibiu (p. 109).

Chapter Two contains the main part of the author's research, which is truly impressive in its scope and thoroughness. Here we can read numerous details about the careers, marriages and generational patterns of the elites of Cluj and Sibiu, as well as many individual stories that give rich colour to this meticulous prosopographical study. On the basis of this data, the chapter concludes that the elites of the two towns cannot be defined as a 'patriciate' and gives convincing reasons for this choice, such as the pronounced mobility of these elites, particularly in Cluj. Chapter Three explores the symbolism of election and the physical aspects of the two town halls. Notable is the painstaking reconstruction of the Cluj town hall, since the building itself has not survived. The author compellingly concludes that the symbolic elements of urban governance indicate the emergence and growth of a 'civic awareness', although I would argue that this awareness was not new but had probably been developing well before the period studied here. The conclusions focus mainly on the differences between Sibiu and Cluj but they also include insightful references to other central European towns. As the author rightly argues, more in-depth comparisons in a wider European context would be particularly illuminating and a wonderful next step in this fascinating research.

The work includes numerous graphs and tables, a gazetteer of place names, an extensive bibliography, and an index of names (a more extensive index would have been useful). The writing style is somewhat awkward at the very beginning of the book, but flows much better thereafter. None of the weaknesses noted in this review diminish the importance of the work, which is a valuable contribution to current debates on urban elites in early modern Europe.

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*Captain Francisco de Cuéllar: The Armada, Ireland and the Wars of the Spanish Monarchy, 1578–1606*, by Francis Kelly (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2020; pp. 312. €35).

The Spanish Armada continues to be a big issue in the British Isles for historians and the public. From 1588, it entered the English mythology of the defence of Britain against the external enemy, and only recently has it begun to be presented to the public without a strong nationalist perspective. In Ireland, where part of the fleet was shipwrecked on its return to Spain, new visitor centres have been opened to collect archaeological material, and local associations promote knowledge of the Armada and its era at a popular level. This renewed interest in the Armada is followed from Spain with a mixture of surprise and admiration. For Spanish historians, the so-called *Empresa de Inglaterra* of 1588 is only an episode—an unfortunate one—in the European struggles of the sixteenth century, rather relegated to oblivion since its last commemoration in 1988. Today, the new military history in Spanish universities is focused on the impact of the war on the development of the institutions and the society that bore its burdens (the fiscal military state); on the circulation and integration of the military and soldiers of other countries in the Spanish Empire (mainly Flemish, Italian and Irish); on the harsh conditions endured by the soldiers themselves and their reflection in the literature of the time; on