

**Akademik Grozdanka Gojkov<sup>1</sup>**

Visoka škola strukovnih studija za vaspitače „Mihailo Palov”, Vršac,  
Učiteljski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu

**Dear colleagues,**

What we have in our hands today is an extensive (620 p) and valuable scientific study *History of Banat – studies of specific features of bordering region*, coordinated by the Academician Victor Neumann, Romanian academy of Science, Press Bucharest, 2015; Foreword: Acad. Razvan Theodorescu; Introductory study: Acad. Victor Neumann.

The team of authors of the monograph book consists of 15 authors from Timisoara, Novi Sad, Szeged, Belgrade, Caransebes and Vrsac, dealing from various perspectives with spiritual and cultural history of Banat, in order to polemically, reflectively, rationally, professionally and critically introduce readers into the complex issue of Banat as civilization space, suggesting them, while reflecting on the past, to perceive Banat as a place where cultural influences of the East and the West and various religion meet, to think about human history in this region as a history of civilizations.

The very title of the scientific study emphasizes the threat which connects, sublimates the spirit of regional specificity, opening up space for meta-scientific approaches to issues the team of authors deals with (Enlightenment of Habsburgs, multi-confessionality, the media in multiculturalism, architecture, regional features of baroque art, centralism of Habsburg Austro-Hungarian monarchy, revolutionary movements of 1848 and their meanings, religious and political emancipation of Jews, regional autonomy as opposed to ethno-national activism, system of schooling under the influence of Vienna, etc. Broad range of angles from which the cultural history of Banat is considered implies that in this review we can talk about the book only in reflections which are notional categories, leaving the reader to reveal them him/herself, having in mind that reception of a text is individual. In other words, in this occasion I would refer to several of my own impressions or receptions of ideas, text messages, without getting deeper into their argumentation.

The text of the book seems to me, as the one who is in love with the Banat plain, where it is typical for us living here that we fully understand the maxim “think globally, live locally”, to be a view on Banat as “east-central” part of Europe, fitting well into what I consider my own cultural identity. I am under the impression that it is possible to make a good psychological profile, an image of a mentality of a man of this part of Pannonian plain according to the book. Historiography in it could help in determining significant spots on the map where people meet and become close, as it has been written by Acad. Neumann, considering that the communication between

---

<sup>1</sup> g\_gojkov@mts.rs

nations and cultures is important for revealing of universal value of national, without emphasizing ideologies, opinions and dominant political minorities.

What is also driven by reading the text are the thoughts of the encounter of the East and the West, on their inseparability, which is in this region clearly marked phenomenon. Well-known idea on interdependence between culture and region, and the idea of its organic structure is outlined in the book as spirituality through the images of the space of Banat which were not possible to grasp by metaphysics and transfer them directly into awareness. These reminiscences create representations of Europeanism of central-east man of Banat, as he is defined by Academician Neumann.

The team of authors who wrote about the cultural life of Banat is characterized by being exceptionally informed, ability to cope with methodology and synthesis of data and facts derived from the literature, to offer the opportunity to the reader to look from a variety of angles, decides on his/her own personal human anchor in revealing permanent ideas of convergences, those ideas and opinions being the grounds of human existence; thus the text deserves a dignified place, while the authors, and Academician Neumann especially the status of a historian of a great strength and important tasks, who ambitiously steps ahead towards overcoming divisions, partiality, on his way of humanism, understanding the development of the world as a whole, in the history of permeation and dialogue. My impression is that the roots of such historiography attitude are here, in Banat, which is in the foreword of the book written by Academician Razvan Theodorescu described as the space of civilizations, attracting by its broad spectrum of culture “Three Confinium” visualized in the tower of the cathedral in Cenad, where it is possible to sense live intertwining of Romanian, Hungarian and Serbian spaces.

The book itself is multicultural and multinational, having in mind that it succeeds in reviving relevant details and inevitable broad contexts, the European model from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, fundamental modernity of the continent. The research on regional history, the so called *Landesgeschichte* after 1800 – leading towards the “Early Modern Regionalism” which has changed since the 1980ies in the complex search for “sub-national regions”, “transnational Euro regions” and certain “borders” which have become the topic of research of geo-politicians and historians is illustrated, as pointed out by Academician Theodiresku, in this co-authored work.

Romanians, Balkan monks and Venetian Benedictines, Slovenian and Oriental traders, Hungarian magnates, the Turkish pashas and Austrian architects, working according to Austro-Hungarian projects; Banat used to be Serbian-Romanian “Duke Land” Ottoman province, Habsburg province and finally Romanian province and part of the former Yugoslavia. As it was suggested by the author of the foreword, Banat remains geographical spiritual and cultural bridge, connecting the whole region.

Thus it could be said that Banat connects European southeast, whose part, together with east-central Europe, it is and from whose spiritual being it raises, originating from Austro aristocracy, of a Kafka, Zweig, Brod, Musil, Milosh,

Kundera, belonging, according to Academician Theodiresku, to the creative periphery of the West, and according to others, to the “Third Europe”.

We could agree with the assessment of to Academician Theodiresku that the selection of topics is versatile and well thought. The enlightenment of the time of Telekia and Brukenthal and the epoch of Jesephinism and Therezianism, along with the policy of the tsar Vienna, causing a huge European migration of the century, creating specific rural habitats of German, Schwab, Italian, Spanish, Check and Slovakian colonists; free masonry which, apart from Mures and Tisa, gathered bourgeois Prague, Bratislava and Zagreb, without mentioning those from the German regions, “Brotherhood movement” relevant for the author of the popular history of Banat, Francesco Grisellini; Romanian and Serbian Orthodox religion; Banat inclined to multilinguism resulting in high culture; rich education and media, especially in south Banat, urbanism and baroque art in military sphere, civil and church, expressed in monumental castle in Arad – today neglected in a way difficult to understand – as well as in catholic cathedrals in Timisoara or Lenaueim, Serbian church in Timisoara and Romanian church in Lugos, numerous statues of Saint Napomuk, frescos in the style of the monastery Brancoveanu, in the monastery Seraka or the building in neo-gothic style – all witnessing syncretic cultural climate difficult to recognize in other parts of Europe.

The readers of the book have the opportunity to better understand the emphasis on the thought and work of individuals like Vasile Maniu and Alekandru Mocsoni, Vincent Babes and Konstantin Diaconovici Loga, Vasile Goldis and Eftimie Murgu, who can be considered cornerstones of creation of geographical, historical and anthropological concept of Banat. We are grateful to all the authors, before all to the Academician Victor Neumann and we believe that the readers will also be grateful, learning from the pages they have signed.

Nevertheless, what remains is methodological, rather than phenomenological issue: have we reached the insight on the specific features which could be considered cultural layers of Banat. It seems that we could conclude that Banat, apart from diachronic and synchronic influences of different cultures, is something special, I would not say a myth, but it has its peculiarities (fruitful, rich plain forms tolerant, mild spirit of a man), so that, apart from great cultural diversity of nations which are living in it even today, it is possible to notice connecting elements. The impression is that the time of shared lives and mixture of different cultures has left marks manifested today more in equality and mutual understanding than in clashes. Maybe reality is just a myth we are proud of here in Banat, and one of the reasons to present at the conference a book which is for us in Banat, relevant for reading of our cultural identity. I would like to congratulate to the editor, Academician Neumann, co-authors and the publisher, i.e. Romanian Academy of Science.

I would also like to thank Professor Viorika Passer and Dr Jelena Prtljaga for their help in translation.

Grozdanka Gojkov