



## Transylvania

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Abstract:	<p>Transylvania – today a province of Romania – is an ethnically mixed territory, inhabited by majority Romanians, and the Hungarian and German minorities. The history of the region conducted on separate nation building processes for the main ethnic groups, on ethno-cultural basis. In the 19th century, Transylvanian Hungarians engaged in the pan-Hungarian nation building process, while Transylvanian Romanians became conscious of their belonging to the pan-Romanian community.</p> <p>Between the two world wars, and in different form, in second part of communist dictatorship, the Romanian nationalism was mainly oriented to assimilate the Transylvanian Hungarians. The political nationalism is present in today's Romania mainly in actions of extremist political parties. The ethnic basis of social cohesion is present both in public and private discourses of Transylvanian Romanians, and Hungarians. However the Transylvanian Hungarians are integrated in Romanian political system, but in the same time maintained their specific Hungarian belonging, and the interethnic relations improved.</p>

## Transylvania

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### Main text

Geographically, Transylvania – today part of Romania – is situated at the turn of the Carpathian Mountains. In a narrow sense its territory is 52.000 square meters and in a wider sense (completed with the hills that extend to the Tisa Plain) its territory is approximately 103.000 square meters. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the territory belonged the Austrian, and later to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, according to the first censuses (1850-1880), slightly more than 50% of the population of this province was Romanian, 25-30% Hungarian and 10-12 German (Saxons and Swabs), with a smaller Jewish and Roma minority. Since 1918, within the framework of the Romanian state, the proportion of Romanians from Transylvania has been increasing, reaching 76% in 2011, while the proportion of Hungarians decreases to 19%. Germans emigrate and their proportion decreases below the 1% threshold.

### History and national ideologies

Transylvania is a region of great importance both from the point of view of the Romanian and Hungarian nation-building processes and national ideologies. It is a real ethnic borderland, a location between competing national centers and rival national ideologies (Brubaker et al. 2006). In Transylvania we could not witness the development of a nation building process that could integrate the three main ethnic groups into one nation because, as in Central and Eastern Europe, nation building projects had ethnolinguistic and cultural basis, citizenship was not the base. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Transylvanian Hungarians also become engaged in the pan-Hungarian nation building process. However, this could not integrate Transylvanian Romanians or Germans. Starting from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and during the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Transylvanian Romanians became unreservedly conscious of their ethnic-national belonging to the pan-Romanian community. This process was led by the spreading national ideology founded by the intellectual and ecclesiastic elite (Transylvanian School). More historical contributions highlighted the specific self-image of Transylvanian Romanians toward other Romanians. (Mitu, 2001)

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century AC, the Transylvanian territory became part of the Roman Empire. After year 1000 Transylvania becomes part of the Hungarian Kingdom as a separate province. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Transylvania – under Turkish control – becomes an almost independent principality. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century it becomes part of the Austrian Empire, and then, as a consequence of the Austrian-Hungarian compromise from 1867, it becomes part of the dualist Hungary without any separate status. After 1918 this province becomes part of Romania, which is emphasized by the Versailles treaty in 1920.

Mainstream historiographies about Transylvania were in interference with national ideologies. According to the dominant Romanian historiography, Romanians are the descendants of the Romanized “Daco-Roman” population. Then, Hungarians conquered Transylvania, the lands were taken and some Romanians were even forced into the Hills, but still the majority of the population remained of Romanian ethnicity. Mainstream Hungarian historians (and national ideology) do not agree with this. According to them, after the conquest from 895, mainly in the 10<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Hungarians settled in Transylvania, which was scarcely inhabited.

During the last two decades (1990-2012) the works of several historians leave the canons of national ideologies (Boia, Iordachi and Trencsényi, Iordachi and Turda, Trencsényi et al., Mitu. 2001).

### **Ethnicity and nationalism in changing context**

Nationalism is not induced through „nation”, but through particular manifestations of the political sphere (Brubaker, 1996: 13–17). This might happen in the cultural or political sphere as well (Verdery, 1993). Between the two world wars, Romanian nationalism was mainly oriented against internal ethnic minorities and their ethno-cultural assimilation (Livezeanu 1995). After 1945, the Romanian nationalism was replaced with Soviet type “internationalism”. But since 1956 they gradually turn back to state politics centered around nation and previous minority rights are gradually ceased. After 1965, in Ceausescu’s regime, especially, nationalism directed against internal ethnonational minorities, mainly aimed at the assimilation of Transylvanian Hungarians, with partial „success” (see Schöpflin 1974, Verdery 1991). Despite this, one of few bases of social cohesion remained the ethnicity which the communist dictatorship wasn’t destroyed (Brubaker et al., 2006).

After the regime change from 1989/1990, the ethnonational minority identity of Transylvanian Hungarians reemerged. They founded their own ethnic based cultural and political organizations (*Democratic Alliance of Hungarians from Romania*, DAHR) and they acquired several linguistic constitutional rights and educational institutions with education in the minority language, financed by the state. This revival of Transylvanian Hungarian ethnicity, nationhood and the ethno-political activity became the target of Romanian nationalism expressed both at the political level and in public discourses and it was represented by extremist parties such as the *Great Romania Party* (PRM), the *Party of National Unity of Romanians* (PUNR). The new political context reemerged older ethno-national tensions, which were embodied in national ideologies. Recent research pointed out that ethnicity in Transylvania is embodied in dispositions and schemas of the habitus, in the feeling of ease, attraction and repugnance that influence the language or the ethnicizable aspects of culture (Brubaker 2006.337)

There are three ideological sources that today have an influence on national identity building in Transylvania (Brubaker 1996): the Hungarian “kin state”, the minority discourse of the Transylvanian Hungarian elite and the national ideology of the Romanian state. These ideological sources form a Transylvanian Hungarian ethnonational identity according to which they are part of the pan-Hungarian nation, with some level of unity of Hungarian symbols as well. However, regional (Transylvanian) Hungarianness is the strongest and most positive identification among them. They behave as a separate ingroup, differentiating themselves both from Hungarians from Hungary and from Romanians. More than half of them think that Transylvanian Hungarians – as a community – belong to the Romanian nation, in a civic sense

(citizenship) and consider Transylvania or Romania as their fatherland, but this is a weak, more neutral identification (Veres2005, 2012). Integration in the Romanian political system does not decrease the level of pride for being Transylvanian Hungarian, because the two have a common source: the wider the range of minority rights and system of institutions ensured by the Romanian state, the stronger the consciousness of being Hungarian and the feeling of being at home in Romania.

Today, in Transylvania, both Romanian and Hungarian nationalism results in national ideological discourses that have an influence on other spheres of life as well. Inasmuch as these are reflected in the national identity of individuals, we may talk about national identity loaded with nationalistic or ethnocentric elements. However the interethnic relations improved significantly. Between 2000 and 2010 scientific surveys, carried out in Transylvania, showed that the Romanian-Hungarian relationship, perceived as conflictual, on country (national) level, reduced from 80% to 26.7%, and on local to 8.3 % in 2010 (Veres2013).

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**Cross references:** Romania, Hungarians, ethnonationality, nationalism, national ideology

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