

CULTURAL HERITAGE HIGHLIGHTED BY THE HABSBURG COLONISATIONS – A PARTICULAR VIEW ON THE ROMANIAN BANAT AREA

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Abstract: *Cultural heritage highlighted by the Habsburg colonisations – a particular view on the Romanian Banat Area.* This article is revealing the problems of cultural diversity as a main impact of the Habsburg colonizations during the 18th and 19th centuries, viewed under two emphasizing periods of ruling: Carol VI and Maria Theresa-Joseph II. The cultural landscape of Banat was transformed as a result of a colonisation programme undertaken by the Habsburg authorities after the area was freed from Ottoman occupation. The paper is a highly condensed version of a doctorate study based on a comprehensive literature review and documentary study. The colonisation programme made a substantial and positive impact on the multiethnic cultural view, bringing a strong cultural heritage and a real multi-ethnic and pluri-confessional region. After the Trianon Treaty the region was divided between Romania, Yugoslavia and Hungary, but the core area is represented by the Romanian Banat.

Rezumat: *Moștenirea culturală reflectată de colonizațiile habsburgice – o privire particulară asupra Banatului românesc.* Articolul relevă aspecte de diversitate culturală ca urmare a impactului colonizărilor efectuate în secolele 18-19, insitându-se pe două mari perioade: cea condusă de Carol VI și cea a Mariei Teresa-Iosif al II-lea. Peisajul cultural bănățean a fost transformat ca rezultat al programelor efectuate de autoritățile habsburgice după ce teritoriul Banatului a fost eliberat de sub ocupație otomană. Lucrarea este o versiune condensată a unui studiu de doctorat bazat pe o bibliografie cuprinzătoare și a unei intense documentări pe teren. Programul de colonizare a avut un impact pozitiv asupra problemei culturale multietnice, formând o regiune multietnică, pluriconfesională cu o intensă moștenire culturală. După Tratatul de la Trianon, regiunea a fost divizată între România, Iugoslavia și Ungaria, dar partea sa cea mai importantă teritorial aparține astăzi României.



Key words: *Cultural Heritage, Habsburg Administration, Colonisation, Romanian Banat.*
Cuvinte cheie: *moștenire culturală, administrație habsburgică, colonizare, Banatul Românesc.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 18th century the cultural landscape of Banat was transformed as a result of a colonisation programme undertaken by the Habsburg authorities after the area was freed from Ottoman occupation. This paper is a highly condensed version of a comprehensive literature review and documentary study revealing economic developments and multicultural facts in the 18th century and reveals their impact on a present complex multiethnic society. The colonisation is split into major periods and the economic and military aspects are both highlighted. The colonists give way to a strong cultural heritage and a real multi-ethnic and pluri-confessional region, where the city of Timisoara could be considered even now a real model of cultural entities.

2. METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

The term *cultural diversity* is normally used to describe the demographic composition of a certain society, while *multi-culturalism*, *multi-ethnicity* and *multi-confessionality* refer to the political implications and demographical planning. This study takes into account J. J. Smolicz (1999) terminology of multi-culturalism, multi-ethnicity and multi-confessionality and shows how Banat region fits perfectly to these terms. Multiculturalism is not just a simple description of the number of spoken languages in a geographical region, like Banat, but the co-existence of different cultural groups within regional politics. The relationships between the predominant group or the majority (Romanians) and the minorities have a territorial expression as far as good living together is concerned.

3. FIGURES AND MATERIALS USED FOR THE 18th CENTURY

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Romanian population in Banat formed a socially homogenous mass that depended on agriculture to provide both subsistence and a surplus for trade. In 1718 it is estimated that four-fifths of the total population was Romanian, with the balance consisting of Serbs, along with some 'Carasoveni or Croats' (called Bulgarians at that time), Gypsies and Jews. However, for security reasons the Habsburg administration sought to introduce a Catholic population between the Hungarians (Calvinists and Reformists) to the north and the Muslim Turks to the south, while at the same time opening up the routes towards Lower Danubia and securing taxation revenue from the exploitation of local resources. The new population was assembled through a massive colonisation involving Germans and other nationalities (including Bulgarians, Frenchmen and Italians). The large scale settlement programme was justified in part by the sparse population at the time as implied by a low tax yield. 'Conscriptions Daten' and other documents refer to 150 Romanian settlements with a total of 5,000 houses, but this is clearly an understatement arising from the assumption that the places in which settlers were initially accommodated (actually Romanian or Serbian villages)

were empty of population at the time. In fact there was a substantial indigenous population that was often forcibly displaced to the mountains or marshes.

A 1774 survey confirmed a Romanian majority (59 percent) with Serbs accounting for a further 24 percent, but 13 percent of the population was now German, French or Italian; with the remainder consisting of Bulgarians (2.5 percent), Jews and Roma: there was no mention of any Hungarians (Table 1). Ehrler (1982) provided rounded figures: 200,000 Romanians, 100,000 Serbs and Germans, 2,400 Bulgarians and 340 Jews. In his general view of the eighteenth century colonisation and settlement process, Manciuca (1943) recognised three main periods of colonisation in Banat:

- a) 1711-1740,
- b) 1740-1780
- c) 1780-1792.

Krauter (1929) also distinguished three periods:

- a) after 1722,
- b) after the Austro-Turkish Seven Years War
- c) under Iosif II (after 1782).

Table 1. *Ethnic structure of historical Banat, after 1774 Habsburg Conscription*

• Nationality	Number (%)
• Romanians	181,639 [59.0%]
• Serbs	78,780 [24.0%]
• Germans, Italians, French	43,201 [13.0%]
• Bulgarians	8,683 [2.5%]
• Gypsies (Roma)	5,272 [1.3%]
• Jews	353
• Total:	317,928[100.0%]

But taking account of the imperial rulers and the colonisation trends a simpler division into earlier and later phases would differentiate merely between the 'Caroline' (Carol VI) and 'Theresian-Josephine' (Maria Theresa and Joseph II) periods. What follows is a general assessment based on a range of publications listed in the bibliography (but not generally cited individually in the text). Documentary sources include:

- 'Conscriptions Daten' (already referred to) and 'Temesvar Einrichtungen-Sachen (both of 1717 and available at the Archive Repository in Vienna);
- census material comprising Seelenkonsignationen (1753-1769) and Seelenkonscriptiones (1770-1790);
- maps such as the topographic map of 1772, with information on ethnicity and religion in most of the villages; militarische Aufnahmskarte and Grundsteuerregulierung (Popp 1942);
- Korabinsky dictionary (1780).

4. THE 'CAROLINE' PERIOD

As already noted in the introduction to this book, Carol VI appointed Florimund C. Mercy as governor (1717-1733) to oversee the Habsburg plan to settle a German/Roman Catholic population. The strategy, approved by the Vienna Court in 1717, was based on a two-tier administrative system of six zones and 13 districts, with the equivalent of one zone comprising a military borderland in the south and southeast subject to the control of the War Council. In the first instance a chain of command was established through reliance on privileged local leaders, known as 'cnezi' or 'juzi' (Shultz in German) with the singular forms of 'cneaz' or 'jude' (Schultheiss). Major fortifications were undertaken at the military bases of Mehadia, Orsova and Timisoara. Colonisation was planned on the basis of northern and southern zones connected by a line of communication through Pischia (Bruckenaus), Giarmata (Jahrmarkt), Freidorf (now a district of Timisoara), Voiteg, Ciacova and Peciu Nou (Neu Wien).

Since there were many *Germans* from Prussia who had suffered during the Thirty Years War there was a good response to the search by colonial agents for settlers who were transported down the Danube from Donauworth, Martheim, Ulm and Regensburg as far as Panciova (Pancevo) and Seghedin (Szeged) for the overland journey by cart to their destination. The first settlers arrived during 1717-22, with more systematic colonisation occurring in 1724-5 when two military officers, I.A. Krausseau and I.F. Falk, were placed in charge of six shiploads of settlers sailing down the Danube (Sima, 1924). However, the 1720s in general achieved good progress, whereas the 1730s witnessed the Ottoman offensive of 1736-8 which forced the German settlers to move into Timisoara and other refugees such as Deta and Oravita (also Gradiste and Vrsac, now in the Serbian Banat). Some settlements disappeared altogether, like Mullenbach near Orsova which is now identifiable only on contemporary military maps. But according to a rather superficial enumeration of 1737, many villages still had more than 35 occupied houses, including (in descending order) Peciu Nou (70 houses), Recas, Zabrani, Aradu Nou and Denta (R. Crețan, 2006); presumably representing the Romanian or Serb population which did not move away temporarily.

Germans were also prominent in and around Timisoara at Besenova Noua (now Dudestii Noi, Giarmata (Ger. Jahrmarkt), Munar, Pischia (Ger. Bruckenaus) and Zabrani (Ger. Guttenbrunn).

They also established themselves elsewhere in the plain: Lugoju German (on the opposite side of the Timis from Lugoju Roman), Periam in the high plain of Vinga, Sanpetru German (previously Romanian) and Zadarlac, now Zadareni. And Germans also took over some Romanian villages in the Caras and Oravita depressions: Berecuta, Iertof (or Hauerdorf), Oravita Montana and Rusova; also Bocsa Montana and Dognecea in the Dognecea Mountains and the markets of Caransebes and Orsova. Very few new settlements arose at this time and the colonists found space largely by displacing the native Romanian population. Most relocations are unrecorded but Romanians from the Mures Valley went to places like Comlosu Mare and Igris in 1718; to Manastur, Satchinez and Recas in 1727; and to Valcani in 1736. Villagers retained their Romanian names where Romanians remained in the majority, as at Ciacova, Denta, Sanpetru and Zadarlac, but new names were used when Germans settled in the immediate vicinity (e.g. Freidorf - meaning free village - and Guttenbrunn, alluding to a good

quality water supply) or when they became a majority in an old Romanian village: thus Schela became Neu Arad (or Aradu Nou) and Falnic changed to Felnac. German names were often connected with the origins of the colonists or with a particular official: Altringen was 'the village of governor Clary of Altringen' and Mercydorf - 'the village of the governor Mercy'; while Moritsfeld indicated 'the land of Moritz' and Nitchidorf was 'the village of the officer Nitzky'.

The first *Italians* settled in Ciacova, Carani (Mercydorf), Ciacova, Freidorf and Timisoara between 1719 and 1732 with the intention of developing the silk industry. In 1733 another group was led by C. Rossi (Mercy's Director of Silk-Worm Breeding), while in 1735 Iosif d'all Avo brought another group from Trieste which settled in Carani. However, the Italians were assimilated by their German Catholic colleagues during nineteenth century. There was also a short-lived Spanish colony arising out of Carol VI's flight from Spain to Vienna and the permission granted in 1735 for his followers to go and settle in Carani and Timisoara. The largest group settled in Zrenjanin (now in Serbian Banat) in 1736, but their attempts to create a 'small Barcelona' were undermined by their failure to adjust to the climatic conditions and those who did not retreat to Budapest or Vienna were assimilated by Germans. There were also some Romanian colonists from Oltenia who settled in the Cerna and Timis valleys in the 1720s and later in the mining settlements of Bocsă Montana, Carunari, Ciclova Montana, Moldova Noua, Rusca Montana and Sasca Montana in 1730-5. A few also went to the lowland: Comlosu Mare, Sanmihaiu Roman and other villages now in Serbian Banat. In 1750 some Romanians were given permission to move from Transylvania to Fiscut, Sanandrei, Seceani and Secusigiu.

Bulgarians settled at the end of Mercy's term of office in Dudestii Vechi. They arrived from Oltenia where the colony had been first established after the Kiprove Revolution (1690). Thanks to the help of Constantin Brancoveanu, they escaped from the Turks and settled in Bradiceanu and the market centres of Craiova, Ramnicu Valcea and Targu Jiu where they were successful tradesmen. They stayed in Oltenia during the Habsburg occupation, expanding their activities, but after the Treaty of Belgrade they withdrew with the Habsburgs because they felt insecure under Turkish suzerainty and appreciated the privileges they would receive as Catholic settlers in Banat. The colonisation authorities directed them to Besenova Noua and the Vinga area where the Bulgarians were referred to respectively as 'pauliceni' (after the Catholic Bishop Paul who converted them) and 'chiprovnicieni' (i.e. from Kiprove). Another area of settlement arose at Brestea (Denta Commune). The Bulgarians became noted for cattle raising, gardening and commerce (also intellectuals and wine producers in the case of the Vinga community).

Meanwhile, ten new villages in the south, by the Danube, were settled by *Serbs*: Campia (or Langenfeld), Socol, Divici, Pojejena Sarbeasc, Radimna, Macoviste, Petrilova, Liubcova and Moldova Veche. However, the origins of Serbs settlement in Romanian Banat lie in the fifteenth century when the first of several waves of colonisation is thought to have occurred. Basically there were three clusters of Serb settlement: the Danube Defile, the Timis Valley (Recas and Peciu Nou) and the Mures, including Gelu and Sanpetru Mare. Each group had its own dialect and cultural traditions according to their origins (Macedonia, the Danube Valley or Central Serbia). Settlement was generally geared to defence of the province: hence the privileges granted to those who settled along the Danube or the 'Mures-Tisa Confinium'.

Carani (Sanandrei) was populated by Italians, while Czechs arrived in Bradisoru de Jos (Oravita).

5. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE 'CAROLINE PERIOD'

The settlers brought various skills with them. After some craftsmen and manufacturers settled in Timisoara in 1717, we hear of stone masons settling in Oravita in 1718 while miners from Bohemia, Saxony and Styria arrived in the mountains in 1721-2. But because most of the colonists came from upland areas, they lacked the experience necessary for farming on the Banat plain. They were not very effective in draining marshes, canalising rivers and building roads, but they learnt much from the Romanians during the period of Mercy's governorship and were privileged by exemption from taxation until 1729. The marshlands were prone to disease and there were problems of security because it was easy for those who knew the area to slip across the Serbian frontier. But there were also serious flood hazards because the Aranca, Barzava, Bega, Birda, Mures and Timis were completely unregulated. So the Bega Canal was constructed (1728-1753): partly for drainage but also to reduce the cost of transporting wood from the Poiana Rusca Mountains to the Danube (thence for shipment along the Sava towards Ljubljana and Trieste). The channel extended from Faget to Rachita (Dumbrava Commune) and Belint; thence in a straight line as far as Timisoara where locks gave access to four small docks in the Fabric area of the town: one for firewood and the others for constructional timber. The channel then continued in a straight line to the Tisa near Klek (now in Serbia). Mercy ordered the installation of a pump to lift water to a purification station from which the town could be supplied with clean water through underground pipes.

Gradually agriculture became more commercialised and industries developed. Rice cultivation was introduced by the Italian colonists who settled at Ciacova and Ghiroda. However, because the ground was too permeable they moved on in 1770 to Rovinita Mare (Denta Commune) where a suitable clay soil was found. The breeding of silkworms took place along the Bega and later on at Ciacova, Deta and Zabrani where mulberry trees were established on dry, permeable ground and special buildings were erected for silk-worm breeding. Good farming was practised at Carani, Ghiroda, Giarmata and around Timisoara, while the town and its surroundings became important for manufacturing with a brewery (1718) followed by metal industries (including a wire works), wood processing and paper making, cloth production and oil pressing. Cloth was also produced in Caransebes and the village of Borlova ('Abafabric') and there was a glass factory at Calina (Dognecea commune) which supplied the local Banat market with a surplus for export. The Germans were very prominent in industry: they formed trading companies and enjoyed privileges which made it difficult for Romanians to compete, although there were Romanian shops in Timisoara.

6. THE THERESIAN – JOSEPHINE PERIOD

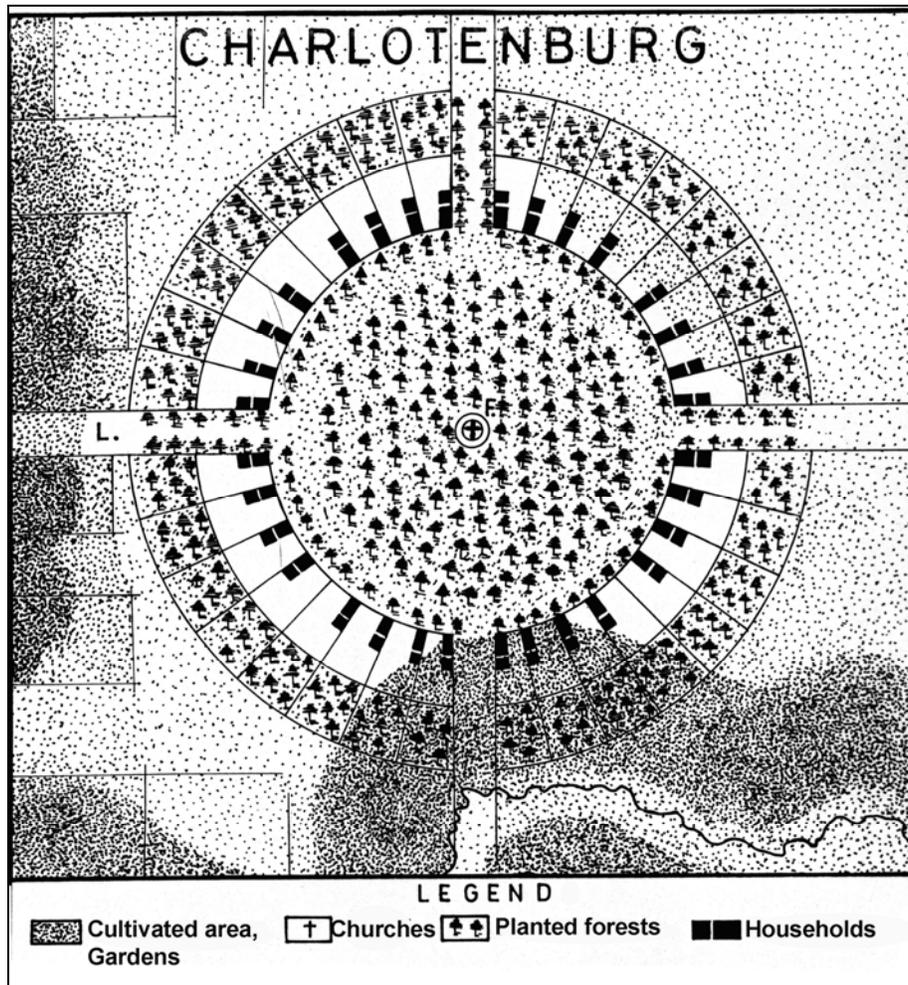
In 1751 the administration was placed on a commercial rather than a military basis and investment was undertaken over a ten year period. There was greater sensitivity towards the Romanians after Iosif II noticed how "the Valachi are badly treated, in many times being obliged to move to other parts, which is why they migrate so much". Therefore a greater

emphasis was placed on expanding existing settlements and establishing new villages rather than displacing a proportion of the Romanian population. Many villages were considered 'full' but sometimes a 'surplus of land' ('Uberland') was deemed to be available for colonists especially in forest settlements ('Waldsiedlungen') where some Romanian land might be taken, often controversially. On the uberland of Csavos (today Granicerii) it was built the German village of Johansfeld. For example, Wiesenheid was established on the Uberland of Firiteaz and Cruceni (Ger. Kreutzstatten) or that of Fiscut and Alios. However, the building of completely new villages was now the preferred strategy adopted by administrators like A. Hildebrand (Simu 1924).

This did not remove all threat to the Romanians who continued to be provoked, although resettlement usually took place in an organised fashion. Thus in July 1765 the colonisation commission decided to resettle Romanians from Felnac, Sanpetru and Schela (Aradu Nou) in Severin County in order to provide more space for German settlement. In 1767, when Count Perlas complained about tension between Germans and Romanians, the latter were obliged to leave Alios, Fiscut, Firiteaz, Ianova, Jadani, now Cornesti, Murani and Sacalaz. They moved westwards to Klek and Torak in what is today Yugoslavia, while others arrived in Klek from Recas. And it is also recorded that Romanians from Beba Veche moved to Nicolint (Ciuhici Commune) in 1773. As a result most of the Romanians who had earlier been privileged for defending the Mures frontier were moved out: indeed all privileges were withdrawn when civilian administration was introduced throughout the counties ('comitates') of Caras, Severin, Timis and Torontal.

However, for the most part the settlement programme aimed at filling those sparsely populated areas that were nevertheless fertile and salubrious i.e. the high plains, which were not subjected to the health hazards of the marshes and largely immune from flood risks; while avoiding areas of Romanian settlement (mainly in the hills and mountains following the displacements of earlier years) unless there were compelling agricultural or mineral resources. German settlers were still preferred and in 1766, when a new settlement administration came from Vienna, colonists were brought from Frankfurt, Koln, Regensburg and Ulm. It is significant that Iosif's great commitment to colonisation earned him the posthumous title 'Joseph der Deutsche' (Joseph the German). But other Catholic nationalities were welcome and indeed colonists from other religions in special instances. Imperial agents sent were able to recruit some French settlers in Alsace and Lorraine. They arrived after 1752 in Carani and Timisoara, while larger numbers appeared in 1763-65 in Sanandrei and Timisoara, with the main wave (1769-72) directed to Duestii Noi, Gottlob and what became the predominantly French village of Tomnatic in same commune. Some French families were still living in Tomnatic at the end of the nineteenth century but they have all now been assimilated.

In the Teresian period (1740-1764) colonists were privileged through religious freedom and tax exemption, but they were obliged to live in new villages of some 200 houses with strict planning regulations with regard to street widths and the planting of trees in front of the houses (with fruit trees in the gardens as well). Each village had its own priest and teacher, while doctors were provided for groups of four villages. Villages were developed on the basis of grid-iron street layouts with geometrical shapes for the total built-up area: generally a square, but circular shapes may be noted in the Lipova Hills (Figure 1).



*Figure 1: The circular shape village of Charlottenburg
(source: the Banat Museum, map 377)*

But during Maria Teresia's rule there was a greater emphasis on the towns and the Germans contributed to a total reshaping of the urban system, making a particular impact in Timisoara. The largest villages were established in Iosif's reign: 21 in Banat (11 in Romanian Banat) after 1764, with 12 of them (six in Romanian Banat) in 1771 alone. Examples include Jimbolia (Ger. Hatsfeld), Bulgarus, Grabat and Gottlob, all situated to the west of Timisoara (figure 2). Altogether some 50,000 settlers were brought to 64 different villages between 1765 and 1785 (22,000 to 39 villages in Romanian Banat) although some of them were old Romanian or Serb villages or new settlements of the Mercy period. Rural settlement intensified

with Hungarians after 1779 (when the Banat area passed under Hungarian administration). Greater emphasis was on the towns (Figure 2).

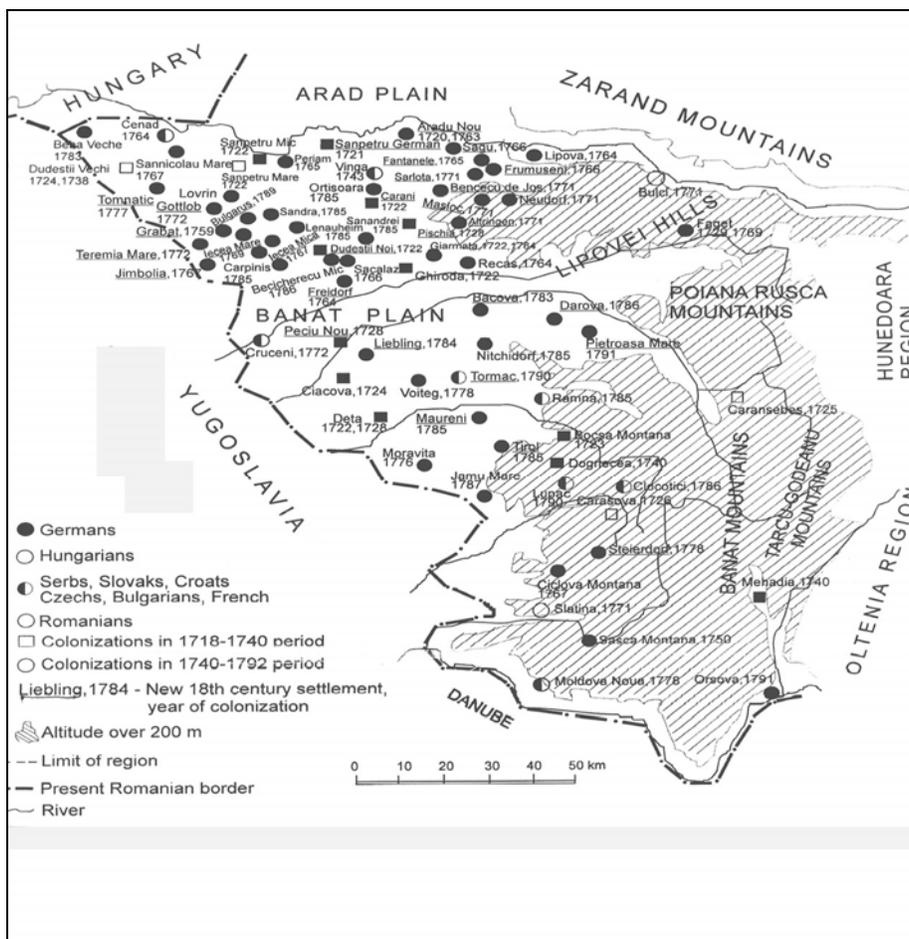


Figure 2: Settlements colonised on Romanian Banat in the 18th century

7. POLYETHNICITY AND PLURICONFESSIONALITY – PARAMETERS OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The existence in a specific geographical space of a great number of ethnic groups, with cultural differences, has generated a variety of geographical concepts such as "polyethnicity" or "multi-ethnicity", "pluri-confessionality", "multi-culturality" and "cultural diversity". These terms have been used to characterize world regions of the world

such as Banat – examined in this paper in the context of the Central European model, a space with variable geometry (A. Basarabă, 1999, p.157).

8. MULTICULTURALISM, A RESULT OF MULTIETHNICITY AND PLURICONFESSIONALITY

The term “cultural diversity” is normally used to describe the demographic composition of a certain society, while “multi-culturalism”, “multi-ethnicity” and “multi-confessionality” refer to the political implications and demographical planning (J. J. Smolicz, 1999, p. 268). In this way “multiculturalism” is not just a simple description of the number of spoken languages in a geographical region, like Banat, but the co-existence of different cultural groups within regional politics. The relationships between the predominant group or the majority (Romanians) and the minorities have a political expression. Because after 1918 Banat was governed under Romanian culture, the majority of ethnic groups could maintain their language, family and religious traditions. Cultural pluralism determines multiculturalism that developed in Banat, due to official policy developing under different administrations (Austrian, Hungarian and Romanian) since the 18th century until now. In this context, the roots of cultural pluralism can be found a few centuries back.

By “multiculturalism” we understand interaction and not cultural isolation, just as the ethnic differences determine coexisting fundamental values and not competition. There is a dynamic balance between Romanian national values and those of the minorities. The values of the majority do not become a “private domain”, but something for all the citizens of Banat. There should always be uniformity in the relation between the social variables of race, religion and ethnicity. This is a pattern to which all democratic states incline. Bilingualism allows, in our country too, that minorities can keep their language, while also understanding Romanian. Although in many European states “fragmentation” has been seen as a major problem for the majority, this does not apply in Banat.

9. CULTURAL DIVERSITY ELEMENTS OF BANAT

Europe over the past centuries has been marked by two contradictory moves: the consciousness of multiple linguistic and confessional communities and the sense of national identity. The first movement gave birth to pluri-lingualism and inter-culturalism, but it is confronted by extreme nationalism that complicates European integration in parts of south-east Europe (although fortunately Banat shows outstanding understanding between the majority and the minority).

Timișoara is frequently considered as a model city regarding European inter-ethnic understanding. In Banat we can find complex relationships between the majority and the minority; also an inter-culturality typical of south-eastern Europe. In order to study the cultural heritage of Banat we must point out the social and economic importance of the 18th century migrations and the changes that occurred the Turkish and Habsburg eras. Each ethnic element has left a powerful mark on the complexity and diversity of the present culture. So, we briefly present the positive elements brought by each group, given the fact that now Romanians represent over 80% of the population of the region, followed by Hungarians, Serbs and Germans etc. The ethnic areas map of Banat shows that today there

are no spaces without Romanian population (fig.6). Also, the predominant religion is Orthodoxy, followed by the Roman-Catholic, Greco-Catholic and Protestant faiths.

The Romanians have improved the economy of the region by their specific peasant farmsteads (with cattle-raising and beekeeping) as well as forest exploitations, mining activities and metal-working. The Romanian population's importance grew as craftsmen arrived from Oltenia and Wallachia in the 18th century, building the so-called mountain settlements (e.g. Bocșa Montană, Sasca Montană and Rusca Montană). They also started a "cultural emancipation". A Romanian contribution can be observed after 1918 too (Cretan, R., 1999) as the Romanian element in Banat was again influenced by local cultural characteristics from Transylvania, Moldova and Oltenia.

The Serbs, arriving between the 15th and 18th century, contributed to the culture of Banat a good farmers, loyal soldiers and craftsmen. They have the same Orthodox religion as the Romanians (also the same type of house) and even led the Romanian Orthodox church for a long time.

The Germans, mostly colonized in the 18th century under three great colonization phases (Caroline, Theresian and Iosephian) to create the most important and complex social and economical elements in Banat. The Hapsburg administration intended to raise the cultural level of the region, to form a European mentality. The Germans settled easily in Banat, through their "personality", diligence, skills, good organization and tolerance towards other groups as regards religions, languages, customs and specific popular traditions (embracing Romanian, Hungarian and Serb festivals). The German villages where more numerous in the center and in the mining and forest areas of the north-west. If we analyze the old road maps and we compare them to the present, the German economic influence is obvious in the sewerage of rivers, the modernizing of agriculture (e.g. model-farms) and in handicraft workshops and industries (mining and metal working). Many factories survive as traditional enterprises e.g. the Timișoara brewery. The work of rural planning is still visible today in most German villages.

Cultural activity in German communities also developed e.g. with the editing of the German newspaper *Temesvarer Nachrichten*. The cultural center was the Roman-Catholic church, for the catholic bishop directed the confessional life not only of the Germans, but also the Bulgarians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Croatians and even some Romanians and Serbs (with catholic Serbs - known as "socati" – still present in the Recaș area). Very important is the positive way in which the Catholic church interacted over the past centuries with the other churches, especially with Orthodox church. The reason seems to be the geographical position of Banat being on the border between Rome and Byzantium. There were no major conflicts between the churches of Banat (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal etc.) although each was conservative regarding internal confessional manifestations.

The Hungarians are the newest ethnic element in Banat, excepting the Ukrainians who came from Maramureș at the beginning of the 20th century. As Catholic or Protestant, they arrived at the start of the 19th century as craftsmen, farmers etc. Because they came from different parts of Hungary they didn't have a specific dress, but their intellectuals influence was felt especially in the towns: Timisoara, Arad, Lugoj, Resita, Deta and Jimbolia.

The Bulgarians kept their cultural traditions and Catholic religion. They transmitted powerful Romanian cultural influences from Oltenia when they came to Banat.

They are the region's specialists in vegetable growing and adopted the 'one child family' system of the Germans and Serbs to avoid sub-dividing their farms.

The Jews started small factories (e.g. for woolen goods, gloves and beer) in the towns where they were also active in commerce and publishing. In 1910 Jews represented about 10% of the population of the city of Timisoara, but they were also prominent in Arad, Lugoj and Resita (where many followers of Judaism were Hungarians). Their small number follows massive emigration to Israel after 1948.

Slovaks formed a small community in Nadlac, from where they spread to other settlements in the plain, since they preferred farming and home industries. The so-called 'Slovak cities' are not specific to Banat because of their lowland situation

Czechs settled in seven communities in south-east Banat, with interests especially in mining and forest work. They have always live in relative cultural and social isolation.

The Croatians and Carașoveni live mostly in a few villages around Carasova and Lupac, which are the main cultural and spiritual centers. They are Catholics and have adopted, like the Bulgarians, a lot of Romanians customs through long cohabitations. They are known for their stock-rearing and forestry activities. Professionally and culturally they are very close to the Orthodox Romanians, exemplified by their pilgrimages to Romanians monasteries (Sangeorge, Bocsca etc.) for religious festivals.

The Roma are found mostly in the rich lowland villages at the 'contact' between the hills and depressions areas; often in old monastic settlements where they inhabit specific streets on the margins. They have a certain musical culture (contributing part of Banat's traditional music), and work in handicrafts as well as local and international commerce.

The Ukrainians are mostly found around Lugoj and maintain specific cultural activities, supported by the Union of Ukrainians from Romania that seeks to maintain the old traditions. Like the Czech and Slovaks, they were known for their forest and cattle-rearing activities.

10. MULTILANGUAGE, A CULTURAL REALITY OF THE HISTORIC BANAT

Most of the ethnic elites were educated in Vienna, Buda, Paris, Timișoara or Karlowitz using the German, Hungarian, Serb or Latin languages. The rural and urban communities knew the value of this type of communication and understanding. Multilingual families led the cultural emancipation of Banat. Schools in Timișoara taught in Romanian, German, Serb and Hungarian from the 19th century, as books were printed and translated, and there were close connections between the churches. There was some assimilation (German, Hungarian and even Romanian) but political aggression (e.g. by German fascist groups in Banat) was very rare. No ethnic or confessional group in Banat sees any danger in the use of more than one language. Even today multilingualism is developed by the three basic "institutions" of church, school and family.

During the communist period ethnic groups in Banat suffered some limitation in teaching based on minority languages, as well as newspaper publishing with an ethnic content. But after 1990 some schools returned to teaching in German, Hungarian, Serb, Bulgarian, Slovakian and Ukrainian. However in German schools there has been a decrease in the number of the German students and an increase in number of Romanians due to the

German emigration, especially during 1990-2. Multilingualism is also maintained by political and non-political minority organizations, including newspapers, magazines and local radio/TV programmes. Compared with the pre-1914 period of Hungarian assimilation of Romanians, Jews or Germans, subsequent Romanian governments have been tolerant towards the national minorities. The fact that there are few magazines and newspapers in minority languages is a problem connected with the organization of the minority groups; it does not reflect political or social obstacles imposed on the Romanian side.

Multilingualism and multiculturalism have lost some momentum lately, especially due to the incomplete local administration (in the period 1990-2004) and the emigration of Jews and Germans. But the region's interethnic and inter-confessional communication can still serve as an example to other European regions. Although much of the old cultural heritage of Banat is lost, it can be replaced by creating new institutions to develop multiethnic education.

11. CONCLUSIONS

The net result was a substantial social-economic and cultural change. Yet despite the major effort to colonise Banat with a German Catholic population during the Carol and Teresian-Josephine periods, the Romanian majority (clearly demonstrated in documents for the Arad plain) remained although it was no longer so overwhelming. However, the colonisation programme accelerated the economic development of the region for the benefit of all nationalities. So the Banat Romanians participated in innovations in agriculture (such as rice growing, viticulture and the breeding of silk worms) and in manufacturing. But the preference shown for German colonists meant that many Romanian communities lost much of their land and were often obliged to move from the plains to the hill and mountain zones which remained predominantly Romanian outside the mining centres.

The 'minority system' is fundamental to the present-day human geography of Romanian Banat. Some minority groups remained essentially rural, comprising village communities in which they were locally a majority. But most have a significant urban presence and it is seen how urban space has been structured in ethnic terms: particularly the areas of Cetate, Elisabetin and Iosefin in Timisoara. Although the German minority is now very small, accounting for only 3.5 percent of the population of Banat (compared with about 40.0 percent in the 18th century), the German minority has played a major role in the development of both the region and the city in modern times. This can be seen in the architecture, industry and commerce, as well as the improvement of agriculture. Germans also had a hand in major public works (including the draining of marshes, the regularisation of the rivers and the canalisation of the Bega for navigation) and in the development of services such as education because schools were founded from 1777.

Since 2005 the Romanians have regained much of their former dominance in lowland Banat, although a complex ethnic quilt remains as a legacy of one of southeastern Europe's most impressive examples of planned settlement in modern times.

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