

Note on Seventeenth-Century Hungary

Seventeenth-century Habsburg Hungary, also known as Royal Hungary, constituted one of the successor territories of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary. Most of this kingdom fell to the Ottomans after the battle of Mohács (1526) when Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (1520–66) inflicted a devastating military defeat on the Hungarians and their last king, Louis II (1516–26). Croatia had joined the Hungarian Kingdom by a personal union in 1102. After the battle of Mohács, Croatia remained within Royal Hungary. Another Ottoman military campaign in 1541 led to the seizure of Buda and the establishment of the Ottoman vassal state of Transylvania. Royal Hungary then became a highly militarized buffer zone to protect the Habsburg hereditary lands (Austria, Styria, and Carinthia) and the lands of the Bohemian Crown (Bohemia, Moravia, and Silesia) against further Ottoman incursions.

The military buffer zone in Habsburg Hungary consisted of an elaborate system of border defenses with fortresses stretching all the way from Transylvania to Croatia and the Adriatic coast. The entire border defense system was directly administered by the Aulic War Council (*Hofkriegsrat*) in Vienna and subdivided into six military districts known as captaincy-generals. The most important of these military districts was the province of Upper Hungary (*Hungaria superior*, *Oberungarn*). This district roughly overlapped with Habsburg Hungary's thirteen easternmost counties that bordered on Transylvania and the Ottoman provinces (*vilayets*) of Eger and Varad. The western parts of Habsburg Hungary were commonly designated as Lower Hungary (*Hungaria inferior*, *Niederungarn*). Three central institutions administered

the territories of Upper and Lower Hungary: the Hungarian Chamber, Hungarian Court Chancellery, and Zipser Kammer (Chamber of Zips).

When I use the term “Royal Hungary,” I am adopting the perspective of the Habsburg court, which claimed sovereignty over the counties of Lower and Upper Hungary. From the Ottoman perspective, however, significant portions of these counties had already joined the Ottoman Empire, either through direct occupation or the extraction of tributary payments. Habsburg claims of sovereignty over Upper and Lower Hungarian counties directly conflicted with a rapidly expanding Ottoman Empire.

Today, the territory of Royal Hungary has long ceased to exist. This territory is dispersed over six modern nation-states: Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Ukraine, Poland, and Romania. As a result of changing national boundaries, place names used in early modern times are often linguistically quite different today. For example, Szatmár (Hungarian) has become Satu Mare (Romanian); Uyvar (Ottoman Turkish) is now Nové Zámky (Slovak). Even Hungarian designations sometimes have different modern equivalents (e.g., Kálló has become Nagykálló). Place names during the seventeenth century typically had at least two, if not three, linguistic variants. Pivotal fortresses and towns were additionally designated by Latin and Ottoman Turkish variants. This multiplicity of place designations is further complicated by the existence of competing variants in the *same* language. For example, German designations for Eperjes (Hungarian) included both Eperies and Preschau.

I have decided to use the designations that appear most frequently in my sources, for example, Neutra Fortress (not Nyitra, Nitra), but Nyitra County. A multilingual glossary lists the seventeenth-century place name variants for the most important towns and fortresses, and also correlates these names with their modern equivalents. I indicate place name variants in brackets at the first mention of villages, small market towns, and small fortresses that are not included in this list.

When designating people, I use the personal and family names found in the archival record. This includes Latinized names that often make it impossible to designate an individual’s primary language affiliation. For the names of individuals who appear more than once, I chose the most frequently used Hungarian, Slavic, or German variants. Turkish names are presented in their contemporary Hungarian versions (e.g., Hungarian Huszein instead of Turkish Hüseyin) – with the exception of well-known Turkish dignitaries such as Sultan Süleyman.

Given the multiethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-confessional character of Habsburg Hungary, I use the term “Hungarian” (*Hungarus*, *Ungar*/*Hungar*, *Magyar*) in two ways: first, as an omnibus category comprising the entirety of the realm’s residents, and second, as a linguistic designation signifying “Hungarian speakers” as opposed to speakers of Slovak, German, Ukrainian (Ruthenian), and Croatian. Hungarian was the lingua franca of Habsburg Hungary. But many residents were bi- or tri-lingual and used their native tongue as well as Hungarian. Linguistic differentiation more or less overlapped with religious affiliation. German speakers were for the most part Lutherans. Slovak speakers were also predominantly Lutherans, although one finds Slovak Calvinists in Zemplén and Ung counties. Hungarian speakers were predominantly Calvinists, but the Hungarian nobles who dominated the politics of Sáros and Szepes counties were Lutheran. Ukrainian speakers, found mostly in the northeastern regions of Upper Hungary, followed the Eastern Orthodox rite. Attempts to draw these Eastern Slavs into union with Rome (Union of Ungvár, 1646) remained largely unsuccessful.

During the 1660s and 1670s, Eastern Orthodox “schismatics” (*schismatici*) and Protestants (both Lutherans and Calvinists) constituted the vast majority of Habsburg Hungary’s residents. Most Catholics were concentrated in Lower Hungary. The Counter-Reformation had made significant progress in Lower Hungary during the first half of the seventeenth century, although its impact was primarily felt in urban and noble milieux. In Upper Hungary, Catholicization remained largely limited to the magnate class and its clients; the Counter-Reformation reached other strata of society only during the early 1670s. Efforts to impose the Catholic faith in Upper Hungary triggered the revolts that form the main focus of this volume.