

Krisztina Arany: Florentine Families in Hungary in the First Half of the Fifteenth Century. A Prosopographic Study of Their Economic and Social Strategies. Solivagus-Verlag. Kiel 2020. IV, 393 S., graph. Darst., Kt. ISBN 978-3-943025-45-3. (€ 58,-)

Until about a decade ago, we had hardly more than fragmented data at our disposal on Florentine merchants in the Kingdom of Hungary during the early Renaissance period. This was probably due to the nature of Florentine sources, located in many different archival units which do not always allow us a chronological interpretation but rather they require a focus on patterns and trends.

As the analytical framework of her study, Krisztina Arany chooses a classical prosopography, supplemented by an introductory study. Such a method can be an efficient way to present large amounts of data, on the condition that it is the fruit of systematic and thorough research. From this point of view, the 1427 Florentine tax records, the Catasto, which was A.'s primary source of analysis, no matter how overstudied it seems to be, provides an excellent data set. Besides that, all the corresponding Hungarian documentation up to 1426 is published and, even beyond that, sources are properly catalogued and accompanied by summaries. The book with which we are dealing is mainly concerned with social and economic strategies of single Florentine families working in Hungary. It is unfortunate, however, that in Florentine tax records, marriage ties are rarely mentioned, and company records were typically reduced to lists of debtors and creditors.

The monograph is divided into seven chapters, each with its own subdivisions, some of them more detailed than others. In her introduction, A. familiarizes the reader with the research questions and sets the general framework of her study within the areas of economic history and long-distance trade. In the second chapter, the author seeks to examine the existing literature on the given topic, however, without references to the most recent relevant works, which have been published since the defense of her thesis. The third chapter is more detailed, discussing Florentines' business activities in Hungary. Because of the randomness of the data, her division of Florentines according to whether they were operating in the short or the long term in Hungary seems to be rather challenging. The fourth chapter is compelling because of its originality as it presents a comparison between Florentine and South German merchants. The question of competition versus cooperation between the two groups is intriguing, very much relevant, and invites the reader to learn more about the subject. In the fifth chapter, the author continues to develop her account of the strategies Florentine businessmen adopted in Hungary, bringing as an example a not-yet-analyzed case of integration into the local nobility. In chapter six, reading A.'s thorough examination of Hungarian households in the Catasto, which compares them to their German counterparts shows that migration between the Republic of Florence and the Kingdom of Hungary was a two-way process. In fact, the two groups appear to have coexisted in other Italian cities as well.

Given the homogeneous data set, some of A.'s conclusions might be perceived as overreaching. This includes her remarks on the lack of bills of exchange which, in her opinion, was linked to the underdevelopment of the region. At the same time, she also mentions, that the Melanesi of Buda offered banking services. Since Florentines had no obligation to report in their tax return any movable or immovable properties located outside Florence, her claim that those involved in royal administration did not possess large amounts of capital cannot be confirmed. However, as she rightfully points out, the role of the Venetian market as a banking intermediary for the region is without question. She concludes that, based on the evidence of the three partnerships found in the 1427 Catasto, Buda, compared to other market towns of Central Europe, was home to a sizable Florentine community. The relationship between Florentine and South German merchants is well-exemplified by those working in long-distance trade and her comparative analysis of the two communities offers a new path for research. The impact that the South Germans had on the local economy has been widely studied, therefore the data could successfully be applied to predict any group specific behavior and patterns in Florentine society.

The analysis comes to a close with an appendix containing the database which, on the one hand, renders an invaluable service to scholars dealing with the subject but, on the other hand, would have greatly benefited from a clear organizing principle to prevent the author from squeezing random data into it. Not all the references come from primary sources, and the author also included some Florentines who are not proven to have traded in the Kingdom of Hungary, as well as some businessmen who came from elsewhere. However, the tables on various Florentine office holders in Hungary are convenient as are the maps located on the cover showing the medieval Kingdom of Hungary.

As mentioned above, the book unfortunately lacks an up-to-date bibliography and consequently also the prosopography database could have been considerably enlarged. Since the defense of A.'s thesis, there have been new contributions to the field, especially concerning the administrative-jurisdictional organization of Italian merchants in Buda. Another topic that might require further consideration is Florentines' involvement in transferring revenues to the Apostolic Chamber, which is a key element in understanding the functioning of Florentine banking networks in Hungary.

More recently, scholars like Tamás Fedeles and Maxim Mordovin have published stimulating contributions on collecting ecclesiastical taxes, and on archeological findings as testimony to the textile trade in Hungary. Yet, it is important to note that case studies like A.'s analysis of the three Florentine partnerships, which comprises the core of her book, provide an excellent basis for painting a larger picture of Italian-Hungarian commercial networks in the early Renaissance period.

Firenze

Katalin Prajda

Mit letzter Pracht. Grabdenkmale in Mecklenburg und Pommern. Hrsg. von Kilian Heck und Antje Kempe. Lukas-Verlag, Berlin 2020. 199 S., 85 Ill. ISBN 978-3-86732-320-8. (€ 30,-)

Der Aufsatzband möchte anhand ausgewählter Beispiele in die frühneuzeitlichen Grabmallschaften Mecklenburgs und Pommerns einführen. Dahinter steht die Beobachtung, dass Grabmale und Epitaphien als visualisierte Formen liturgischer Memoria und säkularer Erinnerungskultur „komplexe Knotenpunkte“ geschichtswissenschaftlicher sowie kunst- und religionshistorischer Fragestellungen sind, die Auskunft darüber geben, wie sich Geschichte und ihre Akteure artikulieren und von der Nachwelt wahrgenommen werden sollen (S. 7). Sie sind als besondere Kommunikationsmittel, als „Kommunikabilien“ aufzufassen, um den von Mark Hengerer 2001 ganz passend kreierten Neologismus aufzugreifen¹. Typologien, Materialien, Künstler und familiär-dynastische Verbindungen geben dabei Hinweise auf regionale Sepulkralandschaften. In diesem Sinn soll es in den sieben Beiträgen deutscher, polnischer und niederländischer Experten zum Thema darum gehen, regionale Phänomene herauszuarbeiten.

Auf die Einleitung der Hrsg., in der sie die Zielsetzung des Bandes prägnant formulieren und den Inhalt der einzelnen Beiträge kurz vorstellen, folgt ein Aufsatz Ralf-Gunnar Werlichs über die frühneuzeitlichen Grabdenkmäler der pommerschen Greifendynastie in Pommern und Mecklenburg. Ausführlich und zugleich kompetent geht der Vf. darin auf die überschaubare Zahl an Grabdenkmälern ein, wobei er sich zunächst denjenigen in Pommern – der Reihe nach in Stettin, Wolgast, Barth und Kenz sowie Rügenwalde und Stolp (die beiden letzteren im heutigen Polen) – zuwendet, um daran anschließend die in Mecklenburg – Wismar und Güstrow – befindlichen Greifendenkmale zu besprechen. Die Grabdenkmale befanden sich „durchaus auf der Höhe zeitgemäßer sepulkraler fürstlicher Repräsentation“, wie Werlich zusammenfasst (S. 55). Man fragt sich freilich, warum dies

¹ MARK HENGERER: Raum als Medium. Adelsgesellschaft, Hof und adelige Bestattung in der Frühen Neuzeit, in: Mitteilungen der Residenzen-Kommission der Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen 11 (2001), 1, S. 54–59, hier S. 56 f.