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Doina Pasca Harsanyi. *French Rule in the States of Parma, 1796-1814. Working with Napoleon*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022. xiii + 285 pp. Notes, references, indexes. €124.79 (hb). ISBN 9-78-3030973391; €124.79 (pb). ISBN 9-78-3030973421; €96.29 (eb). ISBN 9-78-3030973407.

Review by Alessandro Capone, University of Salerno.

Warfare and conquest in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period are among the most classic subjects of study. This has produced a huge, layered, and ever-expanding historiography, and several generations of scholars have devoted their attention to understanding an era in which the intertwining of war, revolution, and political change made a lasting mark on societies and imaginaries far beyond European borders. Mixing techniques and methods from political, institutional, cultural, military, and social history, researchers have investigated war campaigns, systems and practices of military occupation, political-ideological projects and conflicts, processes of state-building and institutional restructuring, and forms of adherence, cooperation, or opposition to the new regime created by the French armies. Canonical works such as those by Stuart Woolf and, on Italy, by Michael Broers and Antonino De Francesco have offered innovative reinterpretations of the relationship between the French and the societies that they controlled, discussing it through the categories of integration, adaptation, acculturation, and nationalization.[1] More recently, two different, but complementary historiographical trends have made these themes topical again. Renewed interest in the military history of the age of revolutions has prompted a rethinking of the global and transnational dimensions of the Napoleonic wars and their social and political impact on multiple scales.[2] Moreover, comparative analysis of the forms of sovereignty and techniques of governance within imperial systems has been enriched by looking at the profiles, practices, and movements of imperial officials and security forces in the Napoleonic world.[3]

Doina Pasca Harsanyi's new book fits at the crossroads of these strands of research. The author, professor at Central Michigan University, is known for an earlier monograph on the exile of a small group of aristocrats, including Talleyrand, who fled to the United States to escape the Terror after participating in the early stages of the Revolution and together formed one of the first groups in French nineteenth-century liberalism.[4] The focus of Harsanyi's latest book is the impact of Napoleonic rule and its transformative projects on the duchies of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla in Italy. The duchies were undoubtedly a peripheral polity in the European political system, but they made up a small state that boasted an ancient dynastic tradition, linked to some of the most prestigious lineages in the region. The duchies were founded in the sixteenth century by the Farnese. The Habsburg and Bourbon dynasties struggled for sovereignty over

Parma and Piacenza until 1748, when a compromise placed the duchies under the double protection of Austria and Spain. The court of Parma was one of the finest artistic centers of the period. Nestled between Piedmont, the Po Valley, and Tuscany, the duchies also controlled the main communication route between northern Italy and the Tyrrhenian side of the peninsula. The period of enlightened reforms conducted under the guidance of Léon Guillaume du Tillot, chief minister to Philippe, duke of Parma, did not dent either the power of the feudal aristocracy or the prominence of civic bodies. In a concise interlocutory chapter, Harsanyi traces this experience and its failure with the rise of the young Duke Ferdinand I of Bourbon and Duchess Maria-Amalia of Habsburg-Lorraine that led to the fall of du Tillot.

The introduction outlines the main objective of the volume. The historiography on the Napoleonic period in Italy is succinctly presented by highlighting “two methodological paths” (p. 2). The first stresses the modernizing character of French rule; the second, indebted to the work of Michael Broers (see note [1]), emphasizes the coercive dimension and cultural imperialism underlying the policy of assimilation of elites on which Napoleonic modernization rested. Harsanyi begins with Broers’ assertion that the acculturation promoted by the French ultimately failed because of the need to adapt the institutions of the new regime to local society. The author wonders “what counted as failure and what was accomplishment during the twelve years of French rule in the States of Parma” (p. 5). The book thus aims to understand the dynamics of coercion, accommodation, and acculturation in the Napoleonic empire through an analysis of a significant case, considered as a “laboratory of political experimentation” (p. 6). This endeavor leads Harsanyi to study the ideology and goals of the French rulers, the military, institutional, and cultural instruments they resorted to, the tensions with Napoleon, and the responses and attitudes of the notables and aristocrats of the duchies. In addition to a good mastery of international and local historiography, the author’s research is based on extensive archival documentation, mainly military and administrative, collected in French and Italian archives, and on some unpublished memoirs of notables.

Despite the chronology given in the title, the book largely focuses on the various phases of French rule over the duchies from the first Italian campaign in 1796 to the aftermath of 1808, when the so-called States of Parma were annexed to the empire as the department of Taro. The concluding chapter outlines the political and administrative life of the department from 1808 to the fall of Napoleon, following the thread of the reflections developed previously on the relations between the French and the local elites in the years when the duchies were gradually absorbed into the imperial orbit.

In 1796 the Directory ordered Bonaparte not to overthrow the Duke of Parma to avoid tensions with Spain. Thus, the duchies were not replaced by a republic, unlike what happened in the rest of the peninsula. In Parma, *patrioti* who looked to establish revolutionary democracy were persecuted and expelled to the Cisalpine. Until 1802 the duchies remained formally independent and sovereign, though subject to French occupation and to extractive policies that became increasingly harsh after 18 Brumaire. Duke Ferdinand had refused to cede his sovereignty into the hands of the First Consul, and when he died in 1802, Napoleon appointed an Administrator General, Médéric Moreau de Saint-Méry, and gave him the task of reforming the States of Parma to make French control more profitable without, however, impacting most pre-existing laws and customs. Harsanyi reviews Moreau de Saint-Méry’s attempts and points out their limitations, including disorganization and a tendency to pomp that alienated local notables.

As Harsanyi rightly notes, the situation of the States of Parma was anomalous. Local institutions and French-established institutions coexisted within a territory that was formally autonomous but embedded in the imperial system through a military occupation that guaranteed French political and administrative supervision. The figure of Moreau de Saint-Méry is also interesting. Born in Martinique, he was an old colonial official, ideally linking the oceanic empire created by the old regime monarchy to the continental empire forged by the Revolution. Moreau also links this book to the author's previous monograph, as he belonged to the liberal aristocrats who were exiled to the United States. Moreau's portrait is just one of those that enrich the work, and we are introduced to others, including some French officials and several Parma notables like Count Sanvitale, who exerted a decisive role in the social legitimation of French rule, as well as minor collaborators such as the unscrupulous Agostino Botti, commander of one of the civic militias inherited from the Old Regime. Both coercion and intermediation with local political actors were crucial to establish imperial rule, and that is where Moreau failed, provoking Napoleon's anger.

When the emperor visited Parma in June 1806, meeting with the dignitaries and civic bodies of the former duchies, he dismantled the governance of Moreau, brutally scolding him for his ineffective financial management. A series of imperial decrees started the assimilation process. Feudal rights were immediately abolished without compensation, legal reform and the introduction of the Civil Code were decided, and the States of Parma were placed under the control of the Governor of Liguria Charles François Lebrun and the Viceroy of Italy Eugène de Beauharnais. In addition, militias of ancient civic or feudal origin were replaced by the National Guard and a Gendarmerie Corps, the creation of which paved the way to annexation. This was a sweeping modernization by decree, which the most zealous Napoleonic agents sought to put in place in the belief that they were leading the peoples of Parma on the path of progress and civilization. The crisis erupted when Beauharnais ordered Parma to send 12,000 National Guardsmen to train at the *Grande Armée* reserve camp in Bologna. Moreau's efforts to recruit the contingent from among the former militia sparked an uprising, which began on 7 December 1806 with a mutiny in Castel San Giovanni and quickly spread across the mountainous hinterland of Piacenza.

The analysis of the revolt, its repression, and its political management by the French and local notables takes up almost a third of the work. Harsanyi studies these events as a lens that allows her to apprehend the limits of the French governance, the ideological views and contradictions of its agents, and the attitudes of the authorities and social groups in Parma and Piacenza. She reconstructs the dynamics of the revolt, drawing on the reports that mayors and municipal commissioners sent to upper-level authorities: Governor Lebrun, military commanders, and the imperial procurator of Piacenza, Pietro Albesani. Local authorities adopted different attitudes in the face of the insurgents. Some fled; others recommended calm by distributing food, and all of them tried to justify themselves and those they administered, describing villages invaded and looted by insurgents who were construed as brigands coming from outside the communities. The French resorted to the same repressive practices adopted by the Directory against internal brigandage. Mobile columns invaded Piacenza with at least 10,000 soldiers mobilized to hunt down the rebels, and an exceptional military tribunal was established. At this point the aristocrats and landowners of Piacenza came into play. They wrote to Viceroy Eugène to offer their help in restoring order. At the same time, they asserted that popular anger stemmed from confusing legal reforms, the forced recruitment of the National Guard, and the requisitioning of mules by the army. As the emperor's Minister of Police Joseph Fouché understood, both the notables and the lists of local grievances collected by mayors and feudal lords challenged the cornerstones of

Napoleonic power: secularization, the Civil Code, the new judicial system, the Gendarmerie, and the National Guard. Such protests pose the problem of the interpretation of the revolt and the role that the landlords exercised in it.

Harsanyi believes that the cause of the rebellion was discontent with the consequences of the foreign presence. This discontent would have been caused not only by the heavy economic and military measures, but also and especially by cultural factors. According to the author, “the rebels’ writings” used “the language of concrete demands to voice a gnawing sense of exasperation over losing the contours of an intelligible world” (p. 112). The idea of an uprising against modernization imposed by the French government is suggestive, but it does not appear entirely persuasive. The sources used by the author do not provide enough information on the organization of the revolt, its political leaders and actors, and their objectives. We do not know who the insurgents were since they are always presented as a collective actor, insurgents from “local communities” (p. 81). The participation of some former militia members in the uprising leads one to suspect that these old armed corps, linked to feudal powers or municipal bodies, played an important role as they did in other counterrevolutionary episodes.[5] Analyzing the judiciary trials against the rebels would perhaps have provided a clearer picture of the social profiles of the rebels and the patronage networks mobilized in the revolt. Harsanyi rightly recognizes the role of the notables, who claimed their indispensable function in guaranteeing social order, but she interprets such a claim as a consequence of the “*noblesse oblige* ethos” (p. 139) that would drive them to negotiate to protect their communities. What seems to escape this reconstruction, however, is the power struggle between the notables and the French government. Imperial Prosecutor Albesani tellingly held notables and local authorities jointly responsible for the revolt, emphasizing the need to mobilize the “ancestral feudal bonds” (p. 138) for pacification.

Confronted with institutional reforms that threatened to wipe out the foundations of their social authority, the notables perhaps did not fuel the revolt, but brought their influence to bear to negotiate their integration into the new regime. Local political factors seem to have mattered more than cultural oppositions. Napoleon blamed Lebrun for his conciliatory attitude. He removed Moreau and sent General Junot to Parma as Governor General and Hugues Eugène Nardon as Administrator-Prefect to restore order by harsh measures. Despite the tightening of repression, however, the French continued to seek the cooperation of the notables. In the end, they reached a compromise, that rested on the criminalization of rebels, the depoliticization of crime whose repression was entrusted to ordinary means, and the involvement of notables in imperial administration and sociability. On this basis, the path of reforms continued, culminating in the annexation of 1808, managed by Nardon through a series of measures that achieved complete administrative and judicial homogeneity. Nardon’s attempt to assimilate local elites through cultural policies failed, but the interplay between the reform drive and the agency of the notabilities resulted in a profound political and social transformation, confirmed by the maintenance of Napoleonic institutions after the Restoration.

To conclude, Harsanyi’s detailed and well-researched book offers a fine case study of the struggles that the Napoleonic regime suffered in its efforts to confront local elites and peoples in its expanding empire. This work will be of interest to all those who want to know more about that interesting and often conflicting enterprise.

NOTES

[1] Stuart J. Woolf, *Napoléon et la conquête de l'Europe* (Paris: Flammarion, 1990); Michael Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796-1814: Cultural Imperialism in a European Context?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Antonino De Francesco, *L'Italia di Bonaparte. Politica, statualità e nazione nella penisola tra due rivoluzioni, 1792-1821* (Torino: Utet, 2011).

[2] See, for example, Chaterine Haynes, "The New 'New' Military History: Recent Work on War in the Age of Revolutions," *Journal of Modern History* 2 (2023): 385-415 and Alexander Mikaberidze, *The Napoleonic Wars: A Global History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[3] See Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Aurélien Lignereux, *Servir Napoléon. Policiers et gendarmes dans les départements réunis, 1796-1814* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 2012); Jacques-Olivier Boudon, ed., *Police et gendarmerie dans l'empire napoléonien* (Paris: Éditions SPM, 2013); Aurélien Lignereux, *Les impériaux. Administrer et habiter l'Europe de Napoléon* (Paris: Fayard, 2019).

[4] Doina Pasca Harsanyi, *Lessons from America: Liberal French Nobles in Exile, 1793-1798* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010).

[5] Giuseppe Cirillo, "Banditismo, masse sanfediste e comunità locali nella Puglia pastorale," in Angelo Massafra, ed., *Patrioti e insorgenti in provincia. Il 1799 in Terra di Bari e Basilicata* (Bari: EdiPuglia, 2002), pp. 361-389.

Alessandro Capone
University of Salerno
acapone@unisa.it

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