

# DOSSIER: TRANSYLVANIA: A HISTORICAL REGION IN EUROPE

## INTRODUCTION

István Szilágyi

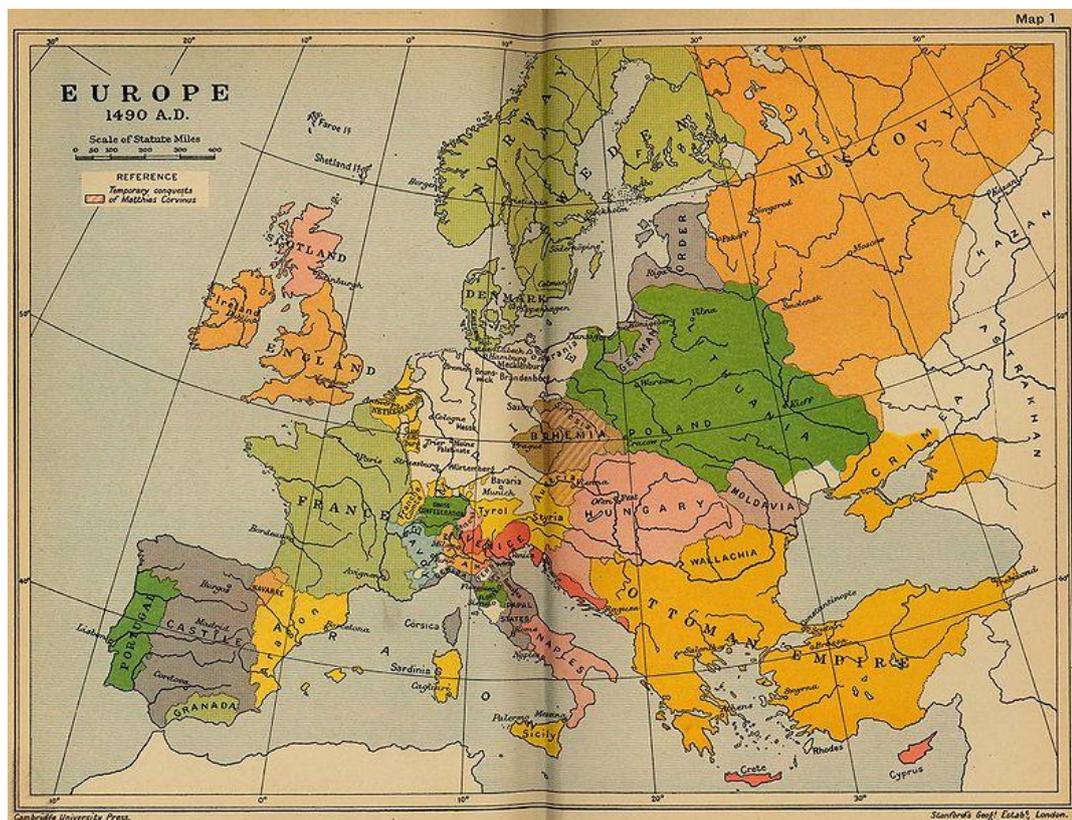
University of Pécs, Hungary. E-mail: szortega@freemail.hu

Recibido: 3 Abril 2013 / Revisado: 7 Octubre 2013 / Aceptado: 22 Enero 2014 / Publicación Online: 15 Junio 2014

In the centre of Europe the Hungarian nation has been living in the form of statehood for 1100 years. The Hungarian tribes coming from the East, the Asian steppe, under the leadership of prince Árpád, in the course of the great migrations arrived in the Carpathian basin and in the process of the *Hungarian conquest* (*Land-taking*), 896 they obtained their final homeland.

The state-founder, King (Saint) Stephen I., was converted to Christianity in 1000 and turned the Hungarian kingdom of mixed ethnic composition consisting of several historical-geographical areas to a modern state. In the Middle Ages the Hungarian Kingdom reached its biggest extension during the reign of King Matthias (1458-1490), born in Kolozsvár-Cluj-Napoca, in the heart of Transylvania.

Map 1. Europe and the Hungarian Kingdom in 1490



Source: [http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom\\_of\\_Hungary](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Hungary)

After the death of the great monarch, King Matthias, the inner differences became more acute and it was the major reason why the Hungarian state could not resist the expanding Ottoman Empire successfully. In consequence of being defeated at the battle of Mohács on 29, August, 1526 Hungary got split into three parts between 1541 and 1686.

Its western area, the rest of the Hungarian Kingdom (Royal Hungary) became the province of Habsburg Austria. The middle areas were

annexed by the Ottoman Empire. Transylvania, the Eastern part of the Carpathian basin inhabited by the Hungarians, the Székelys, the Rumanians and the Saxons (the Transilvanian Germans) was transformed into an independent principality. The Transylvanian Principality (which was bordered on the Wallachian and the Moldavian voivodships) with its heterogeneous populations and religions became one of the major preservers of the Hungarian nation, the Hungarian national identity and culture for centuries..

**Map 2/a. The Partition of Hungarian Kingdom**



Source: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/1909/The-partition-of-Hungary-in-1568>

**Map 2/b. The Partition of Hungarian Kingdom**



Source: [http://www.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Partition\\_of\\_Hungary.png](http://www.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Partition_of_Hungary.png)

Transylvania, exposed to the constant pressure by the Hapsburg and the Ottoman Empires (they were called „two pagans” in the contemporary sources and crónicas) as well as the Rumanian principalities. Later on after expelling the Turks Transylvania was reunified with the Hungarian Kingdom under the reign of the Hapsburgs.

But the Hungarians did not cease to fight for their freedom and independence. The kuruc

uprising and war for independence, 1703-1711, led by the prince Ferenc Rákóczi II. and the revolution and the war for independence, 1848-1849 led by Lajos Kossuth ended in failure.

All the same, under pressure of the inner and outer circumstances in 1867 the *Compromise* between Hungary and Austria took place and a new state including 13 nations was established: it was the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Map 3.- The Ethnic Group of Austria-Hungary in 1910



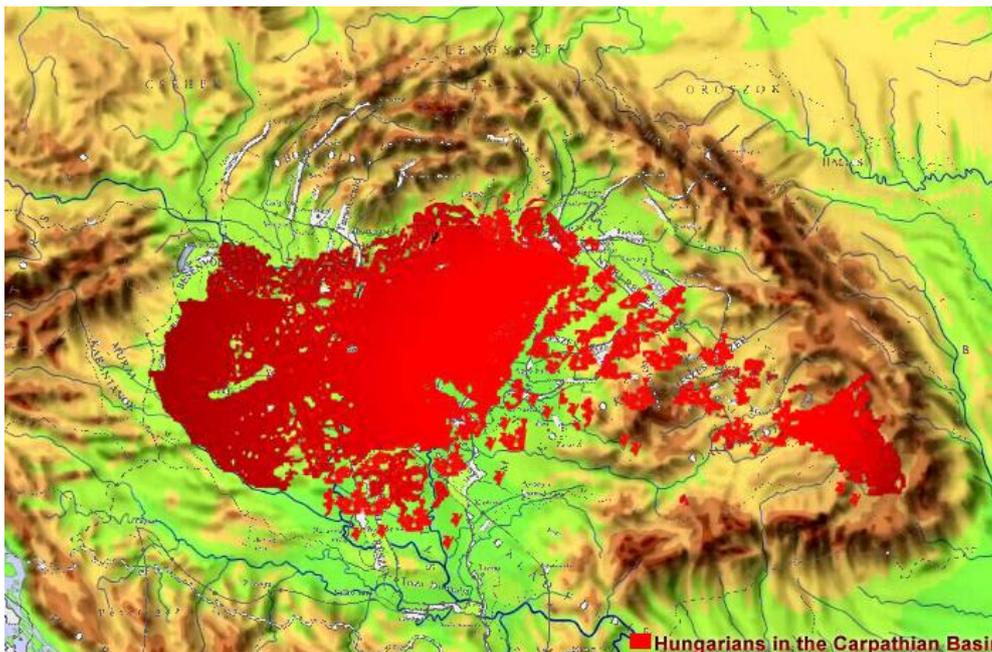
Source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Austria\\_Hungary\\_ethnic.svg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Austria_Hungary_ethnic.svg)

In 1910 there were 10 036 200 Hungarians living in the Carpathian basin. It amounted the 48,1%-of the total population in the Hungarian Kingdom of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, whereas in Transylvania it ran to 31,6%, in the areas at present belonging to Slovakia it amounted 30,2%, in the Serbian Vojvodina 28,1%, in Sub-Carpathia (at present belonging to the Ukraine) 30,8%, in Croatia 3,5%, in the area

of the river Mura 22,9% and in Burgerland, Austria it ran to 9,0%.

In the autumn of 1918 owing to the defeat at war the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy ceased to exist. The unjust and unfair peace treaties created by the winning powers did not lead to peace and stability of the international system.

**Map 4. Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin**

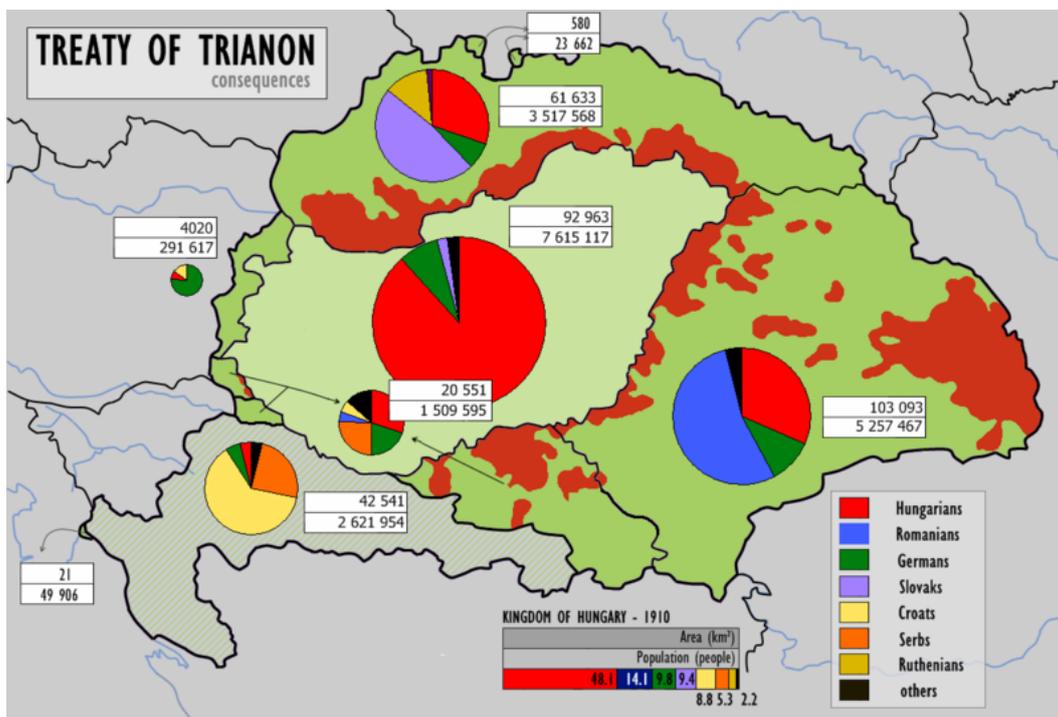


Source:<http://www.urban75.net/forums/threads/tell-me-whats-going-on-in-hungary.281430/page-2>

The Treaty of Trianon concerning Hungary signed on 4, June, 1920 took no account of ethnic and national minorities' viewpoints and rights of self-determination. After the second world war the peace-system of Yalta approved and reinforced these conditions.

The territory of Hungary decreased from 325 411 km<sup>2</sup> to 93000 km<sup>2</sup> and the 35% of the Hungarians once lived in a compact territorial block were forced into a minority situation in the succession states formed on the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

**Map 5. Treaty of Trianon. Consequences**



Source:[http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Magyarország\\_1920.png](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Magyarország_1920.png)

As it happened so many times in the course of history in the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries during the third wave of globalization and in the period of enforcing principle of subsidiarity for the national minorities living in the territory of multinational states (therefore for the Hungarians as well) national identity, the maintenance of national culture and native language became again the matter of vital importance<sup>1</sup>.

One of the key players in the process of strengthening autonomy-endeavour for the Hungarians is Transylvania, which has been the part of Rumania since 1920.

The five studies published in this present dossier offer a survey of ethnic<sup>2</sup>, demographic<sup>3</sup>, higher educational<sup>4</sup> and cultural<sup>5</sup> aspects of life and the autonomy-aspiration in the Carpathian basin<sup>6</sup>, preferably in Transylvania from the Middle Ages to these days.

## NOTAS

<sup>1</sup> In detail see: István Szilágyi: *National Minorities and the Question of the Autonomy in the Carpathian Basin*

<sup>2</sup> Radu Lupescu: *Ethnicity in Transylvania. From medieval peoples to modern nations*

<sup>3</sup> István Horváth: *Hungarians of Romania: Demographic Dynamics for the past one and a half century*

<sup>4</sup> Márton Tonk: *Hungarian Higher Education and Educational Policy in Transylvania*

<sup>5</sup> János Kristóf Murádin: *From easel to professorship. The creation and consolidation of Hungarian professional fine arts education in Transylvania*

<sup>6</sup> István Szilágyi: *National Minorities and the Question of the Autonomy in the Carpathian Basin*