

# ETHNICITY IN TRANSYLVANIA. FROM MEDIEVAL PEOPLES TO MODERN NATIONS

Radu Lupescu

Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

E-mail: radulupescu@sapientia.ro

Recibido: 23 Mayo 2013 / Revisado: 19 Noviembre 2013 / Aceptado: 22 Enero 2014 / Publicación Online: 15 Junio 2014

**Resumen:** Transilvania es una región de Europa, en donde en el transcurso de los siglos convivieron y conviven muchas naciones. Entre ellas jugaron el rol determinante los húngaros, los rumanos, los sajones y los székelys (seklers), quienes ya estaban presentes en el doce siglo en Transilvania. La fecha de su inmigración, sus tareas y el territorio donde habitaron fueron distintas y esta situación se refleja de sus derechos y fueros propios. Pero a diferencia de las épocas anteriores los reyes húngaros de origen de casa de Anjou excluyeron los rumanos ortodoxos de la Gobernación de Transilvania, así no podía desarrollarse la nobleza propia de ellos. A partir de 1437 la nobleza y la aristocracia de otras tres naciones fueron aliados y cuando en el siglo XVI se descompusó el Reino Húngaro, ellas asumieron la Gobernación de Transilvania. Al mismo tiempo Transilvania se convirtió en patria acogedora a las nuevas confesiones y religiones protestantes. Este modo se formó aquel sistema que podemos denominar de tres naciones privilegiadas y de cuatro religiones admitidas. Esta representación de tipo medieval estaba en vigor hasta el siglo XIX. cuando las naciones modernas la sucedieron. Los rumanos aprovecharon la oportunidad ofrecida y han conseguido cerrar filas entre las naciones transilvanas.

**Palabras clave:** Hungarians, Romanians, Saxons, Székelys, Transylvania, Nation.

**T**ransylvania is one of those special historical regions of Europe where different peoples, each with strong

particularities, lived together since from the Middle Ages. This strategic region was incorporated into the Hungarian Kingdom by King Saint Stephen (1000-1038) right at the beginning of his reign, by defeating his uncle, Gyula, a territorial leader from another Hungarian kindred. It became a princely territory of the Arpadian Dynasty, and from the twelfth century it was governed by one of the main office holders of the kingdom, the voivode.

In order to defend its south-eastern borders, the Hungarian Kings settled here the Székelys, a community whose origin is still debated. Earlier they performed military duties along the western border of Hungary, but after this region was consolidated, the Székelys were transferred to east. In the twelve century they already were living in south Transylvania. The presence of the Saxons is better documented. King Géza II (1141-1162) started to settle the first communities from Wallonia and Flanders in the mid twelfth century. Later they were mostly German speaking settlers, and were called Saxons. The purpose of this colonization was to strengthen the defense of the south-eastern border of the kingdom against the Cumans, and to resolve the demographic issue of the underpopulated Transylvania. Meanwhile, the Székelys were transferred to the south-eastern corner of Transylvania where they constituted a community of free men having only military duties. In 1222 the majority of the Saxons were integrated in the Sibiu/Szeben County and King Andrew II (1205-1235) granted them several privileges included in the so called *Diploma Andreamum*. These privileges offered them a great possibility to develop important settlements which later evolved into royal

towns. The Saxon territories were reorganized several times in the following centuries. The most important one was performed by King Matthias Corvinus (1458-1490) who extended the privileges of the *Andreanum* over the whole Saxon community (*universorum Saxonum nostrorum partium regni nostri Transsilvanorum*), and thus created the so called Saxon University which was preserved until the nineteenth century.

The emergence and the spread of the Romanian population in Transylvania is still debated, but is certain that in the twelfth century they were already living in Transylvania. They not formed a single compact community such as the Saxons and the Székelys, but some smaller ones spread over the counties of Transylvania. Although the Romanians were of Orthodox faith it seems that during the Arpadian Age they enjoyed the same status as the Hungarians, Saxons and Székelys. All of these medieval nations were represented on the regional assemblies of Transylvania which started to function from the second half of the thirteenth century. After changing the ruling dynasty, the Angevin kings started to build up a medieval society based on the catholic faith. The orthodox communities, tolerated or even accepted before, were gradually excluded from the local governments, and were not able to develop their own nobility. In the case of the Romanian population the royal attitude towards them was probably influenced by the newly obtained independence of the two Romanian principalities: Wallachia and Moldavia. Especially in the case of Moldavia the intervention of some Romanian influential families from Hungary in obtaining its independence was quite obvious, and few years later, when in 1366 King Louis the Great (1348-1380) visited Transylvania, he took important decisions that had a strong effect on the Romanian population. The noble status was conditioned by the catholic faith and royal granting charter was necessary for these landed properties. From that time the presence of Romanians in the general assembly of Transylvania is no more documented. This is the reason why they were left out from the alliance called *fraterna unio* signed by the leaders of the Hungarian, Saxon and Székely communities. This was concluded in 1437 when a large revolt of the Transylvanian peasants spread through the whole region. The union was created to overcome the revolt and to defend Transylvania against an enemy attack, and not against the Romanian population as was supposed by the

modern historiography. During the fifteenth century the union was renewed several times and gradually became fundamental for the government of Transylvania, especially when after the Battle of Mohács when Hungary was partitioned. From this perspective the change of attitude towards Romanians in the fourteenth century proved to be fatal and had a long term consequence.

From the third decade of the sixteenth century the Ottoman conquest of Hungary seemed to be inevitable. They conquered step by step the border fortifications of the kingdom and annihilated the Hungarian army at the battle of Mohács (1526). During this difficult period the nobility was unable to line up behind a single ruler, but instead the Hungarian Diet elected two kings: Ferdinand of Habsburg and John Szapolyai. The first governed over the western territories of Hungary, the second over the eastern parts, especially in Transylvania. The civil war was exploited at maximum by the Ottomans who in 1541 occupied the central part of the kingdom. Thus Hungary split into three parts, a division which lasted about two centuries. The eastern territories, including the Voivodate of Transylvania and the neighboring counties (*Partes Regni Hungariae*, or *Partium*), constituted the Principality of Transylvania officially recognized in 1570 by the Treaty of Speyer.

The Principality basically was built on the tradition of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, but it had some new particular features as well. First of all the Reformation started to take root in most of these regions, and in the following period Transylvania was considered one of the most important Protestant territories. The Lutheran, Calvinist and Unitarian beliefs were accepted slowly, the last one by the Diet of 1557, and together with the Catholics they became the officially accepted religions of Transylvania. Now the religious diversity of Transylvania doubled the complicated social stratification of it inherited from the Middle Ages. That was the system of the three privileged nations, i. e. the Hungarians, Saxons and Székelys, preserved in the period of the principality. The majority of the Székelys remained Catholic, but the rest of the nations have converted to Protestantism: the Saxons to Lutheranism, the Hungarians to Unitarianism and Calvinism. From the sixteenth century this system was called the union of the three nations (*unio trium nationum*) and the four accepted

religions (*recepta religio*). The union was renewed several times during the existence of the Transylvanian Principality, especially in some moments of crisis, with the purpose of defending their country and the privileges of the three nations (1630, 1649, 1661).

However, if we have a closer look how the status of these nations has evolved during the principality, one can remark significant differences. The Hungarian nobility continued to be the most influential member of the union. On the other side the Székely society underwent important changes. In the Middle Ages they were exempt from taxation but had to fulfill increased military duties. The exemption was not a problem if we consider the whole Hungarian Kingdom but the Transylvanian Principality was much smaller and the exemption affected its economical balance. Thus the princes started to lay taxes on the Székelys which led to a continuous conflict between them. Meanwhile the Székely community became more stratified and even a noble class and serfs appeared among them. Opposite to the Székelys, the Transylvanian Saxons were able to strengthen their position. This was a very prosperous community, governing the most important cities of the Principality. Matthias Fronius compiled a law book for them, called *Eigenlandrecht der Siebenbürger Sachsen*, which encompassed the laws concerning the Saxons. It was recognized as an official law book for the Saxons by Prince Stephen Báthory (1571-1586) in 1583. It was valid until 1853 and continued to strengthen furthermore the University of the Saxons.

This epoch could have been a good opportunity for the Romanian nation and to their orthodox religion to be accepted in this system, but at that time this nation had no social elite to fight for their rights. Those few families of Romanian origin who joined the nobility dropped their orthodox belief and Romanian identity, and became part of the Hungarian nobility. As Constantin Cantacuzino stated “many of the Transylvanian nobles are Romanians or has Romanian origins, but since the leaders of that country are Calvinists and these nobles served at the court, they entered the Calvinist Church and are considered Hungarians. Changing their belief, they changed their Romanian names.”

During the sixteenth century a new type of Diet emerged in Transylvania. It was partially based on the medieval general assembly of

Transylvania (*congregatio generalis*) but it was different in many other respects. The deputies were still members of the three privileged nations, but they actually got the invitation to the Diet due to their offices or their social statuses. All of them were denominated by the Prince of Transylvania and thus represented the interests of their lord. There are only few cases when the Diet was able to act as defender of the interest of the Transylvanian statuses, usually during wartime or when a new prince was elected. As soon as the new lord reestablished the authority of its strength based leadership he subjected the Diet again. This large authority of the prince was possible because Transylvania had no powerful aristocracy to keep it under control. There was only one family member of the Hungarian social elite, the Bánffy of Losoncis. For some shorter periods one can consider the Csaky and Báthory families too, but this was not enough to put some serious problems to the prince. Among them the Báthory family has founded a ruling dynasty in Transylvania. The Diet was made up of the so called regalists, the members of the Transylvanian government, the deputies of the Saxon and Székely territories, the deputies of certain towns and eventually the religious leaders (bishops).

Attitudes during the Fifteenth Year War clearly demonstrate that around 1600 there were no sympathies based on national feelings. The decisions of the princes were influenced by the political circumstances and the system of social statuses. In this respect Prince Sigismund Báthory created a system of alliances with Moldavia and Wallachia against the Ottomans, having the support of Emperor Rudolf II (1595). After the fall of Prince Sigismund, it was the turn of Prince Michael the Brave of Wallachia to bring under his authority the three Principalities (1599-1601). Like Sigismund, he was not guided by some sort national interest to unite his people, but by an important geostrategic issue. If he wanted to continue the confrontation with the Ottomans, the positioning of Transylvania on the side of the Habsburgs was a vital problem. This was the reason why he endeavored to conquer Transylvania and Moldavia, in fact to maintain the alliance forged by Sigismund on the side of the Habsburgs. During his reign he did not helped the Romanian population of Transylvania as a whole. The tax exemption granted to the Romanian priests was a gesture in favor of a medieval status, not in favor of a nation. It is true that his reign in Transylvania

led to some ethnical conflicts. But exactly the division of them demonstrates that were no alliances based on ethical sympathies. For example, the Hungarian speaking Székelys sided with Michael because he renewed their former privileges taken away by the Princes of Transylvania during the sixteenth century. On the other side, the Hungarian nobility was a fierce enemy of Michael, whose long term plan was to oust the Hungarian nobility and to give their landed properties to the Wallachian boiars. This was the way he planned to consolidate his position in Transylvania. However, the Wallachian Prince was not supported by Emperor Rudolf II in unifying the three Principalities, and after a few months he fell to maintain his reign (1601).

The emancipation of the Romanians from the Transylvanian Principality has started with the emancipation of the Romanian clergy. The Orthodox religion, similar to the previous period, has remained tolerated. An important achievement for the Romanian Orthodox community was that Prince Stephen Báthory (1571-1586) accepted the existence of their own bishop having the seat at Alba Iulia. However, the bishopric was dissolved after the death of Prince Michael the Brave (1601) when the states of Transylvania abolished his regime. In 1609 Prince Gabriel Báthory, on the request of the aristocracy, permitted the free movement of the clergy and exempted them of taxes. The background countries of this Orthodox Church were the Romanian Principalities where the clergy has come from. The Princes of Transylvania tried to win this Romanian clergy for the Calvinist Church. In favor of this purpose Prince Gabriel Bethlen got in touch with Kyryll I Lukaris, the Patriarch of Constantinople, and Princess Zsuzsanna Lorátnffy founded a school in Făgăraș „to the benefit of the Romanians”. Furthermore, in Alba Iulia was set up a press for Romanian books. In spite of all these efforts the Calvinist proselytism had little success among the Romanians and produced just a thin intellectual layer.

The historical writing of the sixteenth and seventeenth century was an important instrument in interpreting the privileged status of the different Transylvanian nations. The origin of the Hungarians and the Székelys was related to the brave Huns. The Saxons regarded themselves as descendents of the empire of Charles the Great (Charlemagne). In the case of the Romanians their Roman origin was evident

even for the fifteenth century Humanists. However, the later historiography has not regarded them proper Romans, but descendants of a mixed population settled here by the Romans. This perception of their history can be found in the historical writings of the most important scholars of that time: János Baranyai Decsi, Antal Verancsics, István Szántó, István Szamosközi. The issue concerning the origin of the Romanian population was discussed by the Wallachian and Moldavian historiography too. Here, the earlier historical writing was closely related to the princely court, but from the seventeenth century a new generation of boiars emerged, and they produced a new historiography based on the interest of their status (Grigore Ureche, Miron Costin, Constantin Cantacuzino). They rejected the idea of being the descendants of some Roman malefactors, and were proud of their Roman origin.

At the end of the seventeenth century Transylvania has vent through some significant changes. After the Ottomans had failed to conquer Vienna in 1683 they were expelled not only from Lower Austria, but from Hungary as well. Thus the Habsburgs put an end not only to the Ottoman occupation of Hungary, but they tried to extend their influence over the whole territories once part of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom. Transylvania was annexed to the empire of the Habsburgs during the last decade of the seventeenth century, and its new status was legalized by the so called *Diploma Leopoldinum* issued by Emperor Leopold I in 1691.

The political testament of the seventeenth century Princes of Transylvania regularly called the attention of the nobility to return to the Hungarian Kingdom as soon as it was possible. However, when this possibility emerged after 1683, the leading nobility of Transylvania was not keen on at all to sustain the case of the territorial unification. In 1691 they obtained the *Diploma Leopoldinum*, which guaranteed the previous system of the four accepted religions and the three privileged nations. They considered that the return to Hungary could have endanger their privileges, and thus the Diploma played an important role in hindering the unification, being a guarantee for the nobility to maintain their political influence in the Transylvanian affairs.

In this new context the Habsburgs sought for support for their regime in Transylvania against the dominant Calvinist nobility, still very influential at that time. The supporters of the new regime were the Catholic nobility and the Saxons, though they were Lutherans. But all these social categories represented the traditional Transylvanian nations, and their privileged status was anyway guaranteed by the *Diploma Leopoldinum*. Getting over the Romanian community seemed to offer a better potential. With some minor ecclesiastical compromises the Orthodox population united the Catholic Church, and similar to the unions on Russian territories was set up the Romanian Greek Catholic Church (1699, 1701). Those who accepted the union had the opportunity to enter the system of the four accepted religions. At least this was the offer of the Habsburg government. In reality neither the Romanian elite nor the priests of the united church were not accepted in this system, and took several decades until they were able to benefit from their new rights. In spite of the initial difficulties the union was a unique opportunity for the Romanian population of Transylvania to emancipate. A similar possibility has not occurred for them since the thirteenth century. The former Orthodox clergy involved in the union imposed several conditions that demonstrate the existence of a carefully planned program. They asked for their own bishopric, to be accepted among the three privileged nations, equal rights with priests of the accepted religions for the united clergy, to held offices, to attend Catholic schools etc.

The religious union meant not only ecclesiastical but some social privileges too. The new Romanian clergy now had the possibility to study at the most important Catholic universities and schools in Hungary, Austria and Italy, such as the Collegium de Propaganda Fide in Rome, and the Pazmaneum in Vienna. The new church essentially contributed to the emergence of new ecclesiastical and lay Romanian elite, and in the nineteenth century to nobility with Romanian identity. All this happened exactly during the century when the identity of the modern nations started to take shape, and now the Romanian community had its own elite strata which was able to lay the foundation for this ideology.

A remarkable member of these new elite was Ioan Inocențiu Klein, the third Bishop of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church (1730-1751). As deputy in the Diet of Transylvania he was the

first who requested equal statues with the Catholics not only for the Romanian clergy but for the whole Romanian Nobility. His requests included: equal rights for the Romanian Greek Catholic clergy with the Catholics, equal rights for the Greek Catholic Romanian nobility with the privileged nations of Transylvania, Romanian chief captain for Făgăraș and Chioar, Romanian count for the Hunedoara County and Romanian members in the Government of Transylvania. He argued with the Roman origin of the Romanian people, being the first who settled Transylvania, and with the number of them, as the most numerous nation of Transylvania. The whole inventory of his requests and the arguments he referred to was new and overwhelming both for the members of the Transylvanian Diet and for the Habsburg Court. He was obliged to resign in 1751, and died in exile in Rome. Ioan Inocențiu Klein can be regarded as founder of the Romanian national movement which started to gain in strength in the following decades. This was possible mainly because the religious union set up with serious difficulties at the beginning, but with great profit at the end.

It has to be taken into consideration that among the Romanians of Transylvania the ecclesiastical union produced a strong opposition, which dubbed by the discontent of the peasants lead to several local revolts. The Romanian Orthodox community was sustained especially by Russia, which was in full process to become an influential power and who regarded himself as protector of different Orthodox communities of Eastern Europe and Balkan Area. Considering the good relations between Russia and the Habsburg Empire, Empress Maria Theresa officially recognized the Romanian Orthodoxies of Transylvania, and placed their bishopric under the authority of the Archbishopric of Karlowitz (1761). Although this was not an autonomous ecclesiastical unit, at least ensured for them an institutional frame.

Concerning the union of Transylvania with Hungary, only at the end of the eighteenth century started to gather more and more sympathizers among the members of the Transylvanian Diet, but at that time this project had many opponents too. First of all during the last three centuries the tradition of the medieval Hungarian Kingdom as a whole has fade away. Emperor Leopold I rejected the unification too, and set up three different chancelleries for the Hungarian territories. Furthermore the Saxon

and Romanian community considered that they could preserve more political influence between the boundaries of Transylvania than being part of the Hungarian Kingdom. Thus even from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century started to take shape an opposition of the Saxons and Romanians to everything what was regarded as serving the Hungarian interest. This was an important change in the traditional relationship of the three leading Nations of Transylvania. The Székelys traditionally sided with Hungarians and the Romanians tried to obtain the support and sympathy of the Saxons and the Habsburg dynasty. In this way the Saxons gradually shifted from the system of the *Unio Trium Nationum* based on the medieval principles of the estates toward a new direction governed by the principles of the modern nations. Around 1800 the Romanians still not represented a political force to be a serious ally for the Saxons, but this nation had an immense potential, and from the mid nineteenth century they proved to be a useful partner of the Saxons against the Hungarian national tendencies.

At the end of the eighteenth century the system of the three nations was already obsolete, but is interesting to see that both the members of it and the Romanians who were fighting to be accepted among them, still maintained this type of government. The traditional Transylvanian government was stirred-up by the reign of Emperor Joseph II, who introduced some fundamental improvements to it. His reforms had a great impact even on the peasants because it offered a wide range of liberties and put the basis for the abolishment of the serfdom. However, at the end of his reign the emperor was obliged to retract the majority of his decrees and regulations. The age after his death was a period of return to the previous governments and Transylvania went through the same process. This was guaranteed by the Diet of 1791-1792, which, with some minor exceptions, accepted the return to the previous system.

A remarkable initiative of the Romanian elite was the so called *Supplex Libellus Valachorum*, a memorandum, which summarized not only the political aspirations of them, but also offered a serious historical background and a set of justification for it. The *Supplex* was written by the new generation of Romanian intellectuals, and was taken up by the Greek Catholic and Orthodox bishops. They asked for revert to the system existing previous 1437. They also asked for equal status with the rest of the

Transylvanian nations. This meant a proportional representation of them not only in the Diet, but also at the level of the local administration. The equal status was claimed for the Greek Catholic and the Orthodox religions too, which demonstrates, that although this equality was promised before, hardly was put in practice. It is remarkable that now the Romanian community made no difference between the two religion, and acted together as a nation. The petitioners justified their requests on the ground of their majority asking for rights in the name of the whole Romanian nation of Transylvania, which included the non nobles too. A new concept of nation started to take shape including all social strata of a community. The justification referred to their Roman origin and their early presence in Transylvania and to a supposed contract signed with Töhötöm, one of the Hungarian leaders who occupied Transylvania in 896. This reference brings in our mind the importance of the social contract discussed by Rousseau in determining the status of a person or a nation.

The *Supplex* considered the events occurred during 1437 to be crucial for their status, and for centuries regarded this date the year of the great change in worse. The *Supplex* supposed that in 1437 was created a union of the Hungarian, Saxon and Székely nations against the Romanians, called *unio trium nationum*, and thus they were left out for centuries from the government system of Transylvania. In fact the *Supplex* offered a completely wrong interpretation of what happened in 1437. The union created at that time, as I described above, was called *fraterna unio*, and was conceived against the peasants who were engaged in a Hussite-like revolt against the nobility. It was not intended at all against one of the Transylvanian nations but to calm down the revolt of the peasants. The system of the union of the three nations emerged later, during the sixteenth century, when the Hungarian Kingdom was divided and Transylvania set up its own government. However, it is true that this later government inherited the brotherly union of the three Transylvanian nations, but the Romanians having no its own elite ever since the fourteenth century could not be invited in 1437 in the brotherly union.

The *Supplex* was discussed by the Diet of 1791-1792 and rejected both the requests and the justifications arguing that just a small part of the Romanians, those living in Hațeg region and

Banat, are the descendants of the Romans, the rest of them being immigrated later in Transylvania from Moldavia and Wallachia.

The Diet strengthened the previous system of the three privileged nations and the four accepted religions. This was a victory mainly for the protestant confessions, they being seriously hindered by the Catholic government of the Habsburgs. The Transylvanian nobility was granted the same status as the Hungarian one. The previous privileges of the Saxons were strengthened too. The Diet accepted important changes in the manner of voting. Previously each of the nations counted one vote. From now on this was reduced to each of the deputies. This led to a clear majority of the Hungarians together with the Székelys, the Saxons being pushed in the background.

The main issue prepared for the Diet was the unification of Transylvania with Hungary. Whilst the deputies were working on this project Emperor Francis II has made steps in order to separate the former Hungarian provinces, and finally obstructed the initiative of the Diet to discuss the unification.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the spectacular debates on the national rights were missing since the absolutist regime of the Habsburg suppressed it. But right in these decades the Transylvanian society went through important changes. The traditional structure of the society based on medieval statuses gave place to the modern nations, and the national identity was increasingly strengthening and acted deeper in the society. Each of the nations tried to conserve its privileges and during this process the introduction of the Hungarian language as official one in Transylvania reinforced the conflict between the two parties. The territories inhabited by the Saxons would have been exempted from this point of view, but exactly this community protested the most violently. The Romanians, who until that time were not against the unification of Transylvania with Hungary, positioned themselves on the side of the Saxons and made the question of the territorial union a matter of death and life. Just before 1848 the Transylvanian nations started to follow different ways and the distance between them started to increase more than ever. The well instructed Romanian intellectuals took leading positions even in the Romanian Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia and the relation between the Romanians on the both

side of the Carpathians became stronger and stronger. On the other side the Hungarians too has discovered the Hungarian speaking communities in Moldavia and Wallachia. In 1847 János Jernyei was already proposing exchange of population to settle territorial issues between Hungarians and Romanians.

The events occurred during the revolution of 1848 demonstrated for the leading Transylvanian nations that even the Romanians constituted at that time a well organized nation having strong leading elite. Similar to the Hungarians, Saxons and Székelys they organized their own national assemblies, national comities and national guards. On the other side the military woes of the revolution strengthened the relationship between the Hungarians and the Székelys. The arrangement of the Székely society inherited from the Middle Ages started to resemble much more on those of the Transylvanian counties structured on nobility and peasantry. Although the Székelys were assimilated to the Hungarians they still preserved their identity being member of a distinct order.

On 29 May 1848 an important Diet was held in Cluj, based on the traditional system of the three privileged nations. It was quite odd, the destiny of Transylvania being already determined by the modern concept of nations, the medieval statuses having the last benefit of their privileges. The main task of the Diet was to accept the unification of Transylvania with Hungary, which was one of the main issues of the Hungarian Revolution. After long debates the union was accepted by the deputies of the three nations, and by the Greek Catholic Bishop who was the only who represented the Romanians. Emperor Ferdinand I ratified the union on 10 June 1848 but everybody was feeling that it was realized without a real support of all of the Transylvanian nations.

The Hungarian revolution after a peaceful period has turned into a tragic war, all of the four Transylvanian nations being involved in it. Their division favored the Habsburg government, which offered support for the Romanian revolutionaries against the Hungarians and the Székelys. In 1849 Transylvania already became hard to be governed. The revolution finally was suppressed by the Russian intervention at the request of Emperor Franz Ioseph. At the end both the Hungarian and Romanian revolutionary plans

were erased. Afterwards everybody realized that had no sense to fight against each other but it was too late. Transylvania was maintained as a separate principality of the Austrian Empire, and the loyalty of the Romanians towards the Habsburgs brought no change in their status.

In the second half of the nineteenth century new social categories started to be very influential in the political life of Transylvania. The intellectuals were the main ideologists of that epoch, which favored the Romanians, they having no significant nobility but a powerful intellectuality. The influence of the hereditary nobility was furthermore weakened by the appearance of the bourgeoisie, although their weight started to count later.

An important change in the structure of the Transylvanian society was brought by the liberation of the peasants from serfdom. This reform was initiated by the Hungarian government during the Revolution, but it was put in practice in the following decades by the Austrian government. The reform had an influence especially on the Hungarian, Székely and Romanian nation. The Saxons being a patrician society they were not affected so strong by the new changes. However the influence over the Romanian society was overwhelming. More than fifteenth percent of the Transylvanian population was Romanian peasant, and now they offered a serious background for the Romanian nation, and thus for their national aspirations. For the Hungarian nation the reform was not just an advantage, but also an important loss since the nobility, the leading political force in Transylvania, had lost its economical advantage, especially the middle class nobility. They started to sustain the political ideology of the Hungarian intellectuality which was more radical compared to what they represented before. However, the possible advantage of the serf liberation has not to be exaggerated. They did not have the opportunity to enjoy fully their new status, and still remained outside the political life of Transylvania for decades.

The first Diet that considered the proportion of the Transylvanian nations was organized in 1863-1864. This was a completely new type of assembly in deep contrast with the previous Diets based on the three privileged nations. 46 deputies represented the Romanian, 43 the Hungarian (Hungarian and Székely) and 32 the Saxon communities. In addition to them further

11 deputy from among these nations were nominated by the emperor. In this way the Romanians and the Saxons put commend over the Diet, whilst the Hungarians considered not sharing it. The Diet finally guaranteed equal rights for Romanians, being accepted as the fourth nation of Transylvania. The Romanian deputies asked also for not to change the proportion between the nations by new settlements and facilitating the immigration.

The territorial issues concerning Transylvania started to become a crucial problem for the Hungarians and Romanians, and both nations regarded its favorable resolution a guarantee for their existence. After Moldavia and Wallachia was united in 1859 the Romanians started to sustain the idea of a new Romanian state which would incorporate all the territories inhabited by them. It is noticeable that from the eighteenth century the political program of the Romanian emancipation had several stages and was always updated according to the new political context and to what they already achieved. Now the territorial unification has become the supreme purpose of their political program.

At that time a more realistic and actual project was the unification of Transylvania with Hungary. This issue was always arisen since the division of Hungary in the sixteenth century but was always obstructed by the Habsburg government. As the weakening of the Austrian Empire become evident, especially after the Austro-Prussian war of 1866, it was clear that the Austrians needed a partner nation to strengthen the empire. Both the Hungarian and the Czech Kingdom could have been suitable for this purpose, or even both of them together. After long debates the Hungarian Kingdom was accepted to be the second pillar of the new empire called the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1867). This supposed to reunite the former provinces of the Hungarian Kingdom and as a consequence Transylvania has become once again part of the kingdom. This was the last victory of the Hungarian party in Transylvania, which ensured their supremacy over the Romanians and the Saxons. Although the Romanians definitely rejected the union, the Saxons were divided into two parties: the older generation rejected it, but the new one regarded with sympathy at the liberal government of Hungary trying to modernize the kingdom. After Austria-Hungary was created all these territories were organized on the same principles, which supposed the abolition of the



different local autonomies and self governments. In 1876 the Hungarian National Assembly passed a law that put an end to the Saxon and Székely self government, and their territories were included in the system of the newly created counties. In the same spirit of a uniform kingdom was accepted the Nationality Law which considered that the citizens of the kingdom all represented the Hungarian nation, and not accepted the existence of other nations. However this was just a theoretical approach to this question since the national minorities had their own autonomous religious organization, they were employed in the local administration where they were allowed to use their own language, had their own schools etc. On the other side it is true that there were several cases when the Hungarian Government tried to obstruct these national rights and to give preference to the Hungarian language. This was the reason why after a century from the *Supplex Libellus Walachorum*, a new petition called *Memorandum* was written by the leaders of the

Romanian National Party of Transylvania and Banat (1892). They still requested equal rights with the Hungarians, demanded to put an end to the Magyarization process, but first of all tried to regain the autonomy of Transylvania. At the end of the nineteenth century these were not so radical requests, but the Hungarian Government did not take this petition seriously and acted roughly against the petitioners. Thus the Memorandum-case has become a national issue and aggravated the relationship between Hungarians and Romanians. At the beginning of the twentieth century the idea of the Romanian unification has become so strong that none of the liberties offered by the Hungariad government would not have been satisfied the Romanians. Meanwhile, the Romanian Kingdom now firmly sided with this objective, and it was only a matter of time when this issue was going to be settled. Finally, the outcome of the First World War provided a solution in this matter, a war lost by Hungary.