

DEMOGRAPHIC–ECONOMIC–SOCIAL CONFIGURATIONS IN THE BOCȘA COMMUNITIES (THE 18TH CENTURY – THE FIRST DECADES OF THE 20TH CENTURY)

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After the peace of Passarowitz, in the period between 1716–1752 the imperial civil administration was installed in Banat, and the Vienna Court proceeded to the opening of the old and decayed mines, putting into operation the melting furnaces for non-ferrous and ferrous ores (at Oravița in 1718, at Bocșa in 1719, at Dognecea in 1720). The gold-silver and copper exploitations were resumed in the historic Banat, more precisely in the Bocșa area, in the first decades of the 18th century, along with the Austrian occupation of the region.¹ In the minutes of the Mountainous Office of Dognecea (Bergants Consultations Protocol) we find information about the Bocșa Română (Romanian Bocșa) gold mines, and also about the activity there. This area is mentioned either under the name Dealurile Bocșei (Bocșa's Hills), or Trecătoarea Lupilor (Wolves' Pass). The documents say that they exploited here not only gold, but also copper ores. The first written mention is identified in the report of the 28th of January 1741, according to which, in the Wolfgang gallery, on a 4-digit thick lode, copper ores appear, both along the direction and in depth. According to other minutes, this lode was exploited by Johann Proszmann together with 11 fellow miners of his.² Massive exploitations of this type of ore were effected until 1761, when 128 mining concessions were recorded among which 13 situated in areas close to the Bocșa hills, Bartolomei hills or Victoria mine, actually the Cracul de Aur (Golden Leg) area and its vicinity. Based on the Dognecea Office documents, we can precisely establish the mining exploitation of the Golden Leg: the Franciscus-Theresia and Prinz Joseph mines, the Johann Michaeli pit, the Venceslaus and Ana pit, the Leopold pit, the Franciscus-Seraphicus pit and the Johann Michaelis gold prospecting.³ The sub-mountainous area of Ocna de Fier constituted the basin of the ferrous ores extraction in the period of the Austrian and Austrian-Hungarian

¹ "In the area of the Bocșa-Ocna de Fier-Dognecea localities there were three important perimeters where gold-silver ores exploitation installations were in operation. The first area of these mines are situated in the fully massive of Cracul cu Aur (Golden Leg), situated between Bocșa Română and Ocna de Fier. One discovered here a lantern (opaît) dating back to the Roman period, currently in the collection of the Banat's Museum of Timișoara. The second exploitation perimeter lies in the Tilva Hills of Dognecea, whereas the third near the Petru și Pavel (Peter and Paul) Valley, more precisely near the Little Lake (Lacul Mic) at Dognecea. In a manuscript by Bene Géza we find about the research conducted in 1901, when the author succeeded in entering a gallery and a related pit called Cristian. At the gallery entry they remarked the perpendicular walls ("characteristic to Roman mining, beautifully wrought with chisel and hammer. Thus, the Cracul cu Aur (Golden Leg) area represents one of the oldest mining regions in Banat and in the country, where gold ore was extracted.", in Brindza 1985, p. 215

² T. C. S. N. A., F. B., f. M-I, p. 98.

³ Brindza 1985, p. 246–247.

rule, from where the ores once extracted were further processed in the first furnaces, forges and metal installations of Bocșa Veche (Old Bocșa or Altwerk), Neuwerk and then Bocșa Germană (German Bocșa). We consider that today's Bichiștin perimeter, territory limiting the medieval royal city of Cuiеști, constituted the most compact and the oldest inhabited area of the colonists come from Styria and Bohemia, together with the native population, this being the only explanation for the fact that the beginnings of the metallurgic industry and of manufacturing industries were opened by Austrians in this community.

The first documentary attestation of Vasiova dates back to 1437.⁴ After a while, around 1597, Vasiova was already a compact locality with Romanians – majority native population, led by the local ruler Ștefan Petroniu, who was recognised as a leader in the district, as he had participated in the same year in the allotment of another local Romanian leader, Ștefan Neagul, appropriation realised in the villages of Doclin and Biniș.⁵ In the period between 1690–1700, from the administrative viewpoint, the village belonged to the district of Bocșa, and from the register of localities drawn up in 1717 it results that the locality comprised 36 houses, and from the church's perspective it was included in the Vârșeț district.

This rural settlement administratively belonged to the domains of the Crown until 1855, when it was transferred to the property of the StEG. In mid 19th century, the Vasiova community contained the following “neighbourhoods”: Seliște, Godinova, Dealul Cetății (City Hill) and Talabi. According to the official data, at the end of the 19th century, Vasiova had a total surface of 2,245 cadastral *lanțe* (surface unit around half a hectare), comprised 249 house numbers, which meant a demographic structure of the population by confessions, detailed as follows: 189 Roman-Catholics, 8 Greek-Catholics, 878 Orthodox and 38 Jews of Mosaic rite. In this period also, Vasiova came to the occupation of the Bocșa district, Caraș-Severin County, had its own Mayor's Office, in function until 1943, when it was united with Bocșa Montană (Mountainous Bocșa) under a common local administration. The village, with a majority Romanian population, had, in 1930, around 1370 inhabitants, more than 95% of them being of Orthodox faith.⁶

Until the end of the 19th century, the Vasiova inhabitants had as predominant occupations cultivation of cereals in the Bârzava river meadow, wood carting from the sub-mountain forests, mineral coal obtaining for the Altwerk forges and melting installations, cattle breeding, wood processing in a small industrial unit, initially with Italian capital, built here in 1905. At Vasiova, in the inter-war period, where the industrial, forestry and mining activities were well represented, the occupations of the German minority were related to mining, carting, wood exploitation, many of them being involved in craftsmanship activities in their own workshops. Thus, we can mention the Josef Rieser and Josef Hauser barber's shops, the pastry and cooking shops owned by Herbert Frischan, the Johann Braun shoemaker's shop, the rope braiding workshop operated by Heinrich Dörner, Josef Schnier's carpentry manufacture and the leather workshop owned by Franz Rener.⁷ The inter-war period represented the peak stage of liberal professions in Vasiova, practised especially by the Germans and Jews settled in the locality.

The application of the requirements of the Agrarian Law of 1921 regarding the tillable land and forest assignment to the inhabitants of the Caraș rural area was an extremely difficult process, which lasted almost the entire inter-war period, as most of the land and forestry fund was in the property of the UDR Society. The discontents related to the allotment were also encountered in the Bocșa Montană district, nevertheless, by the activity of the Agrarian Commission

⁴ Csánki 1881, p. 165.

⁵ Pesty 1884, p. 31–33; Vișan/Crecean 2013, p. 127.

⁶ G. C. R. P. D. 1938, p. 144–145.

⁷ G. R. Y. B. 1923–1926, p. 302.

within the Oravița Prefecture, the German minority members of Bocșa Montană and Vasiova received the ownership right over 211 ha of farming and forestry land.⁸

The archpriest Mihail Gașpar claimed that the year 1717 could represent the modern beginnings of Bocșa Montană: "By the Imperial Patent of 1717, a considerable strip of land is ripped from the territory of the Vasiova commune for mountainous purposes. Thus, the present Bocșa-Montană commune is born (Deutsch-Boksan, Boksânănyă).⁹ Undoubtedly, the theologian referred to the involvement of the aerarium in the start of the industrial activity in this community, along with the arrival of the first German and Wallachian colonists in the locality. The Hungarian historian Pesty Frigyes, author of a famous work about Banat¹⁰, used as information sources the answers to a questionnaire applied directly to the mountainous mining settlements in this province, instrument elaborated by the Hungarian Academy in 1864. This sociologic-historic tool had rather a linguistic than proper historic character, as it primarily approached the toponymy of the Banat localities of the Caraș and Severin counties in that historic period. The Hungarian spelling used in the toponimic records distorted the Romanian names, which makes this source almost impracticable and unusable in the historic investigation. The second source used by Frigyes in his work was historic and economic, included in a special entry in the cadastral register of the StEG, anonymous society by shares that has acquired from the aerarium the largest surface of the Southern Banat, the industrial – mining area situated here. The entry was entitled *Ortsgeschichte*, meaning *history of the locality*. Such monographs used by Frigyes were elaborated by the clerks of the mountainous aerarium, and after 1885 by the de StEG clerks, and reflected only the communities of the ethnic groups implanted in Banat after 1718.

In the case of Bocșa Montană, the information from the imperial monographs mentions that in the context of the industrial development of the area, a workers' community was created around 1720, which underwent a true administrative – territorial expansion. The information focuses especially on the evolution and development of furnaces and melting installations of the locality, and other data are accidental and regard the demographic evolutions, local institutions, elements of spiritually, ethnic groups, sources extremely useful for the study of mentalities. A monographic document of the 19th century about Bocșa Montană, entitled *Ortsgeschichte Deutsch Bogsan*, confirms the assertion of archpriest Gașpar concerning the beginnings of this locality: "*We mention a moment of ambiguity where the document says that the settlement (Bocșa Montană, our note) was formed on the cameral land taken over from Vasiova, which is certain. But the affirmation that today Romanians call this locality Bocșa Germană Vasiova (German Vasiova Bocșa) raises serious doubt*"¹¹

In the aforementioned document it is claimed that in this narrow sub-mountainous depression "*there was forest, there were bocșe (charcoal-obtaining spots), as the name confirms it, and there were traced of the mining practised by the Romans. The beginnings of the Bocșa mountainous industry – precious metals in the Theresia melting installation (situated between Altwerk and in Recherwiese (clearing ...) coal makers used to live and work for the Theresia melting works, who came in their majority from Wallachia. It is possible that some have also come from Transylvania, which was indicated by the name Argyelean (ardelean, our note) of some families who still live in Cărbunari (Kohldorf).*"¹²" The document continues by saying that Bocșa Germană (German Bocșa) was started in 1720 by the taking over of some land surfaces by the aerarium from the

⁸ G. C. R. P. D., 1938, p. 51.

⁹ Gașpar 1914, p. 12.

¹⁰ Pesty 1884, p. 206.

¹¹ Albert 2001, p. 94.

¹² Albert 2001, p. 95.

Vasiova peasants as a result of a previous imperial act; the document also mentions that in 1727 “the state administration installed a Catholic parish here, which started the matricule keeping in the same year”. Then, the same monographic source reminds that the small furnace (Blaufeuer), built in 1719 by the foreman Friedrich Freibach at Neuwerk, was transferred to Bocșa Montană in 1725, and then it is established that in Bocșa Montană a melting workshop and a melting furnace functioned between 1721–1725, the fact being illustrated by two plates of cast pit iron, currently in the custody of the Mountainous Banat Museum, on which we read two engraved inscriptions: one depicts Saint George, and the text “*Gheorghius (George) heroically kills the venomous dragon. 1727*”, and the second represents Christ chasing the traders from the temple, with the following text: “*Jesus comes to the temple and makes whips from ropes and chased the loan sharks and the sellers. Jod. (? – GR) 21. 1721*”

In 1772, as the document states, one established the exploitation limits between Altwerk and Neuwerk, on the one hand, and Florianiwerk, on the other hand: “*51 jugăre (surface unit about half a hectare) for Alt and Neuwerk, and with 179 jugăre for Florianiwerk. This is today’s Bocșa Germană (German Bocșa)*.”¹³ The first Catholic rite church built by the aerarium at Neuwerk was erected in 1783, consecrated to Saint Nepomuk, reason why the community was simultaneously called Neuwerk or Nepomuceniwerk (the Nepomuk works). It is worth mentioning the major interest of the mountainous aerarium for the exploitation and processing of the non-ferrous and ferrous ores in the area, which, in Bocșa Montană, led to the building of both a Roman-Catholic church (1723–1726), and an Orthodox church (1796–1798)¹⁴, grace to the contribution of the Vienna Treasury. This monographic document mentions the process of Bocșa metallurgy modernisation, by the construction, at Bocșa Montană, of two new furnaces in 1869: “*and in their place (instead the old furnaces, our note) they built, at the core of the locality, two furnaces of the newest type with hydraulic operation and steam, with an annual output capacity of 100,000 pig iron centenari (mass units), further processed in Reșița*.”¹⁵

Following the economic development of the localities forming today’s Bocșa, the demographic growth of the population and the occurrence of a surplus of industrial and farming merchandise, destined to the commerce, the conditions were created for the organised functioning of fairs or markets as back as mid 19th century. These were the most renowned in the area, were organised weekly, the most famous merchandise fair being held in German Bocșa, where copper and pig iron products manufactured at Neuwerk and Altwerk were traded (nails, horse shoes, hammers, hoes etc.), horses and sheep were sold and bought, “*less cereals, plums, or ‘țuică’, i.e. traditional plum brandy, etc.*”

The aforementioned monographic document synthesises the fact that in the last decades of the 19th century, in Bocșa Germană there was a true city life, as we encounter there a series of public institutions specific to urbanism: “*a royal circuit court, a political juridical chair, a tax service, a post office, a telegraph service, a savings bank, three parochial office for the three confessions, two schools with classes taught in German and two in Romanian, a casino an a choir association*”¹⁶

Between 1718–1780, the imperial authorities granted priority to the establishment of new settlements by their colonisation and organisation based on a rigorous systematisation, by establishing the village border, the street track, the location of the main local institutions (church, school, town hall, marketplace, post office etc.), the arrangement of houses and gardens, the

¹³ Albert 2001, p. 95.

¹⁴ Jurma/Petrica 2000, p. 161–162.

¹⁵ Albert 2001, p. 95; Gräf 1997, p. 67.

¹⁶ Albert 2001, p. 94–98.

space reserved to pastures and cultivated lands, in other words, the first cadastral decision of historic Banat. The successive colonisations of this period were materialised by the establishment of around 85 new communes and localities between 1746–1785.¹⁷ At the end of the 18th century, the organised and state-directed colonisations cease, and a new stage of colonisation begins, very intense until the middle of the 19th century, initiated and realised by the owners of large domains. Whereas Neuwerk and Bocșa Montană were formed as a result of the settlement of German colonists of Styria, Saxonia and Bohemia, in Kohldorf one settled the so-called “săscani” (Sasca locals), or Romanian origin, from the Mehedinți and Dolj area, who worked in the carbonisation of the wooden materials for obtaining charcoal. In 1825 one erected the Kohldorf neighbourhood, concentrating together all the “colonists” dealing in the manufacture and axle transport of charcoal. The imperial treasury provided houses here for all the charcoal makers.¹⁸

The financial administration of the Empire decided, in 1825, the gathering of nomad Gypsies from the vicinity of the localities Ramna, Biniș, Doclin and Ezeriș in a perimeter later called Măgura, establishing the fiscal obligations of the first nine families settled here.¹⁹ According to the aerarium decision, they were obligated to collect gold from the Bârzava waters, every year in value of 4–5 *galbeni* (golden coins), that they were supposed to trade at previously established prices with the Division of Mines in Oravița. Turning the Gypsy families from nomads into workers true to the Emperor proved to be a total failure, according to dr. Jenő Szentkláray, because the clerks responsible for the Gypsies continually complained of their laziness, as they, instead of searching for gold, were busy begging or fiddling and singing at parties. The same author admits that the Gypsies were skilled craftsmen and manufactured diverse wooden objects for domestic use and at the same time signalled their higher natural birth growth compared to the Romanians or Germans, who were the majority in the area.²⁰

In the context of the Austrian-Turkish war of 1737–1739 we can also mention the people’s anti-Habsburg uprising of the Banat Romanians. The riot expanded also among the mountainous community of Southern Banat, to the areas where the Austrians developed mining and metallurgy. In a report forwarded by the Oravița Mountainous Office in 1738 to the Imperial Administration of Banat²¹ we can read wording such as “rebels” or “thieves” for the Bocșa rioters who attacked the imperial guards defending the metallurgic works or disobeyed the laws of the state. In the Vârșeț district, containing also the Bocșa of that time, of the total 66 component communes, 41 were purely Romanian, whereas 7 were mixed, more precisely Romanian-Serbian²², and within their perimeter the mining and metallurgic area of Banat mainly lay, where the Austrian regime had made serious investments for the extraction and processing of ores. In the reports we read that the local administration had not been able, for a month at least, to contain the communities in the district with local military forces, more precisely the rebel Banat inhabitants. The latter – according to documents – refused to obey the orders of the imperial

¹⁷ Bocșan 1986, p. 24.

¹⁸ Kreuzer Fund.

¹⁹ According to the statement of archbishop Mihail Gașpar, the first nine families of nomad Gypsies settled in the present Măgura neighbourhood were: Teodor Dumitru (ten members), George Radu (14 family members), Costan Todor (8 members), Ștefan Radu (9 members), Radu George (12 members), Filip Vășile (3 members), Trăilă Ciocoi (20 members), Răpu Iorgovan (10 members), George Manda (4 members), in Mihail Gașpar, *op. cit.*, p. 15. The same author signalled the fact that this population was extremely prolific, which is illustrated by the presence of 90 house numbers and of 450–500 people, totally Romanised Gypsies, exiting in 1910.

²⁰ Haupt 1999, p. 66.

²¹ T. C. S. S. Archives, F. B. M. D., f. 9/1738, ff. 29–34.

²² Surdu 1970, p. 141; 60–64.

administration, which expressed an uncontested proof that we speak of a people's rebellion, for whose repression the authorities made appeal to military aid from outside the district.

On the 17th of May 1738 the Governor of the Banat province, Neipperg, entrusts the superior mining foreman Hartenfels the defence of the mining region situated in Southern Banat. The forces at his disposal were however reduced to several companies of mine guarding and groups of volunteers recruited from among the workers of the metallurgic manufactures and German colonists, the imperial troops being mobilised to the operation front. In order to organise a more efficient resistance in the case of an attack, the province rulers recommended the fortification of metallurgic manufactures with defence ditches. Large quantities of flour were directed to the Banat mining region for the subsistence of the defence troops and German ethnic groups who had took refuge here from other corners of the empire. The mining foreman Hartenfels is reminded the importance of an efficient defence, able to allow "*the continuation of the foundries activity*", and that he had to grant his entire attention "*to the pursuit and capture of Romanian thieves*", whose co-operation with the Turks was known to the authorities. On the 6th of June 1738 the Altwerk workshops and iron ore foundry were attacked, and in this situation the lessees of these workshops, the Reissenbüchler brothers, are tortured and killed, and the warehouses and installations are ravaged and destroyed.²³

The causes of this uprising, combined with the Turkish attack, can be synthesised in the population's discontent related to the monopoly of plum brandy manufacture and salt sale. As the locals could no longer obtain a profit from their plum orchards, as they had before, started increasingly vehement protests. The unusual high cost of salt and the peasants' obligation to transport it to different warehouses triggered, on the other hand, turmoil among the autochthonous population. On that date, the corvee or forced labour in Banat was paid, but forcing the peasants to dig channels, to labour in mines and manufactures, or to transport ores by their carts, the never-ending requirements of cartering caused by the need to keep the roads open created a state of tension among the locals. One of the Romanians' discontent reasons was the implantation of colonists, whose settlements expenditure was borne by the native population, and the most fertile lands were distributed to the newcomers. The administrative abuse formed a distinct chapter of discontent. The most rapacious imperial clerks were the district ones, who practically committed abuse in an arbitrary manner, when it came to the collection of all sorts of taxes and fee such as *aruncul*, *zeciuiala*, *robota* etc. The army maintenance was another reason of discontent, as the peasants were to feed the army with bread, meat and salt.²⁴

On the 20th of November 1738, the Oravița district administration forwarded another report, showing that "*in the Bocșa area 600 men gathered, thieves and such, among whom Adam Moharu, and as they took refugee in the woods, they will be hard to apprehend*"²⁵. The 600 "men" although described as "thieves" in the spirit of the imperial bureaucracy, seem rather a mass or rioters than a gang of thieves. The coagulation of the revolts around Adam Moharu, famous local leader of a gang of thieves which attacked for a while the district imperial administration is due to the fact that the population always perceived such leaders as regional liberating heroes. This explains why Adam Moharu, the *harambașa* (senior commander of the brigand gang), succeeded in uniting so many Bocșa men during the rebellion events. The document attests that in the Vârșeț district the Austrian authority had ceased to operate, and that it was difficult to imagine that the imperial officials put at the core of their preoccupations the pursuit of a mere gang

²³ Petrovici 2001, p. 27.

²⁴ Petrovici 2001, p. 28–30.

²⁵ Lajos 1898, p. 510.

of robbers. The fact that the Vârșeț district, and implicitly Bocșa, were haunted by the spirit of revolt is justified by an official act issued by the District Office on the 10th of December 1738, requesting the urgent sending to the district of “*a detachment of regular troops for the maintenance of public peace.*”²⁶ It is known today that on the 23rd of December that detachment arrived in the area, under the command of Captain Nikola Visataz²⁷. The information contained in this document is perfectly correlated with that obtained from other sources. Thus, in the letter of May 22nd 1738 addressed by Iancu Petroni, the Bocșa archpriest, to Ilie Daina, the archpriest of Lugoj, the former, referred to the state of mind of his parishers and says that the Bocșa believers are threatening, saying that “*for the mundane rulers, they shall very soon start to light the high fires, to clean the earth of its scales.*”²⁸ The rebels did not remain at the stage of words, they acted on them. Although expanded to the plane Banat, the Banat riot, in its numerous centres, could be repressed gradually. The defence of the mining region was based on several companies of mine guard and the groups of volunteers recruited from among the German colonists.²⁹

The movements of social revolt under the form of thievery continued in Banat after this episode too. It is not surprising to witness the increasingly worry of authorities, as numerous gangs of hajduks, heavy armed, used to openly descend from the mountain regions of Vârșeț, Caransebeș, Văliug and Dognecea to the lowlands and meadows of Timișoara, Ciacova, Reșița or Bocșa. In the serious situation during another social revolt of 1775, when the very existence of the Reșița and Bocșa workshops was menaced, one made appeal to the armed assistance of the Hungarian General Commandment. In numerous documents issued by the district administration we find data regarding the way thieves hunts were organised, the cruelty of their killing, and the mass arrest of all suspects, the exemplary punishment, but also the incapacity of imperial authorities to put an end to such a continuous revolt movements. In a report issued by the Mountainous Division we read about the imminent danger of the Dognecea, Ocna de Fier, Reșița and Bocșa mines, threatened by the thieves’ attacks, and the armed supports from the part of the imperial officials requested in this in this respect.³⁰

Bocșa Montană, around the revolutionary year 1848, had around 300 houses, which meant approximately 3000 inhabitants, more precisely Deutsch Bocșa, together with the Kohldorf (Cărbunari) neighbourhood and the Măgura hamlet. The significant ethnic groups in the locality were the Germans and Hungarians, completed by an insignificant percentage of Serbians and Gypsies. Men, in their large majority, worked in the iron and copper works and in Florianwerk and Altwerk forges and part of them were employed in a silk factory, owned at the time by Anton Schmidt, at the same time administrator of the iron and copper works and the Bocșa Montană furnaces. The silk factory operated at full capacity because, at the initiative of the local mayor, an action started for embellishing streets and side roads with mulberry trees. In mid 19th century, at Bocșa Germană two furnaces were in operation, two iron forges, a nail forging workshops, a copper forge, all those being owned by the mountainous aerarium.³¹

The mining and metallurgic centres of the Mountainous Banat had a special importance and interest for the economy and finances of the empire, reason why the Austrian troops were mobilised rather quickly to this area. In such a situation, the defence preparations of the Hungarian and local revolutionaries of the Bocșa communes were concretised in the erection of a true

²⁶ Lajos 1898, p. 509.

²⁷ Lajos 1898, p. 509, 520.

²⁸ Surdu 1957, p. 329.

²⁹ Feneșan 1973, p. 166.

³⁰ C. S. N. A. C., F. B. M. D., R. I 10/1775, f. 19.

³¹ Gräf 1997, p. 76.

system of barricades, built with the benevolent participation of all ethnic groups of Bocșa Montană and Vasiova under the command of the artillery first-foreman Ludovic Permikās. The latter was an engineer and had co-ordinated in 1854 the railway Oravița-Baziaș construction works, and now he had enrolled as a volunteer in the Honved (Hungarian) troops that attempted to defend Bocșa Montană.

We should point out that the Vasiova locals and the Bocșa Română inhabitants, mostly Romanians, fraternised with the Hungarian revolutionaries, joined also by the German and Serbian ethnic citizens of the three rural communities.³² About the repression and disaster provoked by the imperial troops at Bocșa, after the 24th December 1848, the priest Rafael Kreuzer makes several suggesting statements: „*The imperials advanced with the support of the insurgents of the area to the town and for two hours they pillaged it; in the clerks' offices they destroyed the documents and books. The town must be grateful to the Austrian captain Zeitz, who knew the locals very well and succeeded in preventing the total arson of the town. Unfortunately, theft and pillage could not be prevented. After the revolution, when the absolutist government took over the power, a lot of peaceful inhabitants had to suffer, those who under any form supported the Hungarian interest. The revenge especially struck the mining clerk Karl Orthmayer, who cast canon balls for the Hungarian army in the workshops under its subordination. He was punished by imprisonment and loss of the position by the imperial government. He was the son of the great historian Ortway Tivadar. In 1852, the believers (of Bocșa Montană, out note.) rebuilt the chapel of the hill, damaged by the strikes of canon balls and by soldiers.*”³³

The 1848 revolution meant for Bocșa an interethnic communion, in which together Romanians, Germans, Serbians and Hungarians, were enrolled in national guards, attempting to oppose resistance to the Austrian offensive, in the hope of acquiring democratic rights and liberties and an autonomous administration. After the revolutionary events in the Bocșa localities a period followed of economic and cultural thaw, as well as a process of relative democratisation as regards the civil rights and liberties in the Bârzava Valley localities. Beginning with the 1st of January 1855, along with the taking over by StEG (The privileged K. and K. Austrian state railway society) of the shares from the Chamber Treasury, meaning mining exploitations of Ocna de Fier and Dognecea, of the works and forges, the Catholic church and the school of this confession, the new owners facilitated an economic and commercial comeback in Bocșa Montană, that, towards the end of the 19th century, would acquire more and more accented aspects of modern town. The salary rights of the priest and teacher were paid by the StEG administration: “*In the year 1870, starting with the 1st of January, settled the salary of the priest (making it, our*

³² The following Bocșa Montană revolutionary were member of the Hungarian revolutionary guard: Mathias Fink (locksmith), Peter Jäger (clerk), Ferdinand Kosztia (retired sergeant), Petkovits Kosztia (soap maker), Petkovits Nicola (fur tailor), Josef Roesner (hatter), Mihail Petkovits (trader), Anton Blassuthy (trader), Alexandru Kasztl (controller), Placzer Iulius (mill owner), Pera Poponekz (barber), Gheorghe Diaconovits (coat maker), Ferdinand Augustin (private owner), Francisc Spindler (blacksmith), Zeian Trăilă (dam supervisor), Matei Kufner (painter), Adolf Muntian (tailor), Kaspar Knobleuch (pharmacist), Arnold Hofmann (mining clerk), Anton Kriszt (baker), Anton Stich (baker), Iosif Horwath (window maker), Ion Pergnann (foreman), Nicolae Bercsi (Roman-Catholic priest), Ion Tuschkan (ginger bread salesman), Ion Pécz (teacher) etc. From Kohldorf other people enrolled, among others Anton Pecz (innkeeper), Petru Daicovits, Kosztia Potoșan (coat maker), whereas from Neuwerk came the following volunteers: Petru Pane (carpenter), Martin Kanergruber (innkeeper), Iosif Nicolaevits (tailor), Dumitru Nicolaevits (clerk) etc. Bocșa Română was represented in the revolutionary guard by: Ioan Popovici (priest), Alexa Popesko, Mândru Ciulă (private owner), Pandur Trăilă (private owner), Petru Pandur (baker), Carol Meisner (forest guard), Pavel Nikolits (treasury attorney), Ioan Seres (butcher), Dionisie Petrovits (teacher), a total of 35 volunteer locals enrolled from this locality. The information is provided by Brindza 1983, p. 9–10

³³ Kreuzer Fund, p. 27–32.

note) permanent and mandatory. The salary was before, at the Chamber Treasury, in the annual amount of 405 guldens and 30 creițari or Kreuzers (silver or copper change) consisted in 20 m³ of woods, 15 măsuri (old volume unit) of wheat, 18 măsuri of corn and 30 măsuri of oat. The society doubled the cash, so that the priest received now from the administration 800 guldens and 61m³ wood, and from the believers the annual fee of 350 guldens”³⁴

The protocol of sale and purchase of shares by StEG was modified, so that on the 2nd of August 1866 it stipulated that the railway society had rights and obligations not only in relation with the economic capital of the area, but also with the cultural goods, the church and education institutions of Bocșa Germană. The railway society realised numerous investments of mining installations modernisation in the Dognecea Mountains, ceased the activity of the foundries and forges of Altwerk and Neuwerk, because they yielded a low economic efficiency and implicitly a poor profit: “The copper works of Neuwerk reduced it to the minimum. The old works and three workshops of Bocșa were stopped. The laid off workers were offered another occupation or an aid from the brotherly case. In Bocșa Germană, in 1858, the metallurgic workshop was abandoned.”³⁵

As regards the age of the Bocșa communities and the number of their inhabitants, recorded in the last quarter of the 19th century, the Catholic priest Rafael Kreuser made the following clarifications: “The entire area of middle Bârzava constituted the birth cradle of the Bocșa communities, primarily inhabited by Romanians and only then came, after the development of the mountainous industry, German workers from Styria and others, mostly German craftsmen. After the 1870 census, Bocșa Germană, including Altwerk and Neuwerk, amounted to 2800 people and 460 houses.”³⁶ The presence of German ethnics in the Bocșa space is well represented not only in the field of exploitation of ferrous and non-ferrous ores, of their metallurgy, but also by the exploitation of farming lands and especially by the cultivation of cultural vineyards. The Germans are the first to introduce to Bocșa the crop rotations and modern technologies in land clearing and grubbing, the use of natural fertilisers and machinery for the grapes harvesting and wine preparation. Wine and țuica (plum brandy) obtained after the processing in personal households were destined to the commerce in the Bocșa markets.³⁷ This aspect can be illustrated also by the clerical and administrative activity of priest Josef Ermann, who contributed to the extension of his Roman-Catholic parish by acquiring real estate, by building, with the support of his parishers, of the Capela Calvariei (Calvary Chapel), by the extension of the vineyard culture on the eastern slope of Bocșa Montană, the entire area being full of German ethnic citizens with this culture that brought them a minimal profit: “He (Josef Ermann, our note) built the hill chapel, in the honour of Saint Mary, in 1768, that is still situated on the Kalvarienberg (...). The Catholic and population and other believers are still coming in pilgrimage on the 15th of August each year ... He acquired the entire hill on which he planted orchards and vineyards. His example was followed by others also, so shortly, on the eastern side of the hill, as far as the so-called Izvor, vineyard gardens appeared, producing a white wine earning a new income to the population. For the guard of the Chapel and of the vineyard an old guard was employed.”³⁸

After three centuries of harmonious and productive cohabitation with the Romanian majority population in the Bocșa communes, the German ethnic groups will continue to live together with the Romanians, in this rural area situated on the Bârzava Valley, during the entire inter-war

³⁴ Kreuzer Fund, p. 51–56.

³⁵ Kreuzer Fund, p. 51–56.

³⁶ Kreuzer Fund, p. 51–56, p. 72.

³⁷ D. Z. 2012, p. 115–121.

³⁸ Kreuzer Fund, p. 81.

period. After the Great Union, on the 1st of December 1918, the Germans settled in the Mountainous Banat will strictly observe the legislation of the Romanian state, rigorously obeying the local administrative legislation, being an ethnic group significantly representative in the entire Banat space and implicitly in the Bocșa area.

According to the data provided by the inter-war census of Great Romania, conducted in 1930, in the rural area the citizens who declared to be of German ethnic origin and mother's tongue, more precisely in Bocșa Montană district, amounted to 3,842 persons. This total number of German-origin persons can be distributed only by Bocșa's localities constituting the Bocșa Montană district as follows: Bocșa Montană – 313 German-origin persons, Bocșa Română – 113 Germans, Vasiova – 356 Germans³⁹. According to this administrative – territorial distribution of German population, we find their agglomeration in the villages more representative for forestry, mining and framing exploitations, as well as for concentrations of activities with industrial and commercial character. In these localities, the German-origin persons were preponderantly pre-occupied by the exercise of such activities, either of lucrative type, or liberal professions. The most widely known liberal activities provided by the Germans of the three Bocșa localities are related to the Notary Public offices, officers of the law, medicine and pharmacy, education and theology, milling and baking, financial-banking activities, trade, boot stores, tailoring, butchering, bootmaking, leather industry, barber's shop, pastry chop, carpentry, etc. In Bocșa Germană and Vasiova public notaries carried out their activity, with private notary practices in almost the entire inter-war period, Falbok Stefan and Stich Adalbert. Other professions, many of them with liberal character, among the German community of Bocșa Montană were represented by the teachers Fron Konrad and Schrod Maria, lawyer Blaschuti Alexander, and the executive manager of the 5 A Cerdit Bank of this locality, dr. Alexander Weiss. In this financial credit institution, who owned a capital of 700,000 lei calculated on the level of 1926, employed the German cashier Roza Weverta.

Beside this crediting institution, Bocșa's Germans had already founded another bank, the Daruvar Credit House, with a start capital in value of 60,000 lei, managed until the war by Michael Bender.⁴⁰ There was in Bocșa Montană another crediting institution, called Banca de Păstrare (Saving Bank) SA. Between 1918–1940, the average total of the Bocșa Montană population was of 3,302 persons, of whom 852 were German persons, and in Vasiova, in the same period, the average total of population was of 1,392 persons, of whom 356 German-origin persons. The two neighbouring communes were led in one mandate, in the inter-war period, by a German notary and mayor. From the perspective of the crediting operations, the Credit Bank Banca de Credit SA of Bocșa Montană had, in 1934, a debit of 16,062,795 lei, loan granted to Romanian farmers, and in the same year, a debit of 4, 015, 630 lei recorded by the German farmers. In 1937, in the same banking institution, the Romanian farmers had a debit of 9,401,450 lei, and in the same year the German farmers recorded a debit of 2,500,115 lei. The other bank of Bocșa Montană, Banca de Păstrare (Savings Bank) SA, recorded, in the same reference period, the following figures: 1934 – the Romanian farmers had a total debt of 926, 636 lei, and in 1937 – the Romanian farmers had a debt of 594,820 lei; 1934 – the German farmers had a total debt of 231,629 lei, whereas in 1937 – the same ethnic population had a debt of 148,705 lei. Such values and their dynamics in the four years of reference indicate the importance granted by locals to the development of farming capital, and on the other hand, a significant economic

³⁹ G. C. R. P. D. 1938, p. 116; G. R. Y. B. 1923–1926, p. 270.

⁴⁰ C.-S. C. D. N. A., B. F., f. 19/1937, f. 1, f. 1927.

growth in the same period, as in the reference year 1937 one recorded the lowest volume of crediting for both ethnic groups of farmers.⁴¹

The German traders of this locality were represented in the highest position by Welmann Johann and Beumel Steiner, the latter being the owner of the firm *Steiner & Co*, whereas the only bookstore with German books in the locality was owned by Adolf Rosner. In the local medical milieu we encounter dr. Roth Franz M.D. The trades the most profitable for the German community were related to the tar preparation, operated by Julius Ratgers, tailoring carried on in the workshop of Franz Bahner and Gaspar Tieser, the butchery of Herman Salaritz and his brother Raymund Salaritz, as well as the tannery workshop owned by Robert Hammer.⁴²

The spiritual leader of the German community of Roman-Catholic rite, who carried on an activity of missionariate and Catholic cult, was Jakob Braun, who kept the pastoral activity in the commune Bocșa Montană between 1921–1934. He was followed in the parish chair by the priest Stephan Schrotz until 1940, the year of great territorial raptures of Romania.

Since the beginning of the 19th century, Bocșa Germană had the air of a spa town, the urbanism note being due to the local industrial development, the investments in the area by the mountainous aerarium and the pretorial administration in the locality: *“Bocșa Germană is the location of the circuit court with the same name (circuit court in operation until 1952, when it was dessisted, our note). It has financial office, post and telegraph office, saving bank, choir society, voluntary firemen union, casinos, mining orchestra, hospital, social insurance. It is a small town with pleasant aspect, whose location in an area of natural beauties makes it exceptionally attractive ... Its houses are clean, with several storeys downtown, the streets are connected and planted with ranks of acacias.”*⁴³ Such appreciations were made in 1905. The elements of urban civilisation became more and more accented in Bocșa Germană, so that in 1847 the locality had the aspect of a remarkable clean town, with a perfume of “permanent pharmacy”. Here, the mining administration arranged a promenade and leisure area, called “Izvorăș”(Bründl), where in 1870 the StEG built a restaurant, and near it a shooting base in Swiss style.⁴⁴ The same line of urban modernity was to be encountered also in 1930, when Bocșa Montană had a total population of 3264 inhabitants.

The elements of urban civilisation were more and more accented in the perimeter of the locality Bocșa Montană, situation confirming once again the aspect of town modernity. Thus, in 1880 the construction works of the Saving Bank, building designed and executed by the architect A. Diaconovici. In 1911 the works ended for the construction of the Credit Bank and Post Office, today the Town Hall, with the original inscription on the façade, and the sculpture avant-garde was represented by a statue group symbolising the Hungarian revolutionaries fallen in the 1848 resolution and since 1920 the statue of the Unknown Soldier executed by the sculptor Tiberiu Bottlik.

The newspaper *Severinul* informed the readers as back as 31st of May 1908 that at Colțan a limestone factory is raised which would use the electric energy in the interior lighting and in the technology of limestone burning. In February 1910, the same newspaper announced that the Bocșa Montană pretorium and town halls of the three Bocșa communes are decided to conclude a contract of electric power concession, after the prior mounting of street public lighting on the main axis of these localities.⁴⁵ The Eruga channel served the metallurgic works of Bocșa Montană,

⁴¹ G. R. Y. B. 1923–1926, p. 268.

⁴² G. R. Y. B. 1923–1926, p. 268.

⁴³ Haupt 1999, p. 75.

⁴⁴ Breudel 1870, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Preoteșcu 1908, p. 4; Preoteșcu 1910, p. 3.

especially furnaces, by the production of mechanic energy in the period 1865–1898, year when the Francis turbines of the Hydroelectric Works of the locality is out into operation. The three Bocșa town halls concluded a contract with a firm of Kikinda Mare regarding the arrangement of a street electric network for the domestic and public lighting. The contract was signed on the 8th of May 1910 for a 50-year period. Following the execution of works by the shareholders Arthur Revesz and Carol Molnar, Bocșa Montană remains the second rural commune from the Romanian area that benefited from the street public lighting.⁴⁶

In 1936, Bocșa Montană was the district capital; headquarter of a circuit court and two archbishoprics, one Orthodox and the other Greek Catholic, being also an important economic and cultural centre. Due to its picturesque location on the shore of the Bârzava River, surrounded by sub-Carpathian hills covered by secular woods of hardwoods, the commune was treated as balneologic and climate spa since the period of the Austrian-Hungarian dualism.

Due to the air curative properties, to the existence of an area covered in hardwood and remarkable tourist tracks, the modernisations executed by StEG and UDR in a recreational base in the Izvoraș area, of hotel and guesthouses of the locality, of the Welicsek Sanatorium, Bocșa Montană was declared a climate spa by a decision of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Protection with no. 46. 713 of the 25th of July 1931. In this respect, we remind the inter-war perfume of the “Paradise” restaurant and swimming pool, with a modern architecture for that time, having a terrace, tennis court, bowling alley, rose garden and carp fishery. In the same area we can mention also the promenade with plane trees and linden trees, the U.D.R. sand shores, and a little higher on we found them, “Maere” plateau surrounded by a forest rich in beech trees, oak trees, linden trees and hornbeam trees. At around 3–4 kms. from “Bocșa-Izvor” we find the place called “Vârtoape”, property of U.D.R., with two lakes for carp breeding, but the road to that location crossed valleys and hills covered in century-old trees producing a special air for the treatment for pulmonary diseases, reason why the Bocșa spa was appreciated by the Vienna Court, and a sanatorium was built here in the times of Maria Teresia. Other touristic itineraries in that period could be organised towards the “Medreșului Valley”, “Calvary Chapel”, “Smida”, “Măgura”, and especially to “Buza Turcului/Turk’s lip”, where we can still see the traces of the old Bocșa citadel.⁴⁷

In the locality itself, the tourist services were relatively well represented, as there was a hotel (“The Golden Deer”), three restaurants (“Becker”, “Cucu”, “Unirea”), as well as some private guesthouses at the disposal of the visitors. As already mentioned, there was in Bocșa Montană an establishment for rest and health care, the “Dr. Welicsek Sanatorium”, with modern installations, set-up for hydrotherapy and high altitude air cure, after the model of the Dr. Lahmann Sanatorium of Dresden. The Bocșa spa had a prompt service of information called the “Local Office for Cure and Tourism”.⁴⁸

In the vicinity of Bocșa Română, in 1719, the first furnace and the first foundry were raised, producing pig iron, used for the casting of ovens, forged iron parts, horseshoes, nails, bars etc. As a result of the successive colonisations effected beginning with the 18th century, between 1801–1850 we find the documentary attesting in the Banat province of a lot of localities with strong Germanic elements, one of these new localities being Bocșa Română.⁴⁹

Incorporated in the ensemble structure of StEG, after 1855, they built in Bocșa Română a hydraulic mill at Bichiștin (Altwerk area), on the location of the former iron forge, whose first

⁴⁶ Ion Păsărică 1936, p. 59–61; Gillich/Piroi 2009, p. 18.

⁴⁷ Grădinariu/Udrea-Stoia 1936, p. 64–69.

⁴⁸ Grădinariu/Udrea-Stoia 1936, p. 42; Kakerda 1936, p. 4

⁴⁹ Vișan 2010, p. 30.

owner was a local, Fracica by his name. The mill produced, in the beginning, cereal flour necessary to the feeding of the owners employed by the metallurgic installations of Altwerk and Neuwerk, and later on of Reșița. We find here also a weaving manufacture owned by Anton Schmidt. Toward the end of the 19th century, Bocșa Română had in its structure 524 house numbers, and was part of the Bocșa area. The structure of this locality's population comprised, from the confessional perspective, the following categories: 273 Roman-Catholics, 41 Greek-Catholics, 2443 Orthodox and 3 Mosaic. The border of the locality had a surface of 6794 cadastral *lanțe*, it comprised the Altwerk hamlet, named after the name of the first foundry and copper and pig iron works in the Bichiștin area.⁵⁰

The entire inter-war period meant for Bocșa Română a sustained economic development, due to the expansion of the Farming Machines Factory in the locality, the development of milling and baking, expansion of the railway transport. In this commune, where the Romanian population was preponderant, the professions of the German ethnic groups were extremely diversified, ranging from education, legal professions, trade etc. to craftsmen activity etc. We know very well the didactic activity of teacher Margarethe Portselser who taught in the confessional and administration's school in this locality. In the trade zone, everybody knew Desiderius Robitsec's store, and the mill owners Michael Weber and Josef Wild were prominent figures in this business. The most widely known manufacturing activities among the German ethnic group of Bocșa Română were that of bootmakers, and the most famous was Philip Bücher's workshop, as famous as the tailor's shop of Jakob Richter and Andreas Wild, as well as that of leather processing, exercised in a famous leather workshop of Johann Gradiel.⁵¹

Somewhere at the western extremity of Bocșa Română, near the river Bârzava, on a vast plateau surface, a small mill was erected at the end of 19th century, owned by the Weber family. They were Jewish entrepreneurs, speakers of German and Hungarian, but also with a spirit of entrepreneurship and real estate operation that were to resist in time. The last descendant, Michael Weber, having also an entrepreneur vocation, was involved in the mill management until 1948, the year of nationalisation. In 1927, on the frame of the old mill he built a new one, modern for those times, renouncing to the technology of milling with the help of the stones driven by the mechanic force of water that flew along a channel detached from the Bârzava River. In the first stage, he rearranged the channel, widening it, deepening it and cementing its bank so that the water debit could be appreciable. He installed a roll mill driven by a huge Diesel- powered engine, imported from Hungary, engine produced by the famous German company Deutz. The installation of this engine and the putting into operation of the new milling installation was realised on the 8th of June 1927, reason why that day was commemorated annually by the Weber family through a rustic celebration. The flour obtained here was of very good quality, the miller acquiring a true blazon in time that is why, in the mill premises; we encountered in the inter-war period a lot of carts with cereal sacks arrived from Berzovia or Comorâște, from Reșița or Carașova etc.⁵²

Bocșa Nouă (Neuwerk) started to appear on the right bank of the Bârzava river in the first decades of the 18th century for economic reasons of securing metallurgic equipment, but also because of the frequent floods that the river provoked in the Altwerk area. The mining inspector Friedrich Freibach designed and built there the first iron foundry, moved to Bocșa Montană in 1725, and on its location two hydraulic-driven hammers were built. They were destroyed in a

⁵⁰ Oance 1942, p. 1–2

⁵¹ G. R. Y. B. 1923–1926, p. 272.

⁵² Vișan/Crecean 2013, p. 145–146.

fire in 1844, and in 1848 they erected here a new forge of copper processing, in operation until 1862, when it was closed for good, and on its location the StEG built a factory of refractory bricks. In the same area, a baize textile factory (manufacture) was also in operation, set on fire too in 1833, and on the same location a hydraulic mill was raised, the Bichiștin mill, the most important economic unit in the later UDR.

In the inter-war period, in all three local communities one recorded an economic development supported by the apparition of private economic agents, both industrial and commercial, beside the economic units in the structure of the Reșița UDR Society. The years of the economic crisis (1929–1933) affected the volume of the outcome, especially in the case of economic agents in the composition of UDR (mining and metallurgic industry, forestry districts of Bocșa Română and Bocșa Montană, the timber factory of Vasiova, the limestone factory Colțan, Bichiștin Mill, Farming Machines Factory of Bocșa Română, and also the credit and banking institutions of Bocșa Montană). Starting with 1929, unemployment becomes a chronicised social phenomenon, most unemployed people being inside the aforementioned economic agents. From the reports of the administrative organisms subordinated to UDR, as well as from the situations and reports of local town halls, a series of name lists with the unemployed persons and the members of their families, where one specifies the money and material aids granted by the Ministry of Labour. To the support of these families in need, a special role was played by the support committee for the jobless, organised in the entire Bocșa, especially as the layoffs continued in 1934, this time affecting not only the workers, but also the clerks from the Bocșa economic and banking organisations.⁵³ The multiethnic multi-confessional cohabitation, the development of the industrial lucrative activities, as well as the natural population growth were the essential factors having influenced the road to urbanism of the three rural communities of today's Bocșa space.

Today's town of Bocșa is the result of two stages of administrative unification of the three component localities: in 1943 we witnessed the administrative-territorial union of the Vasiova commune with Bocșa Montană to form Bocșa Vasiovei, and in December 1960, by a decision of MAN (Great National Assembly) Bocșa Vasiovei was merged with Bocșa Română, the new resulted administrative – territorial unit being raised to the rank of town on the 1st of January 1961.

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⁵³ C.-S. C. S. N. A., C. P. F. C. A., File 197/1931, f. 46.
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CONFIGURAȚII DEMOGRAFICO-SOCIAL-ECONOMICE ÎN COMUNITĂȚILE DIN BOCȘA (SECOLUL AL XVIII-LEA – PRIMELE DECADE ALE SECOLULUI XX) (Rezumat)

Studiul nostru își propune o abordare sintetică istorică a trei comunități locale din bazinul hidrografic al râului Bârzava: Bocșa Română, Bocșa Vasiova și Bocșa Montană: articolul debutează cu o scurtă retrospectivă a evoluției istorice a acestor trei comunități locale, începând cu prima atestare documentară până la înglobarea Banatului în structurile Coroanei vieneze. În continuare, nu sunt prezentate doar aspectele legate de dinamica populației, ci și creșterile economice și schimbările în ceea ce privește educația religioasă și cea națională, ambele în perioada habsburgică și austro-ungară, până la 1918.