

BANAT CHRONOLOGY

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Banat, Geographical Landmarks

A province with a complex history, the Romanian Banat's current geographical configuration is an outcome of World War I peace treaties that divided a larger territory between Romania, former Yugoslavia and Hungary.

The historical province of Banat with a total surface of 28,526 km² is situated at Romania's south-western border with Serbia. It comprises a surface of nearly 19,000 km² in Romania, more than 9,000 km² in Serbia (the province Voivodina), and a small territory in Hungary. The Romanian Banat includes the Timiș and Caraș-Severin counties, a small part of Mehedinți County west of Vârciorova village, and part of Arad County south of Mureș River. Its borders are the river Mureș at north, the Danube at south, the mountains Țarcu, Godeanu and Poiana Ruscă at east, and Serbia at west.

The temperate-continental climate has Mediterranean and oceanic influences, balanced temperatures and average rainfalls.

Resembling an amphitheatre oriented east to west, the Banat's territory includes mountains, hills and rich plains, with an abundant river network that supported human life since ancient times. Banat's mountains are rich in minerals such as coal, iron, lead, tin, uranium, copper, quartz, and useful rocks like common clays and flint clay, basalts, dolomite limestone, marble and talc. The land also contains reserves of oil and natural gas, as well as mineral water springs.

Banat and Arad plains are part of the large Tisa River plain, divided by the river Mureș whose north and south banks have significant altitude differences. The plain's soil structure includes alluvial layers of clays, marls and sands covered by a layer of loess and various fertile soils. This is one of the most fertile Romanian plains.

Mureș, Bega and Timiș, the most important rivers crossing Banat's territory, have many affluents. This slowly flowing hydrographic network with meanders, elbows and swamps produces many disastrous floods that require dam building to control and drain away the rivers.

Besides mineral riches, the Banat Mountains have extended fir and spruce fir forests, beech trees on slopes, and on hills beech, durmast and yoke elm trees. Oak and elm trees grow on hills and depressions, tartar maples and sour cherry trees on plains, while the French oak and other species grow on holms.

The wild life in Banat is just as rich comprising the bear, the wolf, the wild boar, the fox, the cottontail and many other animals and bird species.

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The rich Banat soils and subsoils attracted early attention as well as conquerors interested in occupation and exploration.

One cannot overlook two extinct volcanoes at Lucareţ and Gătaia: Pietra Roşie/Red Stone (211 metres altitude), and Şumigu (200 metres altitude). The largest European continental sands, the Deliblato sand dunes (Serbia) nowadays covered in vegetation are found here.

This is the natural setting where the Banat material and spiritual folk culture and civilisation developed and the Banat people lived. *“No native of this territory considers oneself anything else but a resident regardless of nationality, and, no one outside these territorial limits calls oneself a Banat resident unless born and raised in Banat, or born to parents from Banat”* observes Marius Bizerea, an expert in Banat history.

Banat's Chronology

Archaeological findings highlight that people inhabited this area from prehistoric times. Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic cultures emerged and developed leaving behind traces (tools, weapons, graves, pots, figurines etc.) that place this area among the most representative European prehistoric places. This rich history cannot be separated from the overall history of Romania as they often converge.

Geologically, Banat's territory was the bottom of an obstructed former sea called the *“Pannonia Sea”*. Many lowlands left with no drainage access to the hydrographic network became extended marshes and swamps, some surviving until recently.

Archaeological findings confirm that humans inhabited the area ever since the Banat plain was an inland lake, and the people lived a primitive life on islands. Systematic or incidental archaeological discoveries prove the continuous existence of human life in Banat since Palaeolithic.

30000 B.C. In Visag village, the Victor Vlad Delamarina parish, there was the singular finding of a *carved stone tool* belonging to a late Musterian facies, or an early Aurignacian of the Upper Palaeolithic.

28000 B.C. *Upper Palaeolithic Settlement*, Aurignacian, discovered in the Româneşti village, Tomeşti parish, at the Dumbrăviţa point.

22000 B.C. *Palaeolithic traces* from the developed Aurignacian period are confirmed in the Coşava village, Curtea parish, on Cuca hill, in an *archaeological site* comprising 3 living levels certified through lithic tools, as well as in the Româneşti village, the Dumbrăviţa point.

Discoveries from the Azilian Mesolithic age were also made in Băile Herculane, the Thieves' Cave. Material traces multiply in the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron ages.

Neolithic populations belonging to the Starcevo-Criş stage II culture occupy the fertile grounds on river terraces. With their arrival the first ceramics in the county's prehistoric settlements appear. Archaeological searches were undertaken along the Timiş River, at Parţa, Foeni and Timişoara-Fratelia, and along the Mureş River at Dudeştii Vechi.

4500 B.C. Searches in Timişoara-Fratelia and Satchinez settlements attest the emergence of Neolithic communities belonging to the Vinca culture, phase A bearers in the middle and north-west Banat.

Vinca culture, phase B is being influenced in Banat by intertribal exchanges and the development of local phenomena. The most important archaeological research at Parța tell I recovered a Neolithic sanctuary, part of a massive fortified settlement made of surface dwellings with complex plan.

4000 B.C. Communities belonging to Vinca culture, phase C are also confirmed in Banat. This period of most impressive accomplishments in Neolithic building reveals large settlements with elaborate defensive systems and organized distribution of internal living space. Relevant searches were undertaken in Uivar, Parța, Chișoda Veche, Hodoni and Sânanndrei villages. The phase C of Vinca culture ends when Foeni group bearers of the Petrești culture enter Banat, according to searches made at Parța tell II, Foeni and Chișoda. In the north of Banat, at Hodoni and Sânanndrei, the Vinca culture is synchronous with Tisa culture dwellings.

The Coțofeni culture is common to the late Banat Neolithic, and copper objects from the second phase of the culture are highly significant. This culture ends its evolution before the mid 3rd millennium B.C., late materials with Kostolac and Vucedol influences being attested inside the Românești cave.

2300-1700 B.C. The first ethno-cultural groups in early Bronze Age appear at the arrival of ochre tumular tombs bearers, as confirmed in Bodo village. The beginning of the early Bronze Age takes place in Banat at the end of the Coțofeni culture, and it is a long historical and cultural process. Among the researched settlements are the sites at Foeni, Parța, Periam and Stamura-Moravița with Mako ceramic.

1400-1100 B.C. The final Bronze Age phases are represented by the Cruceni-Belegis culture found on a large territory in various sites. Its end indicates the beginning of Iron Age in Banat.

The Indo-European populations overlapped the Neolithic civilisation in the 3rd millennia B.C. and the Indo-Europeanization process led to the formation of Indo-European people and languages. Among them, the Thracians laid the bronze civilisation's basis on this territory. The Indo-Europeans' formation process in south-eastern Europe continued in the Iron Age.

About 1200 - 500 B.C. In the first Iron Age period (about 1200 - 500 B.C.), the Thracians who inhabited the Carpathian-Danube-Balkan space, split into the southern-Danube branch (Southern Thracians) and the northern branch (Geto-Dacians).

800-650 B.C. The Basarabi culture bearers, widely present on the Romanian territory as well as south of the Danube, spread in Banat. The material culture preserves Bronze Age elements, yet it is different. The Geto-Dacian populations represent the dominant element of this culture. Records of these populations' presence on Banat's territory were found in the Visag settlement. A necropolis of this culture was discovered in Susani, Timiș County.

109-106 B.C. At the Danube border, the roman General M. Minucius Rufus faced a Scordisco-Dacian coalition (very likely the Dacians are from Banat) and won several direct confrontations. Antiquity authors affirm the Roman army crossed the Danube for the first time, most probably in the Banat area.

82-44 B.C. The reign of Dacian king Burebista, founder of the Geto-Dacian consolidated state that included the Banat territory.

87 A.D. Decebalus defeated the Roman legions, took over Dacia's throne, and consolidated the army.

101-102 A.D. Following the first Dacian war against Romans, Trajan's army advanced in Banat and strengthened its territorial control.

105-106 A.D. The second Daco – Roman war took place. Banat played a significant role in the Roman attack strategy. The Romans advanced into the territory from the Danube and Mures rivers heading for the administrative centre of Dacia in Transylvania. The Dacian army was defeated, and king Decebalus committed suicide.

Dacia's occupation by Romans led to the assimilation of the Roman superior civilisation brought by the new administration, as well as army, traders and various colonists. In Banat, part of the new province „*Roman Dacia*”, minerals continued to be extracted (at Ad Mediam - Băile Herculane —, Bocşa, Sasca, Moldova Nouă, Ciclova, Dognecea, Oraviţa), the settlements at Arcidava (Vărădia), Dierna (Orşova), Morisenum (Cenad), Bersobis (Berzovia), Tibiscum (Jupa) developed significantly, and the intense Romanization of Daco-Romans continued uninterrupted. The hybridization of Dacio-Roman civilizations shaped the social evolution within this geographic area. The natural development of a Romanized population reached maturity through continuous contact with the Roman world south of Danube. The Orşova and Borlova treasures containing Roman coins before and after the 4th century prove the Daco-Roman population's continuity. The residents could own such coins, withdrawn from circulation before the 4th century, only if passed from generation to generation.

The Romanian people, whose major ethnic traits were defined by the 4th century, faced for centuries the avalanche of migrating tribes - Goths, Vandals, Huns, Gepids, Avars, Slavs, Hungarians, Ottomans and Tartars — and fought to preserve its existence, language and ancestral territory. Sharing life with a number of nomadic tribes added elements - „*Slavic or of different nature*”- that imprinted specific traits to the local Roman civilization. Even if invaders and devastating wars temporarily delayed development, they could not interrupt the Romanian population's continuity on its ancestral territory, change its spiritual and moral features, or its historical objective course.

In the first half of the 10th century, Romanians start to get mentioned in Byzantine, Slavic or Hungarian written sources, separately from their neighbours, as Vlachs leading a life of cultivators, stock farmers and shepherds in small settlements.

After the last wave of migrations, the Romanian people, strongly influenced by Byzantine Christianity, develops a superior economic, political and social organization starting to found fairs, towns, fortresses and, implicitly, the first feudal polities.

The 12th century. The Hungarian king Bela's chronicle by an anonymous notary confirms in the Mureş-Tisa-Dunăre region the existence of a Romanian pre-statal political organization governed by the voivode Glad. His capital was the Cuvin fortress, and his army tried to resist the Hungarians. Glad was defeated and forced to accept Hungarian sovereignty, but his descendants continued to rule. During Ştefan the Saint's reign (around 1000), the voivode Ahtum ruled from the Mureş river to Vidin. He maintained ties with Byzantium and was an orthodox Christian, supporting the Morisena orthodox monastery. Around 1030, betrayed by one of his captains,

Cenadinus, he was defeated by Ștefan's army, and the betrayer became ruler over a large Banat area.

A Roman Catholic diocese was founded in Cenad with the Benedictine Gerard de Sagredo as first bishop. The hagiographic document *The Life of Saint Gerard* attests an advanced society, closed to feudalism, while 10th to 13th century coin treasures from Orșova, Moldova Veche, Oravița, Vărădia, Deta, Caransebeș, Bucovăț, Variaș, Periam, Cenad, Pecica prove beyond doubt the existence of a large population with an intense economic life.

The Hungarian tribes' entrance in Transylvania and Banat were rather expeditions, similar to those in Western Europe, since they had insufficient people to colonize the territories. The native Banat people continued to live in confederations of polities led by the previous rulers' descendants.

The Hungarian conquerors established a new ruling class taking land in property. However, a small number of natives manage to preserve some rights. Some Romanian nobles who participate in state administration turn to Catholicism and become over the centuries Hungarian. „*In our opinion, the ethnic heritage of our people was preserved not by landowners, but rather by the poor and harassed, the majority of peasant population*” under occupational governments.

The end of the 12th century. As Hungarian governance in Banat gets stronger, the old Romanian institutions (districts, principalities, voivodeships), under central pressures gradually turn into counties: Timiș county — 1177; Cenad county — 1197; Caraș county — 1200. However, because of the Romanian population's resistance, these counties must respect local organisational traditions and rule according to the „*old Romanian law*.”

1241 — 1242. Banat is devastated by Tartar assaults and subsequent famine.

1316—1324. Under the rule of Charles Robert d'Anjou, Banat and especially Timișoara –for 8 years capital of Hungary – experienced a remarkable flourishing period.

The end of the 14th century represented the end of this period of peace due to Ottoman invasions. For centuries Banat did not know peace, and on many occasions it became combat zone. In 1389 Ottoman attacks began, in 1392 the Ottomans reached Vărădia, in 1394 they destroyed Gătaia monastery and Uj Pecs in 1396. From 1404 to 1427, Pipo de Ozora, head of Timiș County in king Sigismund's service, defeated them. In 1429, Sigismund placed Banat under Teutonic Knights' protection, offering them the Banat of Severin, but they could not deal with Turkish superior forces and left the Severin fortress.

In those harsh times, the heroic John Hunyadi devoted his entire life to stopping the Ottoman expansion. He started his 1443, 1444, 1447, and 1451 expeditions in Timișoara with armies made mostly of Banat men, as he was county head of Timișoara and ban of Severin. His victory against the Turks outside the Belgrade walls (1456) crowned the end of his life.

The 14th and 15th centuries. During this period, the Banat Romanian population played a significant role, as proved by the existence of numerous Romanian districts under the old “*Romanian Law*”. Eight of these districts had privileged status: Lugoj, Sebeș, Mehadia, Almăj, Carasova, Bârzava, Comiat and Ilidia. They were organised in parishes and circles, and ruled by a prince who, together with his nobles, answered to the county head.

August 29, 1457. King Vladislav V issued a diploma to reinforce and increase Romanians' privileges, entitlements and rights in all eight Valach districts.

1478. The Hungarian king, Matthias Corvinus (John Hunyadi's son) named Pal Kiniszi (Paul Chinezul) head of Timis County. A Romanian nobleman, he brought Serbian colonists to increase defence and preserved the frontiers' safety until 1494. The colonists' presence did not change the predominantly Romanian character of Banat.

1514. Some Banat people participate in the peasant war led by Gheorghe Doja. Victorious at first at Cenad, they occupied fortresses and fairs along the Mures River and in northern Banat, but were defeated in a fierce battle outside Timișoara's walls.

The Diet of Buda, a document that tied peasants to land and forbade them the right to leave and carry weapons, weakened Hungary's defence abilities. Without any resistance, the Ottomans crossed Banat freely, and after Hungarian army's defeat at Mohacs, they occupied Banat.

1552. On July 30 1552, after Timișoara's seizure, Banat was divided: the western part of former Timiș county fell under Ottoman governance, while the eastern part including the north-western lands of former Banat of Severin – a large part of Banat's districts – became for over 100 years a separate political entity named the "*Banat of Lugoj and Caransebeș*" and was ruled by the prince of Transylvania. 164 years of Turkish domination brought significant changes in Banat's social organization. The eyelet of Timișoara was divided in four territorial units: Timișoara, Cenad, Becicherec and Lipova. The fortresses were ruled by a pasha, and Timișoara by a governor. Under Turkish administration all former class privileges ended. Both Romanian and Hungarian nobility completely vanished. Part of the small Romanian nobility became farmers. The occupied population –townsfolk, peasants, and dispossessed noblemen called "*raia*" - had no rights and worked for the Turkish conqueror. Yet the situation under Turkish governance was not harsher than before. The tax redemption system helped peasants, many of them retreating to more secluded areas to escape abuses and plunders from Turkish troops.

The end of the 17th century. In order to consolidate their ruling over Banat, the Turks gave land in property to peasants. This situated them way above peasants in Hungary or Transylvania, and consequently, Romanian peasants from border areas fled to Banat.

1690. Serbian peasants together with their Serbian patriarch Arsenie Cernoievici came to Banat in large numbers because of the Austrian-Turkish war in Serbia.

The beginning of the 18th century. Austria began a vast offensive against Turks. Turkish armies were defeated one by one, and the decisive Zenta victory (1697) led to the Karlowitz peace treaty (1699) where Austria got Transylvania, Croatia and Slovenia. After the 1716-18 wars and the Turks' defeat at Petrovaradin, through the Passarowitz peace treaty Austria took over Banat and northern Serbia, and temporarily over Oltenia. However, Oltenia was restored to the Ottoman Empire after the Belgrade treaty (1739), at the end of 1736-739 wars.

December 30, 1716. The Holy Roman emperor Charles VI decided to change Banat into a Habsburg county land („*Kronland*") governed by a military administration. An Aulic Council divided Banat in 12 districts (most probably old

territorial units of former Timisoara vilayet). Land claims by descendants of Hungarian noblemen and former Banat landlords were rejected since Austrians considered Banat a captured territory earned through “rights of arms” and therefore property of the House of Austria. They administered it separately from Hungary, as a royal domain called the “*Banat of Temesvar*”.

The 18th century. After a long series of Austrian-Turkish wars that generated misery, plunders and injustices committed equally by Habsburg and Turkish troops, Austrian governance was installed, bringing changes and transformations entailed by Habsburg interests.

The general count Claudius Florimund Mercy (1718—1734), a Frenchman in the Habsburgs’ service, was appointed Banat governor and military commander. The Banat’s military administration was subordinated to the Vienna Aulic Council. As Banat was royal domain, the peasants became slaves of the state, bound to pay taxes and perform free work. In these circumstances, Mercy built roads, secured fortresses, dug canals, drains marshes, cultivated rich lands, exploited forests, built many public buildings, barracks and industrial establishments, and dug up mines. The unpaid hard labour of natives insured local economic progress to the benefit of new rulers.

1720. The colonisation with Germans started in 1716, when Banat became a Habsburg province. The need to secure the borders and create a Catholic population willing to support the Habsburg monarchy, determined a massive colonization with Germans and other populations (Italians, Spanish, French, Bulgarians, etc.). The colonizing peak took place in the 18th century, with many German localities founded, and continued in the next century at a much slower pace. Banat’s colonization was a systematic, large scale enterprise, planned to the smallest details. Villages, towns and streets were symmetrically traced on the plane-table, reflecting the absolutist architectural culture of that period. When colonists arrived in Banat, they found a hostile marshland. The first years they faced epidemics, fever and famine. Thru efforts and numerous human losses, two-three generations later they succeeded. The Banat Germans conveyed that experience in the saying: “*To the first death, to the next poverty, to the last bread*”. Crucial to their success was the drying of marshes and building canals for river drainage. The land proved to be extremely rich, ensuring the provinces’ wealth in the 19th century. Practically, Banat became the granary of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire in the following period.

Expenses to consolidate the Habsburgs’ occupation, excessive high taxes demanded by corrupt officers in the Austrian administration, plunders by the occupying army, and advantages granted predominantly to new colonists to the detriment of locals generated protests and conflicts. Grievances took the form of violent riots against the Habsburgs in 1737—1739. General Lentulus’ army mercilessly repressed it, burning to the ground entire villages, and torturing and killing without trial Romanian peasants.

Banat benefited however of the Habsburg interest in securing permanently the Ottoman borders. After the Passarowitz peace treaty (1718), the border guard system insured previously by locals was replaced with a militia system. In 1768, the Romanian colonel baron Papilia organized a “*Romanian Battalion*” comprising 4 companies in Topleț, Globurău, Ilova and Ohaha-Bistra, and 2,383 border guards qualified for military service. In 1773, border guards from Valea Almăjului joined these troops, bringing the total to 7,185 border guards. In 1775, the Romanian

battalion merged with the Iliric regiment forming the "*Romanian-Iliric Regiment*" with headquarters in Biserica-Albă. It included 16 companies, 99 villages and 15,874 border guards. On the military border, German schools were opened, and public and communal buildings were built as well as officer residences, offices, public schools and barns. Wood churches were replaced with stone churches. On November 1st, 1838 the Romanian-Banat Regiment was founded with its garrison in Caransebeș, while the "*Romanian-Iliric Regiment*" became on June 1st, 1845 the "*Iliric-Banat Regiment*" with its garrison in Biserica Albă.

In **1778** Banat was incorporated into the Hungarian administration. In a critical moment for Empress Maria Theresa during the seven year war, the Hungarian Diet managed to set up the county administrative system. Banat was split between the German administration, under the Vienna War Council for the three border regiments' territory, and the Hungarian administration in charge with the newly created counties of Timiș, Caraș, and Torontal.

1785. The Habsburg emperor Joseph II, proponent of enlightenment ideas, abolished censorship (1781), closed down monasteries, and issued the „*Tolerance Edict*” for all faiths, a decision that granted all citizens access to public functions based on merit. By abolishing slavery in 1785, he encouraged peasants' self-esteem since they were the most valuable people in the state, paid taxes and joined the armed forces in times of need.

June 15-27, 1848; the 1848 Revolution. At the Lugoj Assembly, ten thousands persons, the majority Banat peasants, demanded to arm the Romanian people, remove the Serbian hierarchy, recognise the Romanian nationality and language, and name Romanian officers for the Romanian army. Kossuth and the Hungarian press did not respond to these demands, on the contrary, they condemned them. The revolution's defeat brought bitter suffering to the Banat Romanians, years of prison for Eftimie Murgu and other rebels, and disastrous lawsuits.

1849. After the revolution's defeat, Emperor Franz Joseph rewarded the loyal Serbs through the foundation of a territorial-administrative unit, the "*Principality of Serbia and Banat of Temeschwar*", with its capital at Timișoara (Temeschwar) and German as official language.

1860. The "*Principality of Serbia and Banat of Temeschwar*" was abolished, and Banat was reincorporated into Hungary, overlooking the protests of the more than 500,000 Romanians from Banat.

1864-1865. The hierarchical separation from the Serbian Orthodox church is accomplished along with the foundation of the Romanian orthodox episcopate in Caransebeș.

1867. The Austrian-Hungarian pact represented the compromise between Hungarian landowners and the Habsburg dynasty. After the foundation of the Austro-Hungarian dual state in 1867 and the abolition of border regiments in 1872, the entire Banat came under Hungarian administration. The dual government system intensified national and social oppression, and impeded people's national and democratic development in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire.

After the proclamation of the Austrian-Hungarian dual system (1867), Romanians in Banat adopted the "*active involvement*" policy participating in the political life, elections and parliamentary debates. The National Party platform of Romanians from Banat and Hungary (1869) stated its solidarity with parties of other

nations in Hungary, fought against Transylvania's "merger" with Hungary, and fought the "nationalities law".

The following decades bring tough battles, privations, torture and prison, but instead of discouraging the combatants, it made them more tenacious.

The 1859 Moldavia and Walachia's union and especially the Romanian Independence War (1877-1878) had a huge echo in Transylvania and Banat. People from Banat perceived the unity and consolidation of the Romanian state as regenerating source and encouragement to defending their ethnic integrity.

1881. The foundation of the Romanian National Party assisted the Romanians' battle for freedom.

Romanian, Serbian and Slovak parliamentarians created a club to coordinate actions in support of national rights, and to fight the false Hungarian unitary state idea and the Hungarian homogenizing policy.

Contrary to the Austrian-Hungarian state system, the Budapest government focused since inception on the single Hungarian nationality principle, making official the old policy of ethnic assimilation into a homogeneous Hungarian state. Although other ethnically diverse empires used the denationalization method too, it was rarely declared a state policy and was never promoted as fiercely as Hungarian officials did. In its vast denationalization act, the Budapest Parliament voted laws to reassign Hungarian terminology to the Romanian family names, as well as Banat villages and towns. Romanians' hopes and fights for national unity and solidarity grew stronger as a response to repressive measures by Hungarian authorities. Intellectuals in villages were accused of "troubling and encouraging the population to mutiny", of providing an "antipatriotic" education – from their point of view – to young people, and of stocking local and school libraries with Romanian forbidden books.

The beginning of the 20th century

The Romanian National Party chose political activism, and Romanians participated to parliamentary elections.

1914-1918. The beginning of the World War I, in summer of 1914 brought a long range of suffering and hardships for Banat residents, regardless of nationality. Large numbers of men were mobilized and sent into battlefield, leaving Banat's villages in mourning after many of them perished. During the war, numerous campaigns collecting agricultural products from the population left families without bare necessities.

After 1916, when Romania entered the war, Austrian-Hungarian authorities initiated persecutions against Romanians. Accused of "espionage in favour of Romania", "Daco-Romanian feelings", "high treason" or "provocation against the state" a large number of eminent Romanians were placed under political watch, house arrest, deported or imprisoned.

December 1st 1918. Transylvania's union with Romania remained engraved as a great inspirational historic event for all Romanians. The 1918 national political union should not be treated as a civilised world's gift to Romanians, although sympathy might have had some impact, nor a chance occurrence in war circumstances, but rather as the result of a centuries long process during which a brave and tenacious people wilfully preserved its bond with ancestral land, language and faith, customs and rituals, and refused to abandon its identity.

1921. The July 1921 legislation of the agrarian reform responded to urgent needs such as national economy rebuilding and implicit developmental increase.

Between the Wold Wars. During this period, Banat residents could participate intensely to the political process. They were designated to different constituencies to vote for their candidates. The 1929-1933 post great depression period brought economic revival to Banat, especially due to increased agricultural production. Politically, the democratic parties fought leading circles' efforts to limit some acquired rights and freedom. The royal dictatorship founded on February 10, 1938 became one of the most contradictory periods in the country's history: Romania's international status worsened mainly because the great powers of Europe deserted Romania, and its independence and sovereignty were brutally invaded by the Axis powers.

1941. The start of the World War II. This war had disastrous consequences for the entire country, as well as Banat inhabitants. Mobilizations severely affected the work force in villages, and requisitions weakened people's economic power. At the end of the World War II, there was deep poverty and since thousands of people died, many families were grieving.

The act of **August 23, 1944** took by surprise the Banat residents, many engaged in military units fighting on the eastern line. They continued to fight within Romanian divisions for the victory against the German army on the battlefields of Hungary at Debrețin, and Miskolc, as well as in Czechoslovakia at Brno, Praga and others.

For the Banat residents, the socialist system from **1947 to 1989** represented a dramatic period: the collectivization, the alienation of peasants' traditional sense of property, and changes in mentality and work shook profoundly the peasant life in Banat, and had consequences still visible today. The propaganda against the church, and the atheism promoted in schools and social institutions deprived the population of a healthy religious education, with long term effects on the moral conduct of people.

At the same time, this period brought the eradication of illiteracy, improvements in medical assistance, access to culture and work, free education at all levels, the electrification of villages, and a relative progress in living standards. Because of intense industrialization, the young rural population migrated to towns for studies and work, thus villages grew older.

The **December 1989** events, initiated originally in Timișoara and then proliferating around the country, opened new, generous perspectives in Romania's history, yet undermined and discredited by immediate realities. Social requirements in the new system create numerous problems difficult to solve either at state, or individual levels.

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