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Transylvania in the 14th century and the first half of the 15th century (1300–1456)

1. International Background

In the 14th Century, the Central and South-eastern European area was about to experience profound changes, triggered by the new balance of powers and interests of the states of that region.

In spite of signs of serious crisis, the Golden Horde domination, established in 1241, persisted with a certain force and intensity at the beginning of the 14th century in the Lower Danube region. The Mongol threat was still felt in the eastern Russian *knezates* and had a certain influence on Lithuania, Halics, the early settlements in Moldavia, Wallachia, Bulgaria and even Serbia. Also, the Tartar raids represented a potential danger to Byzantium, Hungary and Poland. Yet, from the fifth decade of the 14th century, the movement of emancipation from this domination and the opposition to the Tartars' influence in the West ampli-

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fied. In this respect, significant breakthroughs came from the Polish kingdom—under the reign of the last Piast kings—and from the Hungarian kingdom, ruled by the new Angevin dynasty.

Poland went through a period of expansion during the reign of Casimir III (1333–1370), who made efforts to end or reduce the conflicts with the Czechs and the Teutonic order. He enlarged the kingdom with Halics in the east and enhanced its character as a multi-ethnic and multi-denominational state. After conquering territories in western Russia (1340–1366) and a temporary union with Hungary (1370–1382), Poland, giving up its interests in the Baltic Sea, made a union with Lithuania (1385), gained sovereignty over Moldavia (1387), and influenced Pontic politics.

The extra-Carpathian Romanian provinces entered the final stage of unification and centralization as the Tartar pressure diminished in the east; the Hungarian Kingdom was going through a deep crisis and Poland and Hungary were running a certain rivalry for control over their area. Thus, the incipient states, already recorded in the 10th century in the Lower Danube region, with their knezes, voivodes and boyars, began an aggregation process which led to the creation of Wallachia (around 1290–1330) and Moldavia (around 1340–1365). The unification process was speeded up by the persistent pressure of Hungary, which after having withdrawn during the Mongolian invasion (1241–1242) and domination, went back to its expansion policy, under different forms, both east and especially south of the Carpathians. This political pressure was based upon evident economic interests—within the international trade setting—in the Dalmatian shore of the Adriatic on one side and the Black Sea on the other. Transylvania was an important outpost in supporting these older Hungarian interests in the south and the east; it was the setting point of the Hungarian policy to the extra-Carpathians areas. Through two offensive waves under the reign of the second Angevin king, Louis I (1342–1382), Hungarians seemed to gain a certain control over the Romanian regions beyond the Carpathians. These expeditions organized from Transylvania, with Transylvanian help and the participation of the Romanian princes living south of the Carpathians—in 1345–1346 and in 1352–1354—diminished the Tartar domination over the Romanian territory, but reinforced Hungary's pressure. The Angevins intended to incorporate the Romanian states beyond the Carpathians, down to the Lower Danube and the Black Sea into the Hungarian Kingdom—under the pretext of the apostolic mission to fight the "heathen, the heretics and the schismatic." For many reasons, the Angevin plans did not reach the desired outcome; as a result, one part of the Romanian community was still officially included in the Hungarian Kingdom, after Crişana, Banat, Transylvania and Maramureş had been fully conquered (10th–13th centuries), while another was able set up autonomous states. The latter—Wallachia and Modavia—estab-

lished themselves as free countries also by evading Hungarian authority and, partially, in the case of Moldavia, Polish authority. The state aggregation process south and east of the Carpathians received a huge thrust from Transylvania and Maramureş, mostly from the Romanians living there, who, prevented from organizing a Romanian state in the intra-Carpathian area, got involved through some of their leaders (with a minimum of demographic support) in taking the states of Wallachia and Moldavia to a higher level of independence and unification. In this way, the presence on the borders of medieval Hungary, more precisely of Transylvania, of two independent or quasi-independent Romanian states—direct neighbors of the Romanians of the Hungarian Kingdom—seriously affected the whole evolution of the region between the Lower Danube and the Northern Carpathians. Indeed, a few times in the second half of the 14th century (1359, 1365–1366, 1374), the Romanian states beyond the Carpathians were both in conflict with Hungary at the same time, and this directly influenced the situation in Transylvania.

After 1354 the Ottoman expansion progressed rapidly in Southeastern Europe, to the detriment of the Christian powers and territories, and it changed deeply the international relationships in the Lower Danube region. The successful expedition of the Hungarian King Louis I to Vidin, in 1365, anticipated possible anti-Ottoman actions. For this reason, the Byzantine Emperor John V Paleologus went to Buda and formally accepted the unification of the Eastern Church with Rome. Still, this unilateral act was not accepted in Byzantium; the Ottoman attacks soon restarted on the Serbs, Greeks, and Bulgarians. Thus, at the end of the 14th century, the Danube became a border between the Christian and the Islamic world. Up to this point, Wallachia and Hungary had been directly threatened; this led to an agreement between the two countries and establishment of a Romanian elite in Transylvania during the reigns of Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387–1437) and Mircea the Elder (1386–1418). Simultaneously, the sultans took measures to subdue Constantinople—the center and symbol of Eastern Christianity—a goal that would be reached, with great efforts, in 1453. By the middle of the 15th century, the Ottoman conquest of the Balkan Peninsula had been practically accomplished. The Romanian countries, Hungary and Poland were not part of the Empire. They participated, according to their possibilities and existing circumstances, in the Late Crusade, coordinated by the Pope and other Western powers, but directly and practically supported by the leaders and peoples of the countries particularly threatened by the Ottomans. Through the military efforts of the people of the Romanian Countries, Hungary, Poland, etc., in this period, around 1450, the Ottoman expansion was firmly halted on the Lower Danube.

2. The Crisis of the Hungarian Kingdom and the Political Situation of Transylvania in 1300

THE POLTICAL CRISIS in Hungary, acute under the rule of Ladislas IV the Cuman (1272–1290), could not be ended in spite of all the efforts made by Andrew III (1290–1301); after his death the Arpadian dynasty, a three-century old Christian ruling house, died out. This was the one and only purely Hungarian dynasty in the history of Hungary.

During the crisis, at the end of the 13th century and the beginning of the 14th, the Hungarian Kingdom was close to disintegration. Power was in the hands of some magnates, who imposed their authority in the territories they dominated as sovereigns. Transylvania, with its old separate tradition, could not let this opportunity pass, and under Roland (Lorand) Borşa, Voivode of Transylvania and Count of Solnoc (1282–1294, with interruptions), the estates, headed by the nobility, set up a congregational regime in their area of authority, called *regnum Transilvanum*, a country with a distinct organization from *regnum Hungariae*.

Ladislas Kán followed Roland Borşa as voivode in 1294. He not only took the already established political approach, but he also gave the voivodate a greater autonomy and became, at one moment, the strongest dynast of Hungary. Besides his title of Voivode of Transylvania, Ladislas Kán held the title of *comes* of Solnoc and *comes* of the Saxons and Szeklers as well, dominating the situation in eastern Hungary and, often, in the entire kingdom for more than two decades. He was not afraid to disregard the will of the Pope and of the other high officials of the kingdom, seize assets and appropriate incomes that were legally the king's, seize episcopal estates, remove and appoint bishops or defy any kind of authority. After the death of King Andrew III (1301) and the beginning of the fight for succession, Voivode Ladislas' sovereign authority knew no bounds. In 1307, he seized all the assets of the Transylvanian bishopric, placed his men in the episcopal palace of Alba-Iulia, organized an ad-hoc "council" and made the canons appoint his son, a child, as bishop of the country. The clergy who opposed him were arrested and released only after they had accepted the unusual bishop. Imitating the king, Ladislas Kán set up a "court" in Deva, with a *iudex curie*, a High Steward, a proto-notary and notaries, in other words with a sort of council and chancellery, as in the case of independent states.

During the lasting fights over the throne, the Voivode of Transylvania became, at one point, the "referee" for the situation in Hungary. Wenceslas, the son of the king of Bohemia and Poland, Duke Otto of Bavaria and Charles Robert of Anjou, the son of the King of Naples, all related by feminine descent,

engaged in the fight for the throne. Against the will of the Pope, who had given the throne to Charles Robert, Otto declared himself king. The Archbishop of Strigonium (Esztergom) excommunicated Otto, and the Archbishop of Calocea (Kalocsa) excommunicated the Voivode of Transylvania, potentially loyal to him. In response, Ladislas Kán seized Almaş from the Archbishop of Kalocsa. In March 1307, Charles Robert arrived in Timişoara to look for support and decided to build a fortress, while Otto of Bavaria came to Transylvania, to Bistriţa, for the very same reason. Here, for the promised support and marriage with the daughter of Voivode Ladislas, he gave the latter the kingdom's crown "for safekeeping." However, holding now the crown, the symbol of power, La-dislas Kán had the confident throne contender arrested and gave his daughter to the son of Serbian King Stephen Milutin, the future King Stephen De-čanski, in order to close a new political alliance. The rhymed chronicle of Ottokar of Styria—*Oesterreichische Reimchronik*—reads that "duke" Ladislas of Transylvania sent the contender Otto of Bavaria as prisoner to a "duke" (*Her-zog*) of the Romanians (*Walachen*), "beyond the forests" or "over the forested mountains" (*über Walt*).[1] Nevertheless, in the summer of 1308, duke Otto was already free and could go back to Bavaria, passing through Halics and Prussia. Looking at the German contender's way back home, we could locate the coun-try of that duke, or Romanian voivode, Ladislas' vassal, somewhere in Mara-mureş or northern Moldavia, where there is other evidence showing some in-cipient Romanian states existed in the 12th–13th centuries.

As a result of these harsh disputes between Hungary and Transylvania, the Pope made a strong intervention and sent Cardinal Gentile there, and he made the Diet appoint Charles Robert as king. However, without a coronation, the king's authority was only partial, and the royal crown was in the hands of Voi-vode Ladislas, who, defying the cardinal, refused to give back the symbol of power. Moreover, Kán prevented the Saxon representatives—who had been on the side of Otto of Bavaria—from seeing Cardinal Gentile and ordered Saxon priests, against the established system and under threat, to give the ecclesiastical tithe to the bishop of Alba-Iulia. However, the Saxons rose against him and, in February 1308, they attacked and ravaged the deaconry of Alba-Iulia. Due to these unusual acts, the cardinal excommunicated the "great prince" (as the voivode of Transylvania is called in some documents), together with all his devotees, from counts and palatines to serfs. He set 2 February 1310 as a deadline for the return of the crown.[2] The reason given for the excommu-nication was the marriage of the voivode's daughter to a "schismatic." The

1. "Ottokars Oesterreichische Reimchronik", ed. J. Seemüller, in *Monumenta Germaniae His-torica, Deutsche Chroniken und andere Geschichtbücher des Mittelalters*, Hannover, V, 2, 1893, p. 1152–1154.
2. *DIR, C, Veacul XIV*, vol. I, p. 172–173.

excommunication impact, which seriously affected a great part of the Transylvanian population, made the voivode, long after the deadline, on 8 April 1310, state publicly that he recognized King Charles Robert as the legitimate sovereign. He also promised, on condition that he would be granted honors and rewards, to render the crown by 1 July 1310 and give back all the royal estates (the silver mines of Rodna, the counties of Bistriţa, Sibiu and that of the Saxons, the properties of Dej, Cojocna and Sic, with all the income generated by those salt mines) that he had appropriated.[3] The document issued at Szeged, with the details of these clauses and arrangements underline the pride of Voivode Ladislas, who sets terms to the king; his enormous power, now firmly extended over the Szeklers and Saxons (contrary to the privileges of these ethnic groups) and over the bishopric of Transylvania and some important royal assets.

As a result, the crown was finally returned and the terms were generally respected. The king came to Transylvania in 1310, but the relationship between the two was never cordial and the fights to bring the voivodate back under royal control lasted for almost another 10 years. In the first years following the agreement closed with the king, voivode Ladislas continued to act as a monarch. In 1311, he refused to follow the king in an expedition against another rebel, Mathew Csák from Slovakia, and yet in 1315, when the king tried to place garrisons in the Transylvanian fortresses, the same voivode opposed armed resistance to the royal troops. After his death, the very same year, the voivode's two sons entered an alliance of the discontented, with the old Palatine Jacob Kopasz, the Köszegi and Gutkeled families, Mathew Csák, Moys Ákos and others. Thus, an uprising was being planned with the knowledge and help of some neighboring monarchs like Andrew, the knez of Halics, Stephen Uros II, the king of Serbia, and probably even Basarab, the voivode of Wallachia. Kán's successor, Nicolas Pok, appointed by King Charles Robert, could not fulfill his duties; battles were fought, like that at Deva in 1316, or Bonţida, in 1318, when the new voivode, Dózsa of Debrecen, fought against Moys, the son of Moys, ally of the Borşa rebels. Only after 1320 did Voivode Thomas Szécsényi finally defeat Ladislas Kán's sons, who had held control over a part of Transylvania for a long time, through wide properties and fortresses like Salgo (near Sibiel) and Ciceu (near Dej). When the Transylvanian nobility was pacified, Voivode Thomas started a fight against the Saxons, who—as we have seen—had attacked Alba-Iulia in 1308. Transylvania's reputation as a "rebel country" and Charles Robert's victory had negative consequences on the nobles that had chosen to resist under Ladislas Kán and his sons; still, the prestige of the voivodate and the relative autonomy of the country compared to the rest

3. Fr. Zimmermann, C. Werner (Hrsg.), *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. I, p. 295-296 (hereafter cited as *Ub.*).

of the kingdom could not be erased. On the contrary, the voivodes would have larger attributions and more dignities. Thus, Dózsa of Debrecen (1318–1321) would become *comes* of Solnoc, and "judge appointed by the king" for the counties of Bihor, Szabolcs, Satu Mare, Solnoc and Crasna, located outside voivodal Transylvania (where the rebels had serious social-economic and military headquarters). Besides other titles, Thomas Szécsényi (1322–1342) had also those of *comes* of Sibiu (of the Saxons) and *comes* of Arad. And, the examples could go on.

Under the second Angevin monarch, Louis I (1342–1382), the tendencies to homogenize the multi-ethnic kingdom of Hungary continued on many levels, but with minimum results. The feudal anarchy and the centrifugal actions of some provinces continued under the reign of Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387–1437), who had to do something about the Ottoman threat even though as a Roman-German king, and then Emperor (1410–1437), he was more drawn to Central and Western European issues. All this time, Transylvania kept a separate organization.

3. The Territorial-Administrative Structure of the Country

3.1. General Aspects

MEDIEVAL SOCIETY WAS, by its nature, uneven and non-unitary. In Transylvania, this medieval feature is enhanced by the collision between West and East on the voivodate's territory and in the neighboring regions, by the Hungarian conquest and colonization, by the Western feudal pattern transposed over Byzantine or southeastern European feudal realities, and by the daily contacts between Roman and eastern religions.

This is reflected in the central and local administration of the voivodate, whose basic features were set at the end of the 13ᵗʰ century and in the 14ᵗʰ century. This governing system tended to take two intersecting directions, which completed each other: 1) to create autonomous and privileged territorial-social and territorial-ethnic areas for the nobles, Saxons and Szeklers, distinct from each other, which were to be represented in congregations; 2) to reduce progressively, with some comebacks, the Romanian institutions, of Roman-Byzantine origin and Byzantine-Slavic influence, limit or eliminate the territorial-political units organized and maintained in places by Romanians and exclude the latter as a group from congregations. As a result of this development, the territory of the country was divided into nobiliary counties, Szekler seats, Saxon seats (plus two districts) and Romanian districts.

3.2. The Counties

THE TRANSYLVANIAN COUNTIES were severely changed as compared to their early stages (they are mentioned in documents, as we have seen, in the 12th century already). First, we notice the clear tendency to build the nobiliary county on the ruins of the royal county. The royal fortresses network had been falling apart since the end of the 13th century, and some of the servants (*servientes*) from these fortresses became members of the petty nobility. However, the donation as feuds of some lands with fortresses affected most of the freemen living there, who began to lose their free status and increasingly depended on the landlords. By the beginning of the 14th century the process was generally complete. Thus, the nobiliary organization of the counties was set up, whose governing (and judicial) bodies included a count (*comes*) appointed by the voivode, a viscount appointed by the count, two nobiliary judges (*iudices nobilium*) and six nobiliary jurors. This system functioned in the voivodate's counties (Solnocul Interior, Dăbâca, Cluj, Turda, Alba, Hunedoara and Târnave). In the western counties (Satu Mare, Crasna, Solnocul de Mijloc, Solnocul Exterior, Bihor, Zarand, Arad), in the county of Maramureş and the counties of Banat (Timiş, Cenad, Caraş, Torontal) (with uncertain borders and overlaps with temporary counties like Horom, Cuvin and Somlyó), four nobiliary judges and twelve jurors were elected, just as in Hungary. The count or viscount and the nobiliary judges from the western counties would assist the Palatine in running the general assemblies held in these counties. The count (viscount), the two nobiliary judges and the six jurors from each Transylvanian county would assist the voivode in running the general assemblies of the voivodate.[4] The count (viscount), the nobiliary judges and the jurors would form the judicial seat (*sedes iudiciaria*) of the county.

The separate organization of the Transylvanian counties, the evident predominance of the nobility within them, this nobility specific with some particular customs set the institutional and territorial bases of nobiliary autonomy.

3.3. The Szekler Seats

THE SZEKLERS' ORGANIZATION was greatly influenced by its border-guarding military role, established by the Hungarian kings when this ethnic group was settled in eastern Transylvania, among the Romanians, as Simon of Keza writes in 1283–1285. After some organizational instability, reflected also in the terminology (*terra, districtus*), beginning in the 14th century, more exactly in 1321–

4. *DIR, C, Veacul XIV*, vol. IV, p. 632.

1327 and 1366, the Szeklers' territorial divisions are called seats (*sedes*). Apparently, the Szekler seats were established a few decades later than the Saxon ones, and their name comes from "judicial seat" (*sedes iudiciaria*), widely common in the Medieval world. Documents list, in general, seven Szekler seats: Odorhei (originally called Telegd)—the most important of them all—, then Mureş, Ciuc, Arieş—the only one isolated on county territory—, Sepsi, Kezdi, and Orbo. By the end of the 14th century, smaller seats had broken off from the others, like Micloşoara (from Sepsi) and Caşin (from Ciuc). Szekler seat management was gradually constituted, combining local tradition with the civil and military administration requirements of the Hungarian Kingdom and Transylvania. At the beginning, the highest officer was the seat commander (mentioned in 1324 at Ciuc), a military leader with judicial responsibilities. Latin documents (from 1307 and 1309) call the military leader *primipilus*, but soon after the term captain and then grand captain (*supremus capitaneus*) was used. Besides the captain, another officer was the local judge (*iudex terrestris*), recorded in 1381[5], and later called seat judge (*iudex sedis*). He and the seat captain were presiding over the seat court of judgment. At first, the entire community could attend trials, but as tribal relationships would break down, the main role would be held by the captains, from among whom the jurors (often 12) were appointed. In 1426, the royal judge was also mentioned in documents, as the seat representative of the Szeklers' count (*comes*) and, consequently, of the king. He controlled the justice in the seat, saw that the count's orders were respected and collected taxes. He was appointed by the count, from among his "acquaintances" or lesser vassals. The highest officer, with authority over all seats, was the Szeklers' count (*comes Siculorum*), is first mentioned in the 13th century. He was appointed—and removed—by the king not from among the Szeklers, but from the Hungarian aristocrats. He had the highest military, judicial and administrative responsibilities, being also a Crown's instrument of control over the Szeklers. For a while, The Szeklers' *comes* had under his jurisdiction Saxon lands too, or more precisely the counties of Braşov and Bistriţa and the seats of Mediaş and Şeica. Sometimes, the Szeklers' *comes* was also the *comes* of other counties like Maramureş and Satu Mare (like Andrew Lackfy, 1340–1351). When the Transylvanian voivode was also the Szeklers' count—as in the case of John Hunyadi, for example—, then the country's vice-voivode was also the Szeklers' viscount.

The *comes* would gather and preside over general assemblies (congregations) of all seats or of one of them. This kind of assembly was first mentioned in 1344; until the middle of the 15th century, they mainly served as a forum of appeals for legal cases.

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5. *Székely Oklevéltár*, vol. IV, p. 78 (hereafter cited as *Sz. Okl.*).

3.4. The Saxon Seats

The saxon social organization was more advanced than the Szeklers' because when they arrived in Transylvania they were in a higher stage of development. In the 14th–15th century, urban aristocracy gained importance and imposed its control (especially after 1400) over the Saxon territorial organizations, replacing the *comes*. In the Saxon settlements, the first wider territorial units were also formally called counties, which most certainly changed after 1244, when the seat organization was established within one great county, between Orăştie to the west and Baraolt to the east. The Saxon seats (*sedes*) are first mentioned in documents in 1302–1349, as follows: Sibiu, Sebeş, Cincu, Rupea (Kozd or Cohalm), Orăştie, Nocrich (Alţina) and Miercurea, then Sighişoara and, later, Mediaş and Şeica. If we ignore the last three, at the beginning, until around 1300, the number of the seats in the "county" or "province" of Sibiu was seven (including Sibiu). The Saxon rulers, and also the count, were the seat and royal judges (*comes Saxonum*).

Almost a century after the "Andreanum," between 1325 and 1329, the administrative and legal system of the "province of Sibiu" was reorganized, maybe also due to the Saxon uprising of 1324, when, headed by *Comes* Henning from Petreşti, they unsuccessfully rose up against the Voivode Thomas Szécsényi, who was threatening their autonomy. Thus, the king eliminated the office of *comes* of Sibiu that some powerful Transylvanian voivodes had held. Charles Robert set up a royal judge (*iudex regis*), first mentioned in 1329, to rule the Saxon seats. Appointed from among the *comes*, the royal judges held the same seat responsibilities as the *comes* and their deputies before them, over the entire Sibiu "county."[6] The seat judges (*iudices sedium*), elected from each seat, assisted and were subordinated to royal judges. The seat judge position already existed in the 14th century, although the sources mention it only in 1413, as *iudices sedium*, and on 1440, as *iudices terrestres* (local judges). The royal and seat judges initially judged with the entire local community present, but they, and the jurors, played the main role. Only the important cases, out of the seat judges' competence, reached this forum. The royal and seat judges played also an administrative-fiscal role, in tax distribution and collection, but also a military role in gathering the contingent Saxons owed to the central power. Yet, compared to the Szeklers, the Saxons had smaller military roles, and this is the reason they did not have a special officer with mainly military duties.

The Seven Seats of the "Sibiu province"—named as such according to a 1355 source—held their own general assembly (congregation)—higher than the seat assembly—, dealing with the major, mostly legal, problems of the com-

6. *DIR, C, Veacul XIV*, vol. II, p. 266.

munity. Between two congregations, the town council of Sibiu, turned into a court of appeals for the whole "province" and for all the German groups outside it, would deal with the regular issues of the community. In the 14ᵗʰ century, the seats of Mediaş and Şeica remained outside the "province" (with this administrative status until the 15ᵗʰ century, when the Saxon University was set up), which in 1315 and 1318 were able to follow the Sibiu law, along with the districts of Braşov and Bistriţa.[7] The latter were somewhat differently organized than the seats. The district of Braşov was run by the royal judge or count—who, at that time, was the Szeklers' count—and by a judge-count, elected by the "guests" of this land. In the second half of the 15ᵗʰ century, the town (and at the same time the district) judge, elected by the community, took over the responsibilities of the royal *comes* of Braşov.[8] The district of Bistriţa was initially the queen's property. Until the second half of the 15ᵗʰ century, the Bistriţa district was also run by a royal count, the same person as the Szeklers' count. In 1330, the colonists here claimed and received from the queen the right to choose their own local *comes* or judge and stop being judged by the voivode of Transylvania or other high officers. In 1366, King Louis I consolidated the Bistriţa Saxons' autonomy, deciding that the judge and jurors would judge the cases with the royal *comes* or his deputies; Sibiu was set up as forum of appeals, or in other words a Transylvanian Saxon center.[9]

Removing the royal counts' jurisdiction in the districts of Braşov and Bistriţa, obtaining the right to elect the royal judges in the Seven and the Two (Mediaş and Şeica) Seats, having a single religion and a shared legal system—with the court of appeals lodged in Sibiu—, all these created the bases for the unification of all Saxon groups within a wider territorial and political organization. This was established in the second half of the 15ᵗʰ century and was called "The Saxon University" (*Universitas Saxonum*). It was the best expression of territorial autonomy for the Transylvanian Saxons, and it would even develop later, during the time of the principality.

3.5. The Romanian Districts

THE ROYAL HUNGARIAN authorities did not grant to theconquered and subdued Romanians the global advantages and privileges awarded to the other populations which had come in compact groups into Transylvania. Therefore, they tried to survive under the new conditions and adapt the former territorial-ad-

7. *Ub.*, vol. I, p. 77, 316, 322; vol. II, p. 111, 167, 228, 326, 449, 501, 536; vol. III, p. 155, 289-290; vol. IV, p. 23, 35.
8. *Ub.*, vol. II, p. 94, 364, 368, 536; vol. IV, p. 164.
9. *Ub.*, vol. I, p. 438; vol. II, p. 250.

ministrative institutions to Western realities. The Romanian territorial orga-
nization, of Roman origin, polished during the co-existence with the Slavs, but
also influenced by other migrating populations, consisted in countries (*terrae*),
knezates (counties), voivodates (duchies) and, more seldom, boyar estates.
Their presence is recorded in narrative sources in the 9th century, and in the
documentary sources starting in the 12th century. Within these units (some
were even state nuclei) there functioned political, social-economic, legal, mili-
tary and religious institutions, similar to those from south and east of the Carpa-
thians and partially reflected in sources. The number of documentary sources
increased as the needs of the feudal society amplified and royal Hungarian
control spread over the new territories. It is known that, until about 1400, le-
gal documents covered only a little more than a third of the Transylvanian
territory. Romanian realities—including the territorial organization—remained
quasi-unknown, as they were not mentioned in written documents. They co-
existed for a while with the new organizational structures: counties, Saxon and
Szekler seats.

In the 14th century, the intra-Carpathian Transylvanian territory was, *de
jure*, divided into three distinct structures, dominated by the nobility (the coun-
ties), and the Saxons and Szeklers (the districts, and the districts of Braşov and
Bistriţa). Apparently, all Romanian territorial organization units had dissap-
peared. Yet, as effective royal control over the territory was spreading, on noble
lands (counties) and the Saxon and Szekler lands (particularly, the seats),
Romanian territorial structures, those which had managed to survive and adapt,
emerged in the voivodate proper, or in Banat or the Western Marches. At first,
the authorities called these Romanian enclaves as their inhabitants, the Ro-
manians, did—countries (*terrae*), voivodates, *knezates*. However, after 1300,
under certain conditions, the term "district of the Romanians" (*districtus Vala-
chorum*) became more common. The districts were territories relatively well
defined geographically (on valleys, depressions, etc.). Many of them were the
cores of old political structures, where the Romanian population had managed
to stay together. Most of these districts were recorded in documents in the 14th–
15th centuries, when the former *knezates* broke down into villages or even vil-
lage components, owned by right of inheritance by knezes or ennobled knezes.
In other words, the district elite was mostly made up of knezes (judges), who
remained free and, in general, owners of whole villages or parts thereof (lands
and serfs), with military tasks, Orthodox church builders, owners of estates and
even of stone fortresses with tower-dwellings. The initially relatively uniform
and unitary Romanian elite (the knezes) gradually formed a hierarchy. The
knezes of the open areas, accessible and long under the king's control, turned
from masters into subjects, just like their people. Those from more isolated
areas, protected by the geography, where the kingdom's domination was as-

serted later, indirectly and formally, kept their old prerogatives largely intact for a long time. Until the Angevin reign, these last Romanian knezes (voivodes), from more remote areas, traditionally ruled their *knezates* unchallenged. Still, under Louis I and later, due to the circumstances described below, the Romanian knezes that still owned lands had two options: to try and get a royal diploma certifying their ownership as knezes and then nobles, or to fall amongst the subjects if they did not get this kind of document. Still, those who got the writ in question remained the district elite and still managed local affairs.

Today, around 60 Romanian districts are known in Transylvania and the neighboring counties of the west and north of the province. Most of them survived in Banat (33), but the first to be mentioned in writing, as *terrae*, are those of Făgăraş, Crişana and Hunedoara, at the end of the 12th century and the first half of the following century. Some districts could survive, reorganize and adapt around royal fortresses and depended on the latters' inhabitants, even if at the beginning they enjoyed a certain autonomy by virtue of tradition. Other districts passed, fortresses and all, into private (noble) ownership as royal donations, surviving, in smaller and subdued forms, on the lay and ecclesiastic feudal estates. The districts were run by assemblies dominated by knezes, but most Romanian political structures were dissolved under the new realities.

Geographically, most of the Romanian districts are mentioned in the regions where Hungarian domination was imposed more slowly and later. Some examples are Făgăraş (mentioned as "The Romanians' country" in 1222), lying between the Transylvanian Olt River and the Southern Carpathians, and the district of Haţeg (mentioned as *terrae* in 1247, connected to Litovoi's voivodate in Oltenia), located in a depression south of the Mureş, stretching to the Jiu River Valley.[10] In the county of Hunedoara, outside Haţeg, in 1360–1377, the districts of Hunedoara, Deva, Dobra and Strei were also mentioned. From time to time, the captains of the five Hunedoara districts would hold joint assemblies.[11] The most important districts of Banat were mentioned after 1343–1347: Ilidia, Almăj, Sebeş, Caran (united into Caransebeş), Caraşova, Bârzava, Comiat, Lugoj and Mehadia. The eight chief districts of Banat (located on the territory of Severin Banat and in the counties of Caraş and Timiş) had close administrative-judicial connections that royalty certified through a privilege, granted in 1457, which acknowledged their old freedoms, as a reward for the Romanian knezes' and nobles' merits during the anti-Ottoman fight.[12] How-

10. See A.A. Rusu, I.A. Pop, I. Drăgan, *Izvoare privind evul mediu românesc—Ţara Haţegului în secolul al XV-lea*, vol. I (1402–1473), Cluj-Napoca, 1989, *passim*.

11. Lukinich E. (coord.) et al., *Documenta historiam Valachorum in Hungaria illustrantia usque ad annum 1400 p. Christ.*, Budapest, 1941, p. 233, 326-327.

12. E. Hurmuzaki, *Documente privitoare la istoria românilor*, vol. II, part 2, Bucharest, 1890, p. 94-95 (hereafter cited as *Hurmuzaki*).

ever, most of the districts of Banat, like those of Zarand, Bihor, Crasna, Satu Mare, Cluj, Solnoc or Dăbâca, did not have their old freedoms acknowledged in writing. In the 14th–15th centuries, some of the Romanian districts of Banat were influenced by and then integrated into the Severin Banat, a border structure created by the Hungarians (along an Avar-Slavic model). Nevertheless, for a long period in the 14th century, until the reign of Mircea the Elder (1386–1418), the unit was run, with interruptions, by the voivodes and rulers of Wallachia and it developed, from the initial great unity, into two areas: one called *bănie*, under Wallachian authority, and another called *banat*, under Hungarian authority, bordered by the Southern Carpathians.

Besides Făgăraş, Haţeg and Banat, another strong and lasting Romanian organization structure appeared in the 15th century in Maramureş. Maramureş was an old political structure, made up of a few valley *knezates*, whose rulers, called knezes, would meet regularly in an assembly where, among other things, they would elect the voivode, the head of all the Maramureş country.[13] Thus, Maramureş was a voivodate-country which, from around 1300, the authorities sought to better integrate into the royal structures. In 1300, Maramureş was called *terra*, and in 1326 *districtus*. To rule along with the traditional voivodes of the country, royalty introduced the position of the *comes*, theoretically as early as 1303. However, the new office and the related institutions could not be maintained in the first part of the 14th century. Still, some of the local Romanian feudal lords from Maramureş were drawn to work with the authorities for certain advantages received through ennoblement and ownership certification; other feudal lords rose up in 1342–1343, resisted the pressure for about 20 years and then moved to Moldavia, where they led other Romanian territorial units to independence. The county of Maramureş was fully set on the ruins of the former voivodate or district in 1368 or so, when the nobiliary judges and county assemblies are first mentioned. The voivode's position co-existed with that of the *comes* after this date, and they were sometimes held by the same person, like Baliţă, for example (from 1373), who shared the positions for a while with his brother Drag. Maramureş is the only Romanian region included in the Hungarian Kingdom which changed entirely from voivodate-country to county (following a short intermediate period as a district). When most of the leading knezes of Maramureş were won over by the crown, the voivodate melted slowly into the homonymous nobiliary county.

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13. I. Mihalyi, *Diplome maramureşene din sec. XIV-XV*, Sighet, 1900, *passim*.

4. Economy and Society

4.1. Rural and Urban Economy

THE MIDDLE AGES were by definition the time of a rural world, made up of feudal lords (landowners) and serfs, bound to the land by close relationships. Growing plants and raising animals were the main occupations of the inhabitants, and remained largely unchanged until modern times. Numerous 14th century documents talk about deforested, turned or cleared lands. Cereals (grain)—millet, then wheat, barley, rye and oats—were usually grown through the two-field system and, seldom, after 1350, through the three-field system. The number of mills went up significantly. They also cultivated flax, hemp, vegetables, greens, fruit trees and grapevines. The large forests and vast grasslands offered good conditions for animal husbandry, this being absolutely necessary and complementary to plant cultivation. Yet, secondarily, the Transylvanians also practiced different crafts, trading and carting, and used currency. The country had gold, silver, copper, iron, salt, marble, stone, etc. as mineral resources, extracted by local miners or foreign "guests." Foreign privileged miners, especially German and Hungarian, were brought to Turda, Dej, Sic, Cojocna, Rimetea, Abrud, Zlatna, Roşia Montană, Baia de Arieş, Baia Mare, Baia-Sprie and Rodna. From the precious metals extracted, the eighth part of the gold and the tenth part of the silver went to the king as a tax called *urbură*. The mining areas would become royal property and that was why nobles were not interested in exploiting this sort of resource. In 1327–1328, King Charles Robert encouraged mining as he decided that precious metal mines would stay in the possession of their owners, who would also get a third of the *urbură*.[14]

Crafts had a long tradition in the rural world, where farmers would also practice pottery, carpentry, milling, furriery, etc. Nevertheless, ironsmiths, shoemakers and tanners were more tied to their craft and apart from agriculture. From the 14th century onwards, crafts and trade dominated in boroughs and towns. In 1376, according to some documents, in Sibiu, Sighişoara, Sebeş and Orăştie there were 25 registered trades, organized in 19 guilds or unions of master craftsmen sharing common economic interests.[15] Around the middle of the 15th century, in Cluj, Sibiu, Braşov and Bistriţa the number of trades reached 40. Apart from their economic role, guilds also had political and military purposes: defend the towns, man and maintain the gates and towers, once the major towns had been surrounded with walls. The most developed towns

14. *DIR, C, Veacul XIV*, vol. II, p. 219-220; vol. III, p. 477, 538-539.
15. *Ub.*, vol. II, p. 449-452.

were those carrying out a blossoming trade, first locally, then with Wallachia and Moldavia and other foreign countries. In earlier times, only luxury items, such as weapons and spices were bought from town fairs, but from the 14th century the variety of goods on offer increased: harness items, clothing, footwear, cereals, wines, meat, etc were bought and sold. Generally, craftsmen would sell their own merchandise and buy agricultural products and raw materials. Many towns became centers of trade and foreign merchants had to buy their merchandise exclusively from that market; on the other hand, some towns obtained warehouse rights, where the merchants passing through with merchandise had to unpack their products. Like elsewhere, the central power influenced the life of towns through the privileges it granted to some, backing them up in their dispute with the lay and ecclesiastic feudality. Thus, towns like Sibiu, Cluj, Braşov, Bistriţa, etc. benefited from trade incentives, customs taxes exemptions and guild recognitions which guaranteed them prosperity and turned them into an important source of income for the royal treasury. Foreign relations were run with Buda, Vienna, Prague, Liov (Lemberg) and Krakow. However, the most developed towns were still Braşov, Sibiu, Bistriţa and Cluj, in other words the towns trading intensively with Wallachia and Moldavia. Complementary economies made these exchanges vital to Transylvania and to the Romanian countries south and east of the Carpathians, which is why they were predominant. From the time of Vladislav-Vlaicu (1364–1377) and Alexander the Good (1399–1431), Wallachian and Moldavian voivodes used privileges to encourage mutual trade relations, although the Transylvanians had more to gain given the Hungarian policy of expansion towards the Black Sea, and Romanian princes pressed ardently for equal opportunities.

4.2. The Urban World

THE URBAN POPULATION grew due to natural increase and to fugitives from the feudal lands. Between 1450–1500, the most populated Transylvanian towns were Braşov, with 9,000–10,000 inhabitants, then Sibiu and Cluj, with 8,000 each, Sighişoara and Bistriţa, with 3,000-4,000 inhabitants each. In the Western Marches and Banat, Oradea and Timişoara had 5,000 inhabitants each. Ethnically speaking, until the middle of the 14th century, all of the approximately 150 towns of Hungary had a dominant German population, given the intense urban colonization encouraged by the kings, and the fact that here Germans were the creators of urban life, in the Western sense of the word. It was the same in Transylvania, although, after 1350, the Hungarian population started to grow in number, not only in boroughs, but also in towns. In Cluj, for example, where the power had been held exclusively by the German elite, af-

ter 1458 Saxon and Hungarian rulers shared the local offices equally. In some towns, like Oradea and Satu Mare, until late in the 16th century, there were urban communities ethnically differentiated, with separate administrative bodies. Generally, Romanians were living on the outskirts of towns, in compact areas, some operating like true twin towns, as it was the case with the Şchei of Braşov; others dominated or lived in boroughs, particularly in southern Transylvania and Banat. Rarely, as for a short time in Orăştie, they were involved (as individuals) with the Saxons and Hungarians in the town administration. Usually, as Germans and then Hungarians held the monopoly over urban life, and Romanian civilization was mostly agricultural-pastoral and Orthodox, Romanians had little access to towns.

Urban population varied according to different criteria, from ethnic and professional to financial and social. In general, there would be a thin upper class, usually called patriciate and made up of rich merchants and traders, which, after 1350, started to replace the former aristocracy of rural and, sometimes, noble or semi-noble origin.[16] The middle category of the townsmen came next, the most numerous, represented by craftsmen, merchants, teachers, notaries, doctors, clerks, etc. Finally the lower class or plebs was made of serfs, trained workers and apprentices, town-settled peasants and seasonal workers. The town was governed by a council (magistrate) of 12 jurors, headed by the judge or, in boroughs (and some towns), by the *villicus*, all elected yearly from among the most prominent townsmen. After 1350, in certain towns like Sibiu, Sighişoara, Mediaş, Orăştie and temporarily Braşov, the judge was the royal judge of that seat (district), appointed by the king; this is why the townsmen elected a local judge as well, called *Bürgermeister* or *magister civium*. Later, the two offices would be held by the same person.

4.3. Social Structures and Hierarchies

THE TOWNS WERE, in a way, an exception to the feudal social model, which comprised feudal lords, clergy and peasants. Saxon society was another exception, as it was privileged and free. It was made up of a great number of free peasants (with duties only to the Roman Church and to the king), townsmen and *comes*. The Szekler community was also atypical, greatly privileged and made of *tria genera Siculorum* (1339)[17], or captains (*seniores, primores*), riders (*primipili*) and infantrymen (*pixidarii*), mentioned in texts from 1396–1407. The categories are defined along military criteria, as the Szekler society itself was essentially mili-

16. *Ub.*, vol. II, p. 33, 85, 611; vol. III, p. 48.
17. *Sz. Okl.*, p. 48, 220.

tarized. The villages were divided into *decuria* which formed centuries and then greater units, organized and managed within each seat. Of course, the Szekler infantrymen were also peasants, more animal breeders than farmers, because the arable land was less fertile and the climate rougher. The Szeklers' status of freemen in their seats was preserved throughout this period.

Romanians had a traditional feudal society, of the eastern type with Byzantine-Slavic influence, made of knezes (judges), as small lay feudal lords, priests and commoners; however, these structures were going through a full process of dissolution and adaptation. Thus, the feudal society, closer to its Western pattern, existed only in the counties, in those administrative units under the jurisdiction of the nobility, where most inhabitants were serving peasants (serfs). Nobility was also leveled, apart from its uniform judicial status, guaranteed by the royal regulation of 1351. Between the aristocracy, or *barones*, *comites*, *prelati*, who were directly involved in the administration of the country, and the petty nobles (owning a "*mausus*" or "a fee"), there is a substantial middle layer, the middle nobles. In Transylvania, nobility in general, unless newly arrived from Hungary and granted with lands (13th–14th centuries), came from the former freemen (*milites*, *servientes regis*, *iobagiones castri* etc.), serving the Crown in fortresses and the adjacent lands. Some of these noble families (clans) coming from Hungary and being awarded lands in Transylvania, around 1200 and afterwards, were: Kán, Wass, Kacsics, Losonci Tomaj, with their branches Losonci, Bánffy and Dezsőfi, then Zsámboki, Kökényes-Radnót, Becse-Gergely (from which later descended families like Bethlen, Apafi and Somkereki Erdélyi, playing a fundamental role in the political, social, economic and cultural life of the country, until the modern era), etc. Like anywhere else in Europe, Transylvanian nobility had two features: it held estates (lands and servants) and had military duties. In fact, the "loyal services" represented a prerequisite for ennoblement for all privileged classes. In Transylvania, the lord–vassal system took the form of familiarity (*familiaritas*), meaning that aristocrats had a series of vavasours (housemen, *familiares*), small owners, with *auxilium et consilium* duties. A few aristocratic families (clans) controlled over 25–50 villages, the middle nobles over 10–20, and the petty nobles, under 10 villages, but most often 1–2 villages and sometimes parts of villages. In Transylvania, the great landowners were the Roman Church and the king, as the Hungarian feudal law, which did not accept primogeniture (as did Romanian feudal law), favored lands division. Not only was nobility heterogeneous, but it was also constantly renewing and changing. Under the Angevins (1308–1382) and, mostly, under the rule of Louis I, it was intended to strengthen central power by raising a new nobility to support the dynasty, from the petty nobles, Szekler and Saxon captains and even Romanian knezes. King Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387–17437) followed similar goals, under changed

conditions and through more various means. This however did not put an end to the fight for power and centrifugal tendencies, which split the country several times (1301–1320, 1382–1387, 1401–1403, 1440–1444, etc). Nevertheless, by precise means, nobility held power exclusively in society, a power they exercised with an amazing force. A way to strengthen the nobles' power was the writ of immunity on their lands.

At the opposite pole was the serving peasantry (serfs) living on feudal (noble, ecclesiastic) lands, in the serf villages. They had ownership rights over the house, courtyard, garden and agricultural inventory, as well as the right to use a plot of land (*mausus*) owned by the feudal lord in exchange for a series of duties. In the serf villages, the feudal lord sometimes controlled the mills or the inns and held monopoly over butchering, fishing and hunting, although such control was yet neither very strict nor generally applied.

Legally speaking, in the 14th–15th centuries, all serving peasants had generally much the same status, but their economic situation (assets and goods they could use) varied. There was a big difference between those holding an entire plot of land, eight oxen, horses, cows, swine and even hundreds of sheep and the ones holding parts of *mausus* and few animals. Several things threatened the peasants' position: *mausus* division and reduction, bad crops, wars (Ottoman attacks from the south), feudal anarchy (especially conflicts between neighboring nobles, between nobles and fortresses, between ecclesiastic and noble owners, between aristocrats and petty nobles to win over the labor force), etc. Under these conditions, the number of serfs (*inquilini*) increased, or in other words of the peasants without animals or even without a plot of land or house, who worked with their hands, often changing masters. However, in the 14th–15th centuries, there was a class of free peasants who were not serving the nobles. They were mostly Szekler or Saxon, living in the fully privileged seats, which guaranteed freedom to the population there. Among Romanians, the great feudal dependency established early between knezes and their people (*Olachi populani, iobagiones*), and materialized through property quotas that these subjects owed to knezes, was perfected and emphasized by two means: 1) donations made by Hungarian kings to their loyal nobles, who thus became landowners in Transylvania and subdued the entire population there; 2) Romanian knezes, in the peripheral regions where they had managed to remain landowners through ennoblement, adapted to the strict Western type of feudal society. Romanians became economically dependent as their lands were given to the Catholic Church (to bishoprics, monasteries) and to "guest" (*hospites*) groups sporadically present from Maramureş to Făgăraş and from Rodna to Banat. In the colonization documents of these "guests," it was often specified that they could and must collect the taxes from the locals. Theoretically, the Romanian peasants living on the lands donated to the great group of Saxon

"guests" and the Szekler military group, remained legally free, but they had to face a series of negative phenomena, like reduction or seizure of old properties, and the Szekler captains and Saxon *comes'* tendency to enter nobility and thus to have feudal subjects in the counties and behave like feudal lords, etc.

All peasantry categories had duties to Church and king; moreover, all inhabitants of Roman Catholic faith, including the nobility and even the king, had duties to this Church, only that the nobles' duties of this kind would be paid from the subjects' taxes or would become purely theoretical in time. The duty to the church was the ecclesiastic tithe, or the tenth part of all products, more frequently of crops and wine. Often, especially from the 15ᵗʰ century, the tithe would be converted into money, to the peasants' discontentment. The Orthodox Romanians owed tithe to the Church only abusively, but, unlike others, they had to give sheep (*quinquagesima ovium*) to the king—a sheep with a lamb and a ewe for every 50 sheep—just as the Szeklers would give oxen (*signatura bovum*), and Slovenians have to give marten skins, also called *mardurina (marturina)*. Due to its substantial quota and its quasi-generality to every part of the province, the sheep taxation individualized Transylvania and showed the great number of Romanians. The main tax paid to the state (king) was the *lucrum camerae* and was paid in money. To the serving peasant, the hardest and most numerous duties were those to the feudal lord, more precisely the tax (*census, terragium, fertones, collecta, taxa*), owed in money and varying in amount; the gifts (*munera, akones*), in kind and products (twist breads, hens, chicken, capons, eggs, cheese, etc.), collected for Christmas, Easter and at church celebrations (the peasants also had the duty to host—*descensus*—the king and voivode, with their entourage, which turned from honor into burden); *nona*, officially introduced in 1351, which was meant to spread a sporadic and uneven practice of giving to the master a share of the crops and wine; the swine and bee tithe; the labor duty (*robota*), meaning that the peasant had to participate in different works like reaping, mowing, plowing and sowing on the piece of land that the feudal lord was managing as a landowner. This range of duties in products, money and service to so many beneficiaries, frequent abuses, lack of safety, conflicts, fights for labor force and limitation of the right to free movement (after paying the duties, the serving peasants should have been allowed to leave for another property, as they pleased) led to the peasants' discontentment causing armed and violent riots; these were true *Jacqueries*, like the one in 1437–1438, called the Bobâlna Uprising.

4.4. The Peasant Revolts

THE PEASANTS' POSITION deteriorated at the beginning of the 15th century, when their military duties increased due to Ottoman attacks and when the ecclesiastic tithe or taxes to the landowner became harder to pay. The refusal to pay the tithe made the bishop of Transylvania, George Lepes, take a harsh measure—excommunicate the villages in default and threaten to cancel the excommunication only when the outstanding tithe was paid in the new and rare currency, which was ten times more valuable than the old one. The peasants, abandoned by the church and embittered, influenced by their leaders (Budai Nagy Antal, Michael the Romanian from Floreşti, and so on) by some ideas of the Czech Hussites, more exactly of the Taborites—rising up against the Roman church— rebelled. They gathered on Bobâlna Hill, next to Olpret (today Bobâlna) in the Dej area, and built a camp fortified on the Hussite model. There they drafted their claims (the abusive tithe was to be dropped, the excommunication cancelled and the right to free movement guaranteed) and sent four messengers (some of their captains) to voivode Ladislas Csáki. The latter tortured and killed the messengers and attacked the rebels, but lost his life during the battle won by the peasants. The nobles saw themselves forced to negotiate and close an agreement with the peasants, formalized by the meeting at Cluj-Mănăştur, on 6 July 1437. "The community of the Hungarian and Romanian inhabitants from this part of Transylvania" (*universitas regnicolarum Hungarorum et Valachorum huius partis Transsylvane*) secured a lot from the nobles: the tax was dropped to 10 dinars/year (instead of 1.5 florins; 1 florin = 100 dinars), the gifts were considerably reduced, the *robota* was set to a day/year; deductions and incentives were granted for the ecclesiastic tithe collection; the swine and bee tithe, the *nona*, the gifts called *ako* were removed, and the right to free movement was regulated and acknowledged. To see that all things agreed were respected, once a year, the peasants' leaders would hold an armed meeting on Bobâlna Hill.[18] Still, the violent clashes continued, and the nobility devised a plan: on 16 September 1437, at Căpâlna, the Transylvanian vice-voivode gathered, in the name of nobility, the Szekler and Saxon rulers. Thus, the three estates (nations) of Transylvania closed, for the first time, a "brotherly union" (*fraterna unio*), planning to help each other eliminate all internal and external dangers.[19] Shortly after that, a new undecided battle between rebels and nobles took place there and it was followed by another agreement (6 October 1437, at Apatiu)—also formalised at Cluj-Mănăştur—and much less advantageous for the peasants than the previous one.[20] The

18. *Hurmuzaki*, vol. I/2, p. 614-620.
19. *Ub.*, vol. IV, p. 638-640.
20. *Hurmuzaki*, vol. I/2, p. 623-627.

parties decided to turn to the king for arbitration. The king, however, could not come, as Sigismund of Luxembourg was dying (he died on 9 December 1437), and the new king, Albert of Habsburg, delayed his visit to the country. In the late autumn of 1437, the peasants won to their side most of the people from Cluj, took over the town and from there they attacked the noble villages. A new battle against the nobility, backed up by Hungary, ended in the peasants' defeat. Cluj also fell at the beginning of 1438. On February 2, at Turda, "the brotherly union" met again and took the last measures to eradicate all resistance and to start reprisals against the rebels.[21] The leaders were tortured and executed, and the participants hunted down, imprisoned, beaten and mutilated. Cluj lost its privileges for a time. The riot enlarged the gap between the privileged and the unprivileged and would forever place the Romanians, as a group, outside the decision-making estates.

5. Populations and Ethnic Groups

In the 13TH century, due to historical events, the Transylvanian population stagnated or decreased, in spite of new "guests" settling in. Some of the reasons were the failure of new colonization attempts, the Tartar-Mongolian invasion, migration towards the extra-Carpathian voivodates, conflicts, diseases, etc. According to estimates and comparisons, around the year 1300, the population of Transylvania (and the neighboring regions of the west) could have been of 400,000–500,000 inhabitants, and around 1450, a century and a half later, of 1,000,000. Consequently, the population density increased, in the same period, from 4-5 inhabitants/km² to 10 inhabitants/km². Until 1400, documents talk about around 3,900 localities in Transylvania (taken as a whole). A locality could have had an average of 200 inhabitants (or slightly more), which indicates a total population of about 700,000 inhabitants at that time. These estimates are very general and should remain purely orientative.

It is even more difficult to make estimates based on ethnic groups, since we lack certain and concordant data. Still, there are some precious clues. One of them is the papal tithes registry from 1332–1337,[22] which shows that in Transylvania (and the neighboring regions west and north) there were 954 localities with Catholic parishes. We can count approximately the total number of localities at the time this way: by 1300, 1,154 localities had been recorded, and by 1350, there were 2,552, which indicates that in 1330–1340 there could have been about 2,100–2,200 settlements (obviously, in the meantime some of them

21. *Hurmuzaki*, vol. XV/1, p. 24-25.
22. *DIR, C, Veacul XIV*, vol. III, p. 41-253.

had disappeared, but their loss can be compensated by those that hadn't yet been registered in documents); thus, the villages with Catholic parishes represented 43–45% of all the Transylvanian settlements, and the Catholic population could have represented between 34–40% of the entire population, as it is certain that in many settlements with Catholic parishes an Orthodox population also lived. Another clue in this respect comes from Antonio Bonfini and refers to the time of Louis I. Using internal sources, the Italian chronicler makes a survey of the Angevin king's Catholic proselytism and draws the conclusion that, at the end of his reign—around 1382—"according to all, in Hungary [the Roman] denomination was widespread and had increased to the point where more than a third of the kingdom was infused with the sacred custom."[23] Thus, it is estimated as a great accomplishment the fact that, in the multi-ethnic and multi-denominational Hungarian Kingdom, around 1380, more than a third of population was of Western Christian denomination. If that is the way things were in Hungary as a whole, it is realistic to admit that in Transylvania too Catholics could have represented 34–40% of the population, exactly as it was indicated in the papal tithe registry from the 1430s. This means that here the proselytism of the second Angevin king did not have significant outcomes. The link between denomination and ethnic group is obvious: the Catholic population was made up of Hungarians, Saxons and Szeklers (35–40%), and the Orthodox population could only have been made up of Romanians (plus a small number of Ruthenians and Serbs). Some partial data leads to the same conclusions. For example, in 1330 the Szeklers had 168 settlements with a parish, in the 14th century the Saxons had about 200 settlements on royal land, and Romanians, in Maramureş and Haţeg alone, had, in about year 1400, around 300. Subtracting the Saxon and Szekler parishes from the 954 Catholic parishes, we get to a number of 600-650 Hungarian parishes, which could be close to reality.

6. The Voivodate of Transylvania and the Voivode

TRANSYLVANIA WAS THE only region permanently included in the Hungarian Kingdom to be called a voivodate, and the holders of this office were the only ones who had the same title as the Wallachian and Moldavian rulers. Of course, the title somehow changed its meaning compared to that of the rulers south and east of the Carpathians.

23. A. Bonfinius, *Rerum Ungaricarum decades IV cum dimidia seu libri XLV*, Vienna, 1744, p. 274.

Theoretically, especially after Ladislas Kán's betrayal, the king appointed the Transylvanian voivodes from the high officers who had proved their loyalty to the crown through previous loyal services. The Angevins looked to strictly control and limit the voivodes' power, to avoid all centrifugal tendencies. Nevertheless, some voivodes, like Thomas Szécsényi, who ruled the country for 20 years (1322–1342), expanded their authority, and others set up real dynasties, like the Lackfy clan, six of them ruling between 1344 and 1376. Two members of the Csáki family were voivodes between 1415 and 1437. The voivodes would appoint their subordinates from among their trusted followers, who—from the vice-voivode to the counts and notaries—were accountable to the one who had granted them the offices. Sometimes, especially when the voivodes spent more time away from Transylvania, usually at the royal court, the vice-voivodes would effectively run the country, as happened with Lorand Lépes, between 1415 and 1438. In 1444–1445, he was also "governor" of Transylvania, as decided by Voivode John Hunyadi. On one occasion, between 1349–1351, Stephen, the brother of King Louis I, called himself "duke of Transylvania," a rank superior to that of voivode. From the 15th century, the voivode and vice-voivode offices would sometimes be held by two (or even three) people at the same time.

The voivode held the highest administrative, judicial and military attributions in Transylvania. Due to the privileged status granted by kings to Saxons and Szeklers and the temporary integration of the duchies (districts) of Amlaş and Făgăraş in Wallachia, the voivode's authority was limited to the seven counties mentioned earlier. Yet, for the period we are looking at, the voivodes also held almost constantly the title of *comes* of Solnoc, and some of them, as previously seen, that of Saxon (Sibiu) and Szekler count. This encouraged the Transylvanian rulers to control all the intra-Carpathian space and some Western regions. But, the seven counties themselves—Inner Solnoc, Dăbâca, Cluj, Turda, Alba, Hunedoara and Târnave—did not have a uniform legal status. Thus, some towns or boroughs near the salt mines or mines (Dej, Ocna Dejului, Turda, Baia de Arieş), Cluj, some episcopal and diocesan estates or estates belonging to Benedictine monasteries from Cluj-Mănăştur were formally removed from under the voivode's authority. This triggered constant conflicts, especially between the voivode and the Transylvanian bishopric. Nevertheless, voivodes took advantage of their position and often imposed their will, like it happened after the royal decision of 1344 (confirmed in 1395), which limited the judicial immunity of the bishopric in favor of the voivode.

Through their centralization policy and homogenization tendencies, the Angevin kings and Sigismund of Luxembourg wanted to restrict the Transylvanian voivodes' power, but their efforts did not bring the expected long-term results. This happened for many reasons: the separate tradition of Tran-

sylvania, its ethnic structure different from the rest of the kingdom, the important role that Transylvania and Banat had acquired in halting the Ottoman threat, the tight (economic, but also political, cultural and religious) relationships between Transylvania and Wallachia and Moldavia, etc.

7. The Estates or "Nations" of Transylvania; Estate Assemblies

ALL OVER EUROPE, in the feudal state evolution, at one moment there was a corporative governance stage of certain privileged groups, which together with the monarch took part in exercising or at least influencing power. These privileged groups are called estates. In general it is admitted that as political players, estates come from the tripartite structure of the feudal society: *oratores* or the ones who pray, the clergy; *bellatores* or those who fight, the noblemen; *laboratores* or those who work, meaning the free rural producers and, later, the urban workers. Towards the end of the 13th century, the representatives of these three estates set general (estate) assemblies, under different names (from General Estates in France to *Cortes* in the Iberian lands and from Parliament in England to *Seim* in Poland). Most of the time, this representation did not follow classic rules, as in Hungary, where the high nobles (aristocracy) and the high clergy formed an estate, and the middle and petty noblemen another. In some Central and Eastern European countries, like Hungary and the Romanian countries, the estate assemblies would be constantly held from the 15th century, but their history goes a long way back in time.

In Transylvania, the estates had a distinct composition, resulted from the country's conquest and integration into the Hungarian Kingdom, from tendencies of autonomy and the colonization and settlement here of new ethnic groups, particularly of the Saxons and the Szeklers. This way, the "estates" of Transylvania, set up or about to be established after the middle of the 13th century, were at the end of that century: the (lay and ecclesiastic) nobility, the Saxons, the Szeklers and the Romanians (in fact, their elite). As we can see, from their very beginning, these "estates" had a clear ethnic feature, as nobility officially represented the elite of the dominating Hungarians, identified with the state (even if the origin of this elite was heterogeneous); the Saxons were the "guests" (*hospites*), naturalized by now, but with a separate language, customs and laws; the Szeklers, they too had come here at a certain time, and were different by origin, traditions, organization and even spoken dialect (although their language was growing closer to Hungarian and eventually identified with it); Romanians, often mentioned last, were the most different of all, not only

by language, origin and traditions, but also by denomination, longevity, the position of subjects and by the existence, for some time, of some states of their people (ethnic group) neighboring Transylvania.

Because of this strong ethnic feature, the Transylvanian "estates" would be later formally called (around 1500), nations (*nationes*). Still in the 14th century, the political-elitist feature was stronger and more active: the estates were privileged groups (often by way of official writs) that took part in the exercise of power, but comprised in fact only the elite of an ethnic group, the free members at the most. In Transylvania, the estates held a territorial feature as well: the nobles lived and held estates in the seven counties (on noble lands), the Saxons were usually grouped on *Fundus Regius* (*Königsboden*) or the land offered by the king (Saxon land), and the Szeklers in the area where they had been settled for military purposes, in the east of the country (on Szeklers land or *Székelyföld*). It is true that, for a while, many Saxons (about a third) used to live on noble lands or under the Szekler count's authority; that some of the Saxon and Szekler elite were behaving like the nobles and that a few of them were ennobled; that some Szeklers used to live on noble lands, etc. Nevertheless, all these are merely exceptions to the rule, which stipulated that every estate had its own piece of the country. For Romanians, things were different, as they were conquered and subdued, spread almost all over the country. To a large extent, to the detriment of the lands inhabited and owned by Romanians (and other smaller ethnic groups) and of their incipient states, royal, noble, ecclesiastic lands and Saxon and Szekler autonomies were put in place. Surprised by this rapid development, sustained by the force of a state endowed with a religious mission, Romanians adapted with more difficulty to the new conditions, but eventually (a part of them) regrouped in more remote, protected by nature regions, like the Western Carpathians, Hațeg, Făgăraș, Maramureș, etc. For this reason, they failed to maintain a compact organization, except for the few "countries" partially saved, which they tried to adapt to the pattern followed by the others. Some of these—Banat, Beiuș, Zarand, Maramureș—were not even a part of the "country beyond the forest" and were isolated even from each other. Where, then, could Romanians set up their territorial centers, given that they were everywhere, but subdued and marginalized? The ones who remained between Olt and the Southern Carpathians tried to preserve a "country" of their own, in Olt or Făgăraș, as mentioned in 1222. However, it did not last long and it was not accepted as the other autonomous units were, ending up between the borders of the Romanian state located south of the Carpathians. Yet, around 1300, not all features of the estates were fully established, so Romanians would sometimes be accepted with the other groups.

In Transylvania, as far as estates were concerned, there were two types of general assemblies (*universitates, congregationes*): 1) general assemblies of the

nobility from the seven counties, convened and chaired by the voivode or the vice-voivode (held simultaneously with the general assemblies of the united Saxon and Szekler seats); 2) general assemblies of all estates—nobility, Saxons, Szeklers and, for a while, Romanians—convened and chaired by the king or voivode (vice-voivode), on behalf of the king. The assemblies were established in a time of strong affirmation of Transylvania's autonomy from Hungary. They were held in parallel with the assemblies of the kingdom's nobility and were eventually considered a symbol of the country's autonomy. The first assembly of the "nobility of the Transylvanian country" is recorded in 1288, during Lorand Borşa's rule, when Transylvania was striving to become a sovereign country (*regnum*); it was convened at Turda by the vice-voivode, on behalf of the voivode. After 1320, these general assemblies, held sporadically at first, became regular, annual or bi-annual, with a clear venue, usually near Turda. In their case, there were two opposite tendencies: on one hand, the central power, the Angevin royalty, which had found them already functioning, was trying to strictly control and divert them from their initial purpose, and, on the other hand, the local forces with their autonomous tendencies wanted to break away from Hungary, remembering the "separate country" tradition of Transylvania. According to some phrases from documents—set phrases that don't necessarily express the reality—some assemblies were attended by "nobles and non-nobles" or "nobles and people of any other estate or importance from Transylvania," but from all points of view the nobility was certainly dominant. The most obvious role of these assemblies, as everywhere else, was judicial. However, they sometimes dealt with administrative, economic and social matters: regulate the problems between church and nobility regarding ecclesiastic tithes, customs issues, eliminate "robbers," "thieves" and "criminals," check donation writs, etc. In 1342, an assembly approached a legislative aspect too (in the special medieval sense of the "law"): it formally granted nobility the right to judge the serfs, in other words it passed a general legal regulation. There were other similar cases of regulations to be implemented as laws, but fewer because the right to pass laws formally belonged to the king and the Diet. To the assemblies of the seven Transylvanian counties, convened and presided by the voivode, corresponded the general assemblies of the neighboring Western counties, convened by the Palatine (vice-palatine). The general assemblies of the Transylvanian nobility (or of the Western counties) did not replace the similar assemblies for each county (or those of the nobility from 2–3 counties), especially those that held a judicial role, even if their importance was reduced.

As the temptation of autonomy increased, the voivodes' power grew, and so did their efforts to subordinate, by various means, the entire intra-Carpathian area (one of the methods was for the voivode to take the titles of *comes* of the Saxons and *comes* of the Szeklers), the numerous common problems and dis-

putes between the nobility and the other inhabitants, between the counties and the other privileged "lands," etc. Soon it became necessary to convene extended assemblies of the entire intra-Carpathian Transylvania. The first known assembly of the kind dates from 1291 and it was convened at Alba-Iulia by King Andrew III. "Nobles, Saxons, Szeklers and Romanians from Transylvania" were summoned to attend the meeting to "reform their estate" (*pro reformatione status eorundem*)[24], after serious troubles occurred during the reign of King Ladislas the Cuman. The king wanted to talk to the decision makers from all over the country (not only to the nobility), and the tradition to convene them was not new. In 1288, for example, when the Archbishop of Strigonium—the Hungarian church primate—urged to insubordination from the blasphemous and corrupt king, he addressed to the ecclesiastic authorities and to "all Hungarian nobles, Saxons, Szeklers and Romanians"[25] from the southern parts of Transylvania. The assembly of 1291 had, as we can see, a major importance, expressed by the phrase explaining its purpose ("to reform their estate"), a phrase similar to the one used in the Golden Bull of the nobility from 1222 ("to reform the status of our kingdom" = *ad statum regni nostri reformandum*). What was this "reform," the text does not say exactly, but some clues do exist. First, it should reform the evil done at the end of Ladislas the Cuman's reign—when Transylvania proved rebellious and when they talked about two separate "kingdoms," *regnum nostrum* (= Hungary) and *regnum Transilvanum*—which failed because, under Ladislas Kán's rule, as we have seen, the voivode's autonomy increased. Another problem could concern the discontentment of the estates, especially of the nobles and Saxons, about the disrespect of their privileges. Finally, it was also about the Romanian matter, mostly that of Făgăraş, where Romanians had tried to set up an autonomous unit (*terra Blacorum*), but had been stopped by the nobles, in spite of their bold resistance. When their resistance proved to be in vain, around 1290, some of these Romanians, commanded by their voivode and joined by the Saxons and "other populations," "dismounted" south of the Carpathians, accelerating the process of unification and centralization of the Romanian state emerging there. In the assembly of 1291, before the king, the noble Ugrinus claimed "his" properties of Făgăraş and Sâmbăta, previously occupied by the Romanians.

Another extended general assembly is mentioned in 1355, at Turda, convened by the voivode (on behalf of the king), with "all the prelates, barons, nobles, Szeklers, Saxons, Romanians and other people of any estate or level, settled and living in Transylvania."[26] There is no certain data as to its purpose.

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24. *Hurmuzaki*, vol. I/1, p. 510-511.
25. *DIR, C, Veacul XI, XII şi XIII*, vol. II, p. 369.
26. *Documenta Romaniae Historica, C, Transilvania*, vol. X, p. 325 (hereafter cited as *DRH*).

From these and other testimonies, we can draw the conclusion that the four Transylvanian estates (nobles, Saxons, Szeklers and Romanians) were being established in the second half of the 13th century and that, about 1300, they began to be convened in specific assemblies, at Transylvanian or county level.

However, during the reign of Louis I (1342–1382), in and around Transylvania occurred a series of events with particular consequences for the estates' evolution and functioning. After 1310, the reunification process of the incipient Romanian states south of the Carpathians had been speeded up by those arrived from Transylvania. After 1330, Wallachia emerged as an independent state. Around 1342–1343, some of the knezes from Maramureş, headed by Bogdan of Cuhea, Voivode of Maramureş, started a rebellion that lasted, with a few breaks, for two decades. Bogdan's party looked to maintain Maramureş as a Romanian country (voivodate), with Romanian feudal structures and institutions, with assemblies of knezes and an Orthodox faith, with *knezial* holdings, etc. Another part of the Maramureş feudal class, run by Romanian nobles of *knezial* origin, like Dragoş of Bedeu and Dragoş of Giuleşti, starting to adapt to the new structures of the ruling power, worked with the state officials, rendering "loyal services" to the king. The collaboration focused chiefly on military services (positions), especially on the effort to stop the Tartar danger, which was still looming in the east and threatened the incipient Romanian states from the territory of the future Moldavia. The purpose of the Romanian feudal lords' collaboration with the Crown was to keep and strengthen their old estates, to get new advantages and eliminate the threat of being dispossessed of their lands and positions—as had happened elsewhere—by noblemen from the retinue of kings or high nobles, hungry for affirmation. From these Romanian collaborators, the king chose the noble Dragoş as the ruler (voivode) of a Romanian state nucleus located in northwestern Moldavia, perceived as a Hungarian outpost against the Tartars. Dragoş created a dynasty in Moldavia, through his descendents, voivodes Sas and Balc, but locals disliked Hungarian sovereignty. This discontentment was expressed through a local uprising, about which a document from 1359 says it was ended with the help of another ruler from Maramureş, Dragoş of Giuleşti, praised by the king and rewarded in Maramureş for "restoring (re-establishing, re-settling) our Moldavian country."[27] But the "restoration" of Moldavia was temporary, as local discontentment with Hungarian sovereignty was instilled by the above-mentioned voivode Bogdan from Maramureş—considered "notoriously disloyal" to the king. With about 100–200 families of faithful knezes, probably around the year 1362–1363, after the long-lasting resistance from Maramureş, he crossed the mountains to Moldavia, never to return; he chased away Dragoş's successor and relatives,

27. DRH, C, vol. XI, p. 482-485.

establishing an independent Moldavia. In 1365, Bogdan and his sons were dis-
possessed of their lands in Maramureş, "so that their treason should not be an
example for others [Romanians] who could dare take similar actions."[28] In
1365–1366, King Louis' army, sent to fight Bogdan and make him submit, was
defeated.

In other words, by the end of the 13th century and during the following
hundred years, until 1366, the situation of the Transylvanian estates, except
for Romanians, improved: based on the royal decree of 1351 (confirming and
extending the Golden Bull of the nobility of 1222), the nobility enforced its
position seriously, theoretically acquiring "one and the same freedom"[29] all over
the country, but maintaining its Transylvanian character; the Szeklers com-
pleted their seat organization all over their territory and stated their freedoms
acknowledged as global privileges; only from the middle of the 15th century
would the voivodes diminish the Szeklers' privileges, without seriously alter-
ing them; the Germans would establish themselves strongly, including in the
urban and rural areas outside "Sibiu province"; (in 1366) Louis I improved the
Seven Seats privilege diploma granted by Charles Robert in 1317,[30] extended
the privileges over Bistriţa, paving the way for the new Saxon community (uni-
versitas) of the following century. The central power and Transylvanian authori-
ties began to change their attitude towards Romanians only when they were
trying to become an estate and establish themselves as such, alongside the
nobles, Saxons and Szeklers. Particularly under the Angevins, the homogeni-
zation tendencies of the kingdom—which was so heterogeneous—became
apparent. They didn't concern the privileges granted to the estates, but social,
economic and religious matters: regulate the land ownership on royal donation
writs in counties, the noble rank, ennoblement, strengthen the Catholic de-
nomination, eliminate (limit) other denominations and religions, etc. Roma-
nians, which hadn't received global privileges in the 13th century, were reluc-
tant to accept all these tendencies. They were sometimes robbed of lands and
other assets, allegedly for lack of donation writs. As they were "schismatic," thus
associated with heretics (according to Pope Innocent III interpretation of the
canons, after the Fourth Crusade in 1204), they had to be converted to Ca-
tholicism or otherwise "be robbed and depredated," in other words dispossessed,
which would not be considered a sin. After 1204, this principle was applied to
the Romanians of Făgăraş, Cârţa, the Medieş district, and the "country of Knez
Bele's (Bâlea) sons," etc. Thus, slowly, until the 14th century, the estates built
a relatively compact territorial basis, to a great extent to the detriment of the
Romanians, who were always discontented and rebellious; they would take back

28. DRH, C, vol. XII, p. 398-401.
29. DRH, C, vol. X, p. 89-99.
30. DRH, C, vol. XIII, p. 148–151.

by force, breaking the law, the stolen assets, which now had new owners, they would organize and oppose armed resistance, as they did in Făgăraş (around 1290) and in Maramureş (1342 and 1362–1363); moreover, they would move the centers of their rebellion south and east of Carpathians, encouraging the new political structures of their people to seek independence from Hungary. In 1359 and 1365–1366, the Romanians from Wallachia and Moldavia were simultaneously in open conflict with Hungarian Kingdom, and Louis I sent an army to fight them. In this context, the situation of the Romanians of Transylvania worsened, and their wish to set up and be recognized as an estate would never come true.

The same monarch Louis of Anjou took the first measures in this respect, in 1366, when he spent almost six months (April-October) in Transylvania, mainly to solve the Romanian matter, in two aspects: 1) to subdue, again, as vassals of the crown, the two Romanian "rebel" states beyond the Carpathians; 2) firmly and clearly regulate the position of the Romanians living in the kingdom. He partially accomplished the first goal, closing an unstable agreement with Vladislav-Vlaicu, the ruler of Wallachia. As far as the second objective is concerned, the royal actions, at least *de jure*, were more efficient, according to some documents, the most important of them being issued on 28 June 1366.[31] The document was issued at the request of "all the nobles of our Transylvanian country," who complained that they had "great damages caused by extremely wicked criminals of all sorts, especially Romanian." In other words, the noble estate (like the king) was in conflict with Romanians. As a result, the monarch gave nobility the right to "eradicate and annihilate from that country the criminals of any origin, particularly Romanians," through a few special legal procedures: a) criminal law procedure: nobles and commons not caught in the act could be convicted if 50 people equal to them in rank testified; for those caught in the act, if 7 people equal to them in rank testified; the testimony of a knez with royal writ for his *knezate* equaled a noble's testimony (in other words, before the law, a certified knez was equal to a nobleman); the testimony of a simple knez (without a diploma) corresponded to that of a judge (*villicus*) and valued a *fertun*; the testimony of a Romanian commoner valued half a *fertun*; then there were other regulations regarding the procedure for judging the nobles (with their serfs) and the palatines (with their servants); b) the conviction procedure of those judged and convicted: "the commons or Romanians" found guilty by the judging seats must be caught and punished without any other investigation or charges, but the nobles in the same position (in other words outcast) must be caught and then punished by the voivode; c) the land ownership trials; d) to be exempted from the *lucrum camerae*, food

31. *DRH*, C, vol. XIII, p. 159–165.

supplies and forced military service, nobles had to help the king, voivode, vice-voivode "crush and eradicate the disloyal from these [Transalpine?] parts, insubordinate and rebelled against us and the sacred crown"; e) the taxes owed to the diocesan (convent) representative, present when land ownership, divisions, etc. were put into place, and taxes for documents; f) the king guaranteed the old freedoms of Transylvanian nobles.

In the document, the nobles and the Romanians are opposed, and the latter—inclined to always get their assets back—are presented as (real and potential) "criminals" ("robbers," "thieves" or making other kind of criminal acts). From the Romanians, still, the knezes (small feudal lords) with a royal diploma are compared to nobles as far as trials were concerned. In other words, the nobiliary title was conditioned for the Romanian elite by the possession of a royal donation diploma. The same year, on the Franciscans' request, the king decided that "only the truly Catholic that loyally follow the faith of the Roman Church may keep and own properties with noble or beneficial titles"[32] (this was kept in a confirmation act of Sigismund of Luxembourg, from 1428, regarding the Romanian districts Haţeg, Sebeş = Caransebeş and Mehadia). It was still Louis I who on 20 July 1366 ordered nobles and authorities from the counties of Cuvin and Caraş to catch and hold the „Slavic or schismatic" priests.[33] This measure came after a series of similar acts, initiated immediately after the Fourth Crusade, ceased for long periods and restarted by the end of the 13th century (in 1279) and then under the Angevin rule. The documents of 1366 highlight the tensions in Transylvania and the neighboring counties where Romanians were living. Among them, Orthodox Romanians without donation writs could no longer own properties (lands or people) and be compared to nobles. The lack of donation writs made it impossible for Romanian knezes to own land, a basic principle for the noble position (to accede to an estate), and not being Catholic prevented them from developing as an ethnic group, as an estate in the name of their people. In other words, with some exceptions, Romanian knezes, in the position they held then, could neither accede to the noble estate nor set up one in the name of their people. Nevertheless, a number of factors made King Louis' measures impossible to fully apply when they were issued. They indicated a long-term tendency. Many knezes, especially in the regions acknowledged as Romanian districts, remained landowners without holding a document or instantly becoming Catholic. In addition, the need for support in the centralization policy and anti-Ottoman fight made hundreds of *knezial* families receive donation writs for their *knezates* or even ennobled in the decades to follow, from Sigismund of Luxembourg to the reign of Mathias Cor-

32. DRH, C, vol. XIII, p. 2.
33. DRH, C, vol. XIII, p. 226-227.

vinus. This and the conversion to Catholicism allowed some knezes to accede to estates, still not as Romanians, but as nobles. At one moment, in the 15ᵗʰ century, they shyly tried to set up a Romanian noble estate (in documents as *nobiles Valachi*), probably thanks to their high number and echoes of religious unification decided at the Council of Florence (1439), but the attempt soon failed.

The measures taken by Louis I (especially those of 1366) regarding the Romanians and the Orthodox were not as successful as expected, but, for the long term, they set some constant guidelines. One was the principle of official religion (*religio recepta*), a fundamental component of the future political and religious Transylvanian life, and another was limiting the Transylvanian estates to three, excluding Romanians, as an ethnic group, from exercising power. The reasons were the "religious kingdom" principle of Hungary (having to spread and defend Roman faith by force), the subject position of Romanians—always discontented and rebelling due to the deprivations they suffered—, their Orthodox faith which became the symbol of the ethnic group, the existence of two free Romanian states bordering Transylvania—which was always a temptation, an attraction and an example for the Romanians subject to Hungary. The rebellion of 1365–1366, with its precedents in Făgăraş (1290) and Maramureş (1342–1363) risked leading to following that example and creating an independent Transylvania, completely separate from Hungary and ruled by Romanians, as had been tried before at the beginning of 1300, but then without direct Romanian participation. The crown's mistake south and east of the Carpathians had been the indirect domination through the Romanian elite, which ended up rising against it. The same mistake was not made in Transylvania, where Hungarian nobles, Saxons and Szeklers had been granted global privileges and were interested in offering support to the crown and be what the subdued Orthodox Romanians could not be. Consequently, after 1366, despite the previous favorable events, it was clear that Romanians could not become an estate and could no longer take part in Transylvanian estate assemblies. They would not be mentioned as such anymore. As we have seen, when, in times of danger, the nobles, the Saxons and the Szeklers gathered again, in 1437, in "brotherly union" (and, from then on, more often), the Romanians were excluded, as they did not have an official elite of their own, and even if they were numerous, they were no longer a threat. Thus, the Romanians knezes and voivodes (or the boyars from Făgăraş) had two options: either they would serve the power, claiming donation writs, becoming nobles and, some, would be lost for their ethnic group, or they continued to follow the Romanian and Eastern traditions, meaning that they would keep their ethnic specificity, but would decline socially and marginalize themselves. Of course, between these two extremes there were also a series of intermediate versions, identifiable from documents as well.

Nevertheless, Romanians did not readily accept the fate that had been set for them. Prevented from expressing themselves as a privileged group centrally (in Transylvania), they withdrew on the local level of districts and even of some counties. Here, their feudality, made up of knezes, boyars (in Făgăraş), certified knezes and even petty nobles, continued and controlled local assemblies. In order to function, they adapted to the official rules: they issued documents in Latin, adopted seals, fixed a constant reunion date, they were chaired by high officers of the kingdom and the voivode, etc. After the measures taken by Louis I in particular, the Romanian elite assemblies turned into real complex forums, administrating, dispensing justice (following both the Romanian and official law principles), overseeing tax collection and subject duties accomplishment. At the same time however they were examining breaches and usurpations of some representatives of authority, looked over the old Romanian organizational structures from the free times (documents name them as *libertates*) and appointed delegations to lobby the king, voivode, ban, palatine, etc. the acceptance, certification and respect of these organizational structures. This is how the knezes and noble assemblies of the county of Bereg (1364 and after), from the district Căpâlna—in the land of Crişul Alb (1426)—, in the district of Dobra (1434 and after), in Banat (1457 and after), etc. acted. In Banat and Beiuş, there are complaints and claims addressed by the assemblies of the knezes subject to lay or ecclesiastic feudal lords. There were also assemblies that, in the free times or of minimal foreign state organization influence, would meet up to elect the voivode (the assembly of the knezes of Maramureş in the 14th century, knezes that, by ennoblement, later formed the noble assembly of the same county). Obviously, these assemblies, regardless of the legal position of the territory where they functioned, would address current issues of the Romanian society, ensure relationships with the officials and defend the interests of the Romanian autonomies. Sometimes, the assemblies were attended by representatives of two or more districts, indicating, maybe, former local units dislocated by the new administrative structures or shared issues that required settlement.

The work of these institutions leads to the conclusion that, although the Romanians integrated into Hungary never received global privileges—like the nobility, the Saxons and the Szeklers—and thus were deprived of the right to get involved in the exercise of power as an estate, they managed to impose themselves upon some local institutions based on the (often silent and partial) respect of their old freedoms. In the 15th century, the role of the estates (or "nations") would be more clearly defined, anticipating the political and religious system established in Transylvania in the 16th century, after the break-up of Hungary and victory of the Reformation.

8. Justice

IN THE 14ᵀᴴ and 15ᵗʰ centuries, the traditional Romanian, Saxon and Szekler legal customs were still in place. The latter two were, actually, guaranteed through the Saxon and Szekler privileges, awarded by royalty when these groups had been settled in Transylvania and also later on. In general, almost all medieval dignitaries, elected by the community or appointed by the king, also had legal responsibilities. The Saxons' legal system, brought from their land of origin and unified and consolidated in Transylvania, guaranteed by privileges, was called "the law of the Sibiu province"; it gradually applied to the Saxons without the initial privileges (in 1315, the seats of Mediaş and Şeica get to follow the "law of Sibiu," at their request, and in 1366, Bistriţa, etc.). Sibiu became the forum of appeals for all Saxons, anticipating their final full unification in the 15ᵗʰ century. The Saxons could benefit from an advanced legal system, based on the traditions brought here from Western Europe, based on the rapid evolution of Transylvania, and on the process of strong urbanization, and development of crafts, trading and mobility in the neighboring countries. The Szeklers, however, formed a closed society, with an ancestral regime of wealth distribution and equal rights, functioning since the 13ᵗʰ century, partially in the 14ᵗʰ too, and avoiding individual affirmation. Traditional law continued to be implemented here for a long time, especially in villages,. Nevertheless, the Szekler elite adapted quite easily to the feudal habits of the nobility, a rank they were about to achieve. The Szekler judging seats comprised the seat captain, the seat judge and the royal judge, assisted by 12 elected jurors. The Saxons had panels made up of both the seat and the royal judge and (four or more) jurors. By the 1329 privilege, the German and Hungarian guests from Maramureş (settled among Romanians, at Sighet, Teceu, Câmpulung, Vişc, Hust etc.) could have their cases judged by their judge and their elders, except for serious cases (murder, theft, robbery, arson), which were dealt with by the royal and the local judges. The supreme forum of appeals was the general meeting of the Szeklers from the seven seats (at Odorhei), judging "on the commendable law of all Szeklers and the acknowledged old custom".[34] The Superior court of justice of the Seven plus Two (Mediaş and Şeica) Saxon Seats lodged at Sibiu and it comprised the seat judges and the designated elders (*seniores, Altschaft*), chaired by the royal judge of Sibiu. They were judging according to "our law" and "the old custom."[35] Romanians were judged in their village seats, by "the old and good people," headed by the Knez (judge). Superior to these forums were the district assemblies, usually made up of 12 to 24

34. *Sz. Okl.*, I, p. 103–104.
35. *Ub.*, vol. II, p. 364-365.

knezes in the role of jurors (the commons are rarely mentioned as taking part in these forums, as in 1360, at Haţeg, where the assembly comprised 12 knezes, 6 priest-knezes and 6 *Olachi populani*). Romanians followed their Romanian law (*ius Valachicum*) or "the law of Wallachia" (*ius Volachie*)—as if they had a generic country—and the feudal version of this *ius Valachicum*, called *knezial* law (*ius keneziale*), pertaining to the individual ownership of the land (villages).[36]

From the time of the Angevin dynasty, the old local legal customs, mainly the Romanian customs, which were not protected by firm privileges, were marginalized, restricted and even banned, in favor of the kingdom's feudal organization of Western type. Chiefly, Romanian knezes would always complain about the Romanian system being violated, would ask for criminal and civil cases (convicting thieves, dividing lands between relatives, inheritance, women's rights, etc.) to be judged according to the Romanian or knezial laws. In the Romanian districts, the royal judges from the Saxon and Szekler seats, the nobiliary county authorities, palatines, bans, voivodes and their deputies were the tools of these interferences, of the Hungarian state's legal system expansion. The diploma mentioned above, granted by Louis of Anjou in 1366 to eradicate Romanian "criminals," levelled the legal system, eliminated old customs and placed all inhabitants within the official system. The judicial power of the nobility and of the judging seats substantially increased, and the different treatment applied to nobility as opposed to "commons or Romanians" was obvious and began to be *expressis verbis*, written down. Legally speaking, probably before 1366, as had been done under the Árpáds, the Romanian elite (like its Szekler and Saxon counterparts) was considered nobility (in fact, the Romanian knezes and the boyars were feudal lords according to Romanian law). However, the 1366 diploma shows precisely that, in trials, only the knezes holding a royal certificate were equal to nobles (although, from the Romanian point of view, all knezes held the same feudal position, as they possessed villages and played a military role).

The legal organization of feudal Transylvania comprised a series of courts, without a permanent and clear delimitation of all their competencies. The lowest court—the village court—is followed by the seigniorial one, run by the feudal lord, which was dispensing justice in minor (simple) cases. Serious cases were sent to the superior court (the county assembly). The 1351 diploma seems to have ensured nobility the superior justice privilege, even if it was never applied globally. This is the reason why, around the middle of the 14th century, more and more nobles from Transylvania obtained individually from the king the "blade right" (*ius gladii*), or the right of superior justice (judging cases implying the death penalty: theft, robbery, murder, etc.), symbolically marked by

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36. *A Teleki család oklevéltára*, Budapest, 1895, vol. I, p. 168; *DRH*, C, vol. XII, nr. 157, p. 130–133.

the right (habit) to build gallows on their lands. After seigniorial justice came the county judging seat (or the county assembly), as court of appeals for the ones unhappy with the feudal lord's judging. Only the nobles and the freemen could go there directly, while the serfs were represented by their lord. After the county assembly, an appeal could be made to the voivode's (vice-voivode's) judging seat, held at the "*octaves*" of holidays (the eighth day after some holidays). From the 14ᵗʰ century, the vice-voivode was able to judge more on the "*octaves*" as the voivode was presiding in the general assemblies of Turda, which sometimes functioned as Transylvanian supreme seats of justice. For important nobles or cases of great significance, the Transylvanian assemblies of Turda were forums of first instance, although, usually they were considered courts of appeals. For the Transylvanians, too, the highest court of appeals was the royal court.

9. Church and Culture

IN THE MIDDLE Ages, the church was for most people the most important institution, coordinating directly or indirectly all human activities. The Romanian countries, especially Transylvania, were on a fault line between civilizations, which made Eastern and Western Churches compete or confront on this territory.

According to some Byzantine authors, the Eastern Church (with its ecumenical center at Constantinople) had bishoprics north of the Danube, territories where Romanians were living—probably even in Transylvania—since as early as the 10ᵗʰ century. In the 11ᵗʰ–13ᵗʰ centuries, the number and the organizational level of these bishoprics considerably developed, in spite of difficult living conditions, evident after 1204, when Constantinople fell into the hands of the Latins (= Western crusaders). The offensive of the papacy became more efficient after this date, mainly through the Hungarian Kingdom, military monastic orders (Teutonic Knights, Hospitallers), the Latin Empire of the East (1204–1261), through the Genovese and other less significant factors. Due to this situation, particularly in Transylvania, where the ruling estate was Catholic, the Eastern Church organization suffered deeply. The old structures were maintained: above the regular parishes there were the deaneries; more deaneries would form a bishopric, accountable to an archbishopric and/or a metropolitan church. A series of deaneries would function in the Romanian districts, as in Haţeg, where, in 1360, Peter, the dean (*archidiaconus*) from Ostrov, is mentioned with five other priests (only four named) from the region.[37] Due to a lack

37. DRH, C, vol. XI, p. 506-510.

of sources, the area and activity of the Transylvanian Orthodox bishoprics are little known in the 14th century. On the other hand, the metropolitan churches south and east of the Carpathians had (formally or not) under their jurisdiction the Orthodox Church of Transylvania and its bordering counties, supporting the local bishoprics and parishes, particularly when some official positions were vacant. Thus, after 1369–1370, the newly created Severin metropolitan church probably had under its jurisdiction the entire Banat, while the old metropolitan church of Argeş was in charge of the "lands" or "borders" (all Transylvania or just the lands north of the mountains comprised the South-Carpathian state) and "Hungary" (the Orthodox regions). By virtue of some agreements between the ecumenical patriarchy and the king of Hungary, in 1401 Antim, the Metropolitan of Wallachia, was called in a document "exarch of all Hungarian Countries and Lands." Later in the 15th century, the Moldavian metropolitan church of Suceava would take charge of the Romanian bishoprics from northern Transylvania. Still, there is also data from this period about local eparchies, about their lease holders and institutions similar to bishoprics. At the church of the monastery in Râmeţi (Alba county), in 1376 Archbishop Ghelasie was mentioned, the title suggesting that the man was in charge of several bishoprics. In 1391, with the Hungarian king's knowledge, Romanian nobles Baliţă and Drag (descendents of Dragoş, the voivode of Moldavia, returned in Maramureş) were in Constantinople—besieged by the Ottomans—where they obtained from the ecumenical patriarchy for their family's monastery from Peri the rank of patriarchal diocese, and for Abbot Pahomie the title of "exarch over the lands subordinated to the church" (Maramureş, Mid Solnoc, Árva, Ugocsa, Bereg, Ciceu, Unguraş, Bistriţa, Sătmar with the Medieş district). Around the middle of the 15th century, amid strong Catholic proselytizing by inquisitors Jacob of Marchia and then John of Capistrano, the "schismatic" bishop John of Caffa was discovered in the Hunedoara area; together with Dean Peter of Hunedoara and other Romanians, he fought for their faith, blessed churches and ordained priests. He was eventually captured by John of Capistrano, taken to Banat, imprisoned and forced to convert to Catholicism.

The Roman (Catholic) Church was officially supported in Transylvania by the Hungarian state, defined as an "apostolic kingdom." This gave the church in Hungary a "missionary" character, attracting and converting "the heathen, the heretic and the schismatic." Thus, besides the traditional bishoprics, set up during the conquest, around the 11th–12th century (at Cenad, Oradea and Alba-Iulia, some replacing Eastern or Greek rite bishoprics), after 1300, new eparchies were set up or reestablished in the extra-Carpathian area: in Moldavia, the Milcovia bishopric in 1332 (in place of the old bishopric of "Cuma-

nia" where, in 1234, Romanians were mentioned with their political and religious structures), the bishoprics of Siret in 1370, and Baia; in Wallachia, where Catholics had lived since the 13th century, around 1369 the Transylvanian bishop's deputy came to visit, in 1380 the Severin Catholic bishopric was set up (as a response to the Orthodox metropolitan church) and in 1381 the Catholic bishopric of Argeş was established. Despite all the support received from Transylvania and Hungary, the activity of these extra-Carpathian bishoprics was reduced, as they had few parishioners in these countries with Orthodox inhabitants and strong Orthodox organization.

The Transylvanian bishopric, lodged at Alba-Iulia, covered, generally, the intra-Carpathian region, with a slight extension to the northwest, in Ugocsa, Sătmar and Crasna. As far as the Catholic ecclesiastic organization was concerned, the territory was divided into archdeaconries, usually related to the Szekler counties and seats, like the archdeaconries of Solnoc, Dăbâca, Cluj, Turda, Alba, Târnave, Hunedoara and the ones from the Szekler region— Telegd, Ciuc, Kezd. The only exception to the rule was the archdeaconry of Ozd, located on the Mureş River, in the Reghin region, even if it could have been once organized as a temporary Ozd "county." Some Szekler seats were distributed to the archdeaconries of the counties (e.g. Sepsi, Orbai). As is known, from the end of the 12th century the Saxons had a "royal free provostship," emerging from the natural administrative framework of the Transylvanian bishopric and directly reporting to the Pope, through the Strigonium archbishopric. This was due to the Saxons' "guest" position, who, unlike the Szeklers (coming into Transylvania from the kingdom), came from afar, through formal colonization and needed to be particularly stimulated. The provostship was divided into deaconries and initially comprised the territory of the deaconries of Sibiu, Nocrich and Cincu. Other Saxon deaconries, where the "Sibiu law" was not in force, were accountable both to the Transylvanian bishop and to the provostship of Sibiu. This and the exceptional ecclesiastic position of the Saxons, led to lasting disagreements between the bishopric and the provostship, even armed sieges of the Saxons over the bishopric center from Alba-Iulia. From the 14th century onwards, the Saxon villages were organized into 24 deaconries: Bahnea, Bistriţa, Băgaciu, Orăştie, Bălcaciu, Ţara Bârsei, Sibiu, Calvasăr, Chiraleş, Sighişoara, Laslea, Nocrich, Pelişor, Mediaş, Sebeş, Reghin, Rupea, Şeica, Cincu-Sibiu, Cincu-Rupea, Şieu, Teaca, Patru Sate and Secaşe (Şpring). The deaconries were run by the "deacons." Strigoniu was still officially in charge only of the old deaconries of Sibiu, Nocrich, Cincu and then Bârsa, whose deacons had received quasi-bishop rights (to ordain priests). The rest of the territories, including the ones privileged by the Andreanum, were under the jurisdiction of the bishop of Alba-Iulia. The most disadvantaged com-

munities were the serf villages in the counties. In 1424, royalty dissolved the free provostship of Sibiu, but the Saxons' did not lose their religious autonomy.

Alba-Iulia hosted both the bishopric and a chapter, and alongside the Benedictine monastery of Cluj-Mănăştur there was a convent; both institutions were canonical and monastic colleges, having the role to ascertain and confirm (*loca credibilia*) for the whole Transylvania. In the Western Marches, the Oradea and Arad chapters fulfilled these roles, as well as the convent of Oradea Hill. Among other things, they also fulfilled the roles of the future notaries.

In Transylvania, monastic life developed in the 14th century, although the Orthodox monasteries were seriously deprived after the Catholic offensive run by the Angevins. Some Western orders, like the Cistercians, Premonstratensians, Dominicans and Benedictines, declined in importance compared to the Franciscans. The latter distinguished themselves mostly through their conversion of the Orthodox, undertaken especially under the reign of Louis I. The rule of this king knew one of the fiercest and most violent actions to bring "to Catholic unity" entire peoples of different faiths and religions. An important collaborator of Louis I in drafting and implementing his religious policy was the Franciscan Bartholomew of Alverna, the vicar of Bosnia (the vicariate of Bosnia was a territorial subdivision of the Franciscan Order, comprising Serbian, Bulgarian and Romanian territories, all ruled by the Angevin king). The vicar wanted to impose Catholicism through "cruel wars," carried out by any means necessary under the "bright king's" command. Around 1380, he showed "the earthly advantages" the Hungarian Kingdom would get if it could convert, by force, the Romanian and Slavic schismatic: 1) a more powerful kingdom and allegiance of the "schismatic" to the king and nobles, "as they could never be loyal to their leaders who, following a stranger denomination, are disloyal to God"; 2) putting an end to the criminal actions these "non-believers" do now, "without being aware [of the sin], together with the outsiders, of the same language and cult as them, against Christians."[38] The language used is that of the 1366 diplomas and the consequences were supposed to be similar: forced conversion or eradication of the "schismatic." These documents clearly underline the character of official and single religion for Catholicism and that of "cult" or "stranger denomination" (= Orthodoxy), in whose eradication the "temporal arm" was violently involved. Through these kinds of methods, the Franciscan monks boasted that, in one year (around 1380), they re-baptized 400,000 "Schismatic," which, even reduced ten times, is exaggerated. In fact, Bonfini, whom we have already mentioned, proves this by stating that, after Louis' proselytism, over a third of the Hungarian population was Catholic. But the

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38. D. Lasic, O.F.M., *Fr. Bartholomaei de Alverna, Vicarii Bosnae 1367–1407, quaedam scripta hucusque inedita*, in *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, I, 55, 1962, 1-2, p. 72-76.

failure to reach the religious unity ideal on Catholic criteria, that the second Angevin monarch desired, was in contrast with the effort carried out, which was really extraordinary and raised Catholicism to the rank of privileged denomination. In the light of this evidence, it is clear why, as long as they were Orthodox, Romanians could no longer form an estate and take part in the Transylvanian general assemblies, after 1351–1366. Also, conversion to Catholicism was rejected not only because of the brutal means, the mandatory tithe and other duties it engendered, or due to the support from the Orthodox states, of the same origin as the "Schismatic" from Hungary and located at the border, but also due to the language in which the new faith was practiced. Thus, in 1374, when Moldavia and Wallachia were to be attacked almost at the same time by Louis I and his army, "a part of the Romanian nation," living "at the border of the Hungarian Kingdom, towards the Tartars" (in the Milcovia bishopric), complained (maybe straight to the Pope) that they couldn't keep up with the pace of conversion because "they are not pleased with the Hungarian priests' service" and demand a Romanian-speaking bishop (*qui linguam dicte nationis scire asseritur*).[39] In other words, in 1374, when the extra-Carpathian Romanian countries were concomitantly in conflict with the Hungarian Kingdom (which was strongly pressuring them politically, militarily and religiously), Romanians seriously opposed the conversion made through Hungarians. Romanians brought forth linguistic arguments, which clearly indicates that Romanians too established themselves as a medieval nation and had a national consciousness. The same deep ethnic religious solidarity is highlighted by the statement of Bartholomew of Alverna; according to him, the "Schismatic" from Hungary committed "crimes" with their "outside" brothers; in the case of Romanians, this can be translated as solidarity between Transylvanians and the Romanians from Wallachia and Moldavia.

Otherwise, the relationships between Transylvania and the other two Romanian countries were always privileged. The former political and religious systems from the 13th century included both sides of the Carpathians (Severin, Litovoi's voivodate, or maybe even the Seneslau's voivodate, the bishopric of "Cumania"), and in the 14th century, the Transylvanian "duchies" of Amlaş and Făgăraş, or the Severin Banat were effectively part of Wallachia. The most profitable economic relations of the Saxons and Szeklers were with Wallachia and Moldavia. The same for the religious relations: the official Catholic Church of Transylvania and Hungary would expand south and east of the Carpathians (through bishoprics and other institutions based there), and the official Orthodox Church of Wallachia and Moldavia was in charge of the Romanian church of Transylvania and its spiritual life. Even the border between Transylvania and

39. *Hurmuzaki*, vol. I/1, p. 217.

Wallachia (in the area of Oltenia and Haţeg) was first physically traced only in 1520, with the help of the boyars of Oltenia and the Romanian nobles of Haţeg. Moreover, under the reign of Sigismund of Luxembourg, the crisis of the Catholic Church and the expansion of Ottoman power to the Danube eased the dialogue between the "Latin" and the "Greek," between the king of Hungary and the ruler of Wallachia, which led to certain dispensations for the Orthodox living in Hungary.

The medieval church was also a cultural institution, the most important such institution for a long time. The places of worship were often real works of art, where books were copied, schooling was offered (the priests were the teachers), music was composed, the art of painting and sculpting were taught, etc. Outside the church (monastery), only the towns and, after a while, the voivode's court would have some cultural interests. Obviously, after 1300, the Catholic culture (of the Western model and in Latin) of Transylvania had more favorable conditions to develop than had Orthodox culture, of Byzantine-Slavic origin and spoken in Slavonic. The representatives of Catholic culture were the Hungarians, the Saxons and the Szeklers, and those of Orthodox culture the Romanians. The latter's churches were, generally, Byzantine (Greek cross plans), with many Romanic and later Gothic influences. Few have lasted until our days because Romanians did not have the resources to make lasting and monumental buildings and because the "schismatic" were limited and even formally forbidden to erect churches (as the Buda Council decreed in 1279). Yet, new stone churches, built in more isolated places, where Romanian districts were functioning, added to the old churches from the 12th–13th centuries (Sântămărie-Orlea, Strei, Densuş, Gurasada, Hodoş-Bodrog, Streisân-georgiu-Călan, etc.); some examples are the churches of Râu de Mori, Cuhea, Ribiţa, Râşnov, Lupşa, Crişcior, Zlatna, Ostrovul Mare, Râmeţi, Prislop, Perii Maramureşului, Şcheii Braşovului, etc. Most Romanian churches and monasteries were made of wood and many buildings from that period were destroyed. However, written sources and archaeology bring to light new testimonies in this respect. Thus, recent research has proved that in the Haţeg region alone, by the end of the 16th century there were about 50 Romanian ecclesiastical buildings (court chapels, monasteries, community churches etc.). The great majority of them were painted in the Byzantine style, with votive pictures where the founders were illustrated holding the model of the church, dressed as Wallachian and Moldavian boyars, belted with swords, sometimes reminiscent of the Western knightly fashion. These founders were knezes (judges) or landowners, with their families, with traditional names like Balotă, Bărbat, Cândreş, Cândea, Vlaicul, Muşină, Vladul, Radul, Bogdan, Şerbul, Dan, Oană, Dobrotă, Vişa, Nistora, Anca, Veronica, Miliţa, Stana, etc. Thus, in 1313–1314, *knez*

Balotă had Teofil the Painter paint the church of Streisângeorgiu, and in 1408 boyar Cândreş and boyar lady Nistora did the same thing there.

In the 14th century, when the Gothic style began to blossom, Catholic churches and monasteries were built in many places. Thus, the Gothic choir of the Catholic cathedral in Alba-Iulia was built in the first half of that century, and the great Gothic (hall-like) churches of the Germans in Cluj, Sibiu, Sebeş and Braşov were founded the very same century. The prosperity of the Transylvanian Saxon towns was also reflected in the construction sites. The townsmen were planning to erect more imposing parish churches, which surpassed the immediate needs and even the available means. To construct some of them, Papal incentives were granted and fundraising stimulated. The masters competed in showing their skills, not only in the fields of architecture and construction, but also their sculpting and painting talents. In the 14th century, bronze work was represented by the German masters Martin and George, sons of the painter Nicolaus from Cluj, who made some memorable masterpieces: St. George Killing the Dragon (1373)—ordered by King Charles IV for the royal castle in Prague, where it is still located—, the portraits of three Hungarian kings (1370), an equestrian statue of King Ladislas (1390); their last works, kept in Oradea, were destroyed by the Turks in 1660. Stone or woodwork is represented by the capitals of the choir of St Michael's Church of Cluj (1370–1390), of the (today Evangelic) church of Feldioara (1420–1430), by the sculptures and reliefs from the Black Church of Braşov, Sibiu (the Crucifixion group, the Pietà group), etc. The art of painting flourished, especially in the Romanian churches of Transylvania, and it was stimulated by models and masters from Wallachia. All Orthodox churches were painted, sometimes even on the outside. A few examples: Streisângeorgiu (1313–1314), Ostrovul Mare, Râu de Mori, Densuş, Zlatna, Sântămărie-Orlea (after 1447), Leşnic (after 1394), Crişcior (around 1411), Ribiţa (1417), Strei, etc. Fragmentary painting was kept from the Catholic churches, of Gothic, but also North Italian pre-Renaissance influence: Vlaha (1380), Sic, Sântana de Mureş (around 1400), Mălâncrav (around 1400), Cluj—Sf. Mihail (1430–1440), Mediaş, Sânpetru, Ghelinţa, Mugeni, Dârjiu, etc. Some of the artists were locals trained at schools from the area or artists from the Byzantine and Western world, Italians, Viennese or from the wide German-speaking area.

The churches and monasteries were also writing centers. Slavonic writing blossomed in the Perii Maramureşului area, from Râmeţi, Şcheii Braşovului, Feleac and Prislop, and the Latin school at the Alba-Iulia bishopric and chapter, at the monastery and convent from Cluj-Mănăştur, at the similar institutions of Cenad, Oradea, Arad, Sibiu, etc. In the same places, a series of Orthodox (handwritten) religious books (an Apostle and a hymn book at Caransebeş,

a prayer book and a gospel at Râşnov, others at Braşov, Peri, etc.), but Catholic books were also circulating. The Hungarian Hussites taking refuge in tolerant Moldavia translated the Bible into their language, in 1430, in the Trotuş borough. Alongside churches and other religious institutions, there were schools like the ones of Sebeş, Oradea, Arad, Baia Mare, Mediaş, Cluj, Cluj-Mănăştur, Alba-Iulia, Vinţu de Jos, Odorhei, Târgu-Mureş, Haţeg, Teiuş, Turda, Şcheii Braşovului, Perii Maramureşului, Râmeţi, etc. The schools of Cluj, Baia Mare, Alba-Iulia educated girls. Some of these schools were set up by Catholic orders (Dominicans, Benedictines, Franciscans, etc.). Still, learning, writing, and reading started to develop in the secular world as well, expressing the needs of society. Some of these places were the voivodal chancellery, some aristocratic residencies, but most of all the German towns, where the patriciate was constantly moving, knew Europe and started to appreciate and encourage cultural activities.

10. The Army and the Anti-Ottoman Actions

WAR AND BATTLES were basic elements of medieval society and mentality. The feudal lords were first of all *milites* or *bellatores*, meaning that they were knights, fighters by vocation and ideal. Even the voivode (*bellidux*) title of the Transylvanian ruler (and of the Southern and Eastern Carpathian princes) means military commander or war leader. In the royal army, he would lead the troops gathered from the counties of which he was in charge. However, as grand feudal and high officer, the voivode had his own "flag" (unit) consisting of his lesser vassals. Under the Angevins, the former recruitment system, based on county criteria, changed to the individual units, more efficient considering the greater external dangers and expansion policy. Thus, the lay aristocrats, the bishops and abbots, by virtue of their privileges, would command their flags in battle. Thus, in 1436, the flag of George Lépes, bishop of Transylvania, is mentioned. The petty nobles had to personally take part in wars to defend the country, but not in the expeditions made outside the kingdom (even if commanded by the monarch) if the related expenses were not covered. The nobles' military duties were registered in the diploma from 1351, which confirmed the 1222 Gold Bull.

In the Transylvanian military organization, the Szeklers, members of a community based mostly on military structures, played a great role. Traditionally, they would go into battle commanded by their *comes* and would fight either in the vanguard or in the rearguard of the royal army. The Saxons didn't play such an important military role as the Szeklers. According to the Andreanum (1224)

they had to send 500 soldiers if the war was fought in the country, 100 if the expedition was run abroad by the king and only 50 if the army, fighting abroad, was led by a royal high officer. The German towns which were not located on *Fundus Regius*, but had been granted privileges—Satu Mare, Dej, Cluj—, would help the royal army with a small number of people or, staring with the 14th century, would give money in exchange for their military duties. Consequently, from 1378, the people of Cluj would pay 200 florins in war years, but they were not happy with the amounts getting higher and with the voivode's pressure. Yet, especially after the Ottoman danger had become greater, the Saxons from southern Transylvania (with the Romanians) played a significant role in defending the country by direct participation, by supplying war equipment and siege engines both to their country and to the extra-Carpathian countries.

Staring with 1200, the Romanians distinguished themselves in the military expeditions of the kingdom and voivodate and became an appreciated and much demanded force. The local Romanian knezes and voivodes, the boyars of Făgăraş were feudal lords integrated in the vassal system of the Eastern model (the village knezes accountable to the superior "valley" knezes, the latter to the voivodes, etc.), with specific military tasks. When the Hungarian state extended its authority over the incipient Romanian states and organization structures, these military tasks of the Romanian elite turned into duties to the royal palatines and to the lay and ecclesiastic lords. These renewed military duties as well as the knezes' (voivodes') position as small landlords favored the acknowledgement of the feudal rank for some of them, based on Western requirements. In the 14th and 15th centuries, under the reign of Sigismund of Luxembourg, but mainly under John Hunyadi and Mathias Corvinus, for special military merits in defending the borders of Transylvania and Banat in the battles against the Tartars and the Turks, in strengthening the central power or collaborating with the king against their rebelling fellow countrymen, the king and his high dignitaries granted to many knezes from Hunedoara-Haţeg, Maramureş, Banat certifications for their lands as knez and noble titles, new donations, which legally took them closer to noblemen and they even became nobles. Many Saxon *comes* and Szekler captains did the same thing. The boyars of Făgăraş—who were feudal lords certified according to the Wallachian rules, meaning that they were former knezes and voivodes turned into boyars—at the beginning defended their rank from this very position, but eventually, to stay small feudal lords, they would seek ennoblement. From about 1400, the rule was that in war Romanian knezes would serve in the royal army with a "spear" (a heavily armed rider, with spear and banner, plus his group made up of a few soldiers).

At the end of the 14th century, the Transylvanian and Hungarian authorities, like those in neighboring areas, had to take serious defensive measures

against Ottoman expansion. Sigismund of Luxembourg (1387–1437) adopted a defensive strategy, counting on a well-trained army and the southeastern fortresses. By a decree issued in 1405, the king decided that the towns should build walls all around. At the same time, in 1397, he was able, by Diet decision, to send to war a percentage of the serfs (an archer for every 20 serfs; in 1433 it was decided that 33 serfs would arm a riding archer, but the measure was never applied). In 1429–1433, the king's military organization plan to fight against the Ottoman threat stipulated that, for the battles carried out in Transylvania or the Western Marches, the monarch would come with 1,000 knights, and the voivode and the bishop of Transylvania had to run their own flags. The Saxons and the Szeklers would bring together 4,000 soldiers, the nobility of the seven counties 3,000 people, and the Western counties (Bihor, Crasna, Maramureş, Satu Mare, Solnocul Exterior and Solnocul de Mijloc and others) would bring 500-600 soldiers. If the army had to go through Banat, then, the royal flag would be joined by the troops of the bishops of Oradea and Cenad and the counties of Zarand, Arad, Timiş, Cenad, Caraş, Torontal and also by "Romanians, Philistens (Iasians) and Cumans."[40] King Sigismund, swaying between two attitudes towards Romanians, mentions them "with their power," now and on other occasions. On the one hand, he considered the Romanians to be "rebellious" malcontents, he condemned the Orthodox (in 1428, he confirmed and extended the restrictive measures of Louis I from 1366), he mentioned them as his enemies in the Banat campaign (*caterva phalerata Olachorum* = the armed crowd of Romanians) and he would say, in the Council of Lucca in 1429, that he would like to sweep them all off the face of the earth[41]; on the other hand, he was aware that he couldn't do without their precious military skills, so he used them a lot. By calling the serfs to arms, even if only sporadically, the number of Romanian participants increased considerably. Nevertheless, generally, in the 15th century, the Transylvanian Romanians were considered one of the chief military forces, a component of the defense system, which was also partially based on ethnic criteria. Thus, in the order of battle decided in 1430 by King Sigismund of Luxembourg, *Saxones, Siculi Nobiles et Valachi partium Transilvanarum cum potentia* are mentioned.[42]

In battle, Hungarian kings counted to some extent on foreign mercenaries (English arbalesters and others), which Louis I had stationed in some Transylvanian royal fortresses. Sigismund of Luxembourg sent troops like this to help the princes of Wallachia, Mircea the Elder and Dan II. The use of paid (professional) soldiers was an exception to the feudal custom and anticipated a new kind of army; still, kings sometimes had to let the great feudal lords recruit (buy)

40. M.G. Kovachich, *Supplementum ad vestigia comitiorum*, vol. I, Buda, 1798, p. 432-433, 446-447.
41. *Monumenta Hungariae Historica*, II. Scriptores, vol. XXIX, Budapest, 1877, p. 221.
42. Hurmuzaki, vol. I/2, p. 567-568.

mercenaries, which undermined the central power. The military equipment was similar to the one from Central and Western Europe. Until the middle of the 15th century, basic firearms (bombards) were used without great results. Transylvanians, particularly the Saxons from Braşov and Sibiu, were great armament manufacturers. A Byzantine source says that a "Dacian," meaning a Romanian (from Transylvania), made the great cannon that the Turks used in 1453 during the Constantinople siege.

In the military organization of Transylvania, an important role was played by the fortresses of Bran (1377), Deva, Hunedoara, Chioar, Unguraş, Ciceu, Cetatea de Baltă, Orşova, Râşnov, etc. Townsmen first walled the churches and monasteries (Aiud, Alba-Iulia, Oradea, Târgu-Mureş, Sighişoara, Mediaş, Sebeş, etc.), then the whole central area (the longest fortified walls were at Cluj and Sibiu, then at Braşov, Sighişoara, Mediaş, etc.). The Saxon and Szekler peasants were allowed to organize their defense alone, not only through fortresses (Rupea, Râşnov, Saschiz, Ilieni), but especially through walls surrounding their churches (as almost everywhere in the Bârsa region, from Sânpetru and Cristian to Hărman and Prejmer).

11. John Hunyadi (1407–1456) – Hero of Christianity

ONE OF THE most significant personalities in the history of Transylvania was John Hunyadi. He was born and lived in a time of great internal and external turmoil, from the Hussite movement and the peasant riot of 1437 to the Ottoman attacks and the fall of the Eastern Christian center in the hands of the Turks in 1453. In the 15th century, the Turks occupied a large part of the Balkan Peninsula and were already advancing to the north of the Danube or, more precisely, up the Danube Valley, to Buda and Vienna. The European forces, theoretically headed by the papacy, but mostly made up of populations under attack (Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Croatians, Montenegrins, Albanians, Romanians, Hungarians, Poles, etc.), joined the "Defensive" or "Late Crusade." When the Lower Danube became the border between Christianity and the Muslim world, the main role of the anti-Ottoman resistance went to Wallachia, Hungary and Poland. Transylvania became involved in the fight formally as part of Hungary, but often it actually fought alongside Wallachia and Moldavia. At the end of the 14th century, the Transylvanian Voivode Ştibor supported the Wallachian prince Mircea the Elder (1386–1418), who had become the ally of Sigismund of Luxembourg in the fight against Ottomans. After Mircea's death—the real obstacle for the Turks on the Danube—the Ottoman expe-

ditions to Wallachia and Transylvania intensified (1419, 1420, 1423, 1425, 1428, 1431, 1432, 1436, 1438, etc.), just as the persistent—and sometimes successful—attempts to counter them. In some extreme cases, the Ottomans forced the Wallachian princes to join their troops in anti-Christianity campaigns (in Transylvania), but the overall attitude of Wallachia, despite the great deprivations and sacrifices, was to stand firm. This ensured a long-term protection of Transylvania from direct assaults.

The greatest anti-Ottoman effort of Transylvania was carried out at the middle of the 15th century, headed by the Romanian military commander John Hunyadi (1407–1456). He came from a modest family of Romanian ennobled knezes from Haţeg-Hunedoara; his great-grandfather was probably called Costea, his grandfather named Şerbu, the father Voicu, and uncles were named Radul (two of them) and Mogoş. Voicu (dead before 1419) married Elisabeth of Margina (Marzsinai), also from a family of petty nobles from Hunedoara, likely to have origins in the Romanian borough of Margina (south of the Mureş river, on the border between the counties of Hunedoara and Timiş) and converted to Catholicism. The name Margina or Mursina was also associated to the name of the Romanian knez family Muşina from Densuş, but the connection between John's mother and the Muşina family cannot be demonstrated. John had two brothers, Voicu and John, and several sisters; the identifications of some of the latter are still uncertain, like the one called Marina and married to the boyar Mânzilă (Manzilla) from Argeş (ancestor of Nicolaus Olahus) or the one married to the prince of Moldavia, Peter II. John had two direct descendents, two sons: Ladislas (1431–1457)—dead at an early age—and Mathias (1443–1490), one of the most important kings of Hungary, the only local sovereign since the Árpáds. Like all Romanian knezes, John's father had military duties, bravely fulfilled, even at the royal court. For this, Sigismund of Luxembourg gave him (and his family) the Hunedoara estate in 1490. John was a squire at the royal court and in different missions abroad, where he learnt the art of war. In his youth, Latin documents call him John the Romanian (*Johannes Olah*). In Romanian, Orthodox, Balkan and Greek circles he was always called, even during his lifetime, *Iancul, Iancu, Ianco* or *Iango*. Thus, the great army commander had two names, and obviously, as his prestige and fame grew, the official Catholic name, John, emerged, even if the Romanian and Orthodox name was never forgotten. The practice of two baptism names was common at the time; for example, one of Voicu's brothers had the Romanian name Radu and an official (Catholic) one, Ladislas; moreover, John's brother, also officially called John (the Younger), had a traditional name Ivaşcu (Ivachko) as well.[43]

43. Pius II (Pope 1458–1464), *Epistolae familiares*, printed by Antonius Koberger, Nürenberg, 1481, f. 130r (a handwritten note on the copy from the Batthyanaeum Library from Alba-Iulia, registration number IV 7).

After he become Ban (Earl) of Severin in 1411, Iancu was made voivode of Transylvania, and then governor of Hungary (1446–1453); in his last years of life, he held the prestigious title of captain general of the kingdom. He lived in a troubled period, of great internal instability (the peasants' riot, the death of Sigismund in 1437, the death of King Albert in 1439, two kings sharing the throne, the death of King Wladislaw in 1444, the infant King Ladislas the Post-humous, internal strife) and external threats. In this background, with a unique ambition, he acceded to the highest ranks of the officer corps, with a *cursus honorum* never seen outside the royal house. From 1441, John (Iancu) scored a series of notable anti-Ottoman victories, year after year, for a long period. In the autumn and winter of 1443–1444, he fought a campaign on the territory of Serbia and Bulgaria (under Turkish occupation), advancing to Sofia and Zlatice (in the Balkan Mountains) and even threatening the very center of the Ottoman Empire. Frightened by this "long campaign" and occupied on other fronts, the Turks sued for peace. On the other hand, John's army was also ex-hausted. Thus, finally, closing an agreement with the Serbian despot George Brancovic (who was hoping to get back the throne of Serbia after peace was made) and maybe, in exchange for some personal compensations, he slowed down the "crusader" zeal of the Polish King Wladislaw and of the papal repre-sentative Giuliano Cesarini, preparing the peace with the Turks. The peace, to last for a period of 10 years, was negotiated at Adrianople and Szeged and signed, it seems, in August 1444 at Oradea. Nevertheless, at the request of the Pope, of some Hungarian circles and Western crusaders, the war resumed once the Venetian fleet had set sail for the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. John dis-agreed with the break of peace, but still he led the Transylvanian, Croatian and Bosnian armies, fighting alongside the Hungarian royal army and the Wal-lachian forces, commanded by Vlad Dracul. The battle took place on 10 No-vember 1444 at Varna, where the Ottomans defeated the outnumbered Chris-tian army. It was also due to the surprise of the rapid retreat from Asia of the enemy forces (which the Christian fleet didn't manage to prevent from cross-ing the Boshporus), and an incompatibility of military strategies: while most crusaders used the knight style, with heavy and inflexible armors, the Turks counted on the light mobile cavalry and surprise attacks. The king of Hungary, Wladislaw, and Cardinal Cesarini died in this battle. In 1445, the Burgundian and Papal fleet, agreeing with Vlad Dragul (Dracul), the prince of Wallachia, and John, attacked the Danube fortresses, regained Giurgiu and then withdrew.

Still, John did not give up the fight against the Ottomans. After he was elected governor of Hungary (1446), he created a common military system which included the three Romanian countries, Skanderbeg's Albanians, and some Serbian forces. In a document issued on 4 December 1447, at Târgoviște,

John Hunyadi was called "by the grace of God, Voivode of Wallachia,"[44] and the prince of Moldavia (who was probably his brother-in-law) considered him his "parent." Actually, it was from this prince (Peter II) that John got the fortress of Chilia as strategic point in 1448. It is just that, in the great battle of Kossovopolje (1448), the Christian coalition, betrayed by the Serbian despot George Brancovic, had no chance of winning. The Ottoman Empire seemed ever closer to achieving its goal: the conquest of Central Europe, following the Danube to Vienna.

John's offensive wars ended at the time the symbol of the Eastern Christianity—Constantinople—fell into Turkish hands in 1453. Shortly after that, in 1456, Sultan Mehmed II headed to the Danube to conquer Belgrade, the "key" to Hungary and Central Europe. John strengthened the Danube border (the southern border) and maintained the alliance with the Romanian countries. He gathered an army of about 30,000, Romanian knezes and nobles, petty nobles in general, the other forces of Transylvania, townsmen, Hungarians, Poles, Czechs, German groups, etc. John started the overall attack on the Turkish camp on 22 July 1456, which ended in the Christians' crushing victory. The Turks withdrew in confusion, and the sultan was injured. News of the victory traveled fast all over Europe, and the name "the savior of Christianity" was on everyone's lips. The Pope called the great general "Christ's Champion" (*Athleta Christi*) and decided that, from then on, each afternoon in all the Catholic churches the bells would toll to show appreciation for the great victory and to honor its hero. However, in full glory, on 11 August 1456, John died of the plague at Zemun (near Belgrade). His body was buried in Alba-Iulia, at the very heart of his native Transylvania, and on his tomb the words of the papacy legate John of Capistrano were written: "The light of the world has died out..." Before he died, John had made sure that Vlad Drăgulea (nicknamed the Impaler) got on the throne of Wallachia; on the throne of Moldavia he wanted Stephen the Great who acceded to it in 1457, with Vlad's help. They would both take on the anti-Ottoman fight and prove to be strong warriors and politicians.

John (Iancu) of Hunedoara was a great personality of the 15th century, the heroic century of the resistance against the Turks. He lived in a troubled world, where the idea of Europe was reflected in the concept of a "Christian Republic" and ethnic identities were still subordinated to political-social and religious interests. Defending the countries and the populations of the center and the southeast of the continent from Ottoman attacks, he was at the same time defender of the European civilization. He put his military skills in the service

44. *DRH, D*, vol. I, p. 394-396.

of a supreme idea, he reached personâl glory and, for his country, he acquired great fortune (around 1,000 estates, boroughs, towns and fortresses); in other words, he combined pragmatism with an ideal, as in the wide vision of the Renaissance.

Based on the decisions of the Council of Florence (1439) regarding the union of the two Christian Churches, under John's flag—himself a "new" Catholic, coming from an Orthodox knez family, moving both in the Western and Eastern worlds—Orthodox and Catholics fought together in the name of the shared ideal to defend the "Christian Republic," for which the countries from the area were real defensive "gates."

To the Romanian knez class (nobility) from Transylvania, Iancu showed a special interest, and the former fully served the ideal promoted by the great general in order to preserve its organization and save itself from dissolution. As a result, during John's time, a great number of Romanian knezes were ennobled or certified in their *knezates*—in Haţeg, Hunedoara-Deva, Banat, Maramureş, etc.—a number never equaled during the Middle Ages. This process, along with the promotion of the Romanian nobles to higher ranks, the frequent use of the term *nobiles Valachi* in chancelleries or the creation of a special style for the donation documents in favor of the Romanians, indicate, around 1450, an attempt—unsuccessful, however—to reconstruct an official Romanian elite (estate), alongside the other three. By the nature of things, John (Iancu) served Hungary as a high official of this country, of whose history he is naturally a part, in a time where the ethnic origin was not decisive. Nevertheless, the new ethnic identities were present, and his contemporaries made the distinction between John's country and his ethnic origin. Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405–1464), alias Pope Pius II, wrote that "John Hunyadi [...] did not improve only the Hungarians' fame, but also that of the Romanians among whom he had been born,"[45] and Anton Verantius (Verancsics) (1504–1573) says that Romanians, who equaled in number the other three nations of Transylvania taken together, had "no freedom, no nobility, no right of their own, except for a small group living in the district of Haţeg—where it is believed that Decebalus's capital was once situated—which, during John Hunyadi, born there, acquired noble ranks as it restlessly participated in the fight against the Turks."[46] For now, we are interested here only in Verantius' remarks concerning the Romanian origin of John, from Haţeg, and his actions to protect the Romanian elite from his native region. On the other hand, firmly involving, under his own command, in the fight against the Ottomans the other two Romanian countries, John established a

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45. Maria Holban (ed.), *Călători străini despre Ţările Române*, vol. I, Bucharest, 1968, p. 472.
46. Ibid., p. 410-411.

Romanian or Dacian bloc, which would later be used quite often in times of danger. In time, the military aspect of this bloc would be doubled with a political one, leading—in the Renaissance spirit—at the end of the Middle Ages and modern times to the idea of *restitutio Daciae*. Still, John, a man of his century, remains a European spirit, a warrior, a great commander and strategist, who, for about three quarters of a century, prevented the Turks from advancing to the center of Europe.

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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 shall both join the European Union
quite soon. 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.

Front cover:
"The Hunedoara Castle"

40 (400.000) lei
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15 €