GEOGRAPHICA PANNONICA

Geographica Pannonica No. 2, 20-25 (1998)

Geographical and Economic Influences on the Colonisation of the Banat

Bruce Mitchell
School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London,
Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU, Englad
Saša Kicošev
Institute of Geography, University of Novi Sad,
Trg Dositeja Obradovica 3, 21000 Novi Sad, Yugoslavia

Abstract

In the following paper, the influence of selected factors on the developing settlement of the Banat is examined. These include the historical river network and marshes, the availability of building materials, fuel and drinking water, and the variety, location and extractability of raw materials. Mention is also made of the effect of some of these factors on the general state of health of the population.
This is followed by a brief account of processes of colonisation in the Banat during the 18th and 19th centuries. The motivations of the colonists themselves, and of their rulers, the context in which they were operating, and a brief appreciation of the contributions of the various ethnic groups involved.

Bounds and Area

The Banat is a conventional label for a territorial entity whose existence, despite a remarkably chequered administrative history, is acknowledged by Serb, Romanian, German and Hungarian, and there is close agreement on its geographical bounds. The courses of the Danube, Tisa and Maros embrace the Banat on three sides: divided from the Bačka on the west by the southward flow of the Tisa (Hungarian, Tisza), the Banat is separated "naturally" from Srem and Serbia, and Wallachia by the broad stripe of the Danube as far as Orsova. From here, the Banat's boundary runs northeastward along the Cerna valley, then among the Poiana-Rusca mountains towards the Transylvanian Iron Gates Pass near Bistra and thereafter northwards to Pojoga on the Maros. The Banat's northern border follows the river Maros from Pojoga downstream to Arad and on to its confluence with the Tisa by Szeged. Thus defined by Tisa, Danube, Cerna and Maros rivers, and Poiana-Rusca Mountains, the Banat covers 28,500 km^2, an area slightly smaller than Belgium.

Basic Physical Geography

A common error, even in specialist texts, is to write of the Banat as though it were a single, indivisible unit, across the whole of which specific, similar, conditions obtained. In reality, it comprises several sub-units, each with their own distinguishing features, and which are in some instances sharply differentiated from one another. Many of these sub-units embrace parts of the Banat and continue beyond its borders into neighbouring regions. Topographically, the Banat may be divided into five basic land-types: the Lower Plain, the Upper Plain, the "*Deliblatska Peščara"* sand zone, a hilly zone and, lastly, the Banat Highlands.

The lower plain (about 80 to 100 metres above sea level), which runs mainly alongside the Maros, Tisa and Danube, also extends inland along and outward from the Temes and Bega rivers as far as Fageþ and Caransebe respectively. Most of the lower plain was formerly a confusion of marshes and choked watercourses. The majority of the land is extraordinarily featureless – Kohl, a nineteenth-century traveller remarked that *'all is smooth, unruffled, and flat as the ocean during a dead calm'*. A small 'bubble' in this landscape just south of Zrenjanin (Bečkerek), lies in the path of the Temes and Bega rivers and, before effective canalisation, used to form a significant barrier to drainage, an added cause of inundation in times past.
From north of Zrenjanin, a barely perceptible rise (to an altitude of ca. 90 - 120 metres) brings one to the beginning of the **Upper Plain**, known in German as the ***Banater Heide*** (heathland). This zone, which runs in a broad crescent north-eastwards via Kikinda towards Lugoj is almost equally featureless, but is famed for the great fertility of its black soil, which permits of several harvests a year, and commands a high price per hectare. Not by chance, most of this land ended up in the hands of German colonist-farmers. Successive Habsburg regulations reserved much of this region for the settlement of German colonists, whose loyalty to the crown was not in doubt, and who were deemed likely to bring the best return from the high fertility of the land. Sometimes a pre-existing non-German population was resettled to make room for the colonists, which did little for harmony among the nationalities.

Landscape Division of Banat Region

Just west of Vršac in the south-west Banat is the only distinctly elevated part of the western Banat. The **Deliblatska Peščara**, a thinly inhabited region of sandy desert formed during 18th century by '*irrational exploitation'* of the forests, rises to a height of 249 m. Attempts to reforest the region have not been entirely successful, though nowadays sand can only drift when a strong and persistent wind (the Košava) blows from the south. The dryness and infertility of this district contrast sharply with the loess plateau to its north. (**Bugar**, in **Abonyine-Palotas, Ahmetoviæ-Tomka et al.,** 91-2).
A narrow **hilly belt** in the central Banat, with its own distinct settlement-pattern, is succeeded by densely wooded low mountains, rising quickly towards the south-east. The slopes around the southern towns of Vršac and Bela Crkva (Yugoslavia) are cultivated with vines and herald the fringe of the higher ground to the east.
The mineral-rich **Banat Highlands (*Banater Bergland*)** climb to their highest point (1446 m.) at Semenic, near Gărîna (Wolfsberg), Brebu Nou (Weidenthal) and Văliug (Franzdorf). The valleys of the Temes and Cerna rivers separate the Banat highlands from the Southern Carpathians proper. On the borders of the Banat and Transylvania, the latter approach 2,200 m in height.
Considerable precipitation is generated here, the runoff rapidly gathering in the plain, but draining only slowly onward. The combination of high precipitation in the mountain-districts and the broad inland extent of the lower plain, with its very gradual gradient, exposes wide areas to the constant danger of inundation.

The Influence of the Rivers

The massive Danube and Tisa, and their main local tributaries (Drava, Sava, Maros, Temes, Bega, Berzava etc.) have had a decisive effect upon the settlement-patterns in the Banat. The valley of the Danube lies at an altitude of 89m at Baja in the Bačka, 75m at its junction with the Tisza, and

before the building of the Iron Gates Dam, the river at Sviniþa was still at a level of 66 metres. Only here did the gradient began to drop more markedly. The average level of the Tisza falls only 4 metres over the 150 km from Martonoš (79m) to the Danube (75m) **(Petersen, Scheel, Ruth, Schwalm (Hrsg.)** 1933 293). Until recent times, therefore, a rise in the level of the Danube at the confluence meant almost inescapably inundation along its course. The Tisa's waters, unable to run off downstream, would back up as far as Csongrád, rise out of the river's bed and submerge a huge area. In 1889, 8,369,387 hectares were inundated. (**Someºan** 1939 17). This made life near to the rivers very hazardous (see '*vereinte Kraft gegen die Theiß'*, **Fassel and Schmidt**, 138-40) and confined settlement to the more elevated land. Some areas have remained practically uninhabitable up until recent times.

Around Temesvar, between Szeged and Kikinda, and between Vršac and Alibunar, there had been extensive marshes since ancient times. During the latter years of the Turkish occupation, war damage and population decline resulted in wide expanses of fertile land being simply abandoned. When the Habsburg armies captured Temesvar in 1716, the imperial administration extended to the Banat a policy of colonisation and economic development already begun in the Bačka. The Bega and Temes rivers, which, above Temesvar, had degenerated into an incoherent amalgam of marshland and watercourse, were separated from one another, controlled and canalised. The Bega now flowed through Temesvar; the Temischel, which had given the city its name, disappeared, while several miles to the south, a new river, the Temes, was created. It was later found necessary to dig two small canals to reconnect the two: one to permit flood waters from the Bega to be diverted into the Temes to preserve the city from flood, the other to divert the Temes into the Bega when the latter - Temesvar's primary trade route to the Empire - was running low. By 1776, the extent of the flooding had been considerably reduced, but much remained to be done. Progressively more modern maps show the long process of river-control in operation, with the river-courses becoming increasingly well defined (See especially: Temesy 1939). A 1:75,000 *k.u.k.* military mapsheet of the Apatin area (Bačka) shows, besides dead arms, ox-bow lakes and marshes, the Danube proper, the *Vemelzer Donau*, the *Petreser Alte Donau* and the *Stille Donau*.

Habsburgs, Hungarians, Yugoslavs and Romanians have each in their turn struggled against the rivers, erecting massive flood-banks alongside rivers major and minor, and digging thousands of kilometres of canals. Yet modern maps are still characterised by the great lurches of the Danube and Tisa, and even the smaller Maros, after its plunge from the heart of the Székely country, still weaves its drunken way when it reaches the lowlands above Szeged. Approaching Szeged from the north, the once tyrannically meandering Tisa (over the period 1850 to 1875, under the auspices of Count István Szécheny, regulation shortened the river's course by 463 kilometres (32%, from 1,429 km to 966 km). By the end of the 19th century, 110 'shortcut' canals had been built, along with 3,000 km of embankments, 5,300 km of drainage canals and 50 pumping stations (Munteanu, in **Abonyine-Palotas, Ahmetović-Tomka et al.,** 29) already carries almost the entire runoff from the Slovak and Sub-Carpathian Ukrainian valleys, and has subsumed the Someº (Szamos, Samosch) from northern Transylvania and the Criº (Körös, Kreisch) rivers from the Bihar Mountains. A few minutes before it marches through the centre of Szeged, it links arms with the Maros, which drains all Southern Transylvania (except the Olt valley). The further course of the Tisa between here and the confluence with the Danube is subject to practically no natural constraints: the land either side of the Tisa is very flat, the only distinctly elevated area being around Titel, just before the confluence. When it reaches the Danube, the waters of the Drava have already swelled that river and the great Sava and smaller Temes soon join in at Belgrade. Thus within the space of a few dozens of miles, between Apatin and Belgrade, the Danube gathers into itself the precipitation from Croatia, Slovenia and almost the entire Carpathian Basin. Until the late 19th century, there was a

serious risk of extensive flooding every spring.
The great fertility of the river valleys nevertheless still attracts, and much of the population of the western Banat and the Bačka congregates as close as considerations of safety allow to the banks of the rivers. Martonoš and Bečej, for example, were built within tight meanders of the Tisa, probably to aid both communications and defence.

The Colonisation of Lower Ground

As the drainage of the wetlands proceeded, so colonisation was extended into the lowest-lying lands, principally that between Temesvar and Beèkerek. Johannisfeld (at 81 metres), founded in 1806, was situated in the narrow corridor between the Temes and Bega rivers and, *'like all other communities in the Banat has had to struggle against natural catastrophes and epidemics'*. In 1854, the Bega overflowed its banks and inundated all the fields. 1863, in contrast, brought a drought. 1869 brought a renewed inundation and in that year the villagers harvested from canoes and rafts! To make up for this, however, fish could be caught *'by the basketful'*. Inundation and drought have *'often recurred to the present day'*[1]. In some cases settlements proved untenable, and had to be abandoned or relocated on higher ground. The most striking example is perhaps offered by a group of seven communities (Marienfeld, Elisenheim (Belo Blato, Nagyerzsébetlak), Königsdorf, Albrechtsdorf, Giselahein, Ivanovo and Gyurgyevo) founded by the *Deutsch-Banater Infanterie Grenzregiment* in 1868 in the *Pantschower Ried* (Danube marshes near Pantschowa (Pančevo)). A series of devastating floods, beginning in 1867 and recurring almost every year for a decade, practically destroyed this last officially backed colonisation of the Habsburg period (**Ausschuß der Gemeinde Woilowitz, 1981)** Despite great progress towards controlling the Tisa and Maros within Hungary from 1846 onward, the rivers were able to rise over their banks above Szeged in 1879 and practically destroy that city. In 1889, according to Someºan (1939 17), a massive 8,369,387 hectares were inundated.
Kübekháza, now an inconsequential village in the Hungarian Banat facing Baba Veche (Romania) and Rabe (Yugoslavia) may serve as an illustration of the gradual taming of the hydrography. At the time of the Habsburg conquest, most of this corner of the Banat was under water. When Germans were settled in the village in the late 19th century, a minor watercourse (the Pogány ér) still determined its outline, and acted as a drainage channel, and had saved the village in 1855 when floods had surrounded the village. An inspection today reveals only the vaguest depression in the ground to suggest where this may have been. The Maros river, a few miles to the north, and the Tisa to the west are now so effectively controlled that it has been deemed safe for the people of Kübekháza to fill in and even cultivate their "moat". For miles around the land is perfectly flat, and, apart from the roadside ditches, there is no longer any hint of local protection from flooding. Despite extensive river regulation, the danger of inundation has even today still not been completely banished. In early January 1996, the Maros once again rose over its constraining banks. Estimates of the total cost of the inundations in Judeþul Arad alone ran to 30 billion Lei (**Banater Zeitung:** 10th January 1996).
This propensity to flooding was however the making of Temesvar, the chief city of the Banat. An important staging-post between Buda and the Balkans, astride one of the easier north-south transit routes across the huge marshes, it was nevertheless very inaccessible. During the Turkish period, Temesvar, protected by its belt of marshes, served as a jumping-off point for campaigns and a

[1] *'Banater Ortschaften stellen sich vor'* (57), Johannisfeld. Banater Post 20th Feb. 1997.

secure base. Evliya Celebi, who visited in 1660-64, aptly described the fortress-city as a 'tortoise in the swamp', and pronounced it 'conquerable only by famine. Indeed, in 1597, the city - then in Turkish hands - was saved from such a fate by a timely inundation. Settlement along the major rivers has long been constrained by extensive and regular flooding, while inhospitable mountains constrain settlement in the eastern Banat. Until the rivers were controlled in the eighteenth century, huge areas of the Banat were perpetually submerged by immense marshes, which gave rise to 'pernicious exhalations' and marsh-fever, apparently endemic even in the mountains. The debilitating climate continued to discourage colonists at least into the 1950s. By contrast, the great fertility of the soil - once drained - and the considerable mineral wealth of the Banat mountains nevertheless ensured that colonists could always be found.

Three Scarce Resources in the Lower Banat - Stone, Wood and Fresh Water

One of the peculiarities of the lower Banat and Bačka - and here the distinction between lower lying ground and the Banat highlands must be emphasised - is a great scarcity of stone. Celebi states that all streets and lanes in Turkish Temesvar were built from wood, as *'in this fertile ... land there was not a stone to be found, not even the size of a bean!*' Only the old Hunyadi citadel - the tortoise's 'head' - was built of stone. The rest of the fortress and city, including the streets, were built entirely of wood *(*Evliya, S e y h Q a t n k m e V 385 ff.). A Habsburg bombardment of the timber-built city in 1716 appears to have been sufficient in itself to bring about its surrender. The suburbs had been burned down, and the interior of the fortress reduced to matchwood (Szentkláray, 117). The building norm among the Serb and Vlach majority of the population, as reported by the Habsburg Graf Hamilton in 1734, was for a poor roof of straw or tree-bark to be erected over a framework of stakes thrust into the ground, the walls formed by a coating of mud. Some, he claimed, lived simply in holes in the ground. Such dwellings could have no permanence, unlike the stone-built Saxon towns of rocky Transylvania, and the population was consequently *'zum Transmigriren sehr geneigt'*, (Hamilton's *Chorographia Bannatus Temessiensis*, 65). Some elements in the population long retained this mobility, presenting landowners and tax collectors with recurrent problems and leading to regular abandonment of settlements.

The deficiency in stone is confirmed by JG Kohl, a nineteenth-century traveller, who records the frustration of travelling in the Banat after rain in the early 1840's. Warned against the sticky condition of the main road northwest from Temesvar, his coachman made the mistake of taking a minor road. Very soon, they were struggling: their wheels were *'...no longer distinguishable as wheels, but appeared four thick, solid balls of heavy mud, in which, literally, no trace of a spoke was discoverable!'* All around was *'one thick pudding of mud'* and Kohl regretted the complete absence of any stones one could use instead. He reproduces an anonymous other's characterisation of roads in the Banat as *'strips of bog enclosed between two ditches'*. He then noted, however, that *'the tough slime of a Banat plain soon dries, and then becomes hard as stone'* (**Kohl,** 328-9). A British military map from 1944 notes that along the Temes and Bega, movement is still *'restricted by marshes and watercourses'*, and that their lower courses were *'impassable in winter except when frozen'*. All but one road passing through Velika Kikinda were in 1945 termed passable only in dry weather (NID, III, 517). Indeed, the botched evacuation of Germans from the Yugoslav Banat in September 1944 was badly hampered by a few days' heavy rain.

Despite an apparent abundance of wooden buildings, it is also true that the lower-lying parts of the Banat and, after an initially generous resource was depleted, the Temesvar area, soon suffered from a severe lack of timber. Graf Hamilton's report to Vienna makes this clear, describing it as a

'defect' of the Banat on the lower land, and especially pronounced towards the Tisa. The city's predatory demand for building timber and fuel had to be satisfied by recourse to the forests further east. In the boggy west, the population made do by using peat for fuel and could not be induced to use more costly timber brought down river from the densely wooded Banat mountains.
In addition to stone and wood, another item in deficit in the lowlands of the Banat, despite the superabundance of moisture, was water fit to drink. On the lower ground, the extent and age of the stagnant marshes meant that deep wells had to be dug before a clean water supply could be secured. Ebendorf, (R., ªtuica), south-east of Lugoº, at 196 metres above sea level, and therefore above the worst of the contamination of the wetlands, nevertheless had to be supplied by two wells sunk to depths of 54 and 57 metres. Before pumps were installed in the 19th century, these had to be pulled by hand. They remained the principal source of water until ªtuica was linked to the main water supply in 1970 (**Banater Post**, 5th October 1996). Until this century, the bad water was a constant source of cholera: epidemics were a regular occurrence, often arising as a consequence of floods. Johannisfeld (1,646 inhabitants in 1851 (*Handbuch der Wojwodschaft Serbien und des Temeser Banats* 1854.)), lying between the Temes and Bega rivers downstream from Temesvar, suffered both inundation and cholera in 1831, and a second epidemic in 1836 claimed 64 lives within four weeks (*Banater Ortschaften stellen sich vor (57). Johannisfeld.* Banater Post, 20 Feb 1997). Floods in Judeþul Arad in January 1996, in which the village of Pescari (Commune Gurahonþ), suffered the contamination of 20 of its 23 wells, gave rise to renewed concern that an outbreak of cholera or typhus - which was last encountered in the Banat twenty years ago - might ensue. Pescari was but one of many villages still reliant for its drinking water on wells rather than on mains supply.

'A Most Insalubrious Climate'

The combination of regular, devastating floods, the marshes and the shortage of solid building materials locally (to the consequent detriment of the quality of housing), with the poor quality of drinking-water, induced a poor general standard of health among the population, amply reflected by the widely-quoted colonist saying: *'dem Ersten den Tod, dem Zweiten die Not, dem Dritten das Brot'*. Kohl reported that *'The stench of the stagnating waters, combined with the sultry, heavy air of a hot Banat summer ('for weeks together there is sometimes a perfect calm...') could become overpowering,* particularly in Temesvar. During his visit to the city in about 1840, *'the inner fortress of the town felt like a baker's oven... there was not a breath of air to be had. Of the two thousand soldiers of the garrison, nine hundred were in hospital in one week...'* (Kohl, 278).
In the wake of the disastrous Turkish war of 1738-41, the plague entered the Banat, provoking widespread fear if not large numbers of deaths. The effect of the epidemic on the morale of the colonists was underlined by the habit of the boggy ground to give up its dead, which simply could not be buried at an adequate depth. It was eventually decreed that the corpses of plague victims must be cremated. Subsequently, the Habsburgs introduced a *Sanitätskordon* along the Danube, restricting passage into the Empire of goods and persons deemed to be plague-carriers. This was observed in action by Kohl during his passage through Orsova in the 1840s. *'Nowhere had I heard the subject of health so constantly discussed as at Orsova, and indeed throughout the Banat'*. By 1853, the Preyer, Mayor of Temesvar (whose father's first wife and five children had died during an epidemic in the Banat during the 1790s), was able to state confidently that the city of Temesvar had outgrown its reputation by virtue of Habsburg river-control and land reclamation, but these tasks were far from complete (Preyer, 1995, 124).
The Banat and Bačka have remained difficult environments. A series of villages founded in the

1820s in the Semenic mountains of the Southern Banat, where timber and fresh water did not present problems were soon abandoned and, when re-established, barely survived, because of harsh winters and an exceedingly short growing season (**Schmidt,** 1991). One of the villages (Lindenfeld) presently has a population of one. More recently, Montenegrin colonists to the Yugoslav Bačka after the end of the Second World War were exposed to the harsher side of that region. Among all the post-war colonists, these mountain-dwellers used to adequate supplies of wood, stone and fresh water, suffered the most heavily from contagious diseases, tuberculosis and gastric ailments. Many of the Montenegrins died before the colonisation succeeded, and several of the survivors returned to their homes in the south. (Vasoviæ, p, 167).

The Natural Blessings of the Banat

The Banat does, however, have some redeeming features, and these are of such magnitude as to have encouraged large-scale state programmes of colonisation and a constant stream of fortune-hunters. The fertility of the lower-lying land is such that two or even three harvests a year can be made without recourse to fertiliser, and an occasional disaster due to storm, flood, drought or frost can thus be more readily borne. The production-level of Banat and Bačka wheat became gradually more significant during the 19th century and was priced highly due to having had a higher gluten content than that grown in Germany. Its importance was undermined by the opening of the Canadian and US prairies, although a high yield meant that it still remained competitive. The region also supported significant oats, maize and pork production in addition to the traditionally important raising of horses and cattle.

The lower Banat suffered from an almost total lack of mineral ores. The Banat mountains, in contrast, were a veritable treasure-house. Mining had been done in these mountains since the time of the Romans - perhaps the Dacians. Bavarian and Styrian miners were operating in the 'Banater Bergland' of the Hungarian kingdom as early as the 13th century, and the Turks had continued the tradition, though production was not great. After the Habsburg conquest of the Banat, General Mercy's *Banater Bergeinrichtungs-Kommission* (1717) revived mining activity in the mineral-rich highlands by introducing skilled Tirolean, Styrian and Bohemian labour. By 1733, half of the Habsburg Empire's copper production came from the Banat. While the disastrous Turkish war of 1738-41 forced the substantial abandonment of mining in the Banat, the discovery of massive hard-coal deposits later in the century again boosted the region's importance. By the nineteenth century, the Austro-Hungarian *Staatseisenbahngesellschaft* (STEG) had acquired from the crown virtual monopoly in area of 25 square miles, stretching from Bogschan (Bocþa) in the north to Neu-Moldova (Moldova Nouã) by the Danube. The overwhelming majority of the population was Romanian: the capital and profit however, were firmly in German hands. By the First World War, the Banater Bergland had become the most significant heavy industry zone in south-east Europe, with important centres at Resica (Reºiþa), Oravica (Oraviþa), Steierdorf, and Újmoldóva (Moldova Nouâ). The most important mineral deposits locally were coal, iron, sulphur, copper, and lead, gold and silver. A late 19th century STEG document lists 25 other minerals that were extracted commercially (*Beschreibung der Banater Domäne…)*. Population growth in the industrial towns was powerfully stimulated by the discovery of new deposits, and by advances in technology which it possible to extract known deposits profitably. Oraviþa boomed early in the eighteenth century but was soon overtaken by Reºiþa, and subsequently by Steierdorf in the mountains, once a tortuous mountain railway had been built there and it became possible to exploit and transport its enormous hard coal deposits.

GEOGRAPHICA PANNONICA

Geographica Pannonica No. 2, 20-25 (1998)

The 18th-Century Colonisation of the Banat

The Banat and the neighbouring Bačka have, at least since the Habsburg conquest, been lands of almost perpetual colonisation. Regular change has been one of the few constant factors. Colonists have been brought from every part of Europe, even from today's France, Spain and Italy, but the demand for new blood has never been satisfied. In the eighteenth century, the Banat in particular became infamous for the toll it extracted from the colonists. Plague, malaria, recurrent war with Turkey - all hit the newly arrived colonists perhaps more heavily than the more established locals, already inured to the hardships of life in the region. Yet colonists still came. What impelled such massive population movements?

Perhaps at the top of the list comes dissatisfaction with conditions at home, followed by a perception of better opportunities elsewhere. Emigration and the abandonment of the familiar are themes, which arouses strong emotion and is not undertaken lightly. But unemployment, lack of future prospects, high taxation when in employment, religious persecution and the hazards of warfare all too often contributed to loosen the individual's bonds to the homeland and, coupled with the illusory freedom of the frontiersman, impelled him and often his family to move abroad. In south-western Germany, as in Ireland, the tradition of sub-division of inherited plots contributed to the alienation of a proportion of the rural population and to the drift to the towns. The surplus British, Irish, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Dutch urban populations were drawn off to the New World and other colonial possessions. For the citizens of the Habsburg Empire, after the split with Spain, and of Prussia, there was no such extra-European outlet, but for that a relatively thinly populated east.

From the late 17th century, Habsburg Kaisers, newly possessed of extensive, but thinly inhabited and therefore vulnerable territories in the south-east, being aware of social imbalance and land-famine in south-western Germany and, constrained by economic and military imperatives, themselves issued invitations of varying generosity for colonists. The embroidered versions of these invitations broadcast by the Kaisers' agents, coupled with misery at home and supposedly greater opportunities for land, farming and trade, persuaded would-be colonists to leave home in their thousands. It is worth noting that the greater part of the 18th century German emigration came not from the smaller kingdoms and the petty principalities of the central German space, but from the medium-sized territories of Baden, Württemberg and the Rhineland Palatinate, where life was continually threatened by the encroaching French Kingdom. This was particularly true during the predatory reign of Louis XIV - and from Bavaria, which had been a major victim of the Thirty Years' War. The impossible confusion of Thüringen, which might be expected to have produced great numbers of colonists due to the impotence of the numerous petty princes, barely figures in the list of source territories for Banat colonists. The colonisation of the Banat was however far from mono-ethnic in nature: although Hungarians were initially held at arm's length for political and partly confessional reasons, Romanians and Serbs were major beneficiaries of Habsburg policy besides the Germans and both played central roles in the Banat economy. Bulgars, Gypsies and other more minor groups were also welcomed. This does not mean that there were not frictions between the various ethnic groups. In German literature, one often comes across recriminations against the major population-groups - principally the Serbs and Romanians - for a lack of enthusiasm for the major construction and mining works. But the Habsburg way of life was in conflict with their pastoral ways, so they could not be realistically expected to contribute to their own demise. Friction between German and Serb would strongly influence the process of

colonisation throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

Closing Remarks

The settlement geography of the Banat is dominated by water, mainly because there is too much of it. Until the mid eighteenth century, about a third of the western Banat was permanently flooded, due to the coincidence of very gentle gradients and the confluence of many of Europe's major rivers within a few miles of the Banat's borders. Settlement near the rivers has thus historically been extremely hazardous. Temesvar, the capital of the Banat, grew up at a convenient and well-protected river-crossing, but being surrounded by marshes and suffering from a dearth of fresh water and solid building materials, was home to a sickly population. These conditions were widespread throughout the lower Banat and reached even into the mountains.
The Banat, however, also has a tremendous wealth of mineral resources, and these inspired the Habsburgs to invest heavily in the province and even subordinate it directly to the crown for over half a century. The mineral deposits, and the rich agricultural land towards the north-western corner of the Banat, became magnets for successive waves of colonists. The settlements they swelled themselves later went on to provide further colonists to other parts of the Banat. While Germans were the chief beneficiaries of the Habsburg policies, acquiring along the way the richest lands and the greatest capital assets, the Banat was not colonised by Germans alone. Indeed, without the contributions of Serbs and Romanians, among others, the Germans' remarkable feats of river control and economic organisation would certainly have been far harder to achieve.

References

Ausschuß der Gemeinde Woilowitz (Hrsg.) *Heimatbuch der Gemeinde Woilowitz*. Ausschuß der Gemeinde Woilowitz. Ort? (1981).

Banater Zeitung. Wochenblatt für Temesch, Arad und Banater Bergland: *Kreis Arad: Epidemie-Gefahr vorbeugen. Bei Gurahont sind 20 von 23 Brunnen verunreinigt.*. Temeswar, 10. Januar, 1996.

Baumannn, Julius A.: *Geschichte der Banater Berglanddeutschen Volksgruppe: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Temeser Banats.* Österreichische Landsmannschaft, Eckart-Schriften, Heft 109. Wien, 1989.

Beschreibung der Banater Domäne und des Grubenbesitzes in Böhmen. Probably official "STEG" Publication, no year given, but around 1910. L.C Zamarski & C. Dittmarsch, Wien.

Blum, Konrad: *Liebling, 1786 - 1936.* Druck der Honterus-Buchdruckerei und Verlagsanstalt der evang. Landeskirche U.B. in Rumäniein. Sibiu / Hermannstadt, 1936.

Die Donauschwaben. Deutsche Siedlung in Südosteuropa: Ausstellungskatalog. Herausgegeben vom Inneneministerium Baden-Württemburg. Jan Thorbecke Verlag, Sigmaringen, 2. Auflage, 1989.

Fassel, Horst; Schmidt, Josef: *An Donau und Theiß: Banater Lesebuch.* Landsmannschaft der Banater Schwaben. Place? Year?.

Fata, Marta: *Die Auswanderung aus Württemberg ins Banat im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert.* In: **Museum für Geschichte des Kreises Karasch-Sewerin, Rechitza, in Verbindung mit dem Institut für donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde, Tübingen, und der Universität Babes-Boyai, Klausenburg**. *Kulturraummittlere und untere Donau.*

Traditionen und Perspektiven des Zusammenlebens. Reºiþa, 1995

Feldtänzer, Oskar: *Josef II. und die Donauschwäbische Ansiedlung. Dokumentation der Kolonisation im Batscherland 1784 - 1787*. Donauschäbische Kulturstiftung, München, 1990.

Glaser, Dr. Lajos: *Az Alföld régi vízrajza és a települsek*. In: Fölrajzi Közlemények, LXVII kötet, p. 297-307. A Magyar Földrajzi Társaság, Budapest, 1939.

Hamilton, Graf: *Chorographia Bannatus Temessiensis sub auspiciis novi gubernatoris edita* (1734). Oesterreichisches Staatarchiv Wien, Hofkammerarchiv, Hs. 424, 89 f. As reported in Materiallien 5, Wolf, Josef. Intitut für donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde, Tübingen, 1995.

Handbuch der Wojwodschaft Serbien und des Temeser Banats sammt der Militärgränze für das Jahr 1854. Kaiserl. u. Königl. Staatsdrückerei **.**

Hromadka, Georg: *Kleine Chronik des Banater Berglands.* Verlag Südostdeutsches Kulturwerk, München, 1993.

Jordan, Sonia: *Die kaiserliche Wirtschaftspolitik im Banat im 18. Jahrhundert.* Buchreihe der Südostdeutschen Historischen Kommission, Band 17. Verlag R. Oldenbourg, München, 1967.

Kohl: *Austria, Vienna, Prague, Hungary, Bohemia and the Danube; Galicia, Styria, Moravia, Bukovina and the Military Frontier.* Chapman and Hall, London, 1844.

Olar, Martin: *Das Banater-Gebirge. Eine regional-touristische Analyse*. In: **Museum für Geschichte des Kreises Karasch-Sewerin, Rechitza, in Verbindung mit dem Institut für donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde, Tübingen, und der Universität Babes-Boyai, Klausenburg**. *Kulturraummittlere und untere Donau. Traditionen und Perspektiven des Zusammenlebens*. Reºiþa, 1995

Petersen, Scheel, Ruth, Schwalm (Hrsg.): *Handwörterbuch des Grenz- und Auslandsdeutschtums.* Verlag Ferdinand Hirt, Breslau, 1933.

Preyer, Johann N.: *Monographie der königlichen Freistadt Temesvár / Monografia Oraþului liber Crãiesc Timiþoara* (neue, zweisprachige Ausgabe). Editura Amarcord, Timiºoara, 1995.

Rieser, Hans-Heinrich: *Temeswar. Geographische Beschreibung der Banater Hauptstadt*. Schriftenreihe des Instituts für donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde. Jan Thorbecke Verlag, Sigmaringen, 1992.

Roth, Erik: *Die Planmäßig angelegten Siedlungen im Deutsch-Banater Militärgrenzbezirk, 1765-1821*. Buchreihe der Südostdeuschen Historischen Kommission, Band 33. R. Oldenbourg Verlag, München, 1988.

Schmidt, Horst Dieter. *Ein verschwundenes Dorf im Banat. Bevölkerungsbiologische Untersuchungen der böhmer-deutschen Gemeinde Lindenfeld.* Armin Vaas Verlag, Langenau-Ulm, 1991.

ªomeºan, Prof. Dr. Laurian: *Die Theißebene: eine natürliche Grenze zwischen Rumänen und Ungarn, geographische und geopolitische Studie.* Sibiu/Hermannstadt, 1939.

Szentkláray, Jenõ: *Száz év Dél-Magyarország ujabb történetébõl (1779-tõl napjainkig). Tekintettel a III. Károly és Mária Terézia Korabeli elõzményekre.* Temesvárott, 1879.

Temesy, Vitéz Dr. Gzõzõ: *A temesközi vízszabalyozások a XVIII században* In: Fölrajzi Közlemények LXVII kötet, p.494-509. A Magyar Földrajzi Társaság, Budapest, 1939.

Vasović, Milorad: *Najnovije naseljavanje Crnogoraca u nekim baèkimn selima*. Novi Sad, 1959.