

Zitierhinweis

Pakucs-Willcocks, Mária: review of: Käthe Hientz / Bernhard Heigl / Thomas Şindilariu, Hermannstadt und Siebenbürgen. Die Protokolle des Hermannstädter Rates und der Sächsischen Nationsuniversität 1391-1705, Gundelsheim, Württ: Arbeitskreis f. Siebenbürgische Landeskunde, 2007, in: Südost-Forschungen, --, 67 (2008), p. 353-354, <https://recensio-stag.lorax.syslab.com/r/44c414717ef71034dc6fe28977d1ea7f>



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Quellen

Hermannstadt und Siebenbürgen. Die Protokolle des Hermanstädter Rates und der Sächsischen Nationsuniversität 1391-1705. Hgg. Käthe HIENTZ/Bernhard HEIGL/Thomas ŞINDILARIU. Hermannstadt: Honterus Verlag, Heidelberg: Arbeitskreis für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde 2007 (Veröffentlichungen von Studium Transylvanicum). 223 S., Abb., 1 DVD, ISBN 978-3-929848-66-3, € 14,90

The book reviewed here synthesises historical research and source publication, while also making the most of the technological tools available to the humanities at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The reader is presented with a printed paperback book and a multimedia DVD, the result of teamwork by members of the Studium Transylvanicum and staff from the Honterus archives in Braşov/Kronstadt.

The book itself is a generous introduction to the protocols of the town council of Sibiu/Hermannstadt and of the Saxon University (*universitas Saxonum* or *Sächsische Nationsuniversität* were the terms used to designate the self-governing unity of the Saxon nation in Transylvania) from the 14th century to the beginning of the 18th. The author of the printed book, Thomas Şindilariu, provides the reader with a detailed and critical overview of the history of the Saxon University and of the rich literature on this topic. He explains that representatives of all Saxon districts met twice a year; the town of Sibiu, its Great Council and its mayor were responsible for the administration of the entire Saxon “nation” of Transylvania between these sessions, therefore the history of the town is closely linked to that of the Transylvanian Saxons. The overview of the creation and functioning of the Saxon University is brief but informative; Şindilariu succeeds in touching upon the essential points and conveys the complexity of this institution and its role in the history of the Transylvanian principality with utmost clarity. The author also gives a very short account of the historical literature dealing with the Saxon University; since it was the mainstay of Saxon existence within Transylvania, the *universitas Saxonum* received a lot of attention from scholars as early as the eighteenth century but paradoxically lacks a modern monograph that would approach the historical emergence of this institution in an unbiased, critical fashion. The official dissolution of the Saxon University took place in 1876, but it took a little while longer for the assets of the corporation to be lost to the Romanian authorities in the 1920s and 1930s.

The introduction continues with an account of the archival holdings of the protocols. We learn that the fourteen volumes of protocols, kept in the archives of Sibiu, were numbered and catalogued around 1800. Franz Zimmermann, the renowned Saxon archivist, decided to separate the protocols of the town of Sibiu from those of the University, a separation which has survived to date. Şindilariu offers a useful table with the former and the current location of each volume of the protocols, indicating those that have been lost in the meantime.

Şindilariu continues by discussing the contents of the missing volumes of the protocols on which information survives in the literature and in older archival catalogues. Finally, the guide to using the attached DVD first explains the index which occupies the core of the book. This index was compiled in 1800 and refers to the content of all fourteen volumes

of protocols, thus enabling a glimpse of the materials the lost registers held. Although the editors of the present edition acknowledge that the structure and thus use of the index is restrictive and selective, they have chosen to transcribe and publish it nevertheless as a guide for modern researchers as well.

The remainder of the book is dedicated to this alphabetical index, which strikes the reader as a rather old-fashioned research instrument, a representative product of its time, the turn of the nineteenth century. It compressed the contents of all fourteen volumes of protocols: each entry has a short register, and the first word of each register becomes the keyword for the indexing. The year of the protocol, the volume and the page are also entered. In order to use this index, modern researchers have to browse through it thoroughly, because most of the times these keywords are not straightforward. To facilitate this, the authors of the current edition have mercifully followed the style of the original manuscript and italicised them.

The protocols themselves are edited digitally on the DVD attached to the book. In a beautifully presented interface, all the extant volumes of documents are digitised allowing direct access to the source material. Furthermore, the DVD also contains relevant archival material from other collections, together with transcriptions by archivists or historians of documents from the lost volumes. Before starting to explore the contents of the DVD, users are advised to read the technical guide. The materials are scanned in page by page, with options to zoom in on the page, to select the desired section of the page, and to move up and down on the page.

The project has a few minor drawbacks, among which is the choice to reprint the alphabetic index as has been pointed out already. Further, access to the texts of the protocols requires a good knowledge of palaeography: the large amount of material spanning over two centuries naturally implies a wide range of handwriting styles, while the shift from Latin to German as administrative languages also implies specialist skills in approaching the texts. Apart from the printed index, there is no search function, but browsing the pages on the disc is greatly helped by the zoom tools and the option to skip ahead by ten pages.

Digitising this collection of archive sources, although prompted partly by the difficulties researchers had to face until recently in the Romanian public archives, is a highly commendable project. It is one of the first of its kind in Romania, thus a good start in filling the large gap between this country and the rest of Europe in access to digitised archival documents. The book and the DVD were published under the auspices of Sibiu European Capital of Culture 2007. They are a wonderful way to celebrate the centuries-long history of the Transylvanian Saxons while offering scholars and other interested readers a collection of primary sources of crucial significance.

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