P A R A D I G M S

Historical Autonomies on the Centennial of the Great Union

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The territorial autonomies based on ethnic and religious (confessional) criteria only deepened the discrimination, creating national and cultural tensions and blocking the harmonious and modern development of certain areas.

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THE HISTORICAL autonomies of Transylvania, mostly structured on "nations" (privileged groups, at the origin), date back to the medieval period and are specific to the organization of the feudal world.[1] They have served to maintain the separate and superior organization of certain groups of people in relation to others, to ensure loyalty to the central power, and to serve the military, economic and confessional purposes of the authorities.

The nobles had the earliest autonomous organization, according to the Golden Bull of 1222 issued by King Andrew II.[2] It detailed the privileges of the nobles and their distinct organization in relation to other categories (Estates).

Shortly afterwards, through the Golden Bull of the Transylvanian Saxons (1224)—who came here as 'guests' in the 12th–13th centuries—they were granted a territory in the south of the country between Orăştie (Broos, Szászváros) and Baraolt (Boralth, Barót), called "the Kings' Land" or "the Royal

Land" (*Fundus Regius*) which formed the basis of the Saxon territorial and administrative autonomy.[3] They strengthened their autonomy during the time of King Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490), when they received recognition for the "Saxon University" (*Universitas Saxonum*), i.e. the distinct organization into seats (*sedes*) and two districts, with their own leadership and a distinct administration.

The Szeklers, a Turanian (Turkic) population, linguistically Magyarized earlier, came to the Carpathian Bend (from the west) in the 12th century.[4] The Saxons forced them to partially withdraw east and north. The Szeklers were the vanguard of the conquering Hungarian armies that advanced eastwards in the 11th–13th centuries. That is why the Szeklers originally appeared in Crişana (Bihor/Bihar), then they were recorded on the Târnava rivers (at the middle of the 12th century), and finally moved further east, from Covasna (Kovasna, Kovászna) (to the south) to Gheorgheni (Niklasmarkt, Gyergyószentmiklós) (in the north). The Szeklers organized themselves administratively and territorially into seats and were gradually granted (in the 14th and 15th centuries) broad privileges in their region, which became known as "the Szekler Land" (*terra Siculorum*).

In the 16th century, along with the formation of the Principality of Transylvania, this autonomous organization of the Hungarian, Saxon and Szekler nobles became stronger. Thus, Transylvania—which now included the Banat region, unoccupied by the Ottomans, Crişana, Sătmar (Sathmar, Szatmár), Maramureş (Marmarosch, Máramaros) and some other regions in the west—came under the regime of the "three nations and four religions."

The recognized "nations" were, since the 16th century, the Hungarian, the Saxon and the Szekler nobles, while the "religions" (denominations, in fact) were Calvinism, Lutheranism, Unitarianism, and Catholicism.[5] From now on, the country's princes would be, as a rule, Hungarian Calvinists, and the assembly of the country consisted of Hungarians, Saxons and Szeklers, the representatives of the four mentioned denominations.

The Romanians—that is, the majority of the inhabitants of historical Transylvania and of the western areas we have mentioned—were nowhere to be found in this discriminatory "constitutional" system. Besides, the settlement of these privileged groups (i.e. granted a number of advantages by the king) almost always took place to the detriment of the Romanians, who, as a native population, were always deprived of something (land, rights, institutions, customs) by the new Hungarian regime, towards whom these Romanians, who regularly rebelled, had no reason to be loyal. The new ethnic-linguistic groups were brought in by the kings of Hungary and given land and other privileges for several reasons, one of them, of great importance, being that the central power needed these groups in order to rule the country and to maintain the control

over the Romanians, who were subjected, deprived of goods and rights, discriminated against and dissatisfied.

In the 16ᵗʰ century, following the victory of the Reformation—through which most Catholics became Protestants and legitimized themselves as such—, the "historical autonomies" were strengthened. "The faith from Cluj" (Klausenburg, Kolozsvár) or Calvinism is now increasingly referred to as Hungarian, "the faith from Sibiu" (Hermannstadt, Nagyszeben) or Lutheranism is often called German (Saxon), while the Byzantine (Orthodox) faith, left outside the privileges, is called Romanian and even mentioned as "the Romanian law."

In 1568, the country's Diet of Turda (Thorenburg, Torda) decreed confessional freedom for all the "citizens" of Transylvania, but the Romanians were not then recognized as "citizens" or legal inhabitants, with the privileges pertaining thereto. Besides, shortly afterwards, in 1571, the Diet of Târgu-Mureş (Neumarkt, Marosvásárhely) specified who these "citizens" were, namely, the Calvinists, Lutherans, Unitarians and Catholics. In other words, the famous Transylvanian tolerance was applied only to about a third of the country's inhabitants, that is, to the Estates or "nations." These three Transylvanian Estates or "nations" had now turned (overwhelmingly) from Catholicism to Protestantism, and did nothing else but legalize themselves as such. In Transylvania there were no "religious wars" due to the lack of combatants, since most Catholics disappeared within few decades, turning Protestant. And these nations (now confessionally non-homogeneous) were the dominant elites—with the dominant position established by privileges of medieval origin—, that dominance being exercised over the other two thirds of the population, i.e. the Romanians. The Romanians and their Eastern faith were allowed to exist in order to provide labor to the "nations," to defend them, but not to take part in the country's leadership.

In this complicated architecture, the nations—which in the Middle Ages primarily had a political component—began to emerge as ethnic structures. The former nation of the nobles becomes the Hungarian nation, the Saxon nation becomes the group of all the Germans, and the Szekler nation becomes the community of all Szeklers. In this context, even the land acquired its own nationality: "the Royal Land" is increasingly called "the land of the Saxons," the eastern and south-eastern corner of Transylvania is "the land of the Szeklers," and the seven traditional counties (Solnoc/Szolnok, Dăbâca/Doboka, Cluj/Kolozs, Turda/Torda, Alba/Fehér, Hunedoara/Hunyad, and Târnave/Küküllő) become for many "the Hungarian Land" and no longer the land of the nobles. Only the Romanians did not officially have their land anywhere, although they accounted for two thirds of the population and were present all over the place. It

is true that the traces of some Romanian autonomies were preserved in Făgăraş (Fogarasch, Fogaras) and Haţeg (Hátszeg), in Maramureş and Chioar (Kővár), Năsăud (Nussdorf, Naszód), in Banat and the Western Carpathians, but they functioned more by virtue of tradition, of the local customs and of the overwhelming number of Romanians, than by virtue of official recognition. Therefore, the instrument of medieval autonomies managed to deepen the discrimination in Transylvania to such an extent that even the land of the country officially acquired three kinds of nationality, but not a Romanian one.

This legacy had become obsolete already by the end of the Middle Ages and at the beginning of the Modern Era, when the Romanians began their emancipation movement and sought to assert their equality with the recognized nations and confessions.

The first blows against the privileged organization of the Szeklers came as early as the end of the 15th century, from the Hungarian kings and princes. The wars for the Hungarian throne after the disaster at Mohács (1526) required exceptional military efforts and expenses. In this context, the Szeklers were subjected to excessive taxation, contrary to their freedoms. The taxes, which originally seemed to be extraordinary, became generalized. Most anti-secular administrative measures were taken by Queen Isabella, who persuaded the Transylvanian Diet to order the seizure of the Szeklers' possessions for the prince and to generalize the tax in money for the Szekler commoners (only the leaders and the horsemen could be exempted from it). In 1562, when a war broke out between the Principality of Transylvania and the Habsburgs over the Satu Mare region, the Szeklers, following the promise of their old freedoms being restored, joined the Austrians and rebelled against the local rule. The response of Prince John Sigismund Zápolya (Szápolyai) was firm: he killed the leaders, strengthened the tax exemption for leaders and horsemen, whom he equated with the nobles, reorganized the Szekler seats, and built fortresses of the central power to control the Szeklers. In the local history, the moment marked the "loss of the Szeklers' liberties." The recognition of the leaders and horsemen as nobles and the imposition of taxes upon the Szekler commoners irreversibly divided the Szekler society. Whenever an interested party promised the Szeklers the restoration of the old freedoms, they rebelled against the authorities, but the privileged Szeklers easily defeated the rebellions.

In the collective memory of the Szeklers, the darkest time in their history remained the period of the Hungarian principles of the Báthory family. Allied with Gáspár Békes, in the war between him and Stephen Báthory, the Szeklers ended up on the losing side in 1575. Within a few decades, during the Fifteen Years' War (1591–1606), they received only promises in exchange for military service. After the victories of the Romanian Michael the Brave in the autumn

of 1595, under whose flag the Szeklers also fought, they expected that the old freedoms would be restored by their princes (from the Báthory family), but this did not happen. Hence, the Szeklers started the rebellion of 1595–1596, cruelly suppressed: the leaders were impaled, many Szeklers were tortured, and their wealth was confiscated. The moment has remained in the collective memory as the "Bloody Carnival." This explains the involvement of the Szeklers in the assassination of Prince Andrew Báthory, a fugitive after his defeat at Şelimbăr (Schellenberg, Sellenberk) by Michael the Brave. That is why many Szeklers joined the Romanian prince, who restored their old freedoms.

However, those who challenged the most the rigid and inappropriate structure of these medieval autonomies were the Austrians, who became rulers of Transylvania in 1688–1699. The Habsburgs were good administrators of the dominated territories and considered that an effective instrument in organizing a province were the taxes collected from the population. In order to carry out this operation in optimal conditions (especially in order to eliminate tax evasion), the Austrians undertook in Transylvania, too, periodic censuses of the population and provided for the efficient organization of the territory of the principality. According to these censuses from the 18th century, the Romanians in Transylvania accounted for two thirds of the entire population, a proportion which, despite the extensive measures of "homogenization," remained almost constant. The data available only for historical Transylvania (the voivodeship) indicate for the period 1690–1847 an average ratio of 52.7% for the Romanians, of 27.3% for the Hungarians (including the Szeklers), of 16.7% for the Germans (the Saxons, the imperial officials and the imperial army), and of 3.3% for other ethnic groups (Armenians, Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, etc.). As a constant of the aforementioned period, there was a slight tendency to increase the share of the German population, to the detriment of the Romanians and Hungarians, which decreased by a few percentage points.[6] The Romanians were the poorest group, the one that produced the things necessary for living, who paid the highest amount in taxes and who participated in the defense of the country and to other military and public order actions. The Austrian rulers of Transylvania, however, encountered impassable obstacles in the administration of the province due to its medieval organization, to the stagnant structures called "nations" and to the closed ethnic-territorial autonomies.

The reorganization of the Habsburg state began under Maria Theresa (1740–1780) and reached its peak under Emperor Joseph II (1780–1790). The latter, who also bore the title of Great Prince of Transylvania, introduced a new administrative division of the country, which first targeted the county as an institution, a bastion of the recalcitrant nobles. Hungary was structured into ten divi-

sions, including Oradea (Großwardein, Nagyvárad) and Timişoara (Temeswar, Temesvár), each ruled by a commissioner. The country vice-ruler, who managed the affairs of the county, was no longer chosen by the county council, but rather appointed. He became a paid official under the guidance of the commissioner, having the nobles' judges as his subordinates. The county officials were also appointed by the royal commissioner. The autonomy of the counties was eliminated, including the suppression of their assemblies (congregations); such meetings were only allowed for the election of deputies for the country's Diet. But as the Diet was no longer summoned, these congregations did not take place at all. The counties were reduced to simple administrative districts of the state, within which the official apparatus had responsibilities established through ordinances from the center.[7] These measures of centralization and control of the local government by the Vienna authorities were much more strongly felt in Transylvania proper (the former voivodeship), which had inherited its own institutions and various autonomies from the Middle Ages. The changes began with "the Royal Land," where the Saxons—who, as we have shown, had long seen it as "the Saxon Land," received by them as eternal property—believed to possess exclusive rights and did not recognize any rights for the other inhabitants, especially the Romanians. But the Habsburg emperor, also bearing the title of king of Hungary, considered the respective territory as belonging to him and at his disposal, donated to the Saxons under certain conditions, only with the right to use it. Thus, through a simple order dated 22 March 1781, the emperor put an end to this claim of the Saxons, declaring all inhabitants of that land equal in rights, equally entitled to own property, because the supreme owner of "the Royal Land" was the king. Another order, dating from 4 December 1782, repeated and strengthened the idea that on "the Royal Land," Romanians and Saxons enjoyed equal rights. According to this principle, for example, the sovereign solved in 1786 the case of Răşinari (Städterdorf, Resinár): the inhabitants of the village were free not to recognize anyone as lord of the land, apart from the sovereign; the village was not subjected to any magistrate of Sibiu and was declared a free royal village, while all the inhabitants of "the Royal Land" were to be considered free, without exception. Likewise, Joseph II solved, one by one, the cases pending in the seats of Sălişte (Großdorf, Szelistye) and Tălmaciu (Talmesch, Nagytálmács), of the Romanians from Poplaca (Gunzendorf, Popláka), Chirpăr (Kirchberg, Kürpöd), Poiana (Pojana, Polyán), Sadu (Sodenbach, Cód), Sighişoara (Schäßburg, Segesvár), Şibot (Unter-Brodsdorf, Alkenyér), Orăştie etc.[8] Thus, the principle of equal rights or "concivility," which Greek Catholic Bishop Inochentie Micu-Klein had also demanded about five decades earlier, and for which Michael the Brave had taken partial measures, was applied.

The Romanians seemed to be now, for the first time, "citizens" alongside the Saxons on "the Royal Land."

After his journey to Transylvania in 1783, the emperor undertook here as well the administrative reform of the country. On the ground that he wanted to remove frictions between the three nations, he dissolved all the autonomous territories. Starting with 26 November 1783, Transylvania was divided into ten and then (through the order of 13 July 1784) eleven counties.[9] The new counties not only did not take into account the old territories of the political nations inherited from the Middle Ages, but they were structured in such a way as to combine noble land with Saxon and Szekler lands, wiping out any trace of the old ethnic separations and autonomous enclaves. Thus, Trei Scaune (Három-szék, Three Seats) County included the (formerly Saxon) district of Braşov (Kronstadt, Brassó); Sibiu County comprised parts of the Upper Alba County; Târnava County included the old Mureş (Maros) Seat (formerly Szekler). One measure that dissatisfied the nobles (Hungarian) and the Szeklers (Hungarian-speaking) was the introduction of German as an official language in Hungary and Transylvania. The measure was not taken merely for reasons of Germaniza-tion or for the purpose of denationalization, but for the same reasons of political centralism, to ensure the unity of an empire made up of so many nations, parts of nations and ethnic groups.[10]

The administrative-territorial measures, first of all, annihilated both the counties dominated by the Hungarian nobles, and the Saxon and the Szekler seats. These reforms severely overturned the old autonomies of the country, simply abolished the "constitution" of Transylvania, its "constitutional" nations, transforming all inhabitants into citizens subjected, according to their status, to the same laws, the same rights, regardless of ethnicity or religion. All these in-novations, while devastating for the political and religious system of "the three nations and four religions," tended to bring equal rights to the Romanian na-tion, whose members gained access to the state apparatus and to political power. Thus, it is no wonder that among the Romanians there emerged, at an unprec-edented scale, the myth of the good emperor or the belief that the sovereign was great and good, that he wanted the best for the Romanians and that only the local princes (the Hungarian nobles) were the evil ones, the ones who prevented the implementation of the measures desired by the sovereign.[11] Two other im-portant measures contributed to the emergence of this myth among the Roma-nians, alongside the establishment of the border regiments, which restored to the Romanians the right to bear arms (a right taken from them by the Hungari-an nobles after the peasant rebellion of 1514), namely, the Edict of Toleration of 1781 (granting religious freedom to the Orthodox people in the monarchy) and

the patent for the abolition of serfdom of 1785 (the great majority of the serfs in Transylvania and Eastern Hungary being Romanian), although both of these measures were accompanied by contradictory acts, which affected the Romanian peasantry and the Orthodox monastic settlements. Joseph II was certainly the most beloved monarch, the Romanians seeing in him the sovereign who opened the path towards their full social, cultural and political revival. Not by accident, until the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand in the summer of 1914, he remained a symbol of the Romanians' loyalty to the Habsburgs.[12]

In fact, Joseph II did not intend to favor the Romanians in any way, but rather to ensure the proper functioning of the state, an efficient tax collection and the fulfillment of public obligations, as well as the modernization of the administration in order to prevent violent outbreaks of the people. For Joseph II, the citizens of the state were supposed to be good taxpayers likely to fulfill all public duties in exemplary fashion. The state, in order to gain the most from its subjects, needed prosperous citizens. But, in Transylvania, most of the inhabitants, i.e. two thirds of them (the Romanians), were deliberately kept in poverty and discriminated against. In order to ensure the decent material status of the citizens and to avoid any violent disruptions, the motto that guided the sovereign was: "Everything for the people, nothing by the people."[13] But this true "revolution" was quickly defeated. After the emperor's death (in the summer of 1790, in Vienna), most of the reforms (except for the Edict of Toleration and the abolition of serfdom) were cancelled following the fierce opposition of the conservative nobles, and, in the case of Transylvania, of the Saxons and the Szeklers. Thus, in Transylvania, the old territorial-ethnic autonomies of the Middle Ages were restored, and this was done primarily to the detriment of the Romanians, who were the majority population and remained marginalized.

The return to the medieval organization in Hungary and Transylvania (with counties, seats, districts, and free royal towns) stimulated the progressive movements that culminated in the 1848–1849 revolutions. These revolutions, however, were defeated following the concerted efforts of the internal conservative forces and the armed interventions of the multinational empires in the region, especially of the Habsburg Empire and of the Tsarist Empire. In Transylvania, the opposition of the Romanian revolution to the Hungarian one mainly stemmed from the decision of the Hungarian revolutionaries, taken on 15 March 1848, to include Transylvania into Hungary and not to accept the demands for freedom of the Romanian, Croat, Slovak, Serbian peoples, etc. The Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria reintroduced the absolutist regime after 1849, called neo-absolutism (because the regime was forced to accept certain elements of renewal, but within an authoritarian and centralizing leadership). The Austrian imperial Constitution of 4 March 1849 restored the autonomy of the Great Principality of Transylvania,

which also got back the Partium (the counties of Zarand/Sarand/Zaránd, Crasna/Krassmarkt/Kraszna, Middle Solnoc, the city of Zalău/Zilah/Zillenmarkt, and Chioar/Kővárvidék district). On the basis of this fundamental legal act, at the end of the revolution, the governor of Transylvania, Field Marshal Baron Ludwig von Wohlgemuth, ordered in September 1849 the introduction of a new administrative organization, different from the one existing prior to 1848 (into counties, seats, districts). In 1849, the territory of Transylvania, including Partium, was divided into six districts, led by a military commander, assisted by a civilian commissioner for civilian affairs; the six districts were Sibiu (Sachsenland), Alba Iulia (Weißenburg, Karlsburg, Gyulafehérvár), Cluj, Reteag (Reckenbeck, Retteg), Odorhei (Oderhellen, Székelyudvarhely) and Făgăraş. These six districts were, in turn, subdivided into circles (*Kreise*) and sub-circles. The old medieval administrative system, which had favored the Hungarian, Saxon or Szekler elements in the local administration of counties or seats, was now eliminated, opening for the Romanian elite the prospect of access to positions in the administrative hierarchy. The monopoly of those who had been privileged for centuries had been broken, and the Romanians could presently seek to obtain certain positions in the local and central state administration.[14]

On the basis of the imperial rescript of 12 May 1851, the territory of Transylvania was re-divided into five regions: Sibiu, Alba Iulia, Cluj, Reteag, Odorhei. The circles and sub-circles were also eliminated, the lands being divided into 36 captaincies (*Hauptmannschaften*). Thus, Sibiu included 6 captaincies, Alba Iulia 10, Cluj 6, Reteag 7 and Odorhei 7. The imperial patent of 31 December 1851 (*Silvesterpatent*) inaugurated the neo-absolutist regime. The Constitution of March 1849 was repealed, and, implicitly, the subsequent administrative-territorial organization. Under the supervision of the Governor of Transylvania, Carl Borromaeus von Schwarzenberg, a new administrative reorganization of the province, inspired by the one of 1849–1850, took place. It resulted, in October 1852, into a provisional administrative structure consisting of 5 districts—Sibiu, Alba Iulia, Cluj, Bistriţa (Bistritz, Nösen, Beszterce), Odorhei—, with 28 circles and 109 sub-circles. In the complex conditions of the neo-absolutist period, marked by the opposition of the former privileged Estates towards the post-revolutionary political and administrative reforms of the Court in Vienna, and by the social and political tensions accumulated following the abolition of feudal relations, it became increasingly necessary to have a new administrative structure, simpler and more functional, in Transylvania. Approved by the emperor on 17 February 1854, the new administrative-territorial organization of Transylvania (following the order of Schwarzenberg of 30 November 1854), included 10 prefectures (districts) with 79 *praetura* (circles). The new organizational formula would remain unchanged until the neo-absolutist regime was

replaced at the beginning of the 7th decade. The 10 prefectures were: Sibiu (with 12 *praetura*), Braşov (with 10), Odorhei (with 6), Târgu-Mureş (with 6), Bistriţa (with 10), Dej/Desch/Dés (with 8), Şimleul Silvaniei/ Schlommlenmarkt/ Szilágysomlyó (with 6), Cluj (6), Alba Iulia (with 6), and Orăştie (with 9).[15]

Between 1860 and 1867, following the strong opposition of the nations and of the countries in the vast empire, the federalist-liberal regime was introduced, restoring the autonomy of the historical provinces, including Transylvania. Thus, the imperial diploma of 20 October 1860 and the new fundamental law of the monarchy from February 1861 revived the autonomy of the provinces of the Habsburg Empire, proposing a sort of federalization based on historical law, within which the recognition of equal national rights was promised. In Transylvania, too, at the beginning of 1861, the old political and judicial institutions were restored, the administrative organization introduced in 1854 being abrogated. The orders of the Aulic Chancellery and the imperial rescript of 24 March 1861 provided for the restoration of the administrative forms existing prior to 1848 (counties, districts, seats, free royal towns). The only notable change was that the districts of Năsăud and of Făgăraş were established on the territory of the two former Romanian border regiments. Through this administrative organization (which was due to come into effect on 15 April 1861), the counties were restored (Lower Alba, Upper Alba, Dăbâca, Hunedoara, Cluj, Middle Solnoc, Crasna, Târnava, Turda, Zarand), as well as the districts (Bistriţa, Braşov, Făgăraş, Chioar, Năsăud), the Szekler seats (Arieş/Aranyosszék, Ciuc/Csíkszék, Trei Scaune, Mureş/Marosszék, Odorhei/Udvarhelyszék) and the Saxon seats (Rupea/Reps/Kőhalom, Mediaş/Mediasch/Medgyes, Cincu/ Großschenk/Nagysink, Sighişoara, Sebeş/Mühlbach/Szászsebes, Orăştie, Sibiu, Miercurea/Reußmarkt/Szerdahely, Nocrich/Leschkirch/Újegyház). Unfortunately, and against the natural course of events, following the imperial decision of 27 December 1860, Crişana and Maramureş (including Crasna, Middle Solnoc, Zarand, the town of Zalău and the Chioar district) and the Timiş Banat was incorporated into Hungary, the action taking place in the spring of 1861. The administrative-territorial formula established at the beginning of the liberal period restored the power of the nobles and of the patriciate, becoming practically a *restitutio in integrum* of the state of 1848. The Romanian preeminence in the two districts of Năsăud and Făgăraş, as well as the few seats obtained in the county councils (congregations) fell far short of the expectations of the Romanian elite. That is why, the years to follow saw at all levels of the society an extraordinary movement for equal rights between the Romanians and the Hungarians, Szeklers and Saxons.[16] Nevertheless, for the Romanians, this brief return to a liberal democratic regime meant a breakthrough as compared to the previous realities, as the two autonomous administrative entities, the Năsăud and Făgăraş districts, were established. For a period of 16 years, until their

abolition through Law XXXIII of 1876, the Romanians here demonstrated that they had the capacity to effectively and responsibly govern themselves when they had the legal opportunity to choose their own officials.

In 1867, however, amid Hungarian secessionist threats, the Austro-Hungarian dualist pact was signed, through which two nations of the empire became dominant over all the others. Hence, the country was divided into Austria (called Cisleithania) and Hungary (called Transleithania), Transylvania being annexed to the latter. After the Austro-Hungarian dualism ended in the summer of 1867, the government in Budapest sought to cancel the various local autonomies inherited together with the incorporation of new territories, but also to ensure a more efficient administration in Transleithania. The suppression of all forms of local autonomies of the different nationalities—in Transylvania, the two Romanian districts of Năsăud and Făgăraş, the nine Saxon seats and the five Szekler seats—, but also other state reasons, such as excessive centralization and the increased efficiency of the local administration, determined the government in Budapest to undertake a new administrative-territorial reorganization. Hence, in order to harmonize the various forms of municipal organization and the different territorial-administrative structures stemming from the medieval period, the central government ordered the judicial reorganization of Transylvania based on Law XXXIII of 1876. According to it, the old administrative units (seats, districts) were abolished, their place being taken by counties (*vármegyek*, *megyek*).[17] As a consequence, all the old administrative units that somewhat grouped together the Saxons and the Szeklers, and a small part of the Romanians—called seats and districts—were abolished and replaced with the Hungarian general model of administrative-territorial unit, the county.

These 16 new counties were: Bistriţa-Năsăud (the Bistriţa district, a part of the Năsăud district, parts of Dăbâca County, a part of the Inner Solnoc County), Solnoc-Dăbâca (parts of the Inner Solnoc County, parts of Dăbâca County, a piece of land from the Chioar district), Sălaj (the Middle Solnoc County, Crasna County, the Unguraş/Bálványosváralja site of Dăbâca County), Cluj (parts of Cluj County, the land that stretches along the village of Dăbâca, from Hida/Hidalmás to Geaca/Gyeke), Turda-Arieş (the lower circle of Turda County, the Arieş Seat, Arieş Valley from the Lower Alba County, a series of annexed localities from Cluj County), Mureş-Turda (the upper circle of Turda County, Mureş Seat, villages from Cluj County, a part of the Năsăud district), Ciuc (the Ciuc Seat), Odorhei (the Odorhei Seat, small parts of Târnava and Upper Alba counties, as well as from the Sighişoara and Rupea seats), Târnava Mică (a large part of Târnava County, parts of the Mureş Seat), Lower Alba (a large part of the Lower Alba County), Hunedoara (Hunedoara County, the Orăştie Seat, the Baia de Criş/Altenburg/Körösbánya and Brad/Fenyonpataka sites, parts of the Hălmagiu/Nagyhalmágy site in Zarand County), Târnava Mare (the Rupea Seat, the Sighişoara

Seat, the Cincul Mare/Großschenk/Nagysink Seat, large parts of the Mediaş Seat, the parts of the Upper Alba County not annexed to the Trei Scaune, Făgăraş and Sibiu counties, a part of the Nocrich Seat), Făgăraş (the Făgăraş district, parts of Upper Alba County), Sibiu (the seats of Sibiu, Sebeş, Miercurea, and partially Nocrich, areas from the Lower Alba County, areas from the Upper Alba County), Trei Scaune (the Trei Scaune Seat, parts of the Upper Alba County), Braşov (the Braşov district).[18] There were also small territories from Transylvania proper annexed to certain counties from the Western Parts, such as Satu Mare and Arad.

Thus, the Hungarian authorities abolished all the autonomies that the kings of medieval Hungary or, more recently, the Court in Vienna had established in Transylvania, often placing together, in the same county, regions and settlements inhabited by Romanians, Szeklers, Saxons and Hungarians, in the sense of an amalgamation, of a "homogenization" of the population for the clear purpose of Magyarization. Through gradual legislative measures taken between 1868 and 1876, all the political, territorial, administrative, legal and linguistic institutions that marked the autonomy of the Szekler and Saxon seats in Transylvania were dissolved, despite the massive protests of the groups in question, and especially of the Saxons, who invoked the centuries-old historical existence of the Saxon University (established during the time of King Matthias Corvinus). All the centralizing decisions taken by the authorities remained in force, imposing a centralized regime almost half a century before the collapse of the empire ruled by the House of Habsurg.

A s can be seen from the above data, the Kingdom of Romania, which was completed in 1918, also following the union with Transylvania, did not abolish any of the country's "historical autonomies." "The Royal Land" and "the Szekler Land" had become obsolete already since the end of the Middle Ages, being a serious hindrance to the modern development of Transylvania. The territorial autonomies based on ethnic and religious (confessional) criteria only deepened the discrimination, creating national and cultural tensions and blocking the harmonious and modern development of certain areas. The Transylvanian Romanians never asked, in the era of national emancipation movements, for the autonomy of Transylvania from the Hungarian royal authorities, but from the Austrian imperial authorities, and never claimed exclusive rights for the Romanian nation to the detriment of other ethnic groups, but only equality. Moreover, the Resolution of the National Assembly of the Romanians in Alba Iulia, on 1 December 1918, did not grant territorial autonomy for the minorities, but only provided for the application of a provisional (temporary) autonomy for all of Transylvania (regarded in a broad sense) until its full integration into the Kingdom of Romania. This document stipulates the right of these ethnic communities to their own education, administration and judicial

apparatus, and this has always been partially recognized in Romanian law. After 1989, Romania recognized and enforced these rights wherever that was possible. And the Hungarian and Hungarian-speaking minority also benefit from such rights, not only where they represent the majority, but also where they account for a relatively large share of the population. In what concerns the education in the minority languages, the Romanian state continues to apply positive discrimination measures to enable as many children and young people in these communities to learn in their mother tongue.

Local territorial autonomies—in countries without a federal structure and where the population that gives the name of the country represents about 90% of all citizens, as is the case with Romania—can only disturb the good functioning of the state, creating new ethnic tensions, at a time when Europe strives to "spiritualize the borders," as Nicolae Titulescu once envisaged. Such autonomies cannot be invoked today either as a historical tradition or as an inheritance of the past, because the modern times have invalidated them, have made them obsolete, have revealed their anachronistic nature. Today, the preservation of individual and collective ethnic identity does not have anything to do with these autonomies based on medieval privileges—through which the majority population of Transylvania was being kept, through discrimination, in a state of obedience—, but must start from domestic and international regulations, from the observance of human and minority rights, from the local realities. Today, historical law no longer has any relevance in the eyes of international courts, and history can be brought as an argument before today's decision-makers not when it brings to light obsolete and condemned realities and principles, but when it promotes the perennial ideas of truth, justice, and good.

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Notes

1. Ioan-Aurel Pop and Thomas Nägler, eds., *The History of Transylvania*, vol. 1 *(until 1541)*, 2nd edition (Cluj-Napoca, 2010), 199–290; Ioan-Aurel Pop, *"Din mâinile valahilor schismatici…" Românii și puterea în Regatul Ungariei medievale (secolele XIII–XIV)*, 2nd edition, revised, expanded and illustrated (Cluj-Napoca, 2017), 119–474.
2. Martyn Rady, "Hungary and the Golden Bull of 1222," *Banatica* (Reşiţa) 24, 2 (2014): 87–108.
3. Thomas Nägler, *Așezarea sașilor în Transilvania* (Bucharest, 1981) (see also the new edition from 1992).
4. Hermann Gusztáv Mihály, *Secuii: Istorie–cultură–identitate* (Miercurea-Ciuc, 2009), 5–88.
5. Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Biserică, societate și cultură în Transilvania secolului al XVI-lea: Între acceptare și excludere* (Bucharest, 2012); id., *Cultural Diffusion and Religious Refor-*

mation in Sixteenth-Century Transylvania: How the Jesuits Dealt with the Orthodox and Catholic Ideas, with a foreword by Norman Housley (Lewinston–Queenston–Lampeter, 2014).

6. Ladislau Gyémánt, "Evoluția demografică a Transilvaniei între 1690–1847," in *Populația României: Trecut, prezent, viitor*, eds. Sorina Paula Bolovan, Ioan Bolovan, and Traian Rotariu (Cluj-Napoca, 2006), 42 sq.

7. D. Prodan, *Supplex Libellus Valachorum: Din istoria formării națiunii române*, new edition with additions and specifications (Bucharest, 1984), 234.

8. Ibid., 235.

9. See Ferdinand von Zieglauer, "Die politische Reformbewegung in Siebenbürgen in der Zeit Joseph's II. und Leopold's II" (Vienna, 1781). In *Calendarium maius titulare pro anno 1784*, published in Sibiu in the same year, 1784, the localities in the new Transylvanian administrative-territorial structures are enumerated.

10. Prodan, 235 sq.

11. See Liviu Maior, *Habsburgi și români: De la loialitatea dinastică la identitate națională* (Bucharest, 2006).

12. Alexandru-Bogdan Bud, *Limitele loialității dinastice: Iosif al II-lea și românii din Transilvania în epoca modernă* (Cluj-Napoca, 2015), 21.

13. Prodan, 231.

14. Ioan Bolovan, *Transilvania între Revoluția de la 1848 și Unirea din 1918: Contribuții demografice* (Cluj-Napoca, 2000), 26.

15. Ibid., 27 sq.

16. Ibid., 28 sq.

17. Ioan-Aurel Pop and Ioan Bolovan, *Istoria Transilvaniei*, 2nd edition, rev. and expanded (Cluj-Napoca, 2016), 229.

18. See "1876. évi XXXIII. törvénycikk némely törvényhatóság területének szabályozásáról és az ezzel kapcsolatos intézkedésekről," in *Az 1876-ik évi törvények gyüjteménye* (Budapest, 1876).

Abstract

Historical Autonomies on the Centennial of the Great Union

The paper analyzes, in historical perspective, the various forms of autonomy granted to specific groups in Transylvania, which served to maintain the separate and superior organization of certain categories of people in relation to others, to ensure loyalty to the central power, and to serve the military, economic and confessional purposes of the authorities. Particular attention is given to the system of recognized "nations" and "religious" (in fact, denominations), which systematically excluded the Romanians, who were the majority population. Also discussed are the reforms implemented by the Austrians, especially in the 18th century, until the death of Joseph II, followed by the return to the old forms of medieval organization in both Hungary and Transylvania.

Keywords