



Foreword

*A NEW HISTORY of Transylvania might come as a surprise to some or be something perfectly natural to others. The former might wonder, and quite correctly to a certain extent, if there is any purpose in investigating the generally well-known past of this region, since countless, and especially **pro domo** interpretations have been performed, according to the authors' nationality, from the biased positions of the Hungarian, Romanian and German historiographies, respectively. Such skeptics may also acknowledge that there have been authors from outside the area concerned, in other words **neutral**, who have extensively written about Transylvania.*

On the other hand, history is always in the process of writing and rewriting itself before our very eyes. Therefore, the attempts to approach again any topic of the past, by well-established professional means, are all too beneficial and welcome. There is no such thing as an exhausted historical topic, given that sources multiply continually, new interpretation opportunities emerge alongside new perspectives for understanding the reality.

In the given context, this attempt aims to integrate in a synthesis the more recent investigations in the field, to exploit the sources revealed and published throughout the past decades and to update the interpretations concerning the past of Transylvania. This project is intended to include three volumes, and thus the chronology shall be segmented accordingly. Of course, any such division of history is somewhat artificial as it draws limits where the course of events was in fact uninterrupted. However, historiography, just as any other field of knowledge, needs to be structured and organized along its own intrinsic logic. Thus, this first volume includes the history of the region spanning from ancient times (prehistory) to the moment when Transylvania became an autonomous principality under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire (1541). The following volume shall exclusively focus on the period between 1541 and 1699, when Transylvania was internationally acknowledged as a province of the Habsburg Empire. The last volume shall approach the more recent history, that is the period spanning from 1700 to 1918-1920, when this region actually became an integral part of the Kingdom of Romania. The contents of the three volumes do not reflect an actual periodization, but rather a division of the past of Transylvania according to various formal political changes which were essential to the ruling elite. The extent to which such changes, at the time when they occurred (1541, 1699, 1918), really influenced the basic life of the region's average inhabitants, of the vast majority, is still to be studied and revealed. Otherwise, in the more distant of Transylvanian past especially, it is difficult to identify acts, events, key moments with the same relevance for all the inhabitants of the region. There are significant events for the nobility which are less relevant to the other classes (nations) or key moments for the privileged groups which have no considerable impact on their subjects. Moreover, there are events deemed to be positive for one of the ethnic groups living in Transylvania, but having negative connotations for just one or all the other groups. Hence, we believe that the official political dates with international impact—such as the above-mentioned ones—have the advantage of being or at least seeming to be somewhat “neutral.” Even so, Transylvania's inclusion in the Habsburg Empire, for instance, was not perceived in the same way and did not have the same consequences for the Saxons, Hungarians or Romanians.

There are also other reasons for the difficulties encountered in studying the history of Transylvania. The region has a distinct geographical identity, and this was remarked as early as ancient times, but the historical entity named as such (that is, **Transylvania**) has only existed since the Middle Age, from the time of and after its conquest by the Hungarian Kingdom. At the time, the voivodate or the dukedom lying between the Carpathians, established around 900–1000, from Gelou to the last Gylas (Jula, Gyula), expanded in covering a given well-defined area bordered by the Western, Southern and Eastern Carpathians. Thus, as a voivodate included in the Hungarian Kingdom, Transylvania did not encompass the provinces of Banat, Crișana and Maramureș. After 1541, when Hungary fell apart and the principality of Tran-

sylvania was established, the latter covered a territory twice the size of the former voivodate, as a result of including the province of Banat (from 1552 a part of it was occupied by the Ottomans) and of the Western Marches (Partium). From that moment on, Transylvania became an umbrella-term for the historical provinces that are nowadays referred to as Transylvania as such or the voivodate of Transylvania (the area bordered by the Carpathians), Banat, Crișana and Maramureș. In contemporary language, public opinion designates the territory described above as Transylvania. Therefore, when conducting the research on this region we usually understood Transylvania within the broad meaning of the term, even for the times when this name did not exist as such or it only had a more restricted designation as revealed above.

Another difficulty we were confronted with consisted of a certain lack of coherence within the past of Transylvania, in other words, the existence of so-called “parallel histories.” The political and military authorities of those days attempted and partially succeeded in “melting together” the profoundly different inhabitants of the country, mainly by enforcing various levelling measures, but the inhabitants of Transylvania remained profoundly different, according to ethnic and linguistic, confessional or even territorial criteria. As a result, there is one history of the Romanians from Transylvania, another one of the Hungarians, another one of the Saxons or the Swabians, or yet another one of the Szeklers. They are very often intercrossed, but never to the point of complete identity. In the age of the modern nations’ emergence and emancipation, these ethnic differences were repeatedly examined, evoked and justified. It was also in those times that the first attempts were made to approach the general past of Transylvania from the perspective of the abovementioned ethnic groups: Hungarian (which gradually included the Szeklers as well), German (that is, the Saxons and Swabians), and Romanian, respectively. These approaches have been pursued ever since and they still persist nowadays. After all, history is not only made by the people, but also written by them and for them, and whatever we may call the historical truth are merely relative facts.

In this spirit our attempt cannot be too different either. We historians cannot bring together what history has set apart! Still, from a certain perspective, the inhabitants of Transylvania did share a common history along the centuries, and we endeavor to reveal it. Naturally, we shall not avoid the differences, divergences or conflicts. However, we shall proceed to it without ostentation, respecting everyone’s specificity, at the same time seeking to achieve consistent balance and objectivity. One prerequisite for this resides with the fact that the authors are Romanian, German, Hungarian, and even Jewish. In this attempt we search for dialogue, for there have been too many monologues and they have led to nothing good. Moreover, the international context establishes the circumstances favoring the understanding between nations and ethnic groups, thus reducing the old matters of contention. A growing importance is attached nowadays to the fact that Hungary and Romania both joined the European Union. Transylvania, whose population is 75% Romanian, belongs to Romania in a

natural way, but it also belongs to the new Europe in the making. Therefore, the old tensions and obsessions related to “historical rights” are just a memory of the past and should not influence the historians’ judgment any further. Consequently, the opinions expressed in this book, including the ones concerning the origin and presence of the various peoples and ethnic groups in Transylvania, should only rely on scientific judgments, developed on the basis of historical sources and of the specific research methods thereof. Certainly, the abovementioned shall not exclude various subjective considerations, hypotheses and even errors, as man—and historians themselves are only human!—is by his nature bound to error.

And now a final point on the name of **Transylvania**, on toponyms, names of watercourses and anthroponyms. The inhabitants of the region have used different names for the region concerned, for towns, watercourses and people. The Saxons named the land **Siebenbürgen** (Latin **Septemcastra**), the Hungarians **Erdély**, and the Romanians—**Ardeal**. However, the official name established throughout the Middle Age and through the greatest part of the modern age was **Transylvania**. Moreover, almost all modern languages include versions derived from this latter Latin version which has also spread in the academic environments worldwide. Hence, we ourselves favored this generic and representative name. Where the names of places and people are concerned, things tend to be a little more complicated. The first names are frequently indicated in their Romanian version, as this work was published in Romanian; the last names were also included in their original form (Romanian, Hungarian, and German, respectively). Given that many toponyms and names of watercourses have three versions each (e. g: Cluj-Klausenburg-Kolozsvár or Târnava-Kökel-Küküllő), the current official name was preferred, according to the international standards in the field. Where well-known historical names are concerned, the Latin, Hungarian or German names are also indicated (between brackets or directly).

Despite such good intentions and clarifications, we are very much aware that this is merely another approach to the past of Transylvania, sometimes incomplete and clumsy. We are persuaded that it can be object to significant improvement, especially in the future, when new historical sources become available. On the other hand, we hope that, as Europe has acquired a new institutional dimension, a considerable share of the former nationalistic and exclusivist tensions have disappeared or at least subsided. We believe indeed that we have succeeded in depicting this atmosphere of relaxation and understanding in the following pages, reflected in our discussion of the region’s past. The past cannot be changed, it is an objective given that did take place. But we can still change the current image we have of that past, and if the new image is closer to the truth, then our efforts are salutary. It is with this hope that we present our readers with this book.

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