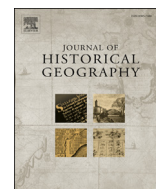




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Historical Geography

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jhg

Burgenland or West-Hungary: The aspirations and limits of Austrian and Hungarian geography, 1918–1938

Róbert Győri^{a,*}, Ferenc Jankó^{b,a}^a Department of Social and Economic Geography, Institute of Geography and Earth Sciences, ELTE Eötvös Loránd University, Pázmány P. St. 1/c, Budapest, H-1117, Hungary^b Alexandre Lamfalussy Faculty of Economics, University of Sopron, Erzsébet U.9, Sopron, H-9400, Hungary

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20 October 2021

Received in revised form

21 May 2022

Accepted 26 May 2022

Keywords:

Austrian-Hungarian border

Burgenland

World War I

Peace Treaty of Trianon / St. Germain

Territorial revisionism

ABSTRACT

At the end of World War I, peace treaties wiped the Austro-Hungarian Empire off the map, and as a result of the Treaty of Trianon on June 4, 1920, the Kingdom of Hungary was dismembered. As a part of this process, a thin band of mainly German-speaking territory of some 4000 km², West-Hungary, became a part of Austria. This paper investigates both the arguments used by Hungarian geographers in defence of that country's territorial unity, notably those aimed at retaining and potentially recovering West-Hungary, and the arguments used by Austrian and German geographers to justify the annexation of that area. Analysing published and unpublished sources (articles, books, maps, propaganda material, and popular science literature), we show that scholars from both sides of the new border based their detailed arguments on similar theories, and used the same methods and mapping technologies for their own causes. We demonstrate that geographical arguments and analyses cannot be divorced from their political context, and that the politics of the new Europe that emerged after 1918 were profoundly geographical in nature.

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Introduction

With the end of the Great War in 1918, both the victorious Allies and the defeated Central Powers had to prepare for peace. The

delimitation of new political boundaries for the nation states of the new Europe involved geographers as perhaps never before. The scholarly justification for proposed border changes and the reasoned explanation of the territorial integrity of different states demanded expert geographical knowledge. Almost every nation involved in the work of peace employed geographers as part of their deliberations. Geographers assisted the large delegations of the great powers (notably, Emmanuel de Martonne for France, Isaiah Bowman for the United States of America, and Alan Ogilvie on behalf of Great Britain), and the interests of several of the smaller states were also represented by geographical scholars (such as the Polish geographer Eugeniusz Romer, the Serbian Jovan Cvijić, and the Czech Viktor Dvorský).¹

In Hungary, highly respected geographers also had roles in assisting the preparations for peace. The Hungarian Peace Preparation Office was headed by Pál Teleki, Secretary General of the Hungarian Geographical Society. His deputy and office chief during the Paris peace negotiations was Jenő Cholnoky, President of the Hungarian Geographical Society and a professor of geography at the

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: gyori.robert@ttk.elte.hu (R. Győri), frk@caesar.elte.hu (F. Jankó).

¹ M. Heffernan, Geography, cartography and military intelligence: The Royal Geographical Society and the First World War, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 21 (1996) 504–533; G. Palsky, Emmanuel de Martonne and the ethnographical cartography of central Europe (1917–1920), *Imago Mundi* 54 (2002) 111–119; N. Smith, *American empire: Roosevelt's geographer and the prelude to globalization*, Berkeley, 2003; G. Bowd and D. Clayton, Emmanuel de Martonne and the wartime defence of Greater Romania: Circle, set square and spine, *Journal of Historical Geography* 47 (2015) 50–63; R. Győri and C.W.J. Withers, Trianon and its aftermath: British geography and the 'dismemberment' of Hungary, c. 1915–c. 1922, *Scottish Geographical Journal* 135 (2019) 68–97; S. Seegel, *Map men: Transnational lives and deaths of geographers in the making of East Central Europe*, Chicago, 2018; N. Ginsburger, Réseaux académiques et circulations savantes entre guerres et paix (1912–1919): Les expertises de Jovan Cvijić et de ses collègues géographes à travers les cas de Trieste et Fiume, *Cybergeo*, document 784, 2016; J. Martinek, Czech Geographer Viktor Dvorský and his Role in Border Formation in Central Europe, in: S. Jobbitt and R. Győri (Eds), *Geography and the Nation after Trianon*, London (In press).

University of Kolozsvár (what is today Cluj-Napoca in Romania).² In Austria Robert Sieger, professor from Graz, had a position in the peace delegation despite geographical questions not having a leading role in Austrian peace preparations.³ For these countries in particular, there was more need than ever before for the insight and cartographical knowledge of the geographers: peace treaties had wiped the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy off the maps, and as a result of the Treaty of Trianon on June 4, 1920, Hungary was dismembered. The internal tensions within multi-ethnic Austria-Hungary had been increasing during the war, and the claims of the Empire's dissatisfied nations (the Czechs, the Poles, the Romanians, etc.) were further fuelled by the proclamation of the Wilsonian principle of self-determination of nations. The ideal that people may be not governed without their own consent became part of US President Woodrow Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' (declared in January 1918) which was regarded as the basis for the American peace terms. Although the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire was not among the war aims of the Allied Powers in the early years of the Great War, France, Great Britain, and the United States had changed the direction of their Central Europe policy by the summer of 1918 and supported the formation of the new nation states that would replace the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.⁴

The consequences for the Hungarian side of the Empire were tremendous. The ethnic Hungarian population comprised only 54% of the Kingdom of Hungary in 1910, and the other nations (Romanians, Serbs, Slovaks, etc.) seized the opportunity to leave Hungary. The country lost two-thirds of its territory, 60% of its population and even one-third of its Hungarian-speaking people. Those parts with a non-Hungarian population were attached to the enlarged or newly created neighbouring states (to Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia and Austria). As a part of this process, a thin band of mainly German-speaking territory of some 4000 km², West-Hungary, became a part of Austria. According to the Hungarian census of 1910, 75% of the population of this territory were German native speakers, 15% Croatian, and 9% Hungarian. Yet, while the Allied Powers decided the fate of this territory in favour of Austria, the largest town in the territory, Sopron, remained in Hungary, together with its surrounding villages and did so as a result of local movements supported by the Hungarian government after the referendum of December 1921.⁵ (Fig. 1).

This paper analyses both the arguments used by Hungarian geographers in defence of that country's territorial unity, notably those aimed at retaining and potentially recovering West-Hungary, and the arguments used by Austrian and German geographers to justify the annexation of that area. We show that the testimonies of the different geographical scholars over this territorial dispute were held to be important by the politicians involved because of

their belief in the objectivity of science and of geography. Geography, that is, was able to set 'the eternal laws of nature'; its 'cold truths' stood in marked contrast to the transience of political interests.⁶ While part of the work for the geographers involved was about performing a service for the nation, they also hoped to strengthen and promote their field of study and to advance their personal careers as a result of involvement in national-scale geopolitics. Geographers did not make fundamental decisions in the territorial questions following the peace treaties; those were determined by the interests of the great powers. In most cases, the geographical arguments were merely tools for legitimisation, and provided rhetorical ammunition for the politicians.⁷ Nevertheless, it is clear that helping to re-draw the political boundaries of Europe in the wake of war presented an opportunity to further establish geography as a territorial science.

This paper examines the nature and content of the geographical disputes over territorial boundaries as they related to the Austrian-Hungarian border region. Several studies on this topic have been presented before, but the focus of these works was not on the role of geographers. Our approach is a loosely biographical one: we examine the ideas and contributions of both major and minor players in Hungary as well as in Austria. We draw upon Steven Seegel's insightful book on Central and Eastern European geographers, and we extend his work by looking at those Austrian and Hungarian geographers he did not focus on.⁸ The paper is in four parts. In the first, we show how Hungarian geographers prepared for the peace talks and what kind of arguments they developed to defend the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Hungary. In the second, we outline the contribution of Austrian scholars to the peace preparation works. In the third part, our concern is with the efforts made by Austrian and German geographers to justify the making of the new Austrian province, Burgenland, and in the fourth we present how Hungarian geographers argued for the old Austrian-Hungarian border and the re-annexation of the lost Western territories. Overall, we demonstrate that arguments over national boundaries were political and geographical arguments, and that what was also at stake was geography as a science. Further, while this may be a case study in a bigger European project, the paper highlights the fact that geographical arguments and analyses cannot be divorced from their political context and, by the same token, that the politics of the new Europe that emerged after 1918 were profoundly geographical in nature and that particular geographical personnel gave shape to Europe because of the place and time in which they worked and the methods which they used.

Hungarian geography for Greater Hungary

The majority of the geographers participating in the peace preparations in Paris knew each other personally as a result of their busy international academic lives and the many conferences they attended. However, the system of relationships established during the times of peace had been put to the test by the war: the scholars from opposing camps fought with the same weapons. The weapons were similar because they used the same tools of science, with the

² M. Zeidler, A magyar béke delegáció tevékenysége, in: M. Zeidler (Ed), *A magyar békeküldöttség naplója, Neuilly — Versailles — Budapest (1920)*, Budapest, 2017, 18.

³ R. Zeilinger, Geopolitische Begründung nationalstaatlicher Grenzen: Robert Sieger und seine „Geographische Kritik der Grenzlinie des Vertragentwurfs“ von 1919, in: *Geopolitik. Zur Ideologiekritik politischer Raumkonzepte*, Wien, 2001, 64–77; N. Ginsburger, L'expertise territoriale et cartographique des vaincus austro-hongrois: Robert Sieger, Pál Teleki et les traités de Saint-Germain et de Trianon, *Cartes & géomatique: Revue du comité français de cartographie*, 228 (2016) 115–132.

⁴ A. Lynch, Woodrow Wilson and the principle of 'national self-determination': a reconsideration, *Review of International Studies*, 28 (2002) 419–436.

⁵ J. Imre, Burgenland and the Austria-Hungary Border Dispute in International Perspective, 1918–1922. *Region: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia* 4 (2015) 219–246; F. Jankó and S. Jobbitt, Making Burgenland from Western Hungary: Geography and the politics of identity in interwar Austria, *Hungarian Cultural Studies* 10 (2017) 14–40; I. Murber, Conditions of Democracy in German Austria and Hungary, 1918–1919, *Hungarian Studies Review* 46–47 (2020), 9–35; M. Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary/Burgenland, 1918–1923: a Territorial Question in the Context of National and International Policy*, Jyväskylä, 2008.

⁶ R. Keményfi, Die Geologische Karte als politisches Instrument im Dienst der Nation. Der Mythos des Tisia-Massivs zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen in der ungarischen Geographie, in: P. Haslinger and V. Oswald (Eds), *Kampf der Karten: Propaganda und Geschichtskarten als politische Instrumente und Identitätstexte*, Marburg, 2012, 217–218.

⁷ M. Zeidler, *Ideas on territorial revision in Hungary, 1920–1945*, Wayne, 2007; Z. Krasznai, *Földrajztudomány, oktatás és propaganda — a nemzeti terület reprezentációja a két világháború közti Magyarországon*, Pécs, 2012.

⁸ Seegel, *Map men: Transnational lives and deaths of geographers in the making of East Central Europe*.

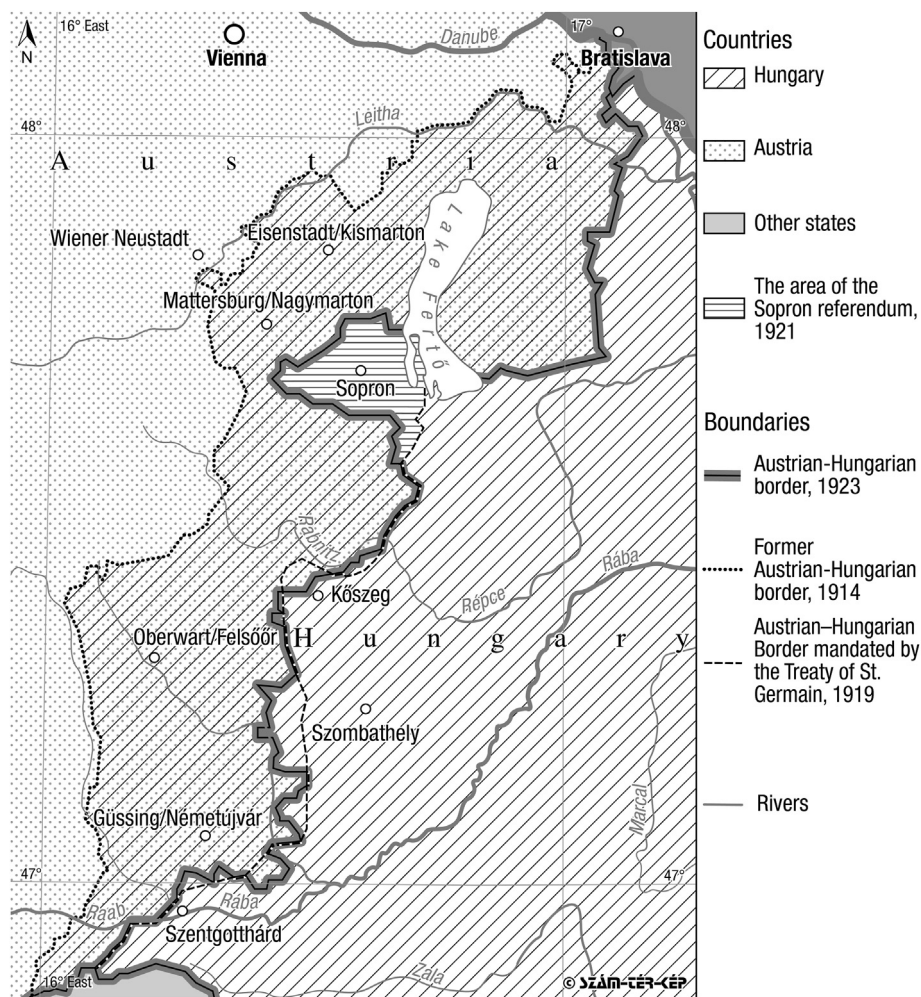


Fig. 1. Setting the Austrian-Hungarian border, 1919–1923. Cartography: Zsolt Bottlik.

opposing arguments they conceived against each other being, on many occasions, based on the same theory. The situation was the same in the case of maps, too. In terms of methodology, the common language of the ethnographic maps had been formulated over the course of decades in centres of study that had always been in contact with each other, and then at the end of the war everyone used these same maps to support their own causes.

During World War I the discipline of geography in Hungary did not consciously prepare for involvement in the peace negotiations. The first expert opinions arguing in favour of the territorial integrity of the country only began to be voiced in the autumn of 1918, at the threshold of the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. That is not to say the subject or its practitioners were unprepared: in the second half of the nineteenth century, geography in Hungary was one of the disciplines tasked with reinforcing national identity

and delimiting the nation.⁹ Statistics based on ethnicity and native language data were an established feature of the censuses, and ethnographic cartography had a long tradition in Hungary because of this. At the same time, generations of geographers had elaborated theories which emphasised the ‘natural’ character of Hungary’s political borders.¹⁰ This practice was not unique to Hungary: ethnographic maps were a common feature of European geography as was evident in the case of the neighbouring Balkan states.¹¹ Arguably, it is because of existing expertise in the area of ethnographic mapping that the Hungarian geographers involved in the peace negotiations were able to produce high quality maps and documents in a short period of time.

The preparations for peace were launched at the initiative of the Secretary General of the Hungarian Geographical Society, Pál Teleki, with the Society undertaking an important role in addition to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office and the government. The fellows of the Society were primarily involved in the cartographic

⁹ A. Szilágyi, A tudományos nacionalizmus szolgálatában: A 19. századi földrajztudomány a nemzetépítő diszciplínák között, in: A. Szilágyi and Á. Bollók (Eds), *Nemzet és tudomány Magyarországon a 19. században*, Budapest, 2017, 58–75.

¹⁰ Z. Hajdú, Az „államtáj” és a „tájállam” problematikája a magyar földrajztudományban 1948-ig, *Földrajzi Közlemények* 120 (1996) 137–150; R. Keményfi, Cartography as a Tool of Nation-building in Hungary and Means of Legitimising Hungarian Ethnic Borders and Spaces, *Hungarian Studies* 24 (2010) 169–179; M. Kőszegi and Z. Bottlik, Maps in the Service of Science and Politics in Post-WWI Hungary, in: S. Jobbitt and R. Györi (Eds), *Geography and the Nation after Trianon*, London (In press).

¹¹ G. Demeter, Z. Bottlik and K. Csaplár-Degovics, Ethnic Mapping on the Balkans (1840–1925): a Brief Comparative Summary of Concepts and Methods of Visualisation, in: P. Peykovska and G. Demeter (Eds), *(Re)Discovering the Sources of Hungarian and Bulgarian History*, Sofia and Budapest, 2015, 65–100.

processing of data from the statistics office, and in drawing up the ethnographic maps.¹² Multiple 'ethnographic maps' were produced, including Pál Teleki's well-known 'Carte Rouge' map.¹³ The 'Carte Rouge' fully corresponded with the Hungarian standpoint: its hidden message supported the territorial integrity of the Kingdom of Hungary. According to Teleki, this map — which has become, perhaps, the most famous Hungarian geographical product of all time — was produced over just a few weeks.¹⁴ Teleki presented the map depicting the native language data and population density to the Hungarian Geographical Society in mid-January 1919, and at the same time proposed that the Society formulate a manifesto on the territorial integrity of Hungary.¹⁵

The study bearing the title 'Manifesto of the Hungarian Geographical Society to the Geographical Societies of the World', although published anonymously, was fundamentally the work of Teleki, and was published in issue 7–9 of the 1918 *Hungarian Geographical Review*.¹⁶ The document was also published in French in 1919.¹⁷ So, when the Hungarian peace delegation arrived in Paris in January 1920, they submitted the French version of the 'Manifesto' together with other geographical documentation and maps, including the *Carte Rouge*, to the peace conference as Annex 3 to Notes II of the so-called Preliminary Notes.¹⁸ The thirty-page text based on the latest regional geography literature placed all the important geographical arguments that the Hungarian field of geography had elaborated in defence of the integrity of the country into one coherent argument. The Manifesto emphasised the geographical unity of the Carpathian Basin as a 'perfect' geographical region: the Hungarian Kingdom was linguistically divided, but it was a country with remarkable physical geographical boundaries, a physical geographical unit (the Carpathians as a watershed), and in an economic geographical sense, it was a functional unity of interdependent and complementary regions. Later, in the inter-war period, these arguments would be used to bolster scholarly support for revisionist political ideals.¹⁹

That the work in 1919 was produced in French is important. Even before the war Teleki was a proponent and populariser in Hungary of French human geography. Most of the citations in the 1919 'Manifesto' document made reference to the work of contemporary French geographers. There were, in addition, tactical considerations behind this use of French and French geographical work: because the most important negotiation partners were the French, the Hungarian geographers had hoped that their argumentation based on French geographical theories would provide a convincing basis for their arguments in support of a Greater Hungary.²⁰

In their reasoning, Hungarian geographers used the concept of a natural geographical unit as their starting point. In Hungarian

geography, the 'Hungarian Basin', or the 'Central Danubian Basin' surrounded by the Carpathian Mountains, was taken to be more or less equivalent to Hungary. This sense of a natural physical geography and its corresponding national expression was established in Hungarian geography by the end of the nineteenth century. After the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, the geopolitical content of the 'Carpathian Basin' was reinforced to be seen as synonymous with Greater Hungary.²¹ As the Manifesto of the Hungarian Geographical Society put it in connection with the coincident locations of the macroregion and of the country's territory, 'On every morphological, geological, tectonic or orographic map Hungary appears before our eyes as a well-defined unit'.²² The Carpathian Basin is a macroregion with clear natural geographical borders defined by the chain of the Carpathian Mountains in the north and the east, and the foothills of the Alps in the west. The well-defined borders are not only embodied in the relief of the basin, their effect is also apparent in the singular nature of the climate and of the flora and fauna.

In addition to the arguments based upon physical geography, Hungarian geographers emphasised the concept of the hydrographic unit. With a few exceptions, the watercourses of the Carpathian Basin flow into the Danube, specifically into that stretch of the Danube which passes through historical Hungary. However, this advantageous hydrographical situation became exceptionally fragile with the proposed new demarcation lines, as any interventions carried out in the mountainous regions of the catchment area (such as deforestation) would increase the risk of flooding in the flatlands. What would happen, therefore, if Hungarian hydrology and watershed management became the responsibility of other countries? In addition, protection against flash floods starting in the mountains would become more difficult if national boundaries impeded the flow of information to downstream, Hungarian, populations. The Manifesto of the Hungarian Geographical Society presented the possible consequences of this in a dramatic tone: 'Flood protection and the news service would become simply unviable if Hungary were to be dismembered!'²³

The unity of Hungary was also justified by numerous economic geography considerations. Hungarian geographers viewed the Carpathian Basin as a harmonious unity of regions mutually supplementing each other in terms of their economic production, as an economic sphere almost capable of self-sufficiency as a result of the diversity of its landscape. Justification of the economic argument rested on the basis of a natural geography corresponding to regional geography traditions. In simple terms, the essence of this reasoning theory may be summarised thus: as a result of its relief, climate, and soil characteristics, the inner area of the Carpathian Basin, namely the Great Hungarian Plain, the Little Hungarian Plain and Transdanubia, has the capability to cover the needs for the most important agricultural products, especially in cereal crops, of a population far in excess of the numbers of people actually living there. At the same time, because these regions were poor in terms of wood, coal, and other mineral resources, they were required to import the raw materials demanded by industry. As a result, a form of 'natural division' of labour and goods exchange developed between the mountainous regions of the periphery and the flatlands of the central basin. Dividing and 'splitting up' this system would be particularly damaging not just for the Hungarians but also for the

¹² Z. Hajdú, A magyar földrajztudomány és a trianoni békeszerződés (1918–1920), *Kisebbségkutatás* 9, (2000) 224–233.

¹³ A. Filep, Kilencven éve jelent meg a történeti Magyarország részletes, 1:300.000 méretarányú nemzetiségi térképe I–II, *Geodézia és Kartográfia* 62 (2010) 3–10, 17–21; D.Z. Segyevy, *Térképművek Trianon árnyékában: Magyarország néprajzi térképe (1918)*, Budapest, 2016.

¹⁴ J. Benda, Interjú Teleki Pállal, 1920. január 17, in: M. Zeidler (Ed), *A magyar békeküldöttség naplója, Neuilly — Versailles — Budapest (1920)*, Budapest, 2017, 75.

¹⁵ B. Ablonczy, Pál Teleki: *The Life of a Controversial Hungarian Politician*, Wayne, 2007, 49–50.

¹⁶ F. Fodor, *A magyar földrajztudomány története*, Budapest, 2006, 760.

¹⁷ Anonym, *A Magyar Földrajzi Társaság szózata a világ Földrajzi Társaságaihoz, Földrajzi Közlemények*, 46 (1918), 289–320; Anonym, *Adresse de la Société Hongroise de Géographie aux Sociétés de Géographie de l'Univers*, Budapest, 1919.

¹⁸ M. Zeidler (Ed), *A magyar békeküldöttség naplója, Neuilly — Versailles — Budapest (1920)*, Budapest, 2017, 263.

¹⁹ Hajdú, A magyar földrajztudomány és a trianoni békeszerződés, 231.

²⁰ Krasznai, *Földrajztudomány, oktatás és propaganda*, 74.

²¹ Z. Hajdú, *Carpathian Basin and the Development of the Hungarian Landscape Theory until 1948*, Pécs, 2004, 8; P. Balogh, The Concept of the Carpathian Basin: its evolution, counternarratives, and geopolitical implications, *Journal of Historical Geography* 71 (2021) 51–62.

²² Anonym, *A Magyar Földrajzi Társaság szózata*, 292.

²³ Anonym, *A Magyar Földrajzi Társaság szózata*, 301.

other, non-Hungarian ethnic groups of the Carpathian Basin.²⁴

In addition, urban geographical reasoning was advanced to be in harmony with these physical and economic geographical arguments. Contemporary urban geography attributed an important role to contact zones of different regions in the location and development of towns. Each and every region had specialised economic production which corresponded to its own natural features, and exchanged its products along market zones which had been formed over the course of centuries where the mountains and plains met. The most prominent market zone of the Carpathian Basin ran along the border of the mountainous region and the flatlands, and the towns were located along the routes running out from the mountains in the river valleys. In Hungary the landscape boundary between the mountains and the flatlands was also, on many occasions, both a language and ethnic border, with the towns established on the regional boundary frequently being multilingual. National borders could not easily correspond to language borders because of the mixed ethnic nature of nations.²⁵

Hungary's geographers did not dispute the multilingual nature of Hungary. Rather, they argued that the language border between Hungarians and other ethnic minorities should not form the basis of a national border. In most regions the language border is not a distinct line, but a zone with a mixed population including scattered language islands, and, in certain regions, villages of diverse ethnicity. Even where the ethnic population formed the majority (for example, the Slovaks in the northern counties, and the Romanians in large parts of Transylvania), most rural areas were separated by sparsely populated mountain regions. These beliefs were underpinned by Pál Teleki's famous 'ethnographic' map, the *Carte Rouge* (Fig. 2). This map, which targeted the ideal of Hungary's territorial integrity, aimed at visually emphasising the Hungarian populations, both by the tactical selection of the colours of individual ethnic groups on the map, but also by emphasising the unpopulated areas. In Teleki's *Carte rouge*, the visually dominant colour red indicated Hungarians (as in all earlier Hungarian maps). German communities were given an orange colour, so that at first glance they blended with the Hungarians, thus emphasising the size and significance of the latter. By contrast, the Romanians were represented by a nondescript shade of lilac-grey. Teleki used white to depict uninhabited regions, thus outlining very clearly the "natural boundary" formed by the Carpathians, while simultaneously minimizing the significance of peripheral ethnic territories with low population densities.

The Manifesto of the Hungarian Geographical Society did not deal with the situation of West-Hungary. The focus of its argument was with the question of the Hungarians in Transylvania, and in north and south Hungary. The reason it did not is that at the time when the manifesto was written, the Austrian state had not yet submitted its claim to these western Transdanubian territories: there was, in sum, no immediate reason for arguments about Hungary's territorial integrity to be directed at this region at that time. Nor did West-Hungary become a focus of the revisionist endeavours of Hungarian geographers in the 1920s and 1930s. One explanation for this was the low numbers of Hungarians living there. The Hungarian-speaking population in the territory which passed into Austrian hands was not even 10% of the total population (according to the Hungarian census of 1910), and the Hungarian population of 25,000 recorded by the 1920 Hungarian census had dropped to 15,000 by 1923 according to the now Austrian census,

the decrease being attributable to high levels of return migration.²⁶ The Hungarian ethnic minority in Austria was dwarfed by the Hungarian population in Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia. While the leading Hungarian geographers raised their voices in the matter of the Romanian-Hungarian and Slovakian-Hungarian borders, it was mainly geographers with local links who took up the debate with their Austrian or German colleagues in the question of West-Hungary, and they who elaborated the detailed geographical arguments underpinning the Hungarian standpoint: the German majority notwithstanding, West-Hungary was an integral part of the Hungarian Kingdom due to its physical geography, economic geography, and transportation links. This was how, for example, the Sopron-born statistician, Gusztáv Thirring, Vice President of the Hungarian Geographical Society and at that time President of the West-Hungary League (a branch organisation of the League for the Protection of Hungary's Territorial Integrity) wrote the English language publication on the region, which the propaganda organisation published in the series *East European Problems*.²⁷ Their works in defence of the country's integrity followed the 'tactics' of the comprehensive geographical argumentation created under Teleki's leadership, their physical geography, hydrology, historical geography, economic and urban geography, as well as transport geography arguments were interwoven and reinforced each other. Austrian and German geographers similarly presented their arguments along the same lines. In essence, both sides were fighting for different outcomes and from their own standpoint but with similar weapons.

Austrian geography and the peace treaty

According to his contemporaries the 'most Austrian geographer', Vienna-born Robert Sieger, had originally studied history and physical geography, the latter under the tutorship of Albrecht Penck, before taking up a position at Graz in 1905.²⁸ Despite a career that combined teaching with research as was customary at the time, Sieger had published numerous geopolitical works in the 1900s following in the footsteps of Friedrich Ratzel and Rudolf Kjellén, arguing primarily for the continued existence of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as a geographical unit. This role and these works help explain why he was appointed as an expert member of the Austrian peace delegation.²⁹

However, only Sieger represented the field of geography in the delegation; there were no geographers among the so-called regional experts.³⁰ The ethnic Transylvanian German Ernst Friedrich Beer, head of *Verein zur Erhaltung des Deutschtums in Ungarn* (Society for the Preservation of German Nationality in Hungary), was responsible for West-Hungary. The peace negotiation period is more or less unknown in the history of the Vienna Geographical Society, predecessor to the national organisation.³¹ In order to

²⁷ G. Thirring, *West-Hungary*. Budapest, London and New York, 1920.

²⁸ E. Brückner, Robert Sieger, *Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen* 72 (1926) 281–282.

²⁹ Zeilinger, *Geopolitische Begründung nationalstaatlicher Grenzen*; Ginsburger, *L'expertise territoriale et cartographique des vaincus austro-hongrois*.

³⁰ Anonym, *Bericht über die Tätigkeit der Deutschösterreichischen Friedensdelegation in St. Germain-en-Laye 1. Band*, Wien, 1919, 1–3.

³¹ I. Kretschmer, 150 Jahre Geographische Gesellschaft in Wien, in: I. Kretschmer and G. Fasching (Eds), *Österreich in der Welt — die Welt in Österreich. Chronik der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft 150 Jahre (1856–2006)*, Wien, 2006, 67–112; J. Mattes: *Imperial Science, Unified Forces and Boundary-Work: Geographical and Geological Societies in Vienna (1850–1925)*, *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft* 162 (2020) 155–210.

²⁴ Anonym, *A Magyar Földrajzi Társaság szözata*, 307–310.

²⁵ Anonym, *A Magyar Földrajzi Társaság szözata*, 313–314.

²⁶ J.D. Berlin, *The United States and the Burgenland, 1918–1920*, *Austrian History Yearbook* 8 (1972) 40.

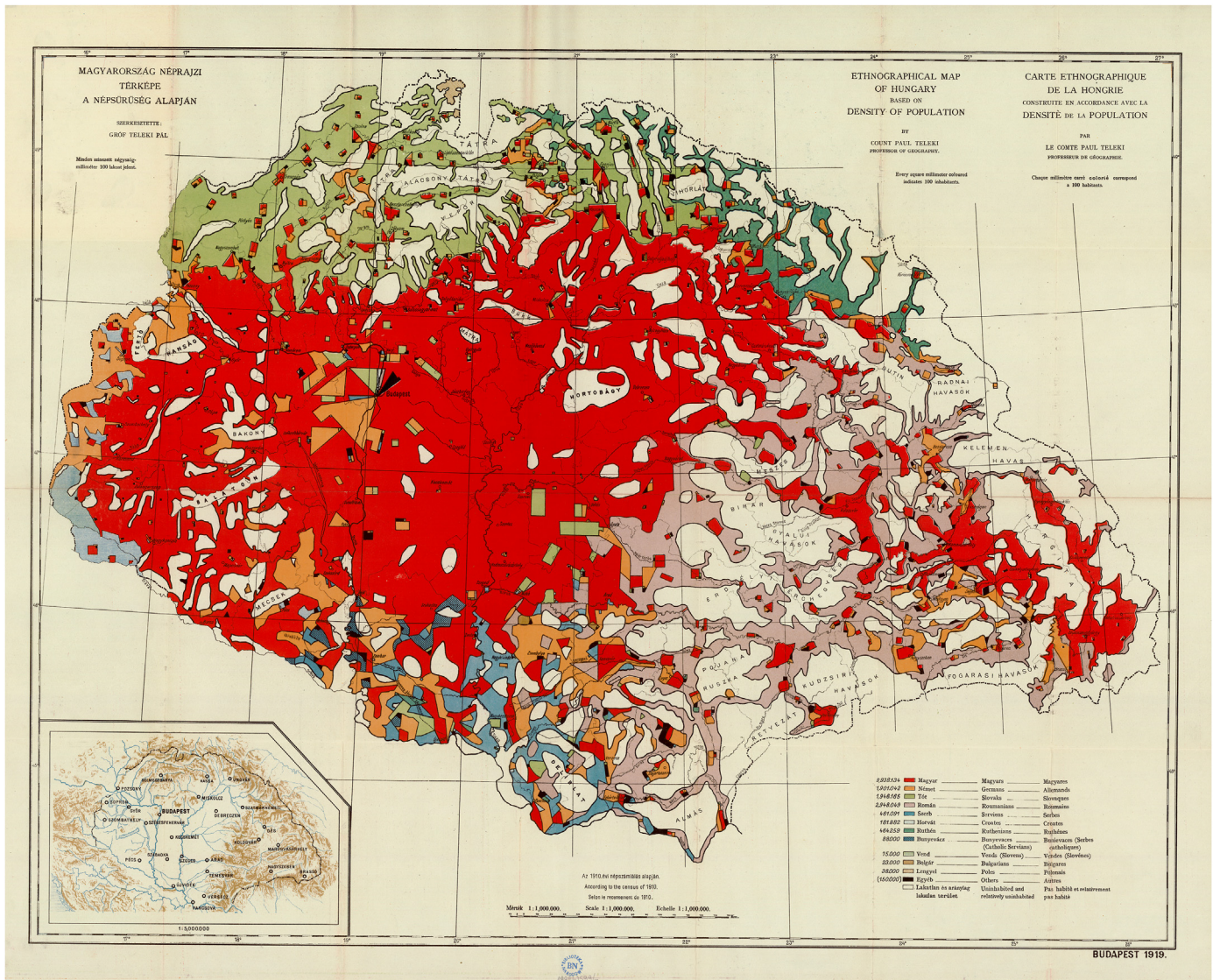


Fig. 2. Teleki's famous *Carte rouge* that argued for the integrity of Greater Hungary. Source: P. Teleki, *Ethnographical Map of Hungary Based on Density of Population*; *Magyarország néprajzi térképe a népsűrűség alapján*; *Carte ethnographique de la Hongrie construite en accordance avec la densité de la population*, Budapest, 1919.

understand this lack of involvement, one must realise that the head of the society at the time was the glaciologist Eduard Brückner,³² and the society's publications had no works similar to those published in the *Földrajzi Közlemények* (Hungarian Geographical Review). All that it published was a reserved report of the territorial changes.³³

The background work to the peace preparations was carried out in the Foreign Ministry, and it was here that the *Vorbereitungsdienst* (Peace Preparation Office) was established in November 1918.³⁴ The principal mover in this was professor of law Rudolf Laun, who was responsible for ethnic affairs, and a member of the delegation. Laun

brought in the Austrian *k.k. Statistische Zentralkommission* (Central Statistical Commission) and the *Militärgeographisches Institute* (Institute of Military Geography) to provide information and to prepare maps for the peace delegation. Accordingly, an ethnic map of the Monarchy was drawn up, where the population numbers of the main ethnic groups of the settlements were displayed in colours (with, for example, the Germans in red). However, the author of the map reported that, because it was not used, it had not fulfilled its role in Paris.³⁵ In addition, a department for the protection of German minorities outside Austria and a related propaganda service was set up in the Austrian Chancellery in December 1918. It was this body that was responsible for the 40-part series of publications '*Flugblätter für Deutschösterreichs Recht*', some issues of which were published in both English and in French. However, no

³² I. Kretschmer, Präsidenten der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft und ihrer Vorgängergesellschaften, in: I. Kretschmer and G. Fasching (Eds), *Österreich in der Welt — die Welt in Österreich. Chronik der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft 150 Jahre (1856–2006)*, Wien, 2006, 43–45.

³³ W. Hecke, Das neue Staatsgebiet Österreichs, *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Wien*, 63 (1920) 49–53.

³⁴ L. Rathmanner, Die Pariser Friedensverhandlungen und die deutschösterreichische Friedensdelegation, *Zeitgeschichte* 46 (2019) 321–342.

³⁵ R. Engelmann, Sprachminderheiten im Gebiete der ehemaligen Österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie, *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 66 (1923), 141–143; P. Svatek, Ethnic cartography and politics in Vienna, 1918–1945, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 51 (2018), 103.

geographers were involved as contributors to those booklets which dealt with territorial issues, and, in contrast to other peace delegation members, Sieger's name is not mentioned in connection with any of the works.³⁶ Yet Sieger had actively written on such issues: before the peace negotiations he wrote a memorandum on the questions of the southern borders of Styria — later, Lower Styria would be attached to Yugoslavia — and he wrote a critique on ethnographic cartography techniques.³⁷

Legal expert Richard Pfaundler wrote of *Deutschwestungarn* (German-West-Hungary) in the *Flugblätter* series emphasising the Wilsonian principle of the self-determination of nations. He also discussed the territorial questions of South Tyrol, Styria, and Carinthia in separate publications.³⁸ The basis of his role in the peace negotiation most probably was that Pfaundler had been given the task of the ethnographical mapping of West-Hungary and of other Austrian border regions based on census data presumably as trainee at the *k.k. Statistische Zentralkommission* ten years earlier. His studies revealing the ethnic problems of *Deutschwestungarn* and accurate ethnographic maps were published in the pan-German publication *Deutsche Erde* in 1910–1911.³⁹

Taken together, this work demonstrates that Austrian historical and geographical thinking had already formulated its argumentation for justification of any future territorial annexation. This is clear also from Pfaundler's later writings. The significance of Pfaundler's role is underlined by the fact that his thoughts on the Croats were referenced in the course of the peace negotiations by the American geographer Major Lawrence Martin in his report proposing the annexation of the territory.⁴⁰ At the beginning of 1919, Martin was a member of the fact-finding mission initiated by the American Commission to Negotiate Peace under the leadership of Professor Archibald Cary Coolidge, and had carried out investigations in Austria and Hungary, but almost exclusively in Vienna and Budapest, in connection with the question of West-Hungary.⁴¹ The fact that he also relied on Teleki's map, the 'Carte Rouge', during his work points to their friendship (one that continued also in the post-war years), as well as the importance of ethnic distribution in the making of new boundaries. However, in the eyes of Martin the food scarcity emergency in Vienna was the strongest argument for the area transfer.

Sieger and the Austrian delegation arrived in Paris on May 14, 1919 and, after presenting their evidence, returned to Vienna on 10 June. On 7 June, Sieger wrote an expert opinion piece entitled *Geographische Kritik der Grenzlinie des Vertragsentwurfs* (Geographical Critique on the Border of the Proposed Treaty). In this, he argued that the planned borders failed to correspond with the language borders, or with the borders derived from the self-determination of the nations, or with the country's natural

borders. He also stated that, with the proposals as outlined, the natural region, together with transport and economic connections, was being cut in two. At the time of this work the annexation of *Deutschwestungarn* to Austria had not yet been confirmed, so he wrote little of this territory. Nevertheless, arguing that the country lacked viability in general because of the scarcity of arable land, indirectly he may have also underlined the arguments in favour of annexation.⁴²

In a letter from Sieger to the delegation on July 2, 1919 Sieger wrote in support of what he called the 'popular proposition' of the annexation of West-Hungary, or at least of the connected border regions, to Styria.⁴³ This letter bears witness to the fluidity of the question and, perhaps, to Sieger distancing himself from the affair — in a previous paper he had only mentioned annexation as a possibility.⁴⁴ The claim that Sieger could not have had much effect on the developments is borne out from letters written by him to German geographer Alfred Hettner and American geographer William M. Davis, in which Sieger mentions his work as expert advisor for a period of just four weeks, and in which he stated that he was viewed not as an advisor but merely as someone who was familiar with the maps.⁴⁵ In the meantime, preparations to hand over the German-speaking West-Hungary region to Austria were under way, and on 20 July the Austrians were informed of the line of the newly-established border between Austria and Hungary.

The arguments of Austrian and German geography in favour of Burgenland

The most urgent task with respect to the newly drawn borders was to legitimate the annexation of the area by providing evidence of the good sense of the new border. One of the first and best developed schemes in this respect was the *Festschrift* published by local history (Heimatskunde) editor Eduard Stepan, who organized a multi-authored book involving numerous persons from the Austrian elite, outside of Burgenland, to establish an historical and geographical foundation for the province.⁴⁶ The term 'geographical discovery' is apt here. The new addition to the map of Austria, Burgenland, formerly *Deutschwestungarn* was, for a great many, and even for Austrian geography, an unknown quantity. Although prior to World War I monographs on Austria-Hungary, such as the *Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in words and pictures*, did add richness to popular science literature with their detailed, primarily ethnographic descriptions, these, however, did not make up for the pleasure of personal experience.⁴⁷ The importance of this personal experience is illustrated by the student study trips organized by the Graz University geographers Robert Sieger and his colleague Marian Sidaritsch.⁴⁸

From an academic point of view, an important and declared objective was the geographical interpretation of this new province within the new framework offered by an Alpine Austria, using the

³⁶ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Deutschösterreichisches Friedensdelegation St. Germain, Karton 19, Faszikkel 1.

³⁷ R. Sieger, *Die Südgrenze der deutschen Steiermark*. Denkschrift des akademischen Senats der Universität Graz, Graz, 1919; R. Sieger, Sprachkarte und Bevölkerungskarte. *Kartographische und Schulgeographische Zeitschrift* 9 (1921) 9–10, 142–147.

³⁸ R. Pfaundler, *Die Zukunft der Deutschen in Westungarn*, Wien, 1919.

³⁹ R. Pfaundler, Das Verbreitungsgebiet der deutschen Sprache in Westungarn, *Deutscher Erde* 9 (1910) 14–19, 35–46, 67–72, 134–141, 173–183., 221–225, 10 (1911) 9–12.

⁴⁰ L. Martin to Professor A.C. Coolidge, Vienna, February 28, 1919, in: Professor A.C. Coolidge to the Commission to Negotiate Peace, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, the Paris Peace Conference, 1919, XII, 122, Vienna, March 3, 1919. Accessed 10 February 2021: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv12/d86>.

⁴¹ Berlin, The United States and the Burgenland, 41; J.D. Berlin, *Akten und Dokumente des Außenamtes (State Department) der USA zur Burgenland-Anschlußfrage 1919–1920*. Burgenländische Forschungen 67 (1977). Burgenländische Landesarchiv, Eisenstadt, 55–58.

⁴² Zeilinger, Geopolitische Begründung nationalstaatlicher Grenzen, 67–77.

⁴³ Österreichisches Staatsarchiv Deutschösterreichisches Friedensdelegation St. Germain, Karton 8, Faszikkel 1/1/c D.

⁴⁴ R. Sieger, Die geographischen Grundlagen der politischen Neugestaltung Österreichs. *Schmollers Jahrbuch* 42 (1918) 2, 423–470.

⁴⁵ Ginsburger, L'expertise territoriale et cartographique des vaincus austro-hongrois, 5.

⁴⁶ E. Stepan (Ed), *Burgenland: Festschrift aus Anlaß der Vereinigung des Landes der Heidebauern und Heinen mit Deutschösterreich*, Wien, 1920.

⁴⁷ Erzherzog Rudolf (Ed), *Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild (I–XXIV)*, Wien, 1886–1902.

⁴⁸ M. Sidaritsch, Studienreise des Geographischen Instituts der Universität Graz in das südliche Burgenland, *Kartographischen Zeitschrift* 67 (1922) 8–10; R. Sieger, Eine geographische Studienreise im Burgenland, *Österreichische Illustrierte Zeitung* 33 (1923) 434–435.

forums of academia and popular science. On the one hand, this demanded engagement with the problem of regional geographical classification, a process which incorporated Burgenland in general into Austria partly as its natural extensions in the east, and North Burgenland in particular as Vienna's south-eastern economic hinterland.⁴⁹ On the other hand, keeping Burgenland together as a single province or distributing it among the historical provinces of Austria presented a problem in practical politics and economic geography. When considered as part of Hungary, West-Hungary was thought to be more developed and richer than the Hungarian average, but, after its annexation to Austria, it appeared backwards to the Austrians. Austrian and German geographers looked down on it from a more or less Orientalist perspective. This was especially true of the southern, poorer half of the territory.⁵⁰ Another problem that presented itself was that the largest town in the region, Sopron, remained in Hungary following the referendum of 1921. With this change of borders, Burgenland had not only lost its capital, but its territory was also split up sharply into two parts.⁵¹ The geographical discourse on the future of the new province received further impetus later on in German political geography literature when the geographical situation of Burgenland was reassessed in the light of Anschluss politics and pan-German geopolitical aspirations.⁵²

It was also considered important that the new province was popularised in terms of national awareness and tourism. The former was important in establishing and reinforcing the identity of the local population; the latter was important in increasing income. To this end, provincial leaders sponsored Burgenland issues of numerous tourism magazines and related articles in other publications, and the province launched its own local history periodicals.

As a result of these endeavours, vast amounts of literature about Burgenland were generated in the interwar period. From examination of this material, we can see how different geographical arguments were used in support of the province belonging to Austria. In terms of physical geography, it was argued that the hills of Burgenland 'belonged to the Alps' in a geological sense, and that the new border was much more of a natural border than the old one.⁵³ This line of argumentation was in places underlined with a rhetoric of symbolic occupation, the expression *Burgenländische Alpen*, for example, to denote the Kőszeg Mountains.⁵⁴ Infinitely more significant than this was the case of the Moson flatlands to the east of Lake Neusiedl. This region did not at all fit into the picture of an Alpine Austria, and where the name *österreichische Puszta* became

commonplace, innumerable orientalist descriptions of the region became steeped in steppe or puszta romanticism.⁵⁵ Naturally, this could be taken advantage of in tourism, as Burgenland, or even the whole of Austria, could be described in relevant texts as a land of contrasts.⁵⁶ Taking a different approach, a frequent way of looking at the character of Burgenland was to treat it as a landscape of transition between the Alpine and Pannonian regions.⁵⁷

Questions of population and urban geography, as well as of history and historical geography arguments, were also of particular significance. A frequent motif in Austrian analyses was to depict the region as an ethnically homogenous German area, the result of the centuries-old civilising presence of the Germans and the fact that the Germans had settled earlier in the area than the Magyars (Fig. 3).⁵⁸ Questions of history were also drawn upon. One such was the affair of the Hungarian private estate pledged to Austria in the fifteenth century. In the mid-fifteenth century, Frederick III of Austria had kept the Hungarian crown safe for decades, which the Hungarian King Matthias recovered by pledging the western estates of Hungary to Austria. This temporary acquisition of lands was interpreted by Austrian authors as a transfer of territory and used as an historical precedent for the annexation of Burgenland. According to this reasoning, Burgenland was not something newly acquired, but territory 'returned' to Austria.⁵⁹

Among the socio-geographical arguments the most important was that of ethnicity and ethnic geography: that Burgenland could be shown on various maps to be Austrian by virtue of showing the German-speaking majority. In questions of population geography, most disputes between Austrian and Hungarian geographers were caused by the ethnic mapping of the settlements remaining in Hungary with a German majority, especially of Sopron.⁶⁰ In Hungary, the collection and interpretation of data related to ethnicity had been a matter of debate between Hungarians and non-Hungarians since the late-nineteenth century. The censuses recorded the 'mother tongue' of the people, but the accuracy of census data was questioned by the non-Hungarians. They accused the public administration that pressure on Slav, German, Romanian people to claim Hungarian as their mother tongue resulted in an under-enumeration of the other nationalities. The proportion of the Hungarian-speakers increased from 46.6% to 54.6% in Hungary between 1880 and 1910, and the language change was more manifest in the growing cities than in rural areas. Beside the 'mother tongue', Hungarian censuses also recorded 'the further spoken language', which enables us to interpret language change and bilingualism in cities further.⁶¹ In case of Sopron, the ratio of Germans (declared as mother tongue) decreased from 73% to 51% between 1880 and 1910, while the ratio of the Hungarians rose from 21 to 44%. The main reason of the rapid increase of the Hungarian speaking population was the immigration from the nearby Hungarian countryside. Bilingualism, however, persisted:

⁴⁹ H. Güttenberger, Der anthropogeographische Aufriß des Burgenlandes, *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 65 (1922) 47–55.

⁵⁰ Güttenberger, Der anthropogeographische Aufriß des Burgenlandes; Krebs: *Die Ostalpen und das heutige Österreich*, 255–259, 344–359; R. Rungaldier, Städte und Landschaften Pannoniens, *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 78 (1935) 178–194.

⁵¹ G.A. Lukas, Deutschwestungarn – ein Elsaß-Lothringen der Ostmark, *Geographischer Anzeiger* 28 (1922) 57–61; N. Krebs, *Die Ostalpen und das heutige Österreich*, Stuttgart, 1928, 255–259, 344–359.

⁵² M.H. Boehm, *Die deutschen Grenzlande*. Verlag von Neimar Hobbing, 1925, Berlin, 143–145; G.A. Lukas, Das burgenländische Raum, *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* 8 (1931) 608–618; O-A. Isbert, Bevölkerung: Die deutsch-madjarische Volksgrenze, in: C. Petersen, O. Scheel, P.H. Ruth and H. Schwalm (Eds), *Handbuch des Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschum*, Breslau, 1936, 665–667.

⁵³ H. Mohr, Des Burgenlandes Mitgift an Bodenschätzen, in: E. Stepan (Ed), *Burgenland: Festschrift aus Anlaß der Vereinigung des Landes der Heidebauern und Heinen mit Deutschösterreich*, Wien 1920, 44–48; M. Sidaritsch, Die landschaftliche Gliederung des Burgenlandes, *Mitteilungen der Geographischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 67 (1924) 118–139; G.A. Lukas, Die burgenländische Landschaft, *Burgenland: Vierteljahresshefte für Landeskunde, Heimatschutz und Denkmalpflege* 2 (1929) 177–179.

⁵⁴ O. Aull, Wanderungen in den burgenländischen Alpen, *Alpenländische Monatshefte* 5 (1928) 773–775.

⁵⁵ P. Eitler, Die Entdeckung des Burgenlandes, *Österreichische Monatshefte* 4 (1927) 295–296; R. Rungaldier, Städte und Landschaften Pannoniens.

⁵⁶ M. Mundprecht, Burgenland – das Land der Gegensätze, *Bergland: Illustrierte Alpenländische Monatsschrift* 11 (1929) 24–30, 41.

⁵⁷ Lukas, Die burgenländische Landschaft.

⁵⁸ F. Baumann, Die Kulturarbeit der Zisterzienser am Neusiedler See, in: E. Stepan (Ed), *Burgenland: Festschrift aus Anlaß der Vereinigung des Landes der Heidebauern und Heinen mit Deutschösterreich*, Wien, 1920, 19–28; M. Vancsa, Zur Geschichte des Landes, in: E. Stepan (Ed), *Burgenland: Festschrift aus Anlaß der Vereinigung des Landes der Heidebauern und Heinen mit Deutschösterreich*, Wien, 1920, 10–17.

⁵⁹ Lukas, Deutschwestungarn – ein Elsaß-Lothringen der Ostmark; Pfaundler, *Die Zukunft der Deutschen in Westungarn*.

⁶⁰ O. Maull and H. Carstanjen, Die verstümmelten Grenzen, *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* 8 (1931) 60–63; O-A. Isbert, Bevölkerung.

⁶¹ B. Varga, Multilingualism in urban Hungary, *Nationalities Papers* 42 (2014) 965–980.

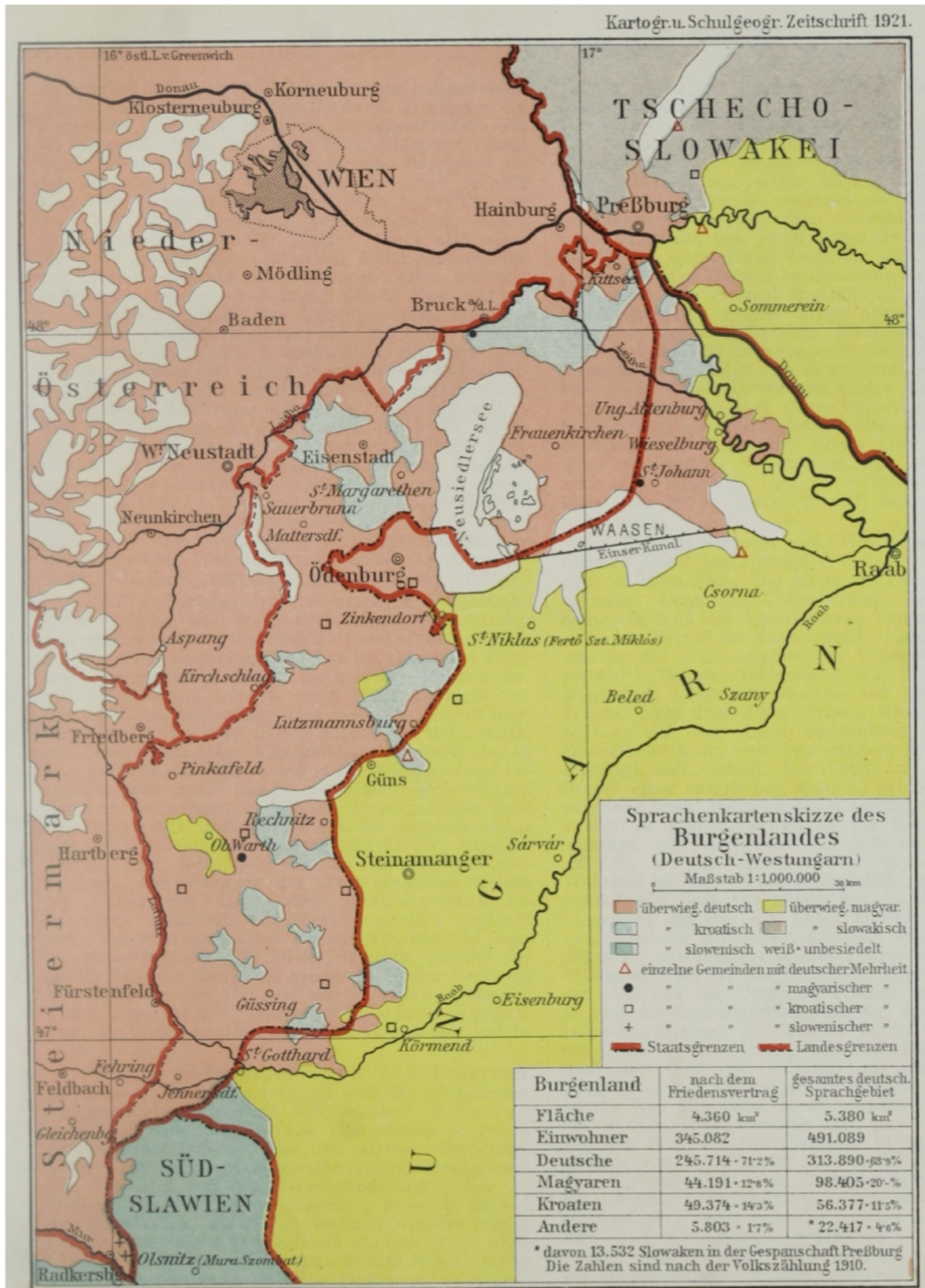


Fig. 3. Marian Sidaritsch's early map of Burgenland's ethnic distribution using the cartographic method of Count Pál Teleki. Source: R. Sieger, Sprachenkarte und Bevölkerungskarte. Kartographische und Schulgeographische Zeitschrift 9. (1921), 147.

the majority of the city and the local elite was German, and knowledge of German was common in all walks of life.⁶² Most of the Germans also spoke Hungarian according to the census 1910: 55% of those whose native tongue was not Hungarian spoke the language of the state.⁶³

A further important criterion at the time of annexation was the question of the ‘viability’ of the Austrian state. As mentioned above, this issue was also addressed by American experts in the background negotiations to the peace conference. The economic geography argument concerning Vienna’s or Austria’s food supply also came up (Burgenland is an important source of agricultural products for the rest of Austria), supplemented later on with the reasoning that the northern parts belong to Vienna and the southern parts to Graz.⁶⁴ However, this idea could have led to the acknowledgement of the division of the province, as this gave cause to geography professor Krebs questioning the viability of the independent province and arguing in favour of its partitioning.⁶⁵ An examination of the division of the province in terms of transport geography, and, indeed, of its bad connections with Austria led to the very same conclusion. However, the geographers were also able to view this disadvantage as an opportunity: if the required new communication connections were to be created, then a new transport corridor in the foothills of the Alps could be opened.⁶⁶

In political geography and geopolitical arguments Burgenland obtained a new role and meaning that was determined quite simply by its geographical position as the south-eastern bastion of the settled German territory, a region that, with its German ethnic soil, was viewed as a buffer zone, bridge region, or transition territory within the great German rectangle. Indeed, these geopolitical approaches also highlighted Burgenland’s ‘territorial losses’, as Sopron and the German-majority villages remaining in Hungary fed the feeling of loss and the demands for revision.⁶⁷ Paradoxically, the Nazi regime did not fulfil these proposed roles after the *Anschluss*; the western border of Hungary remained intact and Burgenland was in turn partitioned and attached to the neighbouring *Gaus* of Lower Danube and Styria.

West-Hungary: an integral part of Greater Hungary

While in the interwar period German and Austrian geographers used their arguments to prove that the new province belonged to Austria, their Hungarian contemporaries tried to refute these arguments one by one, and to speak out in defence of the integrity of Hungary in its western reaches. The linking of natural, social, and economic elements was used to emphasise organic development and the concept of unity. When presenting the physical geography of the region, Austrian and German geographers viewed and

presented the landscape of Burgenland as being Alpine in nature or as a region of transition between the Alpine and Pannonian landscapes. In contradistinction with this, the West-Hungary born geographer Ernő Wallner emphasised that only a very small part of the territory annexed to Austria was Alpine in character, and, in particular, that fitting the Moson flatlands, which belong in all respects to the Little Hungarian Plain, in among the ‘mountainous’ landscapes of Austria was especially problematic. The Hungarian geographers viewed the hydrographical unity of the Carpathian Basin as important evidence of integrity. Even Wallner dealt with the issue of hydrography, emphasising that the water system, the river valleys link the region to Transdanubia and that the new border had partitioned hydrographical unity here also.⁶⁸

Historical geography arguments were in turn brought forth in the territorial disputes between Hungary and the surrounding countries. In territories with a mixed ethnic population and in regions where Hungarians were in the minority or were hardly present, Hungarian historical geographers searched for an answer to the question of who was the rightful owner of the given territory on the basis of ‘historical right’. Which people, in other words, had settled there first? East-Hungary, or Transylvania, where a significant proportion of the Hungarian settlements of the Middle Ages had been destroyed and resettled in the Early Modern period with a non-Hungarian speaking population, was a prominent territory for this research. An important method in historical geography was the examination of the etymology of the names of settlements: researchers attempted to identify the ‘first settlers’ by performing a linguistic analysis of the place names.⁶⁹ These questions also arose in the case of West-Hungary.⁷⁰ In his Transdanubia monograph, Károly Kogutowicz, a geography professor from Szeged University, stated in his chapter on the historical geography of the western border region that ‘in most of the areas with a German majority today, the Germans arrived much later than the Hungarians’.⁷¹ For Kogutowicz, before the Hungarian Conquest the region was populated by small numbers of Pannonian Avars and Slavs and the Hungarians (according to the evidence of the place names) settled along the main routes. The later German-speaking settlers took on the Hungarian place names, or Hungarian place names of Slav origin, with their proportions increasing between the twelve and fifteenth centuries due to the ravages of war and the subsequent settlement of peoples.⁷² The protectors of the Hungarian interests firmly rejected the Austrian standpoint that saw the pledging of the private estates in the fifteenth century as a form of ‘state’ transfer of territory to Austria, referring to this as a historical precedent to Burgenland. In a series of articles published in the 1920s, the director of the Sopron archives, Jenő Házi, analysed the question in detail after an investigation of sources in the archives, and pointed out that Austria had not been able to incorporate the pledged territories and that they had returned to Hungary in the seventeenth century. In his conclusion Jenő Házi endeavoured to put a final end to the dispute: ‘without doubt it may be determined that according to historical fact West-Hungary must remain within the body of the

⁶² A. Krisch, Die ethnische Geographie von Ödenburg (Sopron), *Geographisches Jahrbuch Burgenland* 33 (2009) 85–102.

⁶³ *A Magyar Szent Korona országainak 1910. évi népszámlálása. I. rész. (A népesség főbb adatai községek és népesebb puszták, telepek szerint.)* Budapest, 1912, 41.

⁶⁴ H. Ziermann, Die Landwirtschaft des Burgenlandes, in: E. Stepan (Ed), *Burgenland: Festschrift aus Anlaß der Vereinigung des Landes der Heidebauern und Heinen mit Deutschösterreich*, Wien 1920, 61–65; K. Brockhausen, Der Friedensvertrag von Saint Germain in seinen kulturellen und wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen, in: E. Stepan and S.L. van Looy (Eds), *Neu-Österreich. Das Werk des Friedens von St. Germain*. Amsterdam and Wien, 1923, 1–38; H. Gsteu, *Länderkunde Österreichs*. Innsbruck and Wien, 1936, 253–275.

⁶⁵ Krebs, *Die Ostalpen und das heutige Österreich*, 255–259, 344–359.

⁶⁶ H. Roth, Die Verkehrsgeographische Lage und Bedeutung des Burgenlandes, *Burgenland: Vierteljahreshefte für Landeskunde, Heimatschutz und Denkmalpflege* 1 (1928) 78–82, 2 (1929) 102–106; Güttenberger, Der anthropogeographische Aufbau des Burgenlandes.

⁶⁷ G.A. Lukas, Das burgenländische Raum, 608–618; Maull and Carstanjen, Die verstümmelten Grenzen; Isbert, Bevölkerung.

⁶⁸ E. Wallner, „A burgenlandi kérdés”, *Földrajzi Közlemények* 58 (1930) 146–147.

⁶⁹ S. Jobbitt and R. Györi, East Central Europe, in: M. Domosh, M. Heffernan and C.W.J. Withers (Eds), *The SAGE Handbook of Historical Geography*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi and Singapore, 2020, 79.

⁷⁰ E. Schwartz, *A nyugatmagyarországi német helységnevek*, Budapest, 1932.

⁷¹ K. Kogutowicz, *Dunántúl és Kisalföld írásban és képpen II*, Szeged, 1936, 228.

⁷² Kogutowicz, *Dunántúl és Kisalföld írásban és képpen II*, 230.

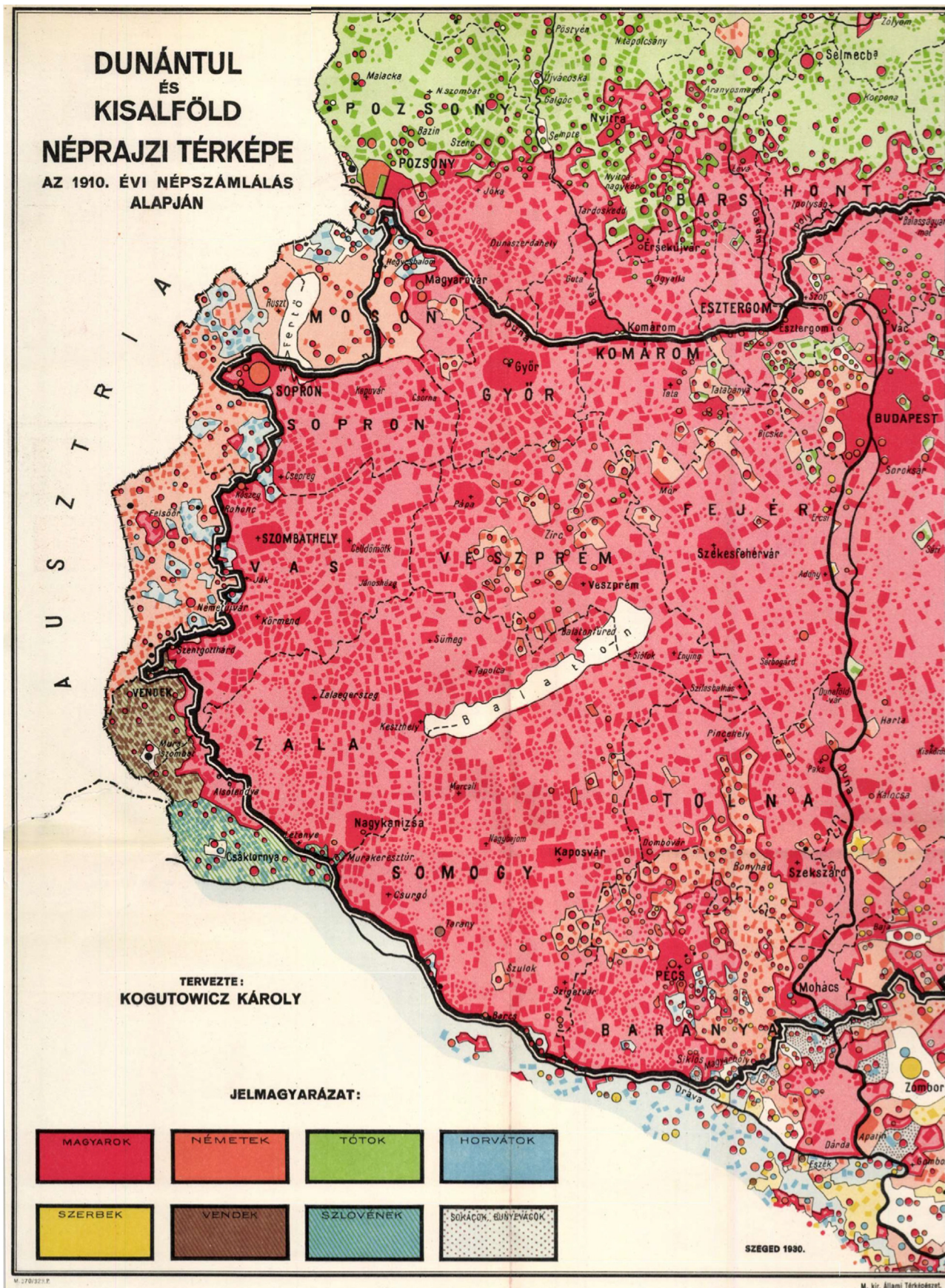


Fig. 4. Károly Kogutowicz's map of Transdanubia's ethnic distribution. This map also demonstrates that ethnic mapping was a game of colours: ethnic groups were presented either as background colours or as coloured shapes in the foreground. Source: Kogutowicz, *Dunántúl és Kisalföld írásban és képen II*, 112–113. (For interpretation of the references to colour in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the Web version of this article.)

[Hungarian] holy crown.⁷³

No one in Hungary disputed that Hungarians were not in the majority in this territory, but they portrayed the German majority as not overwhelming (Fig. 4). Gusztáv Thirring and Ernő Wallner emphasised that the German majority was not itself sufficient cause for the transfer of sovereignty, that the relationship between spoken language, identity and loyalty to the state was more complex. Additionally, Wallner emphasised that the cursory opinion of the Austrian and German geographers that the German-speaking population wished to belong to Austria could be proved, as they did not hold a comprehensive referendum. The referendum held in Sopron and in the vicinity of the town proved the opposite, although the Austrians disputed its fairness. The same was true for the Croats living there, though given the lack of a referendum extending to the entire population, their opinion remains unknown. However, the standpoint of one Croatian settlement did become known during the Sopron referendum: 70% of the population of the almost entirely Croatian Kópháza voted for Hungary. Wallner rejected the charge of Hungarianisation with the simplest of arguments: 'What degree of Hungarianisation is that where the German-speaking population is able to remain at such a proportion for centuries?'⁷⁴

The Austrian economic geography argumentation rested on two pillars. The Austrian geographers emphasised the key role played by the new province in the food supply for Vienna and Austria, and also pointed out that the northern part of the region belonged to Vienna's catchment area and the southern part to that of Graz.⁷⁵ The Hungarian geographers refuted both claims. Ernő Wallner wrote that the southern part of the territory annexed to Austria had never had a surplus of cereals, even that it was forced to import grain. Apart from the trade in cereals, the wood trade was not negligible either: the wood industry products from the southern part of Burgenland sold well in wood-poor Hungary, and the west-east direction of the traffic of these goods had traditions stretching back centuries. With respect to the catchment area aspects, Wallner highlighted the question of distance: Vienna and Graz are located fifty to one-hundred kilometres from the villages of West-Hungary, while the local market centres (such as Sopron) were only ten to twenty kilometres distant.⁷⁶

Conclusion

In this paper we examined the nature and content of the geographical disputes over the new border between Austria and Hungary after World War I. At first, we outlined the peace preparation work done by Hungarian and Austrian geographers and summarised the gist of their opposing arguments. Turning our attention to the disputed borderland, we showed how Austrian and German geographers tried to justify the territorial changes and the making of the new Austrian province, Burgenland. The Austrian

point of view was challenged by the Hungarian geographers who argued for the old Austrian–Hungarian border and the re-annexation of the lost Western territories. It might be thought that, as opposed to Hungarian geography, Austrian geography did not play a significant role in the course of the peace negotiations following World War I. What is true, as we outlined, is that geographers and geographical knowledge producers in Austria between the two world wars implemented a project on provincial and national levels in collaboration with the discipline of history and other fields of study related to knowledge of the homeland. Geographical encounters of Burgenland burgeoned, with academic discoveries, celebratory volumes, and thematic journal issues forming the geographical narratives of the province. This was not only necessary to legitimise the annexation of Burgenland. It was also directed at the need to process, identify and present the issue in terms of how geographical knowledge was fundamental to the building of identity in the province and for the new national identity.⁷⁷

This process was observed critically by certain representatives of Hungarian geography. The significance of the question of West-Hungary, however, is incomparable with that of the question of the Hungarian population in Transylvania or Czechoslovakia in the whole of Hungarian revisionist politics. The same is true of the revisionist argumentation of Hungarian geography. At the same time, however, geographers with local links and those dealing with the geography of Transdanubia also endeavoured to vindicate the integrity of Hungary in the west. There were few among the Hungarian geographers of the age who gave up on their program of integral revision, with many proclaiming the geographical necessity of the political unity of the Carpathian Basin. They thought that West-Hungary was no exception to this truth. Closing his monograph entitled *The Western Regions of Hungary* published in 1941 Béla Bulla wrote: 'Undoing the decisions that led to the mutilation of Hungary, a nation that today is still clipped of its peripheries, is an action demanded by the commanding necessities of life and the laws of geography, and will ensure political order in the Danube Basin.'⁷⁸ However, despite how much Hungarian geographers believed in these laws, the century that has passed since the signing of the peace treaty has not confirmed their convictions.

This paper has shown the complex role played by scholars—mainly geographers—in drawing boundaries in Central Europe after World War I. This study of individuals' involvement with disputes over the territory that is now Burgenland speaks also to matters of wider significance. These include the importance of critical biographical work in the histories of geographical knowledge. Most of the geographers, historians, local administrators, and journalists who participated in the debate over Burgenland regarded their contribution as a service to their nation. By the same token, they also hoped to advance their personal careers as a result of involvement in national-scale geopolitics. This involvement was especially important for human geographers who wanted to strengthen and promote their field of study. This project was undoubtedly a success in Hungary: institutional support for geography was evident in the establishment of new departments and research centres in the 1920s. Politics and geography has never been too far away from each other, but they might have never been so close to each other in Central Europe than they were in the

⁷³ J. Házi, *Történelmi jogunk Nyugatmagyarországhoz*, Sopron, 2011, 29. The debate was reopened in the 1970s. See: F. Zimmermann, *The Role of the Burgenland in the History of the Habsburg Monarchy*, *Austrian History Yearbook* 8 (1972) 7–38; V. Zimányi, *Comments on Fritz Zimmermann's 'The Role of the Burgenland in the History of the Habsburg Monarchy'*, *Austrian History Yearbook* 8 (1972) 80–83.

⁷⁴ Wallner, 'A burgenlandi kérdés', 146.

⁷⁵ This argument was of utmost importance during the peace negotiations. Lawrence Martin used it referencing the information from professor Eduard Brückner. Letter from Martin to Coolidge, 28 02 1919.

⁷⁶ Wallner, 'A burgenlandi kérdés', 147–148.

⁷⁷ F. Jankó and S. Jobbitt, *Making Burgenland from Western Hungary*.

⁷⁸ B. Bulla, *A nyugati országrészek*, Budapest, 1941, 77.

interwar decades. It speaks volumes that Pál Teleki, the leading geographer of revisionist discourse in Hungary, was appointed prime minister twice in this period.

It is important to emphasise that our study did not exhaust this topic entirely. Far from it. We did not deal with spaces and sites in which these arguments were presented and debated and did not analyse how the ‘political atmospherics’ of conferences influenced the outcomes of the meetings.⁷⁹ Nor did we pay special attention to the negotiation processes, or the work of the boundary commissions.⁸⁰ We would like to develop our research further in this direction, in particular by investigating the role of American geographer, Lawrence Martin (member of ‘Coolidge Mission’ in Vienna, in early 1919) in the making of the new Austrian-Hungarian border.

Declaration of conflicting interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Róbert Györi: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.

Ferenc Jankó: Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing.

Acknowledgements

This paper was supported by the project no. K-125001 which is financed by a grant from the National Research, Development and Innovation Office of Hungary (NKFIH) (K_17 funding scheme) (Györi and Jankó). Further, Róbert Györi is member of the MTA BTK Trianon 100 Research Group, while Ferenc Jankó is the member of the MTA BTK Lendület Ten Generations Research Group. The founding sources had no involvement in the conduct of the research and preparation of the article. The authors also wish to thank Charles W. J. Withers, Steven Jobbitt, and the anonymous reviewers for their comments on the paper.

⁷⁹ S. Legg, ‘Political atmospherics’: The India Round Table Conference’s Atmospheric Environments, Bodies and Representations, London 1930–1932, *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 110 (2020) 774–792.

⁸⁰ For a recent study on boundary commissions, see: H. Fitzpatrick, Imagining and mapping the end of an empire: Oskar Spate and the partition of India and Pakistan, *Journal of Historical Geography* 66 (2019) 55–68.