

Transylvania: Myth and Reality. Changing Awareness of Transylvanian Identity

Introduction

In the course of history Transylvania has represented a specific configuration in Europe. A unique role was reserved for it by its three ethnic communities (Hungarian, Romanian and Saxon), its three estates in political law, or *natio* (nations), Hungarian, Szekler and Saxon existing until modern times, and its four established religions (*recepta religio*), namely Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist and Unitarian, along with the Greek Orthodox religion of Romanians which was tolerated by Transylvania's political law. At the same time the Transylvanian region was situated at the point of contact or intersection of two cultures, the Western and the East European. A glance at the ethnic map – displaying an overwhelming majority of Hungarians and Saxon settlers in medieval times – clearly reveals that its evolution is in many respects associated with the rise of the medieval State of Hungary and resultant from the Hungarian king's conscious policies of state organization and settlement. Its historical development, social order, system of state organization and culture have always made it a part of Europe in all these dimensions.

During the centuries of the Middle Ages and early modern times the above-mentioned three ethnic communities provided the estate-based framework for the region's special state organization. The latter served in turn as an integument for the later development of nationhood for the Hungarian and Saxon communities, and as a model for the Romanian community. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the period of the Ottoman State's expansion, the Transylvanian region achieved the status of an independent state in what was referred to in contemporary Hungarian documents as the 'shadow of the Turkish Power', thereby becoming the repository of the idea of a Hungarian State, the ultimate resource of Hungarian culture and the nerve center of its development. In the 18th century, when it was integrated into the Habsburg Empire, it was during the years of Joseph II's state-building activity (1780-1790) that Transylvania witnessed for the first time the emergence of the concept of a 'Romanian nation' (as opposed to the usual medieval term *wlach*), a Romanian national movement and modern Romanian culture. Its Saxon community's outstanding economic and cultural achievements made their mark, still felt, on Transylvania's development, and from a medieval estate, that community became a modern nationality by the 19th century. As a specific German community, Transylvania's Saxon ethnic unit existed only through the statehood of the

Hungarian Kingdom, later through that of the Principality of Transylvania, whereas in certain historical periods the Hungarian and Romanian communities perceived their Transylvanian identity through their cultural, linguistic and national existence and their experience of Transylvania's political law. All these factors combine to assign to Transylvania, a territory embodying ethnic, cultural and national existence, special importance in the collective awareness of all three communities of their identity, an awareness which, in some cases, assumed even a mythical, transcendent character.

The Roots of the Transylvanian Identity in the Middle Ages

Our inquiry into the awareness of identity developed by the peoples of Transylvania must reach back in time to the Middle Ages, to the emergence of a system of feudal estates in that region. In Transylvania there evolved a unique feudal society, based on estates, which at times disrupted and at times rested on the ethnic communities and later came to serve as a cohesive force for them. The Transylvanian estates were characterized not only by a community of economic, social and political interests, but also by attachment to given territories within Transylvania, while having, as has been mentioned, an ethnic complexion in certain cases. In this respect, the Transylvanian estates were not completely identical with those of Western Europe.

In the political crisis of the 13th and 14th centuries, and mainly during the 14th century, the members of the Hungarian clan with large landholdings, the king's mounted warriors (*serviens regis*), and castle-serfs organized themselves into a legally united estate. Its common attributes included free possessory rights, subjection to the king's direct jurisdiction, and the right and duty to do military service in person. The fundamental layer of the nobility thus emerging was chiefly comprised of descendants of the Hungarian clans settled in Transylvania, who were joined by the leading segments of Transylvania's two other ethnic groups. The *gerebek* (*die Gräfen*), the one-time leaders of Saxon settlers, constituting the leading segment of the Saxon society and doing military service, and the Szeklers entering the king's service acquired nobleman's estates outside Saxon and Szekler territories. The leaders of Romanian communities doing military service, *kenezek* (in Romanian *cneaz*) and voivods became similarly assimilated with the Hungarian nobility. The Saxon *gerebek* (*die Gräfen*) and Romanian *kenezek* adopted from the Hungarian nobility not only the title of nobility, but also the legal system, the framework and institutions of public administration, and even the way of life. The integration of Romanian *kenezek* and voivods into the Hungarian nobility was not coupled with the adoption of Catholicism and the Hungarian language in all cases and territories. The Romanians who became nobles were not aliens in the public mind as all nobles were members of the Hungarian feudal estate (*universitas nobilium*), of the *Natio Hungarica*, regardless of ethnic origin. Territorially the Hungarian nobility of Transylvania was attached to seven counties (*cominatus*), where they were free to hold property and to enjoy their privileges, or exercise their 'freedom'.¹

The ethnically Hungarian Szekler population, which had been settled by Hungarian kings in the southeastern parts of Transylvania and had been living in the country as early as the 11th century, showed a special record of development. Their society preserved the Bulgarian-Turkish organization typical of the Hungarians before St. Stephen (997-1038) and the economic system of shepherding based on rotational grazing. No

feudal subordination between Szeklers had yet emerged. The freedom the Szeklers enjoyed, which was later recognized as one of nobility, was conditional upon extraction and was hallmarked by the right and duty to go to war and to have an equitable share in common land. Stratified in later times, the Szekler society was divided into chief persons (*primores*), *lofok* (*primipili*) and commoners (*pixidarii*). Since the nobility of Transylvania, the *natio*, had not been separated into higher and lower nobility, the latter's role was played by the Szekler *natio* (*Natio Siculica*), and its privileges were up until the 19th century attached to a specific territory, the Szekler *szekek* (chairs, Stühle). The Szekler forces played a large part in the defense of the Kingdom of Hungary's eastern borders and then in the armed forces of the Principality of Transylvania. Their consciousness was crucially influenced by the military way of life and the conditions of Szekler freedom.²

With the *Gräfen*'s full separation and integration into the Hungarian nobility, the principle of Saxon equality emerged triumphant in Saxon society, in which no Saxon class of nobility evolved and the peasants were not reduced to serfdom. The ruling segment of that society was formed by the patrician burgesses of Saxon towns, which were enabled by their economic strength to dominate over the Saxon society. The Saxon's privileges were grounded in King Endre II's Charter (*Andreanum*) of 1224, which granted to the Saxon population of the region of Szeben (Sibiu, Hermannstadt) a set of privileges unique in the whole of Eastern and Southeastern Europe. That Charter was to form the basis of the Saxon self-government which determined the framework of Saxon society for centuries to come. From that date onwards the King regarded *Kiralyfold* (*Königsboden*, *Fundus Regius*), or Saxony, as common property of the Saxons, a territory in which the nobility was not at liberty to own property or to enjoy their privileges. In 1486 King Matthias (1458-1490) extended the *Andreanum*'s privileges to the entire territory of *Kiralyfold*, thereby creating the *Universitas Saxonum* (*Sächsische Nationsuniversität*), the self-governing organ of the Saxon community. Jurisdiction of all litigious matters involving Saxons in *Kiralyfold* was taken by the *Universitas*, which administered justice on the basis of the Saxon Code (*Eigenlandrecht der Siebenbürger Sachsen*) incorporating Saxon usage and approved by Prince Istvan Bathory (1571-1583) in 1583.³ Thus the Saxon society, consisting of free peasants and urban burgesses acted as a legal entity *vis-à-vis* the nobility and Szeklers, the two other estates of Transylvania, and even came to share political power in the Principality of Transylvania. Thanks to their handicraft industry and trade, the Saxons grew into one of Transylvania's most significant economic factors within that legal framework. The Saxon patricians clung tenaciously to their power and privileges, and they passed a law which allowed only Germans to buy houses in Saxon towns.⁴ This is how the Saxon estate, or *Natio Saxonica* came into being, assumed a bourgeois character, comprised primarily ethnic Saxons, and was strongly attached to the privileged territory. On the other hand, the switch to the bourgeois-peasant way of life brought with it the development of an extremely strong popular, feudal and then nationality awareness persisting up to the 20th century.

The Romanian ethnic group had traversed a path which did not allow it to become a feudal 'nation'. By the end of the Middle Ages the Romanian commons came to be serfs partly of the Hungarian nobility, partly of the nobility rising from their own ranks. Regardless of their ethnicity, the serfs had no political rights, while the nobility, into

which the Romanian nobles became integrated, made up a single nation, the *Natio Hungarica*.⁵

The Hungarian nobility, the Szeklers and the Saxons externally acted as separate, but united communities of interests. The legal system, different from others, operated to organize each of them into an estate jealously guarding its independence and selfhood, whereas feudal consciousness permeated all members of the community, because the rights and duties of the individual and his rank in the country's social structure were determined by his position as a member of the feudal estate. In medieval terminology, the three Transylvanian estates were called 'natio', or 'nations', naturally not in the present sense of the term referring to origin and mother tongue, but with regard to the totality of lawful customs within a community concerned, or 'freedom' (*libertas*), as being the main criterion of a 'nation'.⁶

It was under the impact of the growing Turkish threat to Transylvania and of the peasant revolt of Hussite character in 1437 that the three Transylvanian estates formed an alliance known as the *unio trium nationum* (1437), pledging joint efforts in each other's defense against any attack.⁷ Although the union was an occasional alliance, it was to lay the groundwork for the political system of Transylvania.

One cannot yet speak of a separate Transylvanian consciousness or identity in the Middle Ages and the 16th century, as is best exemplified by Transylvanian historiography. Historiographers of the 16th century were still guided by a general Hungarian, or Pannonian approach to the recording of history. Their works conveyed the same Pannonian consciousness as the writings of the Hungarian Ferenc Forgach (1530-1577), Antal Verancsics of Dalmatian origin (1504-1573) or Miklos Olah of Romanian origin (1493-1568) did. Thus they considered themselves to belong to the *gens Pannonica*, expressing the cohesion of peoples of different tongues and origins living in Hungary, and were committed to *Hungaria*, or *Pannonia*, as they called it by its ancient name, comprising as it did numerous peoples. This thought was expressed in the finest terms by Christian Schaeseus (1536-1585), a Saxon humanist of Transylvania, in his epos entitled *Ruine Pannonicae*.⁸

Identity and Conciousness in the Principality of Transylvania

The advance of Turkish Power in Central Europe and the break-up of the Kingdom of Hungary after 1541 gave rise to the emergence of Transylvania as a separate principality, which strengthened its statehood after 1571, the beginning of Istvan Bathory's reign. Thereafter the Principality of Transylvania had a special role to play, even in the ethnic Hungarian's collective awareness of identity in historical, political and cultural aspects alike. Hungarian politics of the 16th and 17th centuries set the long-term goal of unifying and liberating the country. The princes of Transylvania formulated several conceptions in pursuit of that goal, such as:

- the formation of a personal union between the Principality of Transylvania and Poland, eventually to be extended to include an alliance between Moldova and Wallachia, as a possible third grouping of countries in the region of Central Eastern Europe in addition and opposition to the Habsburg and the Ottoman Empire (the most important exponents of this idea were Princes Istvan Bathory (1571-1583) and Gyorgy Rak-

oczi II (1648-1660).

- The unification of the country against the Habsburgs, starting from the Principality of Transylvania in the east – the country that joined the European Protestant system of alliance in the 17th century and recognized the supremacy of the Turkish Sultan in exchange for autonomy in internal governance and a larger measure of foreign policy manoeuvre (the most important exponents of this idea were Princes Istvan Bocskai (1605-1606), Gabor Bethlen (1613-1629) and Gyorgy Rakoczi I (1630-1648)).⁹

The period of the emergence and consolidation of the Principality of Transylvania coincided with the era of the spread of humanism, the Reformation and subsequently the Baroque, which brought lasting achievements for all three ethnic communities of Transylvania and impressed itself strongly upon the development of their collective awareness of identity. A distinct feature of that period is that the ethnic groups of Transylvania internalized a body of knowledge that was partly in touch with reality, but partly contained mythical elements as well.

Hungarian culture recorded its most notable achievement in the following fields:

- *Book printing*; mention should be made primarily of the press of Kolozsvár (Cluj, Klausenburg) established in 1550, and books published in Hungarian under the direction of Gaspar Heltai of Saxon origin (1490-1574). It was there that Gaspar Heltai published the Hungarian translation of the Bible in several parts; the Hungarian translation of Istvan Werboc's *Tripartitum*, the most important accomplishment of Hungarian legislation in the Middle Ages; some poems by Sebestyén Lantos Tinodi (1505-1556), a prominent Hungarian poet of the time; and the Hundred Fables written by him in 1566, the first really great work of prose in Hungarian. Miklós Kis Misztotfalusi (1650-1702), the most notable lettercutter in Hungarian typographic history, likewise worked in Kolozsvár.

- *School system*; in 1581 Istvan Bathory, Prince of Transylvania and King of Poland, founded a university in Kolozsvár, entrusting the organizational work to Jesuits. In 1622 Prince Gabor Bethlen had the Diet decide on the establishment of an 'academy', the result being the foundation in 1629 of the College of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia, Weissenburg), which had the collaboration of teachers of European fame like Martin Opitz, Johannes Alsted, Johannes Bisterfeld, and Ludwig Piscator. It remained a characteristic feature of education in Transylvania that its students continued in Italy, Holland, Germany and England.

- *Sciences*; the Hungarian Encyclopedia (1653) of János Csere Apaczai (1625-1659), which for the first time conveyed in Hungarian the ideas of Copernicus, Descartes, Regius, Althusius, Ramus, and Amesius at a scientific standard closely equal to that of Europe at the time, was published in Transylvania.¹⁰

- *Historiography*; during the 16th and 17th centuries Transylvania became a center of historiography (in Latin and Hungarian). Gaspar Heltai's adaptation of Bonfini's (1434-1503) Chronicle, the first genuine historiographic work in Hungarian, appeared in Kolozsvár in 1575. The most prominent Hungarian historiographers of Transylvania at the time included István Szamosközy (1570-1612), János Bethlen (1613-1678), János Szalárdi (1601-1666) and János Kemény (1607-1662). Hungarian historiography in Transylvania was intimately connected with that of Central and Western Europe and was in tune with the trends of humanism, the Reformation and then the Baroque. Politically it was specifically Transylvanian, viewing events from the angle of the Transyl-

vanian State.¹¹

● *Spreading use of the mother tongue*; in the Principality of Transylvania Latin was replaced by Hungarian as the language of correspondence, public administration and legislation. What was more, Hungarian partially became the language of diplomatic intercourse in the surroundings of the Principality. The voivods of Wallachia and Moldavia as well as the Turkish authorities used Hungarian in correspondence with the princes of Transylvania and with Transylvania in general.¹²

The struggle against Turkish power and partly against the Habsburg empire for the restoration of the one-time Hungarian State brought a decisive influence to bear on the collective awareness of the identity of the Hungarian nobility, i.e. the *Natio Hungarica*. Lying at the heart of the tradition in which the Huns and the Hungarians were kindred people, or virtually the same people, were old Hungarian chronicles of the Middle Ages. That view was shared by humanist historiographers including Bonfini (1427-1503).¹³ The chronicles referred to the dynastic tradition of virtual Hun-Hungarian continuity as a historical argument for the legitimacy of the Hungarian conquest and of subsequent Hungarian state-building.¹⁴ In his essay on Simon Kezai's *Gesta Hungarorum* of the 13th century, Jenő Szűcs stated that:

the dualism of approach to these two basic periods of history is spanned by a conceptual *continuity* in the sense that the epic aspects and theoretical elements inherent in the first period, the ancient period of the Huns, add up in their context to a 'source of law', as it were, which can be invoked as the origin of historical rights, ... direct social and political lessons and postulates regarding the present and future: residing in the ancient Hun period is also the desirable model of relationship between society's political sector and royal power, or the feudal nature of the State (*status regni*), one which in turn is an expression of deeper structural peculiarity, a specially historicized nature of political thinking, namely the phenomenon that until the 19th century political theory in Hungarian history appeared largely encased in epics and a *system of historical arguments* rather than primarily in treatise, theoretical works and categories of topical interest.¹⁵

The Szekler's consciousness of defending their 'ancient freedom' adds an interesting touch to the historical awareness of the Hungarian nobility based on the fiction of Hunnish-Hungarian kinship or identity. The social roots of that consciousness are to be traced in the struggle of Szekler commoners against the chief persons (*primores*) encroaching on Szeklers' freedom. The Szekler Diet convened at Agyagfalva (Lutita) in 1505, and mainly in 1506 adopted strict resolutions against the *primores* encroaching on Szeklers' freedom and proclaimed the Szeklers' equality of rights once again. The myth which had made its way since the 13th century that Szeklers emerged from the Hun King Attila's people, who had retreated to Transylvania after the collapse of the Hun Empire, came to assume political significance. The awareness of Hun origin not only made the Szekler commoners believe that the 'Scythian' virtues of the Hunnish-Hungarian kindred people had been preserved in the purest form by them, but also prompted them to relate their privileges to that merit. The romantic admiration of the Huns, a most characteristic manifestation of the Hungarian nobility's consciousness at the end of the Middle Ages, readily acknowledged the 'Scythian' (*Szittyá*) primogeniture of the Szeklers.¹⁶ As can be seen, the conception of the Hungarian nobility and the Szekler estate reveals some sort of a theory of Hunnish-Hungarian continuity, which

was advanced as a historical argument and seen as a legislative source of political rights. In the Transylvania of the 16th and 17th centuries, this was superimposed by a Transylvanian consciousness derived from a definition of the interests of the Transylvanian State. Although it did not lose sight of the interrelationship of Hungarian and Transylvanian politics, occasionally it treated interpretation from the point of view of the Hungarian Kingdom of the day as being alien or foreign rather than Transylvanian.

The 16th and 17th centuries was a period that witnessed a singular flourishing of Saxon culture in the Latin and German languages. The Saxons of Transylvania take credit for significant accomplishments in several fields:

- *school education*; in 1453 the *Studium Coronense* was founded by Johannes Honterus (1498-1549), the most prominent figure of humanist Saxon culture. His education law drafted for the high school of Brasso (Brasov, Kronstadt) served as a model for all Saxon high schools in Transylvania. In that era there was a school in every Saxon village and town. The Saxon school system followed the pattern of education in Germany, thus enabling young Saxons to continue studies at universities in Germany.¹⁷

- *Book printing*; the first Saxon press was established in Nagyszeben (Sibiu, Hermanstadt) in 1529. The famous press of Brasso was called into being by Johannes Honterus in 1539. The printing work of both Nagyszeben and Brasso published books in Latin, Greek, German, Hungarian and Romanian, with a large part thereof finding their way into the mainstream of European culture.

- *Science*; the Saxon science of Transylvania found a place in European scientific life thanks to the works of Johannes Honterus on grammar, geology and astronomy.¹⁸

- *Historiography*; which was the most important means of expression of the Saxon community, produced a flood of works that seems almost unbelievable to the research worker of our days. The most notable humanist historiographer of the 16th century was Christian Schaeseus (1536-1585), whose principal work was the epos entitled *Ruine Pannonicae*. Significant works in the 17th century were created by Georg Kraus (1607-1679), Johann Tröster (?-1670) and Lorenz Töppelt (1641-1670), whose writings showed close affinity to Hungarian and European historiography at the time. The latter works reflected the same Transylvanian approach as contemporary Hungarian historiographers did.¹⁹

- *Gradual spread of the German language*; in this era the authorities of the *Universitas Saxonum* and the Saxon towns came to make greater use of German in correspondence *inter se*. Saxon historiography began replacing Latin for German. Michael Weiss (1569-1612), judge of Brasso, used both Latin and German in his record, while the historiographers Johann Tröster and Georg Kraus wrote their works in German. Efforts were also made to raise the Saxon dialect of Transylvania to the rank of literary language.²⁰

The Saxons of Transylvania, chiefly due to their economic weight and strong bourgeois class, became a most important repository of humanism in Transylvania. Like Hungarian culture and parallel to it, Saxon culture was intimately connected with the large European currents.

Protection from Hungarian craftsmen and merchants, prohibition of alien settlement in Saxon towns, and concentration of contacts with relatives in towns in Germany caused the bourgeois 'national consciousness' to appear ahead of time in the ranks of Saxons in Transylvania, who in the civil war of the post-1526 years sided with the

Habsburg dynasty. Although the defeat suffered by the Habsburg side in the civil war, which lasted until 1535, forced the Saxons, the *Universitas Saxonum*, to recognize the Transylvanian reality, they retained their sympathy with the Habsburgs. This apparently irrational attitude was the product of the economic ties that the Saxon towns maintained with the German Empire. In the 16th century those ties gave new impulse to the Saxon developing a German consciousness.²¹ During the 16th and 17th centuries the Saxon 'nation' (*Natio Saxonica*) found its place in the Principality of Transylvania as a state-forming estate and mostly accepted the Turkish orientation of the princes of Transylvania. At the same time, like the Hungarian nobility and the Szekler, it looked to history for political argumentation and as a reliable source of law. The ideological arguments of Saxon consciousness were provided by the Saxon *comes* Albert Huet (1537-1607), who in 1591 said in the presence of Prince Zsigmond Bathory (1581-1597, 1601-1602):

We have been called in by King Geza, so we are aliens no more, but full-fledged commoners of the country, are no serfs but subjects and dear loyalists. This is evidenced not only by our privileges, but also by other royal documents, which we have packed in a huge chest in order to safeguard them in our honor at the town hall and to aid the recollection of our offspring.... It is said you are but guests, newcomers and aliens, not warriors, defenders of the land. To this I reply that truly we were guests, but it is precisely this condition that we view as a sign of our honor.²²

The 17th century also saw the emergence of a Saxon theory of German continuity, which first appeared in Germany and was advocated mainly by Philipp Melanchton. According to that theory, the Dacians-Goths-Saxons were one and the same people, so the Saxons were the oldest inhabitants of Transylvania. That theory was disseminated by Matthias Miles (1639-1686), Lorenz Töppelt and Johann Tröster, Saxon historiographers floating on the wings of Baroque imagination. The Saxon theory of continuity proved short-lived. As early as the end of the 17th century the Saxon *comes* Valentin Frank von Frankenstein (1643-1697) refuted it and proved, by an analysis of the *Andreanum*, that the Saxons were settled during the reign of King Géza II (1141-1162).²³ In 1792, on the other hand, Joseph Karl Eder (1670-1710) relied on authentic documents and critical methods for adducing evidence in support of the Saxons' settlement and self-government.²⁴ Saxon civic consciousness existed through the medium of privileges granted by Hungarian kings and was capable of being kept alive within them alone – through the Saxon estate, or *Natio* that shared political power in Transylvania, first linked to the Kingdom of Hungary and then to the Principality of Transylvania.

In the 16th and 17th centuries the Romanians of Transylvania had not yet arrived at the threshold of becoming either an estate or a bourgeois nation, but humanism and the Reformation bore influence on their cultural life as well. Saxon and Hungarian Protestantism tried to spread the Reformation among the Romanians of Orthodox religion, too, and as part of that effort, an attempt was made to introduce and spread the mother tongue in place of Old Slav used in church life. Notable results were achieved in book printing and the foundation of the first Transylvanian schools teaching in Romanian. The Saxons who identified with the Lutheran Reformation equipped printing works of Szeben with Cyrillic letters and entrusted them to the care of Filip Moldoveanul (first part of the 16th century), who in 1544 printed the Romanian catechism (*Catehizmul romanesc*), the first book in Romanian. In the late 1550s a Romanian press with Cyril-

lic letters was also set up in Brasso, where deacon Coresi (?-ca. 1583), the most notable Romanian printer of the time, was active. His press produced 35 books of an ecclesiastical nature, of which 23 were in Old Slav, three in Old Slav and Romanian, and nine in Romanian, the latter conveying to the Romanians the Lutheran views accepted by the Saxons and the Calvinist views accepted by the Hungarians. Also actuated by Calvinist motives, the Romanian translation of the New Testament was published by the princely press of Gyulafehervar (Alba Iulia, Weissenburg) in 1648.²⁵ The Romanian texts printed in Transylvania contributed to the introduction of Romanian in church life and the underpinning of the Romanian literary language. The 16th and 17th centuries saw several Romanian schools established in the territory of Transylvania. In 1559, according to Romanian historiography, instruction in Romanian was introduced at the Romanian school in the suburb of Brasso Bolgarszeg (Schei) which was inhabited by Romanians.²⁶ Calvinist proselytism in Transylvania facilitated the operation of schools teaching in Romanian at Lugos (Lugoj) and Karansebes (Caransebes). In 1657 Zsuzsanna Lorantffy (ca. 1600 -1660), the wife of Prince Gyorgy Rakoczy I, set up a school with Romanian as the language of instruction at the manor in Fogaras (Fagaras). All these developments took place despite the fact that a part of the Romanian clergy, insisting on Old Slav as the liturgic language in Transylvania, was explicitly against the organization of schools teaching in the mother tongue.²⁷

A notable feature of Transylvania in the 16th and 17th centuries lay in the different trends of the Reformation taking root and in the peaceful coexistence between them and Catholicism, which was to some extent relegated to the background, even at the time of religious wars in Europe. The Lutheran trend of the Reformation made its way in *Kiralyfold* inhabited by Saxons. Johannes Honterus elaborated the basic tenets of the Saxons' Lutheran denomination and church in 1542-1543 and the Saxons' Lutheran clergy elected a superintendent in 1553. With it, the Saxon Lutheran Church was established, which later became the national church of Saxons in Transylvania and was to play a decisive role, together with the Saxons' territorial autonomy, in the survival of Saxons as an ethnic group.

The Helvetian trend of the Calvinist Reformation was gaining ground in the ranks of ethnic Hungarians and mainly of the nobility, while the Antitrinitarians, or Unitarians organized a church in Kolozsvar. Moreover, the Sabatarian ideology, which accepted only the Old Testament and rejected the New Testament, similarly took hold and created a literature, unique in Europe, on the basis of the rabbinical doctrine. During the 16th and 17th centuries the Principality became a gathering place of the most radical reformers. Transylvania was visited by Fausto Sozzini, Giorgio Blandrata, Johannes Sommer, Christian Francken, Jackobus Paleologus, Matthias Vehe-Glirius²⁸, and Anabaptists from Moravia and Unitarians from Poland were settled there. The foothold won by nearly all trends of the Reformation is an example of the embodiment of a multipolar society in the religious sphere. The political law of Transylvania sanctioned the free exercise of four established religions (*recepta religio*) – the Catholic, the Lutheran, the Calvinist, and the Unitarian – along with the tacit primacy of Calvinism supported by princely power. Upon accession to the throne every prince had to swear an oath on the freedom of the four religions. At the same time, members of the estates personally took an oath of union, swearing to defend by joint action the privileges of three estates and the free exercise of the four established religions.²⁹

The Orthodox religion, with Byzantine rituals, of the large masses of Romanians living in Transylvania was not treated on an equal footing with the other denominations, but in 1574 Prince Istvan Bathory had the Diet recognize the right of the Orthodox Eastern Church to elect a bishop.³⁰ In accordance with the legal system, although it occasionally came under pressure from the Calvinist state power, the Transylvanian State tolerated orthodoxy and refrained from persecuting it. The traditional Transylvanian tolerance, which was permanently ingrained in the minds of Transylvania's ethnic groups, is based on this legal system and practice.

Identity in Habsburg-ruled Transylvania

At the end of the 17th century Transylvania became a part of the Habsburg Empire, and there began a period of what Peter Apor (1676-1752), a Hungarian writer of memoirs, fittingly called *Metamorphosis Transilvaniae*.³¹ In his *Diploma Leopoldium* issued in 1690-1691 Emperor Leopold I retained the country's autonomy, notably he continued to guarantee the privileges of the Hungarian, Szekler and Saxon estates and the free exercise of the four established religions. However, his actual policy was directed towards the Catholicization of Transylvania and its fullest possible integration into the Empire. This was a policy by which the Habsburg government sought political support both against the estates and against Protestantism, which the empire expected among the Romanian Orthodox masses who were merely tolerated, treated as only a *populus* rather than a *natio*, by political law. In its own interest, the government tried to elevate ethnic Romanians from their position of civil disability, thereby securing the framework of development which left space for the evolution of a Romanian consciousness of national identity and for the Romanians' growth into a modern nationality. In Matthias Bernath's view, the development of Romanian national consciousness can be attributed primarily to these external impulses.³² An institutional setting for social, political and cultural progress was created by the union of Transylvania's Romanian Orthodox Church with the Catholic Church – the establishment of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church. In 1699 Emperor Leopold I regulated by decree the legal relations of *Ecclesia Catholica Graeci ritus unitorum*. The Decree provided that the Romanian Greek Catholic Church was to have equal rights with the Catholic Church, the priests of the new Church were to enjoy privileges of nobility and were to be free from *corvee*, secular believers and commoners were to be raised to equal rank with the Catholic order and were to enjoy equal rights with the orders, Catholic scholarships were to be available to priests, who were to have access to colleges, and Romanian schools were to be established.³³

Within the newly established framework the Romanian national movement of Transylvania emerged in several stages. Its first prominent representative was Inochentie Micu-Klein (1692-1768), the bishop of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church. He laid the groundwork for a set of arguments that was advanced by the Romanian national movement and was to play a great role in later times, namely he demanded, by invoking the numerical majority of Romanians the participation of the Romanian population as a political entity in the *Gubernium*, the governing organ of Transylvania. The concept of Daco-Roman continuity, one of the historical myths which has been a basic component of Romanian awareness of historical identity to date, appeared as a histori-

co-political argument for the first time in his pronouncements and writings.³⁴ The representatives of the European humanist movement, including the litterati in Hungary and Transylvania, were the first to notice Latin elements and a Latin structure in the Romanian language. In possession of contemporary historical knowledge it stood to reason to consider the Romanians to be descendants of the Dacians and the Romans conquering Dacia in the days of Traianus. Accordingly, the oldest inhabitants of Transylvania were not the Hungarians, nor even the Saxons, but the Romanians. Micu-Klein may have adopted the theory of Daco-Roman continuity, the doctrine of the Romanians' Daco-Roman origin, from the works of Miklos Olah, Lorenz Töppelt, or Dimitrie Cantemir (1673-1723), Prince of Moldavia.³⁵ The main factors required for the Romanians' emergence as a political entity, such as the Greek Catholic Church as an organizational framework, a historical ideology underlying national consciousness, and the claims to representation in public offices, occurred in Inochentie Micu's time.³⁶ Joseph II's measures, governed by the spirit of enlightenment and intended to create a centralized State, imparted fresh impetus to the Romanian national movement. As is stated by the Romanian historian David Prodan, Joseph II's personality, or Josephinism's system of enlightened ideas, played a fundamental role in moulding the frame of mind of Transylvania's Romanian intellectuals at the end of the 18th century.³⁷

The representatives of Romanian national consciousness who exercised the greatest influence were members of the generation of scientists and writers known as the Transylvanian School (*Scoala Ardeleana*), the great Transylvanian triad, notably Samuel Micu-Klein (1745-1806), Georghe Sincai (1754-1816) and Petru Maior (1756-1821). In 1780 Gheorge Sincai made public his work (*Elementa linguae Daco-Romanae sive Valahicae*), aimed at the Latinization of the Romanian language, and he published the first book to appear in Romanian in Latin letters (1779).³⁸ According to the Hungarian historian Zoltan Toth, Sincai's concept of history is a 'special mixture of religious community feeling, of nationalism grounded in history, and of a moderate enlightenment of the Vienna type'.³⁹

The next incident of the Romanian national movement was the submission to the Diet of 1791 of an appeal entitled *Supplex Libellus Valachorum*. That document, which may be regarded as the most important political writing of the Romanians in Transylvania in the 18th century, was based on Inochentie Micu-Klein's set of arguments, including Daco-Roman continuity, and sought a place for ethnic Romanians in the system of Transylvanian estates. It demanded admission of the Romanians as the fourth nation and assurance for the Romanian clergy, nobility and commons of the same rights as were accorded to the corresponding stratum of the Hungarian, Szekler and Saxon *natio*. At the time the Romanians of Transylvania sought adjustment to the feudal structure of the Transylvanian State, so their demands cannot be regarded as bourgeois in nature.⁴⁰

The subsequent period points in the direction of national cultures and a modern nation and nationality. Theatrical art began to develop, and there were established literary and scientific societies, libraries, museums and periodicals. With respect to the Saxons, special mention is deserved for the art patronage of Samuel Brukenthal (1746-1813), President of the Transylvanian *Gubernium*. His museum, gallery and library in Nagyszeben were of a European standard and still represent quite valuable collections in Transylvanian territory.

The Hungarian culture of Transylvania in that period ‘obtained priority of date’ in its record of achievements for the first Hungarian literary lexicon (Peter Bod, *Magyar Athenas*, 1767), the first Hungarian Linguistic Society (1793), the first Hungarian permanent stone theater (Kolozsvár, 1821), and Janos Bolyai’s Appendix on the non-Euclidian geometric system (1823), which claimed world priority. The historico-political trend of the so-called reform era preceding the Revolution of 1848 was increasingly towards the establishment of a united nation-state. The Hungarian liberal politicians of the time looked on Hungary and Transylvania as ‘two sister countries’ and threw their efforts into bringing about a union of the two countries and extending the use of Hungarian. Union came to be a national goal of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 and was actually proclaimed by the last feudal Diet of Transylvania (30 May 1848). In opposition to it, the Romanian leaders of Transylvania at the time formulated the principle of national self-determination. A most prominent Romanian politician of the time, Simion Barnutiu (1808-1864) rejected the union by setting the postulate of a multi-national state against the Hungarian concept of a nation-state. He linked the individual’s natural right to self-realization with the linguistic nationality of the period, claiming that a people’s character and nationality was rooted in its language.⁴¹ It was in this period that the Saxons of Transylvania began to consider themselves as a part of all Germans. Some Saxon personalities wanted to remodel the collective existence of Saxons – based on the privileges granted in the Middle Ages and rooted in the system of the estates – to become a territorial autonomy with German as its official language.⁴² The idea was also raised of reconciling conflicts and transforming Transylvania into a federation of four nations, four territorial autonomies. The four nations were to be represented in equal proportions in the provincial government and the Diet was to be addressed in three official languages.⁴³ In spite of these attempts, the three national movements of contemporary Transylvania were set against each other by positions of nationalism conceived in the world of ideas prevailing in the 19th century. The conflict led to the outbreak of the civil war of 1848-1849. In those years the majority of the Romanians and Saxons sided with the Habsburgs against the Hungarian movement for independence (from the Habsburgs).

Another attempt at reconciling conflicts was made by the Transylvanian Diet of 1863, which was attended by 59 Romanian, 56 Hungarian and 44 Saxon representatives. The government proposal submitted was in favor of enacting a law on the equality of the Romanian nation and its two religions, and the equal usage of Romanian. The Bill was adopted. Some representatives insisted on the historical aspect and sought a solution for the nationality question on the basis of establishing contact between the feudal *natio* and the bourgeois nation.⁴⁴ This, too, serves to show that the history of Transylvania offered a possibility for a course of development towards recognition of equality for its three ethnic groups. That potentiality was thwarted by the general trend of Europe’s historico-political development during the 19th and 20th centuries, which operated to orient the historico-political force of the region towards the priority of establishing a nation-state.

The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 created a liberal Hungarian nation-state which was regarded as politically united. This put an end to the separate status of Transylvania, which became an integral part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and, within it, the Hungarian State organized on the French model. Act XLIII of 1868 on the Union proclaimed civil and political equality and the abolition of the previous territorial divisions and privileges by 'nations'.⁴⁵ The equal rights of the established denominations were reconfirmed, and their system of self-government upheld, it having been emphasized that those rights were also recognized for the Romanian Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches. In the Nationality Act of 1868 the national liberal policy of Hungary spelled out the concept of a 'united political nation', under which the country's 'citizens constitute, also in conformity with the general principles of the Constitution, a single nation politically, the one and indivisible Hungarian nation, of which every citizen is an equal member, whatever his nationality'.⁴⁶ The Act accorded wide-ranging rights to nationality languages in public administration, courts, education and church life. The Act was drafted under the liberal approach which drew on the contemporary French conception of law, notably the exclusivity of individual rights. It was precisely that concept which the nationalities of Hungary complained about, as the Act failed to recognize them as nations of country-wide status, as political entities and as subjects at law, and provided for no form whatsoever of collective rights. In 1876 the Hungarian State went so far as to abolish Saxon territorial autonomy and then proceeded to divide the territory of Transylvania into counties, as administrative units in line with the aspirations of a modern centralized State. The *Universitas Saxonum* was virtually transformed into a huge foundation retaining its assets and competence with respect to the Saxon school system.⁴⁷ While the Saxons of Transylvania accepted the political system of dualism, the Romanians of Transylvania could never resign themselves to the loss of Transylvania's separate status and waged a strenuous struggle to have their collective rights recognized. The movements of nationalities acted as an extended force and in a contributory factor to the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

The 1920 Peace Treaty of Trianon annexed Transylvania to Romania. Similarly, the new Romanian State came about under the hallmark of the national principle and was defined as a nation-state by all its Constitutions. During the interwar period the Hungarian and Saxon minorities were able to preserve their ethnic existence despite the measure toward Romanization. The Hungarians of Transylvania, in quest of a new direction, struggled for national autonomy and formulated their ideology, prevalent during the interwar period and termed Transylvanism by Hungarian literary history. Its basic tenet was that 'Erdely Ardeal, Siebenbürgen, Transylvania or whatever the name by which the world called and calls it has been a separate historical unit for a thousand years, with a distinct Transylvanian consciousness of its own, a separate culture and separate self-respect'. According to Karoly Kos (1883-1977), the most important exponent of this trend, Transylvanism held, by invoking the principle of idealized tolerance, that in the course of centuries the history, geographical endowments and scenery of Transylvania combined to generate a peculiar idiosyncrasy. Its distinctive traits included oneness with the landscape and the people as well as the need for Hungarian-

Romanian-Saxon coexistence, mutual acquaintance and respect as well as a conscious commitment to all these desiderata. This rather abstract concept of Transylvania left ample leeway for mythicization. Along with more concrete concepts like those of regionalism and autonomy, such notions as 'Transylvanian spirit', 'Transylvanian mind', 'Transylvanian solidarity' were characteristic to this approach. The conservative segments of society placed emphasis on its aspects of idealization, using this as an argument to escape to the past and to Nature, whereas the so-called populist wing cherished the shared democratic traditions of the Transylvanian past and advocated mutual understanding, respect, and the inseparability of specificities and Europeanism.⁴⁸ In our view there exists a *de facto* specific sort of Transylvanian regional identity embracing the cohesive factors of Hungarian, Romanian, and, in the case of the Saxons, German national identities on the one hand, and some regionally colored elements as determined by Transylvanian regional development on the other hand. This specific national and regional consciousness is shared, to a varying extent, by all the ethnic communities of Transylvania.

The greatest blow to multinational Transylvania was dealt by Ceausescu's communist regime, which carried the principle of a homogeneous nation-state to extremes and tried to implement it by means of a totalitarian dictatorship. That regime utterly destroyed the civil society of the three ethnic groups, wiped out the Hungarian school system and transformed the ethnic configuration of Transylvania by resettling huge masses of Romanians from Wallachia and Moldova. Then it devised an *Endlösung* of its own, a program for the destruction of villages in an attempt to crush one of the last retreats of national minorities and to demolish Transylvania's architectural system, a still existing mirror image of the history of the three ethnic groups. The unbearable circumstances and the political pressure caused masses of the Saxon population to leave Transylvanian territory and settle in the Federal Republic of Germany. The most important motive of the emigration of the Transylvanian Saxons, according to public opinion research, was the danger of losing their ethnic identity.⁴⁹ The number of Germans in Transylvania fell from 543,842 in 1930 to 108,933 by 1992.⁵⁰ About 150,000 Saxons and Swabians left Romania in 1990-1991. Saxon ethnicity came to the verge of total extinction and can no longer be revived. The present author considers the disappearance of Transylvanian Germans to be the greatest tragedy in Transylvania's history. Never before had any historical upheaval resulted in the disappearance of any one of the three ethnic groups making up the population of Transylvania.

Conflicts still exist between the idea of a nation-state and the demand of minorities to be recognized as state-forming factors, as collective legal entities. Article 1 of the Romanian Constitution as adopted in 1991 defines Romania as a nation-state: 'Romania is a sovereign, independent, united and indivisible nation-state'. This article makes the Romanian State the exclusive representative and embodiment of Romanian ethnicity despite the existence of large national minorities.

In contrast, the 1992 Declaration of RMDSZ (Democratic Federation of Hungarians in Romania), the legitimate organization of Hungarians in Romania, defined the Hungarians living in Romania in the following terms: 'The Hungarians in Romania are a political entity and a state-forming factor and as such they are an equal associate of the Romanian nation'. At the same time, the organization demands internal self-determination with full respect for the present borders and Romania's territorial integrity.⁵¹ In

point of fact, the Hungarian population of Romania lays claim to the same rights as the Romanian nationality did in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

As has been illustrated, Transylvania has accumulated distinct and indisputable achievements in the course of history. As a natural concomitant of this, the Principality of Transylvania and its territory appear in the ethnic Hungarians' collective awareness of identity as a trustee in the struggle for Hungary's existence as a nation and a state and for the preservation of Hungarian culture. The Saxons who have moved to Germany maintain their Transylvanian identity even in the consumers society of the West. This is proven by the science of Saxon history, the center of which was relocated from Transylvania to Germany. On the other hand, Transylvania appears in the Romanians' awareness of identity as the cradle of the Romanian people and nation.

From the context of Transylvanian history and awareness of national identity it follows that the possibility still exists, as it did in the past, to develop myths. The historical myths of modern times have all been national myths. To use the definition given by the Romanian historian Andrei Pippidi, the concept refers 'both to obvious fabrications of and canonical answers to big issues as hypotheses for the intended justification of which some blemishing extra sentiments are spent'.⁵² Obviously, even present-day Hungarians are inclined to create myths by roaming into the past and reducing to symbols historical figures whose personal fates are examples of the tragedies suffered by ethnic Hungarians. However, modern Hungarian historical science has resolutely embarked on the road of demythicization. The myth of the common descent of the Huns of Central-Asiatic origin and the Finno-Ugrian Hungarians, which survived into the 19th century like a canon, has long disappeared from the textbooks on history, though traces of them are still present in the minds of some segments of ethnic Hungarians. By contrast, Romanian teaching of history continues, in our view, to be based on myths, for which the Romanian nationalist course of policy is a breeding ground. Not only are Romanian youth steeped in myths, but – since minorities in Romania cannot learn their own histories – Hungarian pupils of Romania also have no choice but to assimilate this mythical concept of history. Under the laws of psychology, the only way of protection is that of learning but disbelieving.

According to Andrei Pippidi, the Romanians' awareness of historical identity is dominated by three myths: the Daco-Roman myth of the Romanians origin, the doctrine of continuity, and the doctrine of Romanian unity.⁵³ We, for our part, may add the myth of a Romanian nation-state. The substance of these myths has varied with political needs and emphases. Its seriously perverted forms were prevalent at the time of Antonescu's and Ceausescu's dictatorship when these myths took on some form of a totalitarian ideology. The myth of Daco-Roman origin traces the descent of ethnic Romanians back to the Dacians who lived on the territory of Transylvania in antiquity and to the Romans who conquered them. This genealogy varied according to whether emphasis was placed on the significance of the Dacian or the Roman element. Also changing under this concept, was the territory where the Romanian people appeared on the scene. While some historians regard Transylvania, the province of one-time Dacia, as the sole cradle of Romanian ethnogenesis, that territory was extended for an explicitly political motive during Ceausescu's tenure, to include the entire territory inhabited by Romanians at present. According to the myth of continuity, the Romanian people, who had risen from the emergence of Dacians and Romans or the Romanization of

Dacians, lived continuously in the territory inhabited by it at present, meaning that the Romanians are the only natives of Romania. The myth of Romanian unity contends that the fundamental tendency of Romanian history has always been the creation of unity, a united nation-state. Under this mythical concept of Romanian history, an idea and an aspiration emerging in a particular period, the concept of nation in our case, is projected back to periods in which they did not exist. The most obvious example of this is provided by the interpretation of the role of Voivod (Prince) Mihai Viteazul of Wallachia, who at the turn of 16th and 17th centuries occupied the territories of Transylvania and Moldova for a short period. In mythical Romanian historiography the Voivod is seen as the first realizer of Romanian aspirations to unity. Under this concept, the forces resultant from Romanian history point to a single direction – that of a united nation-state – while the Romanian people were always struggling against foreign oppressors. Therefore the ultimate goal of Romanian history is to create a Romanian nation-state, independent and united.

Today Transylvania belongs to Romania according to the peace treaties concluded after the First and Second World Wars. The nationality pattern of its population is shown in the following Table.⁵⁴

| | 1910 | 1930 | 1966 | 1977 | 1992 |
|-----------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Total | 5258452 100% | 5548363 100% | 6719555 100% | 7500229 100% | 7709994 100% |
| Romanian | 2829487 53% | 3207880 57.8% | 4559432 67.9% | 5320526 71.0% | 5617234 73.55% |
| Hungarian | 1662669 31.6% | 1353276 24.4% | 1597438 23.8% | 1651307 22.0% | 1598938 20.73% |
| German | 564697 10.8% | 543852 9.8% | 371881 5.5% | 323477 4.3% | 108933 1.41% |
| Other | 201569 3.8% | 443355 8.0% | 190804 2.7% | 204914 2.7% | 3308893 4.29% |

The evolution of the peoples' awareness of identity in Transylvania and the creation or elimination of myths depend on the future development of Romania and Central-Eastern Europe as a whole. The emergence of a democratic Romania integrated into Europe will bear influence on the peoples' awareness of national identity in Transylvania. A democratic order and recognition of individual and collective rights for minorities may allow for preservation of specific Transylvanian values and traditions, elimination of history's official character, restoration of its condition as a science with its own values, and a balanced relationship *inter se* of the peoples of Transylvania. Since, however, one cannot exclude from political development the prevalence of contrary tendencies, such as the pursuit of a Romanian ethno-territorial state, one cannot predict the date at which historical myths will have disappeared from political culture.

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 51. Az RMDSZ nyilatkozata a nemzetiségi kérdésről (RMDSZ's Declaration on the Nationality Question), Kolozsvár, 25 October 1992, in István Schlett, *Kisebbségneközen* (A Meeting with Minorities). Budapest, 1993, p. 191.
 52. Andrei Pippidi, *Ibid.*, p. 46.
 53. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-50.
 54. Árpád Varga, *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142, 209. Account has been taken of categorization by mother tongue for 1910 and of preliminary census figures for 1992.

