

## THE GEOGRAPHICAL ORGANIZATION OF PLAIN BIRDA-MORAVIȚA AS REFLECTED ON THE MAPS FROM THE HABSBERG AND CONTEMPORARY PERIOD

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**Abstract:** The article entitled – The Organizing geographic area during Habsburg rule and the contemporary period in Plain-Moravia-Bird – plans to conduct an analysis both of the spatial organization of settlements in the Plain Birda-Moravita during the Habsburg rule . In preparing the present article, there were used several methods of which there could be mentioned the followings: the method of analysis, the historical method, the synthesis method, the comparison method and the mapping method.

**Key words:** villages, the period of count Mercy, old district of Ciacova, countries, regions, socio-economic development

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### THE HABSBERG RULE

The removal of medieval structures from the areas inhabited by Romanians (from the mid eighteenth century) and important economic and social changes had two major consequences, namely the birth of new social relations and the development of national consciousness, which was an important step towards building the Romanian nation.

In 1716, the whole region of Banat came under Habsburg rule. After the Treaty of Passarowitz (Pazarovac) from 1718, the entire Banat and other territories previously under Turkish domination became Austro-Hungarian provinces. After the conquest, Banat became the personal property of the emperor from Vienna that administers the province economically. In order to evaluate the possible tax exploitation of the province, the military administration carried out a census in the entire Banat in 1717, the census being completed by the development of detailed maps for the whole of Banat region, showing both the inhabited and abandoned settlements from Banat (Bercea, 2008, 37).

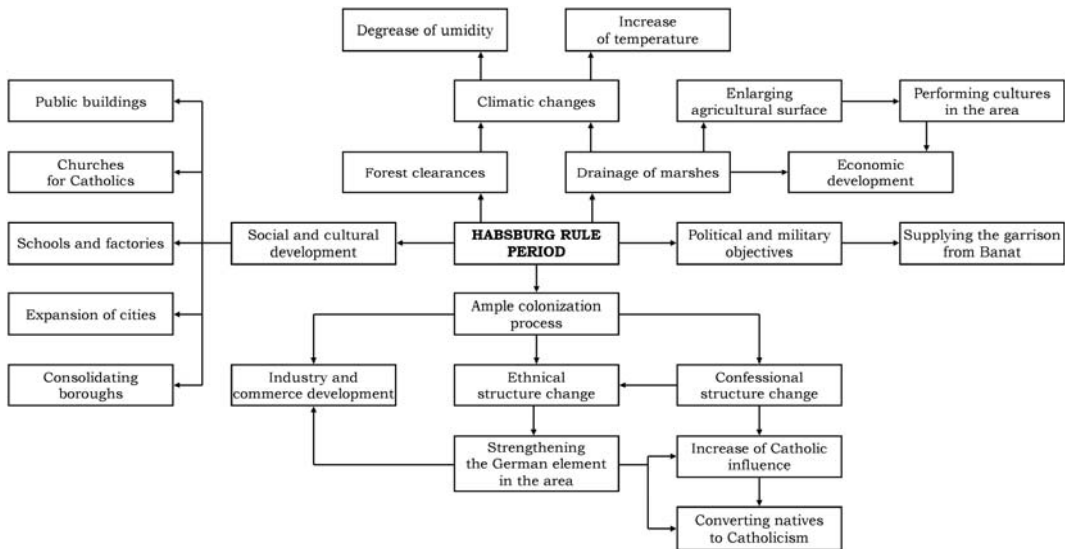
Between 1716-1751 Banat, under Habsburg domination, goes through the military administration period, during which the region was divided into 11 districts for a more effective control.

The reforms that took place during the Austrian Empire period had a major role in the economic and social development and exploitation of the natural resources of Banat.

One of the objectives of the Habsburg domination was the development of economy in Banat, development embodied in: the existence of fertile land, the possibility to increase the agricultural land through drainage and embankments. The development of the province was necessary so that it could to supply and support the troops from the garrisons established in Banat, Banat being an important region for the Habsburg military system. (Bercea, *ibid*).

The period of Count Mercy, or rather the new Habsburg administration after 1718, is characterized by a cultural, social and economic development, the building of churches for Catholic and Orthodox churchgoers, schools for children, the regulation of river flows and the reclamation of wetlands and ponds, the introduction of advanced agricultural crops, urban expansion and consolidation of cities, improvement of roads and development of markets, building factories and public monuments.

With all the drawbacks caused by the casual hostile attitude of the Hapsburg authorities, their presence here had a beneficial role for the development of the entire region. The orientation towards modernization is evident. However, it should be mantioned that these measures taken by the Habsburg rule had some consequences from a geographical point of view, massive deforestation and draining of marshes destroyed the local climate characteristics, generating climate changes (climate became drier and drier and the temperature rose).



**Figure 1.** The period of Habsburgh mastery-direct influences an indirect ones on the geographical space in the Birda-Moravița Field

After conquering Banat, the Habsburgs started a long process of colonization, using mainly German Catholics from Wurtemberg, Schwaben, Nassau etc. Therefore, for a time, the population growth was ensured only by the immigration process. As a result, the share of German Catholics reached a point of 50 % of the population. This still represent an exception, since the rest of the region, despite

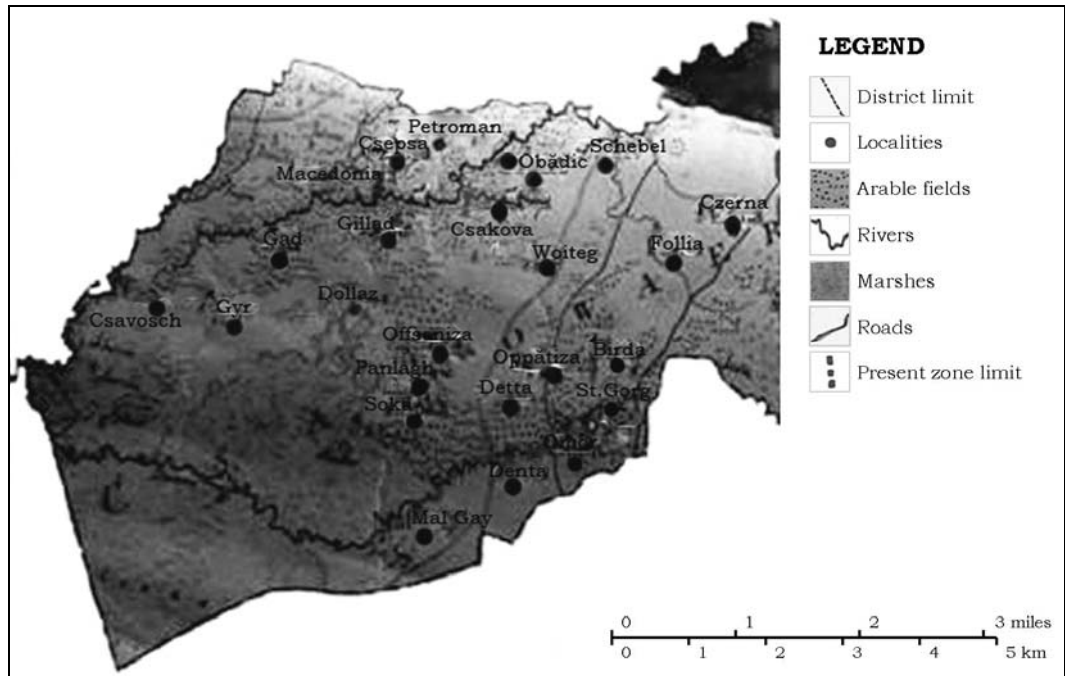
colonization, was populated mostly by Romanians. As skillful craftsmen, the Germans contributed to the development of industry and trade. Due to the need to ensure better living conditions for the colonizing population, the Austro-Hungarian authorities began a reorganization of all the villages from Banat, while building new ones. As a result, the region became an organized network, and an ordered and compact structure. Relations between the different consequences on the geographical organization of settlements caused by the Habsburg rule in the Plain Birda-Moravita and the entire region of Banat, are shown in Figure 1.

**Cartographic sources**

*Period of old maps*

At a first analysis of several maps belonging to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we could consider the major differences between the old and the contemporary periods.

If we were to look at the map from 1723 (Figure 2) we can easily confirm the presence of these differences.



**Figure 2.** Ciacova district during count Mercy’s times, 1723-1725

(Source: after Arhivele Naționale/Archives of the State – maps and plans collection nr. 33)

Firstly, this period was characterized by instability, the entire region of Banat being ravaged by the Ottoman domination that lasted for 164 years and which has brought great pain and loss of life.

Thus, up to the Treaty of Passarowitz, the entire region was covered with water, the figure below showing a land occupied by marshes and swamps.

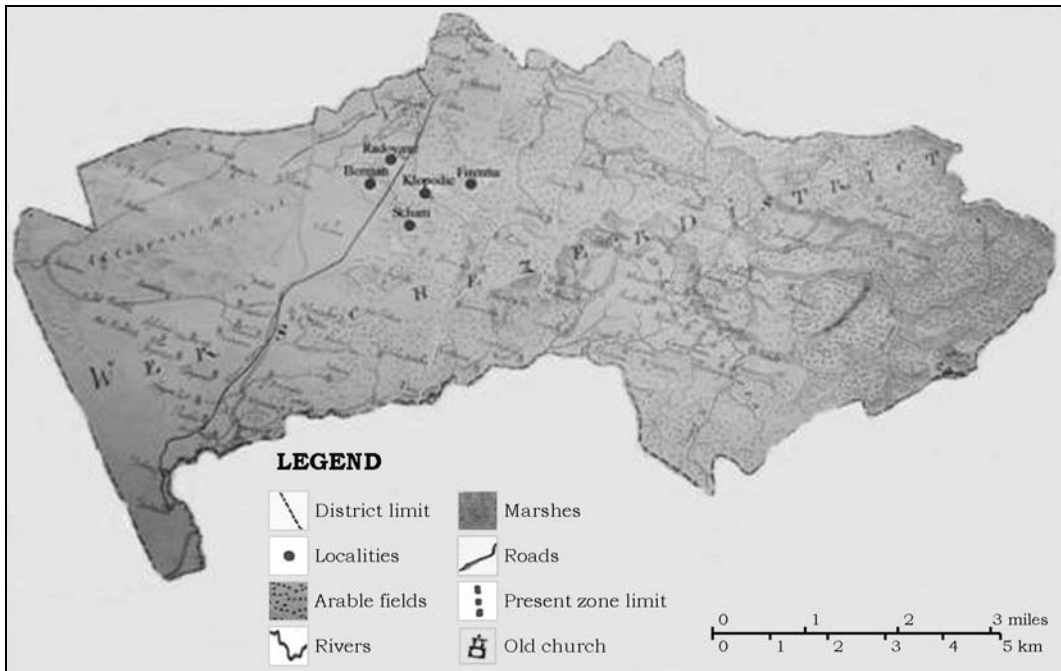
In what the settlements from Plain Birda-Moravita are concerned, it should be noted that the current territory of Plain Birda could be identified with the old district of Ciacova (District Csakovaer), the settlements being almost the same for both territories, except certain that are found in the district of Vârset.

However, there were differences in the names of the settlements. Thus, the village of Jebel bore the name Schebel under Count Mercy, Ciacova bore the name Csakova, Petroman bore the same name as it currently has, Cebza bore the name Csepsa, Obad bore the name Obadic. The parish of Giera bore the name Gyr, and Ciavos bore the name Csavosch. Regarding the village Toager which currently belongs to the parish Giera, does not appear on the map of Mercy because it is attested much later. At that time, the parish Voiteg bore the name Woiteg, and the village Folea (which belongs to Voiteg parish today) bore the name Follia. The village of Cerna, which currently belongs to the parish of Liebbling, bore the name Cserna in 1723.

The village Ghilad bore the name Gillad and Gad bore the same name. The settlements situated in the south also had differences in names. Thus, the today parish of Banloc bore the name Banlok, the village Dolat bore the name Dollaz, Ofsenita was recorded under the toponym Offseniza, and Soca bore the name Soka.

The current city Deta bore the name Detta in 1723 and the village belonging to it, Opatita, bore the name Opatiza.

The settlements from the south-east of the current Plain Birda also show differences in names. However, Birda kept the same name during the period 1723-1725. The villages that belong to this village today had different names under Count Mercy. Thus, the today village of Sfantu Gheorghe bore the name St.Gorg, and Berecuta bore the name Berekuza, but it should be mentioned that at that time Berecuta was part of Vârset District.



**Figure 3.** Vârșeț district during count Mercy's times, 1723-1725

(Source: after Arhivele Naționale/Archives of the State – maps and plans collection nr. 33)

Denta is another village from Plain Birda which had the same name on the map in 1723, but the village Rovina which now belongs to the parish of Denta, bore the name Omor under Count Mercy.

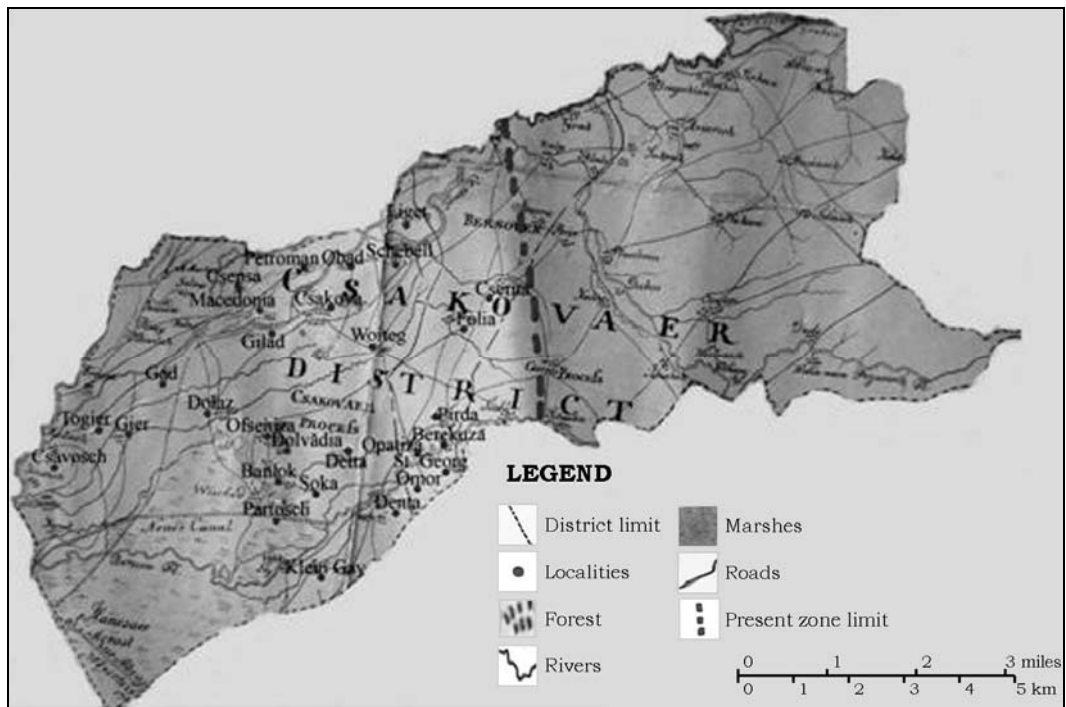
Regarding the settlements from Plain Moravița (Clopodia, Ferendia, Jamu Mare, Gherman si Dejan), it should be noted that on the map from 1723-1725, they were part of the district Vârset (Figure 3).

Thus, as it can be seen on the map, the parish of Jamu Mare bore the name Scham and the villages that currently belong to it, Feredia and Clopodia, were found on the map bearing the name Firendia and Klopodie.

Gaiu Mic, village belonging to the parish of Moravia, bore the name Mal Gay. Another village that belongs to Moravita today, Dejan, in 1723 it bore the name Radovanz.

Stamora Germana is not recorded on the map of Mercy, being certificated later.

The official map of 1761 (Figure 4) does not bring significant changes because it fits in the context of the Habsburg administration.

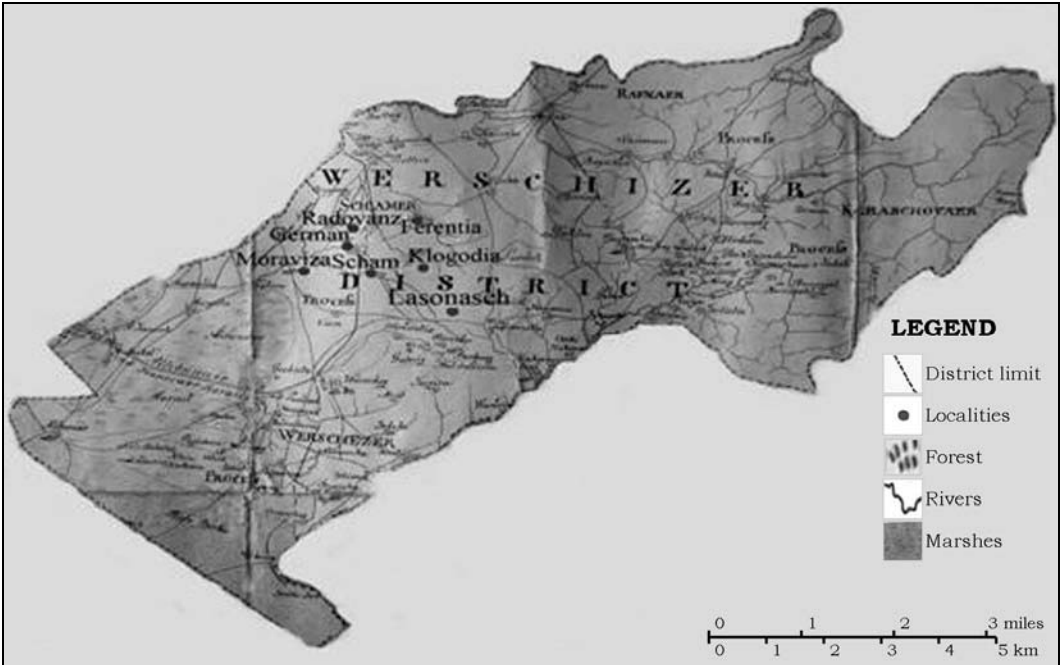


**Figure 4.** Ciacova district map during count Mercy's times, 1761

(Source: after Arhivele Naționale/Archives of the State – maps and plans collection nr. 27)

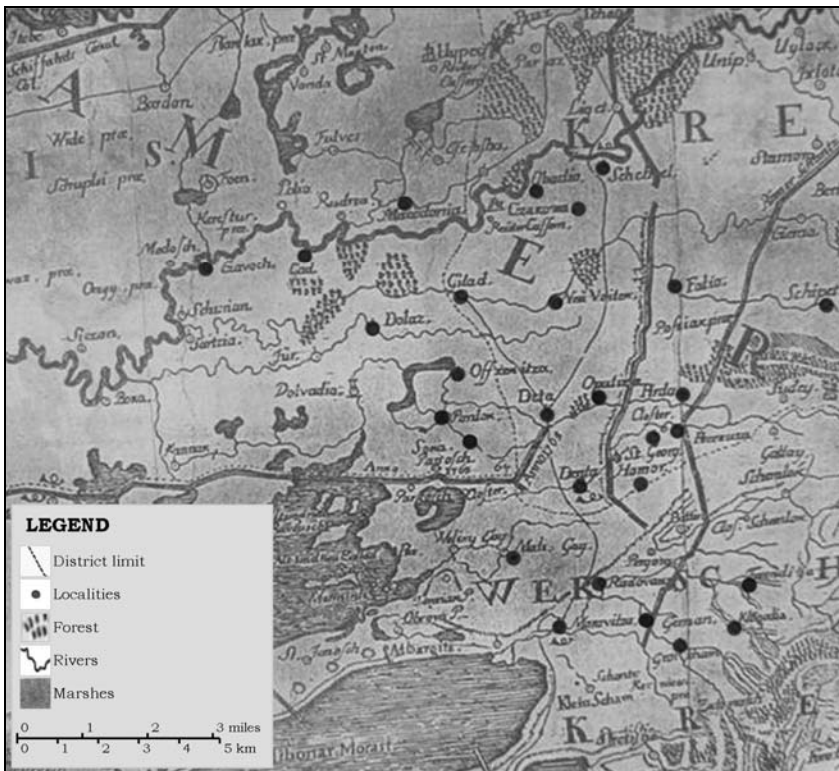
Most of the settlements bore the same names as in 1723-1725, but there must be mentioned some differences in the position of the houses. Thus, the today parish of Livezile appears on the map of 1761 as Dolvadia, and it was placed in the north of the parish of Banloc in 1761, unlike the current period when it is in the western part of the same parish. The toponym Birda becomes Pirda. Also Jamu Mare appears under the name Scham, Ferendia was known under the name Ferentia, and Clopodia bore the name Klogodia. The present parish of Moravita is found on the map as Moraviza, this being found in Vârset district (Figure 5).

Griselini's map (1776) (Figure 6) and Ciacova district map from 1789 (Figure 7) and Vârset map from the same year bring no significant changes in the toponymic elements or in the location of the settlements.



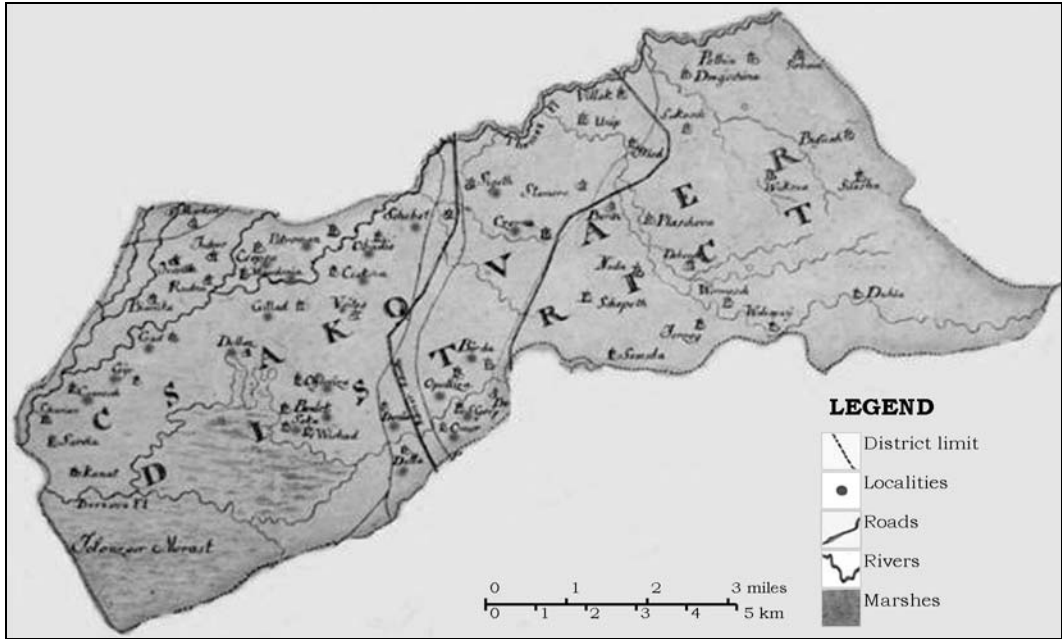
**Figure 5.** Vârșeț district map during count Mercy's times, 1761

(Source: after Arhivele Naționale/Archives of the State – maps and plans collection nr. 27)



**Figure 6.** The map of Timișan Banat the Birda-Moravița Field, 1776

(Source: after Arhivele Naționale/Archives of the State – maps and plans collection nr. 32)

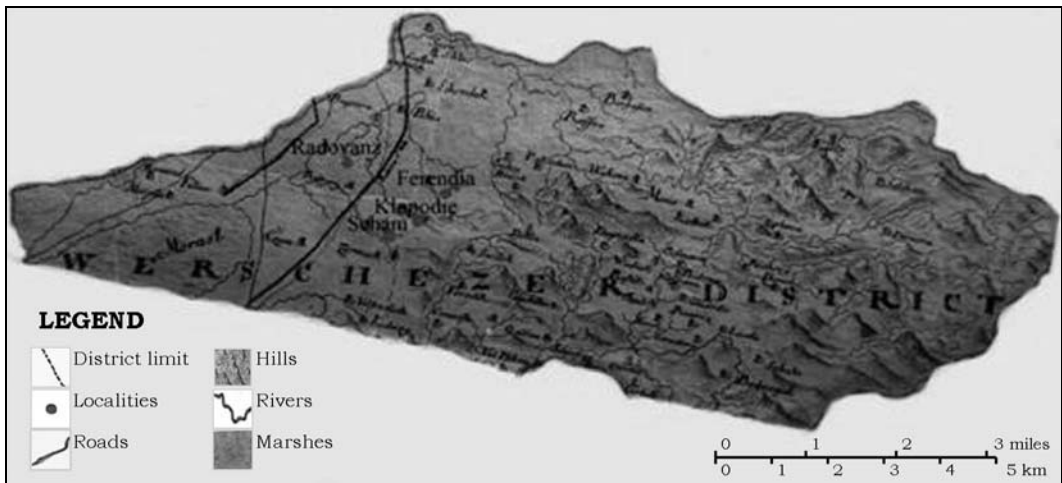


**Figure 7.** Ciacova district map, 1789

(Source: after Arhivele Naționale/Archives of the State – maps and plans collection nr. 58)

However, there are some differences in name on Grisellini’s map that should be highlighted. Thus, Jamu Mare appears on the map as Gros Scham, the today parish of Voiteg, which was known as Voiteg on the previous maps, is recorded as Neu Voitek, and the village Lātunas that currently belongs to the parish of Jamu Mare, is recorded under the toponym Zatonasch.

The year 1789, does not bring any major changes, compared to 1723 and 1761, on the location of the settlements, however there are some toponymic changes recorded. The today settlements of Plain Moravița are also to be found in Vârset district (Figure 8).



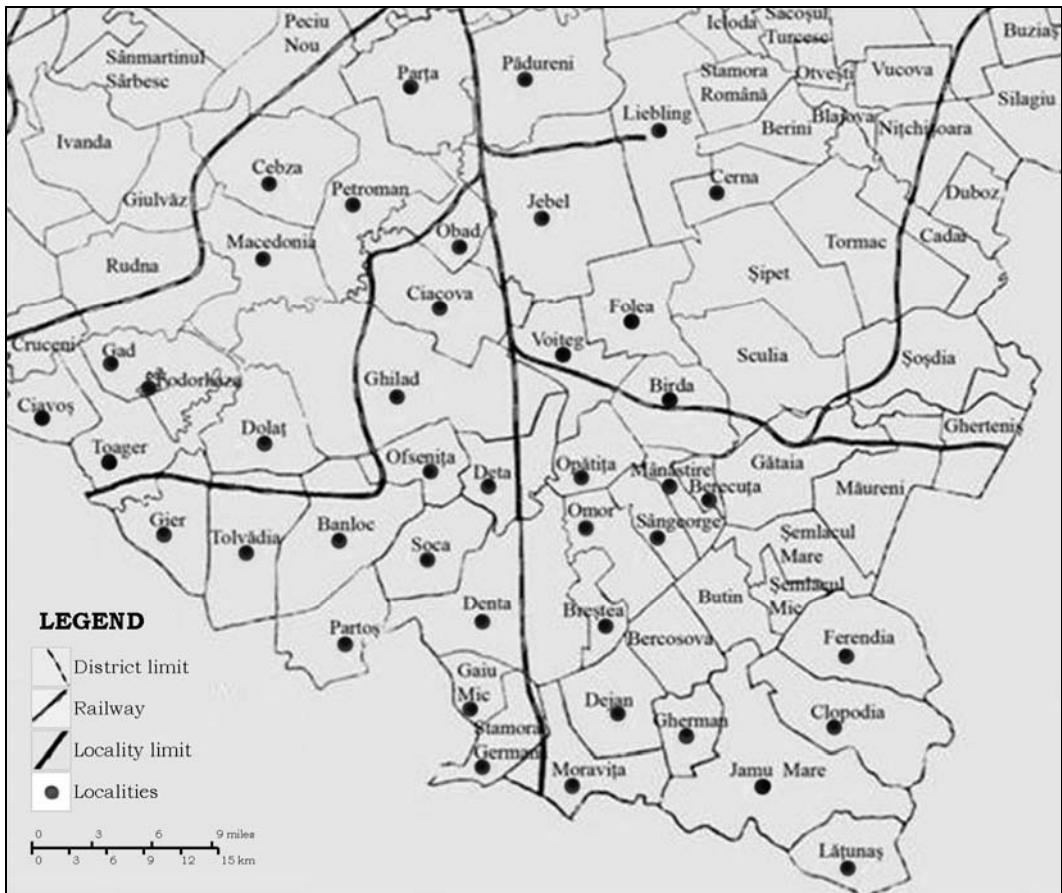
**Figure 8.** Vârșeț district map, 1761

(Source: after Arhivele Naționale/Archives of the State – maps and plans collection nr. 58)

We must, however, mention the presence of the trade routes that crossed the region at that time and the presence of wetlands and ponds and large afforested areas, areas which are found around Deta, Denta, Toager, Giera, Granicieri Gad, Tolavadia, Liebling, as shown by the geographical organization of the area of these settlements in 1777, respectively 1818 (Liebling).

#### *Period of contemporary maps*

After the Great Union of 1918, the entire Banat is characterized by significant changes not only in social, economic or demographic terms, but also in terms of territorial administration, the settlements from the current Plain Birda-Moravita felt those radical changes. Thus, by the Royal Decree of June 13, 1925 nr. 1972, the country was divided into 71 counties which included nets and parishes. The Timis-Torantal county comprised 12 nets and 237 parishes and in 1926 it was established the 13<sup>th</sup> net. The village Fodorhaz (Fodorhaza), which belonged to Gad parish, was not part of the rural villages and it was disbanded in 1939 (Figure 9).

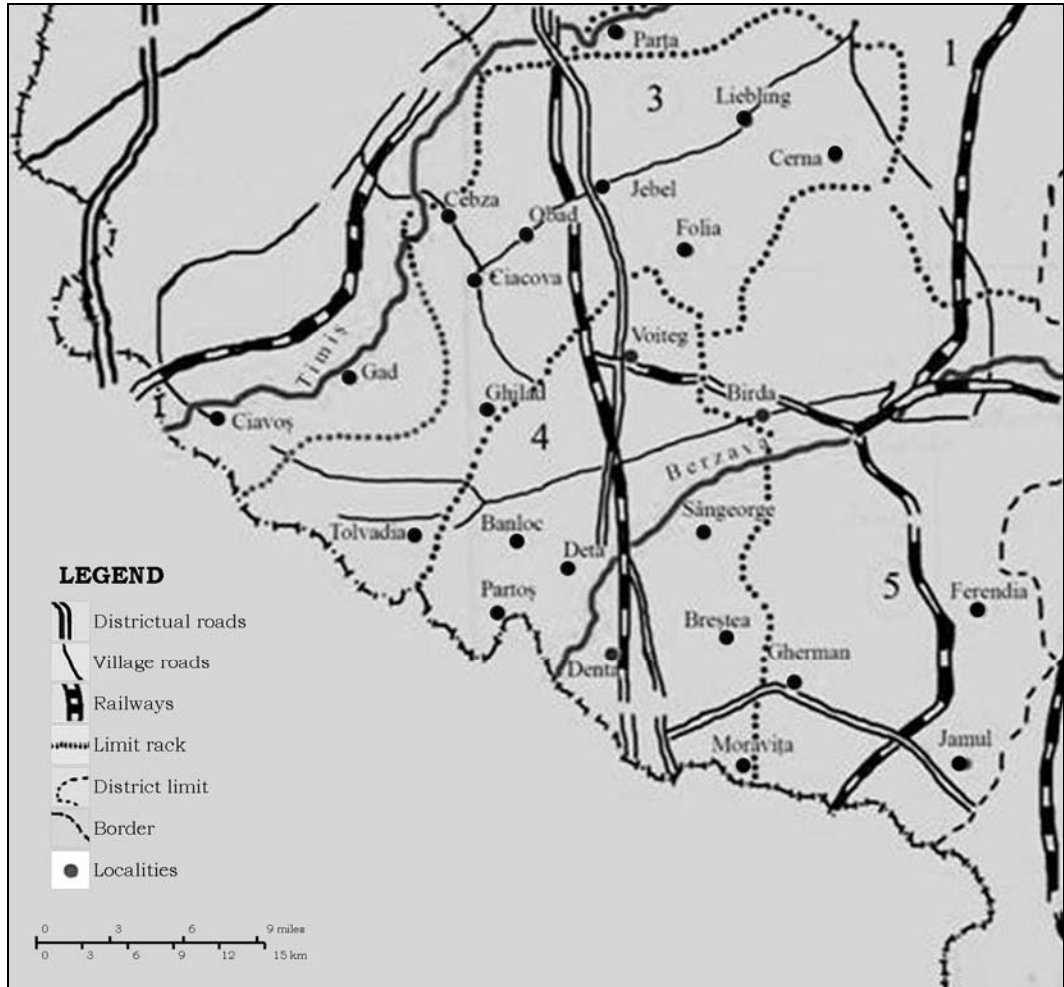


**Figure 9.** Localities from Birta-Moravița Field in the period between the wars (Source: after Arhivele Naționale/Archives of the State – maps and plans collection nr. 20)

In 1942, following the Decree Law 288 of January 23, five parishes are disbanded in Timis-Torantal county, including the parish Omoru Mic. In 1945



the county's administrative organization was represented by two cities (Timisoara and Lipova), 234 parishes and 13 nets, including Ciacova and Deta (Figure 10).



**Figure 10.** The localities Birda-Moravița Field – administrative organization the racks  
(Source: after Lotreanu, 1935)

After the World War II, Romania's entrance in the Soviet sphere of influence had consequences on the territorial and administrative organization. On September 6, 1950, by Law No. 5, the 58 counties and 424 nets were disbanded, and in their place, there were created 28 regions with 177 districts, 148 cities and 4052 parishes. The territorial administrative unit was the district, which was directly subordinated to the region. The parishes were subordinated to the district. The two districts were Deta and Ciacova and they were in charge of other parishes from the present territory of Plain Birda-Moravița.

In 1921, Liebbling was part of Timis- Torontal County, Ciacova net, being also a parish (Drinovan, 1973, p.203). In 1956 Liebbling was part of the Timisoara region, district Ciacova and the village Josif belonged to it (Drinovan, *ibid*). Since 1972, it is part of Timis county, it is a parish, with the villages Josif and Cerna

belonging to it (Drinovan, *ibid*). However, in 2002 the parish of Liebling (including the two villages: Cerna and Josif) consisted of 3,680 people with over 80 % Romanians.

Opatita also witnessed an economic boom in 1921, and the settlement belonged to Deta net it was also a parish. In 1956 Opatita was part of the district Ciacova, the village belonging to the parish of Deta. Since 1972, it is part of Timis county belonging to the town Deta.

After the establishment of communism in 1947, the parish of Manastire would also include the villages Berecuta and Sângeorge. But this parish will not last long, being included in the parish of Birda and later in that of Gataia.

The year 1956 is characterized by an administrative reform: Ciacova becomes the residence of Ciacova district.

Between the years 1950-1966 Tolvadia was part of the Banat region, belonging consecutively to Ciacova then Deta districts, and at the same time, it was a parish.

In 1966 Jebel was part of the Banat region, being included in the Deta district and it was a parish (Drinovan, 1973, 202).

In 1950 Folea was part of the Banat region, Deta district (Drinovan, 1973, 253).

In 1968, the village Pădureni becomes attached to the Jebel parish, situated at a distance of 6 km. In 2004, following the law 84/ 2004 on setting up new parishes, Pădureni is restored to its previous status of parish.

According to some studies carried out in 1966 and 1967, The Grand National Assembly from 1968 adopted the Law no. 2 by which it was decided the administrative territorial organization of the country in counties, cities and parishes. Following the disbandment of regions and districts, 49 settlements were declared cities (including Deta- on 27 May, 1967 is disbanded as district, and it declared town, for the third, in 1968). Ciacova became a town in 2004, the year when it was re-established the parishes of Birda, Ghilad and Parta.

According to the new administrative-territorial division, Tolvădia changed its name to Livezile, and since 1972 it belonged to the parish of Banloc, just as the village Dolaț.

Livezile was redeclared parish under law 461/ 2006, by being detached from the parish Banloc (General Urban Plan, 2010, pg 7).

Between 1972-2006 Dolaț belonged to the parish of Banloc. However, following the decree 461/2006, it became part of the parish of Livezile.

From an administrative point of view, after 1952, the village Sângeorge was included in the Deta district, and between 1956-1967, it was part of the Gataia district. But after the administrative reform of 1967, the village will belong to Birda parish until 2004, except for a short period (1988-1990) when it belonged to the parish of Voiteg.

Following the Law 84/2004 Birda became a parish, and the villages Berecuta, Mănăstire and Sângeorge belonged to it. To date the four villages that belonged to the village by the decree becomes Gătaia city.

## CONCLUSIONS

The two distinct periods in the history of the settlements from Plain Birda-Moravita present major differences in the geographical organization: the Habsburg rule represents the period when the geographic area of Banat was capitalized at a higher level than in the Middle Ages. Equally, the modern period

stands for a new administrative division that will generate the socio-economic development of the settlements.

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