Welcome to Virtual Banat!

Banat is the historical province lying in the south-eastern extremity of the territorial entity called Mitteleuropa.

The area of Banat, square-shaped, has the following natural borders: the Mureș River in the north, the Tisa River in the west, and the Danube in the south; its eastern border is a route that crosses the Southern Carpathians in the west and the Western Carpathians in the south. Banat covers an area of 28,526 km$^2$, which today is divided into three regions. The largest of them, about two thirds, belongs to Romania (18,966 km$^2$); one third belongs to Serbia, and a small part, 284 km$^2$, belongs to Hungary. From the administrative point of view, today’s territory of Banat is divided as follows:

**First-time events in Banat**

1002 – The first monastery on the territory of present-day Romania was at Morisena (today Cenad Village, Timis County). Its patron saint was St. John the Baptist and it was a monastery of Orthodox monks.

1030 – The first school on the current Romanian territory was opened at Cenad (Timis County). The teaching language was Latin.

About 1179 – the Abbey at Igris, founded by the Cistercian monks of the Pontigny
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**In Romania:**

- the whole Timiş County
- Caraş-Severin County, except for Băuţar, Bucova, Cornişoru and Preveciori, which all form Băuţar commune
- Arad County, only the area south of the Mureş River
- Mehedinţi County, only Baia Nouă, Dubova, Eibenthal, Ieşelniţa, Orşova and Sviniţa. Several localities of the traditional Banat sank disappeared under the Iron Gate reservoir.
- Hunedoara County – Sâlciva and Pojoga

**In Serbia:**

- the part of Vojvodina situated east of the Tisa
- North Banat District (Severni Banat in Serbian) (except for Ada, Senta and Kanjiza municipalities, located east west of the Tisa)
- Central Banat District (Srednji Banat in Serbian)
- South Banat District (Južni Banat in Serbian)

In central Serbia:
Pančevački Rit, the area that forms the part of Palilula municipality to the west of the Danube and is included in the Belgrade metropolitan area

In Hungary:

- a small part of the Csongrád county (comitatus), namely the area located in the southern angle formed by the Tisa and the Mureș, as far as the state border with Romania and Serbia

Brief Historic Presentation

After the repression of the 1848 revolution, in order to reward the devoted Serbians who sided with the Imperial authorities during the conflicts, the Vojvodina of Serbia and the Tamiš Banat (Woiwodschaft Serbien und Temescher Banat) were formed following the Emperor’s decree of November 18 1849. The province included territories of Banat (except the military border), Bačka and Syrmia. Its ruler was the Grand Voivode, one of the Emperor’s numerous titles. The province was ruled by an Imperial lieutenancy led by a governor and was organised in five districts (Kreise) divided into sub-districts (Bezirke):

- Timișoara, with Aradu Nou, Lipova, Buziaș, Ciacova, Vârșeț and Timișoara sub-districts (193 villages and 280,808 inhabitants)
- Lugoj, with the Făget, Lugoj, Bocșa and Oravița sub-districts (234 villages and 219,803 inhabitants)
- Becicherecu Mare, with Törökbécse, Kikinda Mare, Sănnicolau Mare, Biled, Jimbolia, Modoș and Becicherecu Mare (108 villages and 336,763 inhabitants)
- Neusatz (Novi Sad)
- Sombor

The last two districts included territories outside historical Banat. The population of the province was very mixed: 347,459 Romanians, 321,110 Serbs, 335,080 Germans, 221,845 Hungarians and other ethnic groups. The capital of the province was Timișoara. The official languages were German and Serbian.

The Vojvodina of Serbia and the Tamiš Banat province was abolished in October 1860 and the governing system reverted to Hungarian comitatens in Banat and Bačka. Syrmia was incorporated into Slavonia. The administrative rulers of the comitate were the primcomite (the prefect), the vicecomite (the subprefect), the pretors (head of subdistricts), and the comitatens Congregation.
Romanian Banat

In 1950, following the Soviet model, the communist authorities introduced the administrative-territorial organisation on regions by Law no 5/September 6 1950. Although it lasted only until 1968, the division of the national territory into regions and raions underwent major changes in time. Initially, the territory of Romanian Banat was distributed into three regions that were very similar to the current counties: Arad (belonging to Banat only partly), Timișoara and Severin. This structure lasted only for two years, until 1952, when the Severin region was abolished and the territories of the remaining regions were redistributed. In 1956, the Arad region also disappeared and in 1960 the Timișoara region was renamed Banat. A short description of these successive changes is given below:

Arad region, with its capital Arad, comprised, in 1952, an area only a little larger than the current Arad county. In the beginning, it did not include the Sânnicolau Mare area that was incorporated after the 1952 territorial reorganisation. Between 1952 and 1956, the region had six raions: Arad, Criș (capital at Chișineu Criș), Gurahonț, Ineu, Lipova and Sânnicolau Mare, only the last two belonging to Banat. In 1956, once this region abolished, its territory was redistributed between Timișoara and Oradea regions.

Severin region, located in southern Banat, had the shortest life: only two years (between 1950 and 1952). The capital city was Caransebeș. It covered an area only a bit larger than today’s Caraș-Severin county and also included the traditionally Banat area lying in the south-west of Mehedinti county today.

At first, Timișoara region, with the capital at Timișoara, covered an area only a little larger than the current territory of Timiș county. At the time, it was divided in three raions: Deta, Sânnicolau Mare and Timișoara. In 1952 it lost Sânnicolau Mare, which was incorporated into Arad region, but it was attached the whole Severin region. Between 1952 and 1956, the latter had nine raions: Almaș (Mehadia), Caransebeș, Deta, Făget, Lugoj, Moldova Nouă, Oravița, Reșița and Timișoara. In 1956, by Decree no 12 regarding amendments to Law no 5/1950 for the division into raions of the territory of the People’s Republic of Romania – PRR (published in the Official Bulletin of PRR of January 10 1956), the southern part of the former Arad region was added to this region.

Banat region was established by Law no 3/December 27 1960 for the improvement of the administrative division of the RPR’s territory. It comprised not only the former region Timișoara, but also territories of the former Arad region. Its capital was Timișoara. It covered today’s counties of Timiș, Caraș-Severin and partially Arad (the southern part), including the municipality of Arad, as far as
Macea and Pâncota, and a major part in the north of the Mureș, outside the traditional Banat. Consequently, in 1961, this territorial administrative entity reminding of historical Banat covered 21,000 km$^2$ and had 1,234,340 inhabitants. Banat region was divided into 12 raions and 16 towns, of which 4 (Timișoara, Reșiți, Arad and Lugoj) enjoyed a special statute, that of regional towns. The 321 communes comprised 601 villages. The raions of the region were Arad, Bozovici, Caransebeș, Deta, Făget, Lipova, Lugoj, Moldova Nouă, Oravița, Orșova, Sânnicolau Mare, Timișoara, but also the regional town of Reșița, whose area and number of localities were those of a raion.

December 18 1964 – names of localities were changed by Decree 799.

In 1968, the raions and the regions ceased to exist by Law no 2/ February 16 1968 and the former județ (county) name was reintroduced for new administrative-territorial entities. In the case of Banat, these new divisions are more similar to the 1950 regions than to the pre-war counties. On this occasion, the south-eastern corner of Banat, including the town of Orșova, was attached to Mehedinți, a county from Oltenia, while about 40 villages in northern Banat, the town of Lipova and Aradu Nou were attached to Arad County. To top it all, Caraș-Severin county received several villages from Hunedoara, while two Banat villages near the Mureș were incorporated into Hunedoara County. This is how the splitting of Banat that started at the end of World War I went on and today we can find Banat localities in five Romanian counties, a Hungarian county, and three districts and a metropolitan area of two Serbian provinces. Not to mention the unprecedented situation that three large cities outside Banat – Belgrade, Szeged and Arad – have districts in Banat. By the same Law no 2/1968, some names of localities were changed, while other localities disappeared because of numerous administrative unifications.

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**Serbian Banat**

Chronological references
- November 25, 1918 – The People’s Assembly of Serbs and other Slavs gathered at Novi Sad to proclaim the unification of Vojvodina (Banat, Bačka and Baranja) with the Kingdom of Serbia.
- 1918 - 1922 – Serbian Banat formed the Veliki Bečkerek district.
- 1922 - 1929 – The territory of Serbian Banat was divided between the provinces (oblast) of Belgrade and Podunavlje, the latter with
the capital at Smederevo.

- October 3, 1929 - April 1941 – The country’s territory is divided into banovinas. Most of the Serbian Banat territory was incorporated into Dunavska Banovina, with the capital at Novi Sad. The town of Belgrade, together with Zemun and Pancevo, formed a separate administrative unit of banovinas.

- April 1941 – October 23, 1944 – Serbian Banat, Šumadija and Braničevo formed a smaller Dunavska Banovina as part of the puppet Serbian state under German military occupation. Banat was under Serbian authority only in theory, as it was administered by the German minority. It was ruled by a vice-ban (Vize-Banus) who was formally a subordinate of the ministry of internal affairs in Belgrade. The official languages were German and Serbian.

In that time, Serbian Banat was divided in the following administrative subdivisions (districts): Pančevo, Vršac, Bela Crkva, Kovin, Jaša Tomić, Veliki Bečkerek, Velika Kikinda, Novi Becej, Nova Kanjiža, Kovačica and Alibunar.

The whole Banat administration came from the German minority. The local high officials were appointed by the puppet government in Belgrade, at the suggestion of the vice-ban. Even the judges and the notaries were German. The postal, railway and fiscal administration was in the hands of the German ethnic group. The civil administration of the German minority was doubled by the German military occupation under the rule of a military commandment.

- After the war – The province of Vojvodina was established based on the former Danube Banovina.
- 1948 - Borča and Ovča were included in the administrative area of Belgrade.
- April 7, 1963 – The Socialist Autonomous Province Vojvodina with the capital at Novi Sad was established. It also comprised the Serbian Banat territory.
- July 5, 1989 – The autonomous statute of Vojvodina was revoked.
- September 28, 1990 – The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina was established.
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<tr>
<td>Serbs</td>
<td>229,568</td>
<td>235,148</td>
<td>261,123</td>
<td>358,067</td>
<td>374,258</td>
<td>423,837</td>
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<td>424,765</td>
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<td>125,374</td>
<td>126,519</td>
<td>120,541</td>
<td>17,522</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>108,662</td>
<td>98,463</td>
<td>95,867</td>
<td>110,446</td>
<td>112,683</td>
<td>111,944</td>
<td>103,093</td>
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<td>66,433</td>
<td>62,365</td>
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<td>54,447</td>
<td>49,455</td>
<td>43,474</td>
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<td>Slovaks</td>
<td>16,223</td>
<td>17,595</td>
<td>17,900</td>
<td>20,685</td>
<td>21,229</td>
<td>22,306</td>
<td>22,139</td>
<td>21,392</td>
<td>19,903</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>13,270</td>
<td>14,840</td>
<td>27,783</td>
<td>39,238</td>
<td>53,899</td>
<td>43,334</td>
<td>56,092</td>
<td>92,808</td>
<td>93,924</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>566,400</strong></td>
<td><strong>559,096</strong></td>
<td><strong>585,579</strong></td>
<td><strong>601,626</strong></td>
<td><strong>617,163</strong></td>
<td><strong>655,868</strong></td>
<td><strong>665,759</strong></td>
<td><strong>672,884</strong></td>
<td><strong>648,390</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: The population of Borča and Ovča, localities that were included within Belgrade’s administrative territory in 1948, was subtracted from the population of Serbian Banat. The data used in this table were taken from the Hungarian and Yugoslavian (Serbian) censuses conducted in the corresponding years.
Territorial Exchange

A protocol concerning several Danube islands and an exchange of localities between Romania and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was signed in Belgrade in November 24, 1923. As a result, in 1924, Jimbolia (until then Dzombolj), Checea Croată, Beba Veche, Pusta Cherestur, Ciorda and Iam, that had belonged to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were incorporated into Romania, while Modoș (Modoș, today Jaša Tomić), Părdani (Ninčićevo, today Međa ), Șurian (today Šurjan), Căptălan (today Busenje), Krivobara (today Markovićevo) and Gaiu Mare (today Veliki Gaj), that had been part of Romania, were ceded to the mentioned kingdom. Jimbolia was ceded to the Romanian State on April 10 1924.

References:

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English version: Antuza Genescu

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