TOGETHER OR SEPARATELY: GERMAN SETTLERS IN MEDIEVAL HUNGARY

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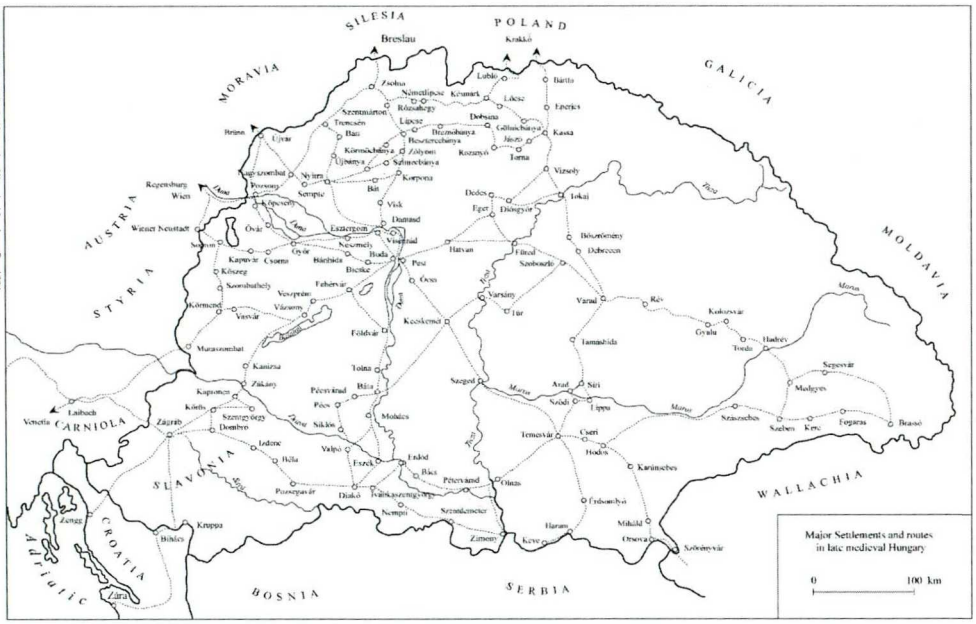
Between 1000 and 1526, the independent Hungarian Kingdom was a multi-ethnic state. Some of the ethnic groups living in Hungary were "native" inhabitants (for example, the Slavs and the remnants of the Avars) of the Middle-Danube Basin that gave a geographical frame to this medieval state, while others, such as the Khabars and Alans arrived together with the conquering, essentially Finno-Ugrian Hungarians in the late ninth century. The most important component of foreign ethnic groups, however, arrived to the Middle-Danube or Carpathian Basin after the foundation of the Christian kingdom—which is associated with the coronation of Saint Stephen (25th December in 1000 or 1st January, 1001) (Engel 2001) .

The population density of this region was relatively low throughout the entire medieval period and during the Mongol invasion of 1241–1242; the Ottoman incursions occurring from the fifteenth century onwards also decimated the inhabitants of the country. Therefore, Hungarian kings invited foreign settlers in large numbers to their country and provided them with numerous privileges. The influx of foreign ethnic groups to the medieval Kingdom of Hungary was further promoted by the unfavourable living conditions prevailing in the native lands of the immigrants. Before the Mongol invasion of 1241–1242 immigrants came to Hungary both from the Eastern (Jews, Ismaelithes, Patzinaks, Cumans) and the Western part of Europe (Walloons, Italians, Germans, especially Saxons) (Engel 2001, 58–61; Petrovics 2009, 65–73). Those who arrived from the West were referred to as guests (Latin: *hospites*), and in the eleventh and twelfth centuries they came primarily from Flanders, northern France (Walloons), Lorraine and Lombardy. Since they were Romance-speaking people, the Hungarian sources in the Latin language referred to them as *Latini, Gallici* and *Italici.* They were followed in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by Germans *(Teutonici* and *Saxones).* From the second part of the thirteenth century, German ascendancy became obvious in most of the towns of the Hungarian Kingdom (Petrovics 2009, 65). Since the history of the foreign ethnic groups living in medieval Hungary is a broad topic, I will focus in the following only on the immigration of the Germans and on the role they played in the urbanization of the realm.

I. Transylvania: the Saxons and the Andreanum

The most significant and at the same time the largest-scale immigration of the Árpádian Age (comprising the period between 1000 and 1301) was that of the Germans in Transylvania (Erdély in Hungarian, Siebenbürgen in German and Transilvania or Ardeal in Romanian), the eastern province of the Hungarian Kingdom. The first groups of those who later came to be called Saxons arrived here from Flanders in around 1150. During the thirteenth century, they were followed by numerous waves of

'Saxons' from the region of the Rhine and the Mosel rivers. Despite the heavy losses caused by the Mongol invasion of 1241–1242, by around 1300 three great blocks of Saxon settlements had come into existence, all of them in the southern and eastern marches of Transylvania. The natural centres of the southern settlements were the towns of Nagyszeben (Hermannstadt/Sibiu) and Brassó (Kronstadt/Braşov). These towns guarded the only routes that led towards the Black Sea through the southern Carpathians with the burghers of cities controlling trading activities of this region. The two main routes were the ways in the vicinity of Hermannstadt/Sibiu led through the valley of the River Olt named Roter-Turm Pass or Vöröstoronyi-szoros in Hungarian and Pasul Turnu Roşu in Romanian, and the ways besides Kronstadt/ Braşov led through the Törzburger Pass or Törcsvári-szoros in Hungarian and Pasul Bran-Rucăr in Romanian. The importance of these routes explains for example why Saxon merchants established close contacts with the Genoese harbour towns of the Black Sea via them.



After KMTI, p. 95, Early Hungarian Historical Lexicon, Bp. 1994.

Nagyszeben/Hermannstadt was to remain the first in the rank of Saxon settlements. Around 1190, a collegiate chapter was founded here, one that was taken out of the authority of the bishop of Transylvania residing in Gyulafehérvár (Karlsburg/Alba Iulia) and subjected directly to the archbishop of Esztergom, head of the Hungarian church. The Saxons of Nagyszeben/ Hermannstadt, occupying a territory that spread from Szászváros (Broos/Orăştie) in the west to Barót (today's Baraolt in Romania) in the east, were given wide-ranging privileges by King Andrew II in 1224. In his document, later referred to as the Andreanum, the monarch engaged himself not to

grant away any part of their land, which, as a consequence, virtually became the property of the Saxon community. Their judge remained the count of Nagyszeben/ Hermannstadt and was appointed by the King, but the minor court cases were to be judged by their own magistrates, whom, along with their priests, Saxons had the right to elect. Saxons had to pay to the royal chamber an annual tax of 500 Hungarian silver marks and were expected to host the king three times a year and the voivode of Transylvania twice a year. As military obligation, they had to equip 500 warriors for the campaigns within the kingdom and 100 soldiers for foreign wars. In exchange for all these duties Saxons were allowed to trade freely throughout the region.

By the fourteenth century, the Saxons of Nagyszeben/Hermannstadt were grouped into eight autonomous districts called "seats" (Latin: *sedes*) with their centres at Nagyszeben (Hermannstadt/Sibiu), Szászváros (Broos/Orăştie), Szászsebes (Mühlbach/Sebeş), Szerdahely (Reußmarkt/Miercurea Sibiului), Újegyház (Leschkirch/ Nocrich), Nagysink (Groß-Schenk/ Cincu), Kőhalom (Reps/Rupea) and Segesvár (Schäßburg/Sighi oara). At the end of the Middle Ages these were called collectively as the "Seven Seats," although this community of the Saxons was composed of eight seats at that time. In 1402, King Sigismund attached to them the districts of Medgyes (Mediasch/Media) and Selyk (Schelk/Marktschelken/ eica Mare), which were also inhabited by Saxons but had hitherto been subjected to royal lordship through the *comes Siculorum,* that is, the count of the Székely. These two districts later came to from the so-called "Two Seats" (Zimmermann 1996, 36–134; Engel 2001, 113–115).

The colonisation of the region around Brassó (Kronstadt/Braşov) also called Barcaság (Burzenland in German and Ţara Bârsei in Romanian), that spread in the south-eastern part of Transylvania, was started by the Teutonic Knights (The Order of Brothers of the German House of Saint Mary in Jerusalem), who were invited and settled there by King Andrew II in 1211. The primary task of the Teutonic Knights was to defend the south-eastern borders of Hungary against neighbouring Cumans. Nevertheless, when the Knights requested Pope Honorius III to be placed directly under the authority of the Holy See rather than that of the King of Hungary, Andrew II, angered and alarmed at their growing power, responded by expelling the Teutonic Order out of Transylvania in 1225. In the late 1220s (but most probably in 1226), the ousted knights were invited to Masovia by Conrad I of Masovia (Konrad I Mazowiecki in Polish), a Polish duke who needed military assistance against the pagan Prussians. In return for their military support, Conrad I offered the Teutonic Knights the region of Kulmerland in the southern part of Prussia, today's Chełmno in Poland. This land formed the base of the later State of the Teutonic Order (*Staat des Deutschen Ordens* in German *and Civitas Ordinis Theutonici* in Latin), which was originally a crusading state. Learning from the Hungarian incident, Grand Master Hermann von Salza wanted to have the Order's rights documented beforehand, by a deal with Conrad that was to be confirmed by the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope (Hunyadi 2008; Pósán 2012).

The colonisation was not interrupted by the expulsion of the Knights, since the Hungarian monarch allowed the old colonists to remain there and encouraged others to join them. This territory constituted an autonomous Saxon region independent from Nagyszeben/Hermannstadt just as did the three districts of Beszterce (Bistritz/

Nösen, Bistri a), Radna (Altrodenau, Rodna Veche) and the so called Királyi (Kyralia) in eastern Transylvania, which together came to form the third unit. The greater part of the Saxon territory enjoyed ecclesiastical autonomy, as its churches were organised into deaneries instead of archdeaconries and subsequently subjected directly to the archbishop of Esztergom.

There were many other Saxons in Transylvania settling on noble estates, but they became subject to private lords and were over time assimilated by the Hungarians. All in all, German immigration into Transylvania was considerable. It lead in the modern period to 242 localities with a German speaking population, with the Saxon autonomies extended over an area of about 11,000 square kilometres. The 1920 Peace Treaty of Trianon transferred Transylvania, along with Banat and Partium to Romania; as a result the Saxons found themselves within the frame a new state. At the end of the Second World War, tens of thousands of Germans living in Romania, along with the Transylvanian Saxons, fled before the Soviet Red Army. Due to various reasons —forced assimilation, expulsion and emigration—the number of Germans/Saxons dramatically dropped in Romania in the second half of the twentieth century, especially after the collapse of Nicolaie Ceauşescu's regime. According to the records of the Lutheran Church of Hermannstadt/Sibiu the number of Saxons in Transylvania in 2003 was only around 15,000.

II. The Zipserland/Szepesség/Spiš

Another important area from the point of view of early German immigration was that of the Zipserland (Szepesség in Hungarian and Spiš in Slovak), a region in the north-central section of Historic Hungary, situated between the range of the High Tátra (Vysoké Tatry in Slovak) and the Slovak Ore Mountains (Slovenské rudohorie in Slovak) (Fekete Nagy 1934; Homza and Sroka 2009). The first German settlers appeared here in the mid-twelfth century and were followed by others—primarily after the Mongol invasion—in the second half of the thirteenth century. Although most of them were Franks, Bavarians and Austrians; their urban law code derived from the Saxon Law *(Sachsenspiegel),* hence they came to be known as Saxons. Because they lived in the region of Zips (Zipserland/Szepesség/Spiš) they were also known as Zipsers (Cipszerek or Szepesi szászok in Hungarian), a term which distinguished them from their brethren, the Transylvanian Saxons (Blazovich 2005).

Zipserland's most important walled cities included those of Lőcse (Leutschau/Levoča), Késmárk (Käsmarkt/Kežmarok) and Gölnicbánya (Göllnitz/Gelnica). By the late fourteenth century there were 24 such towns in the region. The fortress of Szepes (Zipsenburg/Spišký hrad) had become the administrative centre of the county of Szepes at an unknown date, most probably in the first half of the thirteenth century. From 1271 until 1878—with occasional exceptions—Zipserland enjoyed regional autonomy, in other words, it was directly subject to the authority of the king, and not to the local nobility. The city of Lőcse/Leutschau was the region's most important urban and administrative centre, responsible for most of the commerce between Hungary and Poland. In 1370, the 24 Zipser towns promulgated a joint law code based on the German Saxonspiegel. In 1412, King Sigismund borrowed 37,000 schoks of silver groats of Prague (equalling 100,000 golden florins) from Wladislas II

of Poland for the war against Venice, in return for which he ceded him one part of Spiš, including the seigneury of the castle of Lubló (Lublau/L'ubovňa), the towns of Podolin (Pudlein/Podolinec), Gnézda (Kniesen/Hniezdne) and Lubló (Lublau/L'ubovňa) along with other 13 Saxon towns. The area thus pledged was only regained by Hungary with the First Partition of Poland in 1772 (Engel 2001, 228). Following the First World War, Hungary lost Zipserland along with all of Northern Hungary, to the newly created state of Czechoslovakia. At the end of the Second World War and during the late 1940s, thousands of the Zipsers, along with other Germans living in Czechoslovakia, fled or were expelled.

In Transylvania and in the Spiš (Szepes/Zips) region, where the Germans were invariably called Saxons, settlements formed large and contiguous blocks. Besides these regions, the towns of the western borderland including Pozsony (Pressburg/Bratislava), Nagyszombat (Tyrnau/Trnava) and Sopron (Ödenburg) or those of the north-eastern part of the realm such as Kassa (Kaschau/Košice), Eperjes (Preschau/Prešov), and Bártfa (Bartfeld/Bardejov) just to mention the most important ones alongside the mining towns and, of course, Buda (Ofen), the medieval capital, were also places where Germans lived in large numbers in Historic Hungary in the Late Middle Ages.

It is important to note the existence of localities called *Német(i)* [Germans] and *Szász(i)* [Saxons]; their Hungarian names prove that these villages had once a presence of German population. Such villages were part of the ethnic background of the German towns in the Hungarian Kingdom. While some of the German *hospites* or guests settled down in villages, their majority became urban burghers and played an outstanding role in the process of medieval Hungarian urban development from the thirteenth century onwards (Petrovics 2009, 71).

III. Social and Economic changes in the Later Middle Ages

The thirteenth century, especially the period following the Mongol invasion, brought several major changes in the socio-political and economic life of the kingdom. This is the time when trading contacts with Kiev and Constantinople declined and Hungary became integrated into the western European economy. Links tying Hungary to Germany and Italy became ever stronger (Szűcs 1993, 227–240). Conscious royal policy aiming at fostering urban development in Hungary also dates to this period. King Béla IV (1235–1270) issued the first charters securing urban privileges to localities in Hungary: one for Fehérvár in 1237, and another one for Nagyszombat (Tyrnau/Trnava) in 1238. The Mongol invasion accelerated this royal policy. However, the primary aim of Béla IV in fostering urban development was rather to give shelter to the population in the case of a potential new Mongol attack than to strengthen the towns' economies. King Béla's successors, including the ill-fated Ladislas IV 'the Cuman' (1272–1290), also followed this policy, but only to a lesser degree than his predecessor (Szűcs 1993, 50–61; Kubinyi 1997; Petrovics 2009, 72). It was in the fourteenth century, especially the period between 1323 and 1382, during the consolidated reigns of Charles I and Louis I that the number of charters containing urban privileges increased significantly again. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries some 50 settlements were granted royal charter in Hungary. This number refers only to localities which were

situated in the region of Hungary proper, that is, north of the river Drava—in other words, Dalmatian and Slavonian towns were not included—and which were not ecclesiastical centres or (arhi)episcopal cities (Petrovics 2009 72–73).

The size and impact of German immigration on medieval Hungary was so considerable that the wealthiest towns of the country then became populated predominantly by Germans (Saxons) and so German enclaves came into being. These enclaves continued to exist throughout the entire period of the Middle Ages—and even beyond. The towns of German settlers had their own autonomous legal life, partly regulated by special German town-laws (law-codes) and they put also emphasis on their German literacy (besides Latin). Most important settlements were dominated and governed, at least in the beginning, by an elite of German origin. Whereas in Bohemia, Moravia and Poland German settlers enjoyed the privileges of prestigious German mother-towns (such as Nuremberg, Magdeburg and Lübeck), in Hungary the situation was different. Building upon the precedent of "the law of Fehérvár," associated with the Walloon citizens of the town, "the law of Fehérvár" was adopted as a model to be followed in the thirteenth century. Thus "the law of Fehérvár" was granted by the kings, among other settlers, to the guests *(hospites)* of Pest in 1231 (confirmed in 1244), of Nyitra/Nitra in 1248, of Győr in 1271, of Sopron in 1277 and of Pozsony (Pressburg/Bratislava) in 1291. Thus town law in Hungary was not pure German law, but rather in the evolution of Hungarian urban liberties and laws a mixing of Latin and German laws took place (Kubinyi 1997, 29–30, 39–41, 61–63, 68–71; Engel 2001, 112; Petrovics 2014, 285–286).

Since Latin was the official language of the Kingdom of Hungary in the Middle Ages, documents were mostly formulated in this language. In the fourteenth century, however, the use of vernaculars (German, Hungarian, Italian and various dialects of western and southern Slavonic languages) began to challenge the primacy of Latin in many areas of urban life. Several contemporary written documents attest the fact that medieval towns in Hungary were not monolingual. German, the most important of the vernaculars mentioned above, was used for internal communication from the first arrival of German settlers in Hungary. Written German first appeared in urban contexts around the mid-fourteenth century: for example in Pozsony/Pressburg in 1346, in Sopron/Ödenburg in 1352—half a century earlier than in the official documents of the royal chancellery (1397) (Mollay 1982, 120–128; Szende 2009, 210–211). From this time on German was widely used in the towns of the realm where this ethnic group formed the majority of the urban population. Even the law-codes of towns, among which the most important was that of Buda, referred to as *Das Ofner Stadtrecht* (Mollay 1959), were written in German. Obviously, in these towns beside the law-codes, other documents were also produced in German; these were tax-rolls, testaments, charters, epistles, chronicles and different town-books, just to mention the most important ones (Mollay 1982; Szende 2009, 214–224, 228).

IV. Pest and the Emergence of Buda

From our research perspective the development of the towns of Pest and Buda are particularly interesting. One of the most significant towns of the Kingdom of Hungary in the first half of the thirteenth century was Pest. This rich town, then populated

by German settlers—*"ditissima Teutonica villa"* as Master Roger recorded in his famous *Carmen miserabile* (Bak and Rady 2010, 160–161)—received its first urban charter in the early 1230s; nevertheless Pest was destroyed by the Mongols in 1241. King Béla IV endeavoured to revive the town therefore after the Mongol invasion issuing a new urban charter in 1244, *The Golden Bull of Pest,* aimed at the surviving settlers of Pest (Kubinyi 1997, 39–41). In 1247, in fear of another Mongol attack, the monarch resettled the dwellers of Pest across the Danube on its right bank, on the area of the castle district of modern Buda. With this process King Béla IV actually founded a new town. The dwellers of Pest brought with themselves their privileges, their seal and the name of their original town, Pest. Due to these circumstances the new town of Buda, for a while, had an alternate name: *Castrum Budense* as it came into being in the vicinity of the original Buda, which from this time on was named Buda Vetus (Óbuda in Hungarian, Old Buda in English), and *Castrum Novi Montis Pestiensis* (Pestújhegyi-vár in Hungarian, Pest's-new-castle-on-the-hill in English), as the settlers came from Pest. Since the new town of Buda had a significant German population in the Later Middle Ages, it had a German name, too. This was Ofen, the German translation of the Slavic name *Pest* (Engel 2001, 255–257; Petrovics 2014, 285–286).

The newly founded Buda, due to its extremely favourable geographical location and wide ranging privileges, which were not restricted by secular or ecclesiastic landlords at all, soon became a prosperous town being—with the exception of certain periods—the seat of the royal household in the Later Middle Ages. In short, in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries Buda functioned as the centre of the kingdom, both in the economic and political sense of the word. From the fourteenth century onwards its law, *Das Ofner Stadtrecht,* compiled in the first half of the fifteenth century, became a template for urban laws and privileges bestowed by the Hungarian kings. According to this code—to refer to one interesting and, at the same time, characteristic case—only two Hungarians could be elected as members of the town council, while the judge (Richter in German, Iudex in Latin) was to be a person whose four grandparents were of German birth (Mollay 1959, 69–71). This situation was changed by a revolt in 1439. By then 'Hungarian' and 'German' parties had emerged in the medieval capital of the kingdom, and the revolt was brought about by the murder of the leader of the Hungarians. The mob attacked and ransacked the houses of the rich, making no distinction between Germans and Hungarians, which shows that, in fact, it was a social conflict disguised in an ethnic jacket. By the time the rebellion was suppressed both parties were willing to find a compromise. Henceforth, German and Hungarian inhabitants enjoyed equal rights within the town's government. The Hungarians were to provide half of the council, that is, to have equal representation in a great council of one hundred members *(Hundertmannschaft),* which elected the judge and the inner (smaller) council. From then on German and Hungarian judges were elected in alternate years, and the 12 seats of the smaller council were divided equally between the two nationalities (Engel 2001, 262; Szende 2009, 215). This model proved to be very successful and was adopted later by others towns with a mixed Hungarian and German/Saxon population (for example, Kolozsvár/Klausenburg/Cluj-Napoca).

After 1247, Pest—the "mother-town" on the left bank of the Danube—was subordinated to the newly founded city of Buda. One striking sign of this dependence

was that the judge of Pest, at least, for a while, was designated by the town council of Buda from among its members. Nevertheless, by the late fifteenth century Pest, whose inhabitants by the 1400s were almost exclusively Hungarians, had become an independent town, and joined the group of the tavernical towns, the most developed group of medieval Hungarian towns (Petrovics 2014, 285–287).

Although Buda and its environment recovered from the first wave of destruction after the fatal battle of Mohács (1526), the election of two competing kings and the ensuing war between the rivals, John Szapolyai and Ferdinand of Habsburg, sealed the fate of the former royal seat. Szapolyai captured Buda in 1529, though only with Turkish assistance, and expelled its German inhabitants, since he did not trust them. The wealthiest German inhabitants of Kassa/Kaschau shared the fate of the German inhabitants of Buda, as they were also expelled by King John in 1537 (Petrovics 2009, 78, 86–87). Ferdinand was unable to re-take the city, and King John ennobled the remaining burghers of Buda. The citizens, however, were not able to enjoy their new status for long, as Sultan Suleiman occupied the city in 1541 and turned it into the centre of a new Turkish province, the Budin Eyalet.

Closing Remarks

The immigration of the eleventh–thirteenth centuries fundamentally modified the ethnic and economic structure and outlook of the kingdom. Regions that hitherto remained uninhabited were now transformed into arable land, where settlements soon sprang up. Overall, the process of colonisation remarkably increased the resources of the country. A particular feature of the colonisation is that, in comparison with the Latin guests, the immigration of the Germans, turned out to be much more significant in the long run. The case of the Germans/Saxons shows that they, along with other foreign ethnic groups living in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary, enjoyed wide ranging autonomy. The privileges granted by the monarchs of the realm, enabled the communities of these ethnic groups to organise their lives along the principles of their special legal customs, which at many points differed from the realm's customary law. This situation necessarily led to a certain kind of separation. This is well demonstrated by the case of Nagyszeben (Hermannstadt/Sibiu), founded by Saxon settlers around 1150, where the acceptance of new inhabitants was limited on an ethnic basis. This rule was primarily established in order to keep away Hungarians, Romanians and 'Greeks' who appeared in large numbers around Nagyszeben/Hermannstadt due to the Ottoman advance on the Balkans (Szende 2009, 207). Despite the separation, especially the German burghers of the towns of medieval Hungary greatly contributed to the development of the whole country both in the economic and cultural sense of the word.

The expulsion of the Turks from the realm in the late seventeenth century opened a new chapter in the history of Germans living in Hungary. At this point another wave of German immigration began into the country. This was motivated by the large landowners' need for agricultural labourers, and the Habsburg Imperial Government's desire to repopulate the lands that had been devastated during the Ottoman rule and the Liberation Wars. In contrast with the Germans who had arrived in Hungary in the Middle Ages, those who came in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries were known

as Swabians (Schwaben). This time most of the Germans were peasants, who established prosperous agricultural centres throughout the country. It was a new phenomenon that in the nineteenth century most of the German townspeople—except the Saxons of Transylvania—became Magyarized and came to constitute a significant portion of Hungary's modern middle class and the nation's administrative and scientific intelligentsia.

Even in 1910 over 10 percent of Historic Hungary's population identified itself as German (1.9 out of 18.3 million) (Dávid 1988, 343). Surprisingly enough, after Hungary's dismemberment at Trianon in 1920, Hungary still had nearly half a million Germans out of a population of 8 million. This situation changed only after the Second World War, when most of the Germans fled or were expelled. In 2001, only 62,105 people identified themselves as German and 88,209 had affinity with cultural values, traditions of the German nationality according to the date on Nepszamlalas2001.hu (Retrieved on 2016–01–26). *Sic transit Gloria mundi...*

Nevertheless, old town centres, especially in Transylvania and in the territory of present-day Slovakia, architectural, legal and cultural monuments still bear witness to the legacy of the German settlers who found their home in Hungary (Pukánszky 1926; Niedermaier 1996, 2002, 2004; Homza and Sroka 2009).

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