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# **Economic and Cultural Influences of the German Immigrants on the Traditional Life of Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srijem, from the Beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to 1941**

*In this paper we're trying to find out the size and scope of the changes in the economic and cultural life of Slavonija, Baranja and western Srijem, especially the Slavonian village, in the time after the establishment of the Habsburg monarchy and the migration of the Germans. Government's orders from one side and the influences of the German colonizers, peasants and craftsmen on the other side, result in significant economic and cultural change, which affected all spheres of public and private life. The devastated Slavonian village is being changed with radical measures, and the infiltration of foreign influence does not leave the local population indifferent. The aim of this paper is to show some of the significant moments which change the picture of Slavonia, Baranja and western Srijem, starting from the 18th century, when new values, skills, habits and behaviors are created, which are today considered to be autochthonous, Croatian, Slavonian.*

*It will present a short historical review of the presence of Germans in Croatia; it will focus on the new developments which occurred in the Slavonian village primarily in agriculture, trade, folk architecture, the culture of living, nutrition among other things. It will also present the*

*author's field research in which she describes the interaction of Germans and Croats in Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and western Srijem in the first half of the 20th century.*

**Key words:** Slavonia, village, Germans, Habsburgs, Croats, economy, traditional life

## **A short historical review: Germans in Croatia them all**

The area of Eastern Croatia<sup>1</sup> has been inhabited by many different peoples. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after the liberation from the Ottoman rule, there were a few waves of immigration from different areas of the vast Habsburg monarchy. Members of the German nation came to eastern Slavonia, Baranja, western Srijem, Banat and Bačka at that time. The Habsburg monarchy is colonizing the liberated areas, sticking to the principles by which the land and the people who cultivate it represent the source of the wealth of the country. The German immigration was motivated by economic reasons (Geiger, 1997, 10). The biggest wave of the German immigration to the Hungarian part of the monarchy came to Banat, Bačka and Baranja. They were more sparsely distributed throughout Croatia, Slavonia and Srijem. Most of the German townships were in the eastern part of Srijem around Zemun, Nove Pazova and Indija, in Slavonia around Osijek, Vinkovci, Vukovar, and smaller townships in the vicinity of Đakovo, Požega, Garešnica, Daruvar i Virovitica (Geiger, 1997: 13). The immigrants from different German lands had no awareness of their kinship, nor a national or political awareness (Geiger, 1997: 11-12).

The German who inhabited the area of the former South Hungary mostly belonged to the peasantry, living of agriculture, and came to the fertile Danube area motivated by imperial patents and royal proclamations, looking for a way to fulfill their basic existential needs. Other nations came with the Germans: Hungarians, Slovaks and Ruthenians

The movement of Germans and other nations in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century came in a few waves. It was motivated by economic reasons, the repopulation of devastated areas after their liberation from the Ottoman rule and the defense of the southern border with the Turkish Empire.

The German population that immigrated in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century wasn't composed only of peasantry. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Germans were often managers, economists and suppliers on the government's land. They would gladly come to work to Croatia, in spite of the rumors during the Thirty-year war which said that it was the land of barbarians, dangerous and without culture. Such opinion prevailed in France,

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<sup>1</sup> Eastern Croatia is made up from Slavonija, Baranja and western Srijem. The term Eastern Slavonia in the paper is related to the contemporary geographic term within the borders of the Republic of Croatia.

Italy and England (Kolar–Dimitrijević, 2001:26-27). As a matter of fact, banditry, highwaymen, outlawry and the plunder of villages were common in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Slavonia (Taube, 1956: 13).

The estates in Virovitica, Slatina, Donji Miholjac, Valpovo, Bizovac, Belje, Darda, Vukovar, were under German nobility's control, and it was mostly German forestry supervisors, foresters, property managers, builders, land surveyors and officials who served in them. The Vukovar estate was in possession of the German noble family Eltz from 1736 all the way to 1945. They successfully administered this property since the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, taking care of the roads, the production of silk, the needs of the population, and the property was administered with the count's family using the services of German economic experts (Kolar – Dimitrijević, 2001: 26 - 36). There were German presses in Slavonia in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Taube, 1956: 12). There were numerous Germans and Austrians in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century who publicly, or as government's officials, managers or supervisors actively participated in the social events of their time (more about this can be read in *Mira Kolar Dimitrijević, Skrivene biografije nekih Nijemaca i Austrijanaca u Hrvatskoj 19. i 20. stoljeća, Zagreb, 2001*), and it was in this way too that this ethnic community left a trace in the history of Croatian culture.

The German colonists and their descendants who came to Slavonija, Srijem, Baranja, Bačku and Banat were called Swabians (Schwabern) by the local Slovene population. They themselves, as well as numerous German authors, use this name, calling the German colonists in the former Southern Hungary Danube Swabians (Donauschwabern). This name was created after the First World War as a common name for Germans who lived in previous Hungarian lands. Although this name was drawn from the name of the German land Swabia, only a smaller number of the immigrants came from this part of Germany, and the much larger number came from Bavaria, Hesse, Lotharingia, Westphalia, Saarland and Sudetenland. This name is explained by the possible occurrence of the early great waves of immigration from Swabia. The Swabian name was a pejorative term for Germans. Germans who lived in a European country, outside of Germany, were called Volksdeutscher by the Germans from the Reich. This widespread name got its negative meaning only after the Second World War (Geiger, 1997: 9-10). Germans were given to status of a nation a minority in the new Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes after the year 1918 and already at that time they were considered to be unwanted, being members of the vanquished German people. Their emigration starts already at that time (Geiger, 1997: 16).

Germans in Yugoslavia assembled in the Kulturbund (Schwäbisch-Deutschen Kulturbund) since 1920, an association for the preservation and spreading of the German culture, while the Party of the Germans in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was established in 1922 (Partei der Deutschen im Königreiche SHS). The Kulturbund was active for some 20 years, while the activity of the political party of the Germans ended already in 1929, with the beginning of the dictatorship pronounced on the 6<sup>th</sup> of January, and it was not renewed later because the imposed constitution of 1931 forbade national and political organizing (Geiger, 1997: 23). With the beginning of the Second World War, i.e. the accession of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to the Tripartite

Pact, the spreading of the national socialist ideology among the German agricultural and catholic populace continued, but there were also occurrences of massive anti-German demonstrations. In the newly created Independent State of Croatia, the Volksdeutsche were constituted in the German National groups (Die Deutsche Volksgruppe) with corporate legal status which held a position towards the government of the ISC as a legal entity towards other entity (Geiger, 199: 23-24).

A number of actively engaged local Germans grew larger towards the end of the war, but with that also the resistance among the members of this national community who deserted military units, refused service at the Eastern Front, and protected the Jews. A partisan unit «Ernst Thälmann» was established in Slavonia in 1943 (Geiger, 1997: 25; Beus Richembergh, 1994: 13).

The leadership's of the German National groups planned the evacuations of the smaller groups of the Volksdeutsche from the end of 1941, to preserve lives and property, but due to the events on the European battlefronts a plan was created for the evacuation of the whole German population in Yugoslavia. The evacuations began in 1944 when those who committed crimes left. The decision to evacuate was often made by the leaderships of the German national groups and the SS, not the people who were supposed to be evacuated. Many of the evacuees didn't want to leave their birthplace, but measures were taken to evacuate all the Germans. When the authority of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was established, arrests and liquidations followed (Geiger, 1997: 25 - 28). From 1944 to 1948 there were more than 70 camps for the imprisoned Germans (Beus Richembergh, 1994: 13). Expulsion, liquidation and assimilation of Germans were carried out at that time. This was the beginning of the end of the Volksdeutsche (for more on that read in V. Geiger; How the Volksdeutsche disappeared, and all the bibliography listed there) and the end of the existence of a culture which left inerasable traces in the economic and cultural life of Slavonia, Baranja and western Srijem.

## **The economic influences on the traditional life of Slavonia, Baranja and western Srijem with emphasis on the slavonian military frontier**

After the liberation from the century and a half of Ottoman rule, the Sava and the Danube military frontier were established in 1702<sup>2</sup>, to help the defense from the Ottoman Empire. The whole Slavonia was administered by the military and the Imperial chamber up to the year 1745, when the northern part was annexed to the Civilian Croatia, while the southern part, along the left bank of Sava, stayed under the administration of the Imperial war council in Vienna, and was organized as a military frontier

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<sup>2</sup> The military Frontier was established in Slavonia and Srijem in 1702 (lower – račka, middle – brodska, upper – gradiška).

The holders of the Habsburg crown were the descendants of the medieval German royal families. Through different administrative and military measures they brought economic and cultural programs to the area of Slavonia. The administrators of the chamber's properties in the Civilian Croatia and the military orders of the companies, the lowest military area units in the military frontier influenced the changes in the traditional identity.

## 2.1. The development of agriculture, livestock farming, crafts and manufacture

The various influences on agriculture, crafts and trade are important for the development of these activities in Slavonia. But only the immigrants, distinguished individuals and company orders, but also the Slavonian enlighteners try to transfer the experiences witnessed in the German countries. Matija Antun Relković, in his literary work which was printed in 1762 and amended in 1779, called "*Satir iliti divlji čovik*" which among other things writes about agriculture in Slavonia, criticizes the Slavonian peasant for plowing very little land, working only till lunch, drinking a lot of brandy while working, breaking the plow with his carelessness, and for having five men working one plow<sup>3</sup>. Relković knows the circumstances in Slavonia well, and in his work he recommends practice and agriculture in the country looking towards the German way of doing it. The Slavonian peasant, presented by Relković, is lazy, insensible and disorganized. He presents the hardworking German peasant as an opposite:

«...*Jedan Paur u nimackoi zemlji  
u Slezji, ial u Saxsonji  
Vishie more on Sam po orati  
kad kobilu, y kravu ufati  
Nego vás pet, y deset volllovah  
kad ufatish, ial deset konyováh  
Jer ne tražxi csasti, ni rakie,  
nitise on, kao vi napie  
Neg ponese u torbici Sira,  
pak sam pluxi, sam kobilu tira  
Pak on neche da posla ostavi  
dokle svega jutra nesastavi*  
(Relković, 1997: 47)

*J on ore csak do tavne nochi  
ier niema od nikog pomochi  
Pak na sie on tolliko xitta  
Shto mu more za dva, za tri litta  
Biti hrana, al ony prodade,  
ier zalludu nishta ne imade,  
On ne derxi, nego shtoitie triba  
y shtonyemu zaihche potriba  
A ostálo Sve za novce dade  
pak on novca uvike imade...»*

<sup>3</sup> A plow in Slavonia was made of wood. Plowing was difficult and because of that it took five pairs of oxen to pull a plow. A man walked with every pair to make sure the oxen are pulling well. As the parts of the plow began to be made of metal, the number of oxen was lowered to two, with just one man supervising them. Horses were not used at that time to pull the plow, but for easier duty and driving. They were probably used only when the plow was perfected (Kadić, 1987: 6), following the example of the German peasants. From the verses of Relković we find out that the German peasant («alone») uses horses to plow, and it seems that the plow in Silesia and Saxony was at least partly made of iron.

Describing life in the Slavonian military frontier, Relković wrote his works with intent to improve all the procedures performed in the village, but with pointed caricaturizing and overemphasizing of the negative characteristics of the Slavonian peasant. With intent to emphasize the differences, he idealizes the German peasant and criticizes the Slavonian one. Of course, the impoverished Slavonia found itself in a completely new and political environment after its liberation from the Ottoman feudal system. The developed Europe, and the Habsburg monarchy changes the picture of the agricultural and livestock farming Slavonian country with its new ways.

With the arrival of the Germans the way the land is worked changes. The Croats didn't fertilize the land and very rarely left it fallow (Taube, 1954: 170). They would crop the land with wheat the first year, with corn in the second, and in the third year the land was left fallow (Janković, 1968: 169., Čivić, 1964: 105). They thought they would nourish the land by leaving it fallow for two years, with hay left after threshing, or with cow manure. This is why the harvested wheat was threshed right away, in the field (Matić, 1951: 15). Unlike them, the German immigrants bring crop rotation and land fertilizing. The practice of leaving the land fallow was gradually abandoned and the practice of crop rotation was adopted.

The traditional way of harvesting among the Croats was reaping with a sickle, and they adopted harvesting with a scythe from the Germans (Cepelić, 1978: 268; Matić, 1951: 16). The Šokci didn't know how to tie the ropes, *vuža*, which were needed to tie the bales of wheat after the harvest. It was recorded that in Petrijevci near Valpovo the wheat started being reaped with a scythe around 1900. The first person to reap with a scythe was a German called Genhard who transferred his knowledge to others (Bahert, 2000: 96). According to the memory of the narrator Ladislav Švedl (born in 1921) from Petrijevci, this happened long before that. Individuals also introduced new practices into the everyday work of the Slavonian peasant with their actions.

Livestock farming was a lot less developed among Croats than among the Germans at the same time. All the livestock in Slavonia was in the open from spring to fall and had enough food, but in the winter it would die of starvation, among other reasons, for not being sheltered in the barns (Filipović, 1912, 23). At about the same time, in 1787, the veterinary law and other regulations began to apply. The Croatians had cows of the *podolia* breed, while the immigrants introduced the Swiss breed (Kadić, 1968: 133-142).

The foreign authority introduced the rearing of the silkworm already in 1761 (Taube, 1954: 166), and the society of Viennese traders was established in 1777 with the mission to improve the manufacture of silk in Slavonia. There are records of German weavers neared Daruvar in 1777, who made Turkish aba and garments for sales from the rough domestic wool, and the German producers of glass near Našice who made glassware and windowpanes (Taube, 1956: 13).

These are only some of the trades brought with the arrival of the Habsburg and the immigration of Germans into Croatia in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which formed the base of the economic growth and development in later times.

## Traditional habitational architecture and habitation

It is considered that the traditional houses in eastern Slavonia, Baranja and western Srijem draw their origins from the pre-ottoman times, judging from their shape, basic plan, openings and rooftops, which is proven by the description of Vukovar by the travel writer Maksimillian Prandstätter from 1608, when it was a Turkish marketplace, and which says: '*it is quite a small town with nice peasants' houses, the kind you see here in Germany*' (Karač, 1994: 151). He also drew a landscape of Vukovar<sup>4</sup> which shows houses with ridged roofs and gables on the sides, with a few windows on their faces. By following what was seen in the towns, it is considered the construction and the shapes were followed all over the wider region and that the houses in Slavonia, Baranja and Srijem were shaped according to the same model. Until the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Habsburg Monarchy began working on the homogenization and planning of urban and rural structures, there were no street plans, and the houses were scattered in Slavonia (Mesarić Žabčić, Galiot Kovačić, 2007). A regulation named 'The general instruction for habitation' was announced in Vienna in 1772. According to this instruction, there are technical norms for the establishment of settlements, design for plots, and for building of houses and surrounding buildings. The widths of the streets and the plots, as well as the placement of all the buildings on the same side of the yard, and on the boundary with the neighbor, were all precisely set (Živković, 1992: 11). The military authority in the Slavonian military frontier moved villages in an organized way from the mountains and the back roads to the main roads in order to control its dissatisfied and overtaxed subjects more easily (Engel, 1971: 532).

The Slavonia-Srijem military frontier under the direct authority of the Imperial war council was divided into three infantry regiments: Gradiška, Brod and Petrovaradin. The resettlement began in the time when the Seventh Brod Regiment was commanded by Colonel Count Friedrich Ludvig von Dönhof (1767-1771). In that time plans were made according to which the villages were built. It was ordered at the same time that the houses should be built in rows and lines (Filipović, 1912: 23; Povijest vinkovačke gimnazije, 2002: 16). Relković also writes in *Satir* about the responsible lieutenant colonel of the Gradiška regiment, Ljubibratić of Tribinje, who '*lined up the village along the road, and put houses in rows behind these houses*' (Relković, 1994: 127). The command in charge ordered the frontiersman to linearize<sup>5</sup> villages. The obligation to linearize villages was a part of the regular obligatory work (rabota) which the frontiersman had to perform (Bösendorfer, 1950: 74). The movement or as the frontiersmen called it "lining up and numbering houses" was carried out in a ten year period. The houses were lined up, in the streets which were planned and cut through for this purpose (Jarić, 1964: 90). Says that time, the Slavonian villages were compacted and linearized and as such, they were recognizable through the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The landscape of Vukovar is in the Archive of Croatia in Zagreb; reproduction in the monograph: «Vukovar, vjekovni hrvatski grad na Dunavu», Zagreb, 1994, pg. 126.

<sup>5</sup> Ušorava, ušoriti, (isp. šor) - line up a village along the road; a linearized village – a village whose houses form a lane, and are not scattered around.



century, when they started to change their appearance. The same type of houses was built both in civilian Slavonia and in Baranja.

The regiment ensured that its orders were followed through official company orders<sup>6</sup>, or by punishing the house elders in case they weren't followed through. The orders were usually about the building of houses and the organization of habitable and economic space, but they would delve into all spheres of the life of the frontiersmen's families. For instance, a house would have had to be torn down if the company didn't authorize the plot to be possessed. In Babina Greda the frontiersmen would be allotted plots whose size would range from 400 to 800 square yards for the buildings and the yard. The width of the plot next to the street would be 12 to 14 yards. No part of this will be used for gardens because a separate allotment would be awarded for them (Tkalac, 1994: 28- 30). The width of the plot, converted into meters would be 22.7 to 26.5 meters and the length over 50 m (Španiček, 1995: 87). In the divisions of the cooperatives in later times the plots would be divided into several smaller ones, so that the smallest width of the plot would be 7 meters. The usual name for a house with a ridge roof and gables, with a porch or without it, would be *Swabian house*, or *špichauz* (tipped house). This is especially true for gabled houses made from rammed earth, which can be seen even today around Vukovar and Baranja. F. Stefan Engel, a military official<sup>7</sup>, recorded in 1786 an order to build houses from Egyptian brick (Engel, 1971: 532). Egyptian brick is an unfired brick dried in the sun. In the Brod regiment it was used to build houses until the time brickworks on the frontier. It was used in combination with wood, and later with brick. Clay, which was necessary to make mud-brick, was available and completely free, and unlike wood, it would ensure better resistance of the building against fires which were common.

Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century sources don't give much information about peasants' houses in Slavonia, but there a few descriptions from the period of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The advisor for the government Friedrich Wilhelm von Taube traveled around the Požega area (western Slavonia) in 1776 and 1777 and recorded that the majority of the houses were built in wood and mud, and partially covered by thatch and straw. He recorded that the houses didn't have glass in the windows. Instead of that they would have cloth (according to Španiček, 1995: 27, 28). A description by Captain Relković in *Satir* in which he describes the layout of the house is similar to this one. He states that the house is no good, because it's not insulated on the outside nor on the inside, one can see into the house through the trunks, the windows are not shut, there is no furniture and there are two or three *kiljera*<sup>8</sup> which are no good (Relković, 1994: 75, 89).

The frontiersman would build their own wooden houses and adjoining buildings (Tkalac, 1994: 21). The wood they used for construction, mostly oak, they would acquire in the woods under the supervision of the military authority. They would cut

<sup>6</sup> The orders of the Babina Greda company, original company orders written in Croatian but using German syntax. I'm using the orders prepared by M. Landeka and D. Šveglj, and the book by K. Tkalec, *Babogredska kompanija*, where he reconstructed the life of a Slavonian frontiersman based on fifteen books of orders written between 1811 and 1847.

<sup>7</sup> *Koncipist*: a frontier official

<sup>8</sup> *Kiljeri*, *vajati*, *pojatci*, *kućari*;



down and saw the trees and take them to the village (Pavičić, 1968: 105). The wood would be cut with axes at the end of January and in February (Landeka, 1991: 7, Reljković, J. S., 1994: 24-25, 27) because at that time the wood would be dry and not susceptible to rotting and the woodworms. At the same time they would cut the rails for the fences (Reljković, J. S., 1994: 24-25, 27).

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century on the peasants' houses of the Brod regiment the chimneys would be made of wood, and approximately two decades after the regulations of the colonel Dönhof, in the patent of the Emperor Joseph II in 1788 building chimneys from wood on wooden houses was forbidden, and it was ordered to build them with bricks or, exceptionally, with unfired bricks and latticework which had to be well coated (Matasović, 1932: 65). This measure successfully reduced the occurrence of fires. The orders from the Babina Greda company from 1824 state that some houses didn't have a chimney<sup>9</sup>, or that it wasn't covered. The elders of the house cooperatives would be punished if they wouldn't put on what is missing in seven days (Landeka 1991: 13). The measure of the government's intrusion into every sphere of the peasant's life is witnessed by the prohibition of carrying a candle without a lantern, smoking a pipe in the barn or the attic, or smoking while passing through the village (Landeka; 1985: 181). It was left in the memory of the narrator's as an ancient story that carrying tobacco while harvesting in the field would be punished with 15 lashes with a bull's tail.

The Imperial war council allowed the frontiersmen in 1820 to build their houses and other buildings only with brick. For this purpose they could make their own brick in the brickworks, and they didn't have to pay for the wood use to lay the furnaces in the brickworks (Tkalac, 1994: 31-32). In the orders from 1823 it was laid out that the foundations of all the buildings, especially houses and barns<sup>10</sup> would have to be strengthened, and that any disobedience of the orders would be harshly punished by the company (Landeka, 1985: 181). When a general was on inspection, every house, room, fireplace and yard<sup>11</sup> had to be well cleaned, and if they were not, the master the house faced a punishment. Many native inhabitants would also throw garbage in front of the house on the road, which would also be punished by the authorities (Landeka, 1985: 181-182). The punishments, in most cases, would be floggings, like in the cases that were mentioned before.

All the examples we mentioned relate to the Slavonian military frontier, where the peasant – frontiersman, burdened with military obligations and agricultural work, would do what he was ordered to. But similar changes occur in the counties of Slavonia in which the authority was civilian. The peasants who were serfs on the Slavonian fiefs usually had foreigners as masters, who usually had Germans for Hungarians as farm managers.

The three-part organization of the houses existed at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but there are no firm facts on whether it was developed here, or was transferred from the German lands in its developed form. The entrance to the house was in the middle

<sup>9</sup> Odžak (turkish) – fireplace, chimney.

<sup>10</sup> Ambar - (turkish) – barn, grain warehouse.

<sup>11</sup> Avlija (turkish), yard.

room, the kitchen which is a unified space. It was entered from the yard or the porch, and here there were doors to the front and the back room. The kitchen was intended for communication with the rooms, and in its other part to prepare food. It had an open fireplace on which food was prepared and meat was dried. Somewhere in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century fireplaces begin to disappear from the village houses and the replaced with concrete cookers, *šporeti*. (Španiček, 1995: 30- 31).

It was an effort to change and direct the usual ways of construction. All the prescribed measures led to a better construction, habitation and greater safety of the habitable and agricultural buildings.

### Agricultural buildings

Beginning of the construction of agricultural buildings dates back to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century too. Count Dönhof wrote an order for the military frontier in 1765 to build barns<sup>12</sup> or haylofts and mills<sup>13</sup> because wheat was often left in the field to rot (Filipović, 1912: 23). It would also be stored in wheat holes in the ground and would thus be of poor quality because of inadequate storage (Babić, MCMLIX : 1070). All these circumstances would lead to shortages of food and hunger. It was necessary to build agricultural buildings, but there is no information on whether it was stimulated at that time. It went very slowly which was witnessed 20 years later by F. S. Engel, who wrote that there are still too few barns and haylofts to store hay and not enough stables for livestock (Engel, 1971: 314, 315, I. Vol.). On the Belje property in Baranja, which was part of Hungary proper at the time in 1824, there were already large barns to store the crops, while the subjects would store their wheat in barns of different shape, mostly made of canes and coated from inside and outside with mud, covered with straw. (Sršen, 2002: 120).

It can't be claimed that the Slavonian mills were an import from the Habsburg monarchy because they were present in this area before the ottoman rule, but it is presumed that they were built in greater numbers at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century at the same time when the devastated land was populated by immigration. They were most numerous around Vinkovci and Županja, but also in other areas of Slavonia and Baranja. These mills overshadowed the existing water mills because the military authorities tried to regulate the navigation on the Sava River and reduce the danger of flooding. The mills would grind cereals used for human and animal nutrition, salt and clover, and had an important role in farming in the southeastern part of Slavonia, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Španiček, 1995: 2-4). The building of 'dry' mills was encouraged by the government with the opportunity to freely cut wood (Virč, 1982: 25).

With regulation, constant supervision and control, the commands of the lowest formations of military authority, the German managers on the properties and by the

<sup>12</sup> Štagalj, (german Stadel), a building used to store livestock fodder.

<sup>13</sup> Suvara, a mill powered by oxen or horses, it grinds stuff dry, hence the name (suvo=dry). The mill would be built by several owners or the master of the property. They were most numerous in the Military Frontier area.

already present knowledge of the colonized German peasants and craftsmen directed and improved farming and animal husbandry. The existence of agricultural buildings of good quality was a precondition for developing farming in general. The habitational architecture, placement of the buildings, the organization of space and working space as well as the material from which the buildings were built was far better than in the times of Ottoman rule. The civilizing progress brought innovation to the traditional construction and living. The peasant was directed and restrained with orders in building an organizing the living and the working space. The orders had the fulfillment of all the imposed obligations as their goal. By introducing new materials, new ways of construction, giving numbers to the buildings and was intended to prevent frequent fires, to prolong the useful life of the buildings and to improve the quality of living. Many Turkish and German expressions, used correctly or in a distorted form were widely used among the population of Slavonia, which shows the strong influence of the Turkish and the German presence. The notions used in traditional construction: *kvelbovanje*, for making arched windows on agricultural buildings or *giter na pendžeru*, for a window with a grate, *ajnfort*, for a driveway into the yard, are just some of the names which prove this assertion.

All the things by which Slavonia is known today: order, work, cleanness of the house and its surroundings, the organized barns, cleanness of the streets, the wells, the fences, the bridges, the graveyards, the roads come from the heritage that was imposed by the Habsburg rule (Kadić, 1968: 141).

The Germans in eastern Slavonia and Baranja were known as excellent builders of living and agricultural buildings. Josip Payr, a scribe and an official recorded in 1824 that the Germans have been building beautiful houses for several years already in Beli Manastir in Baranja. (Sršan, 2002: 105).

The first immigrant German craftsmen, among the masons, come to Slavonia in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Taube, 1956: 13). The German masters of the craft, the masons in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century were mostly self-taught or carried their knowledge from one generation to the next. They built in all the materials mentioned, mud-brick, wood and bricks. A story is recorded about the daughters of a German mason from Berak who built houses in and around the village, among these a house from 1912<sup>14</sup>. German craftsmen are also prominent in the manufacture of wooden objects.

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<sup>14</sup> House, Berak, Čakovačka 10, a registered unmovable cultural heritage object of traditional architecture. A big house made of brick, key-shaped in its blueprint. It is built in parallel with the street. The street wing with the doors, as well as the representative built driveway, occupies the whole width of the plot. The house has five windows on its face, with reliefs made in mortar. The terracotta applications were put around windows, the doors and the arch. The historicism style was shown in the form of the windowpanes, with alternating circular and triangular gables, and in the pallication of the stucco decoration. A two-wing iron door leads to the patio, with a colored glass above them in a grid pattern. The doors, a quality work of a blacksmith, are square in shape and the continuation of the glass frame on the top is arched. The house has a built driveway beside it with an arch at the entrance. The built masonry arch is between two massive pillars, and beneath it are the new iron doors, which replaced the old one, damaged in the Homeland War. There are three spacious rooms along the street, and in the yard wing the rooms continue in this order: room, bathroom, room, kitchen, storage room, pantry, summer kitchen and the entrance to the attic. The last room in this sequence is the barn. Beneath the bathroom and the room next to it is the basement. The wide porch is on built pillars and continues along the whole house.

The carpenters would make the wooden inventory of the house, cupboards, night-stands, mirrors, doors, windows, chairs, tables. German Libman is named as the best milling<sup>15</sup> master craftsman in the Tomašić mill<sup>16</sup> in Otok (Španiček, 1991: 153).

## The traditional life and culture of the Danube Germans: the examined traces and general characteristics

Through the history of the immigrant German population you can see the history of any individual. I support an assertion by B. Mesinger that an immigrant in a new land, on a new land, has to start from the beginning, fighting to ensure his existence, and that his identity as a member of the governing nation didn't bring him security and leisurely existence. It was a man who was sacrificed first as a colonist, as the one who leaves his home to arrive to a place where he is always a foreigner because he is always the other, the different. All the wealth the immigrants had was hope, and all that kept them together was faith and self-confidence (Mesiger, 2004: 71).

I found out what exactly constituted the traditional culture of Croats and the colonized Germans in eastern Slavonia, Baranja and western Srijem by carrying out a research in the field. The narrators and the interviewees on this wide topic were not easy to find. The most common answers to my questions were: they are gone, those who knew something died, as well as the fright of some German speakers about remembering the exodus of their people after 1945. The narrators I found I classified into two (small) groups. Those interviewees that were born in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who thus lived during the coexistence of the two nationalities in the village, both Germans of Croats of both genders, belong to the first group. Those who were born just before World War II or during it belong to the other group, they are the descendants of Croats and Germans who lived in the villages and they have knowledge about the researched period of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century coming from the stories of their parents and grandparents.

The literary work of the German woman Theresia Moho «Marijanci, childhood in Croatia, 1928 – 1945», is also a credible source for learning about the life of the local

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In the yard there is a hut, and a space to put farm tools. The house is exceptionally spacious, well built and richly decorated. Its construction connects the characteristics of the traditional rural and the urban historicistic architecture. The undisputable value of the house is the level of its preservation and its plan which belongs to the traditional folk architecture of Slavonia by type, and also in the rarity of such architectural style in the rural ambient.

<sup>15</sup> Suvadja, a craftsman who lives in a mill with his family, i. e. in the house which is adjoining it. His basic job is the grinding of cereals and keeping the mill in a working condition.

<sup>16</sup> Tomašić mill in Otok, V. Nazora Street, 49, a registered unmovable cultural heritage object of traditional architecture, the only preserved and renovated horse powered mill in Croatia. It was built in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in two main: a house with a mill and the miller's apartment and a round tent shaped room with a cone roof which housed the driving mechanism.

Swabians in the Slavonian village<sup>17</sup>. In this lyrical novel full of emotion, one can get a picture of the Germans, the structure of their family, family roles, relationships, the duties of the parents and the growing up of the children.

### **The nutrition of the rural population and the German immigrants in Slavonia and Baranja**

The main dish in 18<sup>th</sup> century Slavonia was fried meat with sour cabbage and potatoes. The diet of the rural population is dull but rich in calories, which is appropriate for a man who had to work hard. On the table of a rural family one would usually find pork with boiled sour cabbage and cured meat or bacon. The peasants would keep pigs, cows, sheep, and goats, among poultry, geese, turkeys and ducks. Livestock was 'eaten for meat, poultry as a replacement' wrote Josip Stjepan Relković at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in his «Kućnik<sup>18</sup>». He points out that people didn't know how to make other things. Dairy products (butter, milk cheese and cream) were made but rarely eaten, because a chief of the house cooperative would sell them and save the money he thus earned (Relković, J. S., 1994). The people in Slavonia used onions and garlic and knew how to pickle cabbage. They didn't know how to preserve fruit and vegetables, so they would dry fruit, mostly apples, plums and melons in the fruit dry sheds<sup>19</sup>, especially around Županja. This fruit would be stored in the attic after drying and be cooked and eaten in the long winter days.

Two professors from Budapest, Matija Piller and Ludovik Mitterpacher went around the Požega area in 1782 and wrote this about food and the table: «...Everybody eats at the common table, but one after the other. The men sit at the table first; after them it's the women's turn and children are last... There is not a lot of variety in the meals. In summer they mostly eat vegetables and various flour based meals, in the winter they eat meat, mostly pork, and if there is a lot of cabbage the peasants eat it often, slicing it finely and fermenting it in its own juice. They also use pumpkins for food. After peeling the crust, they cook them in water and when they are cooked soft, they spice them with cream cheese... Whatever they make from flour (whether wheat or corn) they regularly cook in milk, but often they just pour over some melted bacon... They drink wine, or even more often plum brandy, and if they have neither they are satisfied with water ...». (Matić, 1951: 10). The autochthonous Slavonian meals are also fresh cheese with onions and hot salad with bacon, the so-called «popurita», a name common around Vinkovci. The choice of meals and the nutrition of the Slavonian peasant changed slowly; while other vegetables and different spices would be found on the tables of the clergy and the secular magnates and in the city, for a long

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<sup>17</sup> I indirectly view Theresia Moho, (born 1928) as my narrator, although she herself provides answers to the questions that are the object of my interest. Through her intimate life story she made it possible for a lot of readers to get some basic knowledge about the Germans in Slavonia. These are, of course, her reconstructed memories, which go all the way to her early childhood. The same approach applies to my narrators too. The verification is possible and it was carried through by analysis and comparison of the data gathered from the narrators. Personal memory is the only appropriate basis for the tracking of human events, thoughts and feelings. Through them we can reach objective reality.

<sup>18</sup> Kućnik, a male person running the house cooperative.

<sup>19</sup> Pušnice were small wooden agricultural objects situated in the front yard.

time only the items mentioned above were available to the peasant. Chicory, celery, beans, rosemary, carrot, pepper, radishes, horseradish, saffron, spinach and squash were used later (Filipović, 1822:1-110), and they arrive in the village during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

One of the most important farm duties in a year was pig slaughter. Josip Lovretić, a priest and a writer about the folk life, described a pig slaughter in Otok in 1897. The pigs were singed after slaughter. Straw would be put over a pig and the straw would be ignited so the hair would fall off. After scraping it with hoes and wooden scrapes, the women would flush *tikvenim rgom* over the pig, and then the men would wash it «*with both hands without a tub*». After being washed, the pig was again put on clean straw and processed further (Lovretić, 1990: 10; Kadić; 1981: 36). All of the work was done on the ground level and kneeling, which was very exhausting (Kadić, 1981: 36). The Germans probably brought the tools used to process slaughtered pigs more easily, the wooden pulleys (*rem*), the tubs, tools for removing hair (*glokne*), and the tables on which the pig was processed.

Hungarian cuisine, as well as German, also had a great influence on the nutrition of Slavonian peasantry. The cured pork products would be eaten by Slavonians in winter, but also in summer, (Šalić: 1990, 65), unlike Germans, and during the summer poultry and dairy products would be more common. The Šokac women learned from their German counterparts how to conserve fruit and vegetables, i.e. to make canned cherries, apricots, *gunja*, and to make pickles: pickled pepper, cucumbers, sliced pepper, green tomatoes. The writers from Budapest recorded at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that women served men and stood at the table. In the great Šokac peasant families around Vinkovci this was so throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time a German family would have a meal together. After lunch cakes would often be served. Germans would eat meat only on Thursdays and Sundays, and this habit was transferred to Šokci and was followed for a long time. Preparing meat by frying it, poaching and stewing was also a characteristic of the Germans. At the same time when the table of the Germans was rich, with many dishes, the Šokci would cook or fry meat, cook potatoes and other vegetables. The Germans prepared potatoes in five different ways, and other vegetables would be cooked or fried on butter. It was recorded that the «...Šokci didn't know how to make noodles until Swabians taught them...». The names of meals made of wheat flour, so popular in Slavonia, whose German names are still used in their twisted Croatan form point to this: dough with potatoes - grenadirmarš (Grenadir Marsch), fried eggs with flour – šmarn (Schmarn), dough pockets with marmalade – tački (Taschen gefüllt mit Marmelade), long waffles – šufnudle (Schupfnudeln), rolled apple pie – štrudla (Strudel mit Füllung), pastry, sepent shaped cookies - kifle (Kipfel) and others (more on nutrition, N.Rittig - Beljak, Švapski kulinarij – dodir tradicija u Hrvatskoj, Zagreb, 2002 )

Wine and brandy are autochthonous Slavonian drinks, while beer came with the arrival of German brewers and the foundation of the first breweries in Osijek, at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The first breweries were intended to serve the settled imperial soldiers of German origin, and after that the settled civilians (Vrbanus, 2002: 221).



The habit of drinking beer slowly arrives to Slavonian villages. In the villages in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century beer was available in village inns; it was kept in barrels and poured in pints. It has been accustomed since and is now often used.

The German influence to the nutrition of the population in Slavonia is very obvious. One can assume that the local rural population took over the table manners, the preparation of food and some nutritional customs from the German ethnic group. This process went on since the migration of the German farmers, craftsmen, soldiers, nobility and the clergy. The changes in nutrition occurred mostly in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so the rural population in Slavonia in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century didn't have a clear view of the influences of other cultures on the local, in nutrition as well as in the other areas of the traditional life. «*The religious, domestic and family customs were the same as ours*» (vintage, pig slaughter, farming), claims Pero Penavić (b. 1916) from Berak.

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the inhabitants of different ethnicities prepared meals in a similar way, the same kinds of meat, poultry, fruit and vegetables were available to them, and they rarely had knowledge about the origins of specific meals. The narrators often point out that there were no differences in cuisine between the Germans and the Croats, Šokci (Srijem, Valpovo area). I don't bring this as a rule, because it was recorded that during the Second World War Šokci in Baranja didn't fry anything, and just cooked instead. (Šabić, 2004: 233). The time to innovate in nutrition depended on the time when the fireplaces in the houses stopped being used for cooking and by building or buying a cooker, which made it possible to make food in different ways at the same time.

The Slavonija – Srijem of today is in many ways based on the knowledge of the German culinary tradition. Among the majority of the rural and the urban population in eastern Slavonija and Baranja there is no awareness of these facts, and people proudly point out that that cuisine is originally Šokac and Slavonian.

### **The traditional production of cloth and the clothing of Šokci and immigrant Germans**

To the traditional processing of linen which was sowed and used for weaving in a peasant family in Slavonia, the German immigrants in Bačka add hemp, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to Srijem, and in the other half of the century to the central Slavonia (Cepelić, 1917: 13). Besides being produced at home, since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were hemp manufactures in Vladislavci near Čepin and later in Vukovar<sup>20</sup>. Milko Cepelić, a priest, historian and ethnographer from Đakovo, brings interesting information that in 1870. weaving was more spread among women in German immigrant families than among the women from Croatian families (according to Petrović, 1998: 109), and even half a century later he writes that unlike Šokci women,

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<sup>20</sup> The hemp factory was in Borovo.



Swabian women spun and knitted because they had the means and the purpose to do so (Cepelić, 1917: 32).

The data acquired in field research dispute this claim, because the narrators (born after 1917) say that the Germans bought clothes in the town, and that their women didn't have time to weave because of the structure of the family. But some of them remember knitting machines in the 'Swabian houses' on which nobody worked. The manufacture and knitting with linen vanishes in Slavonia through time, which was caused by various reasons, e.g. the bans on retting the flax and the hemp to prevent fish poisoning (Lovretić, 1990: 103-108) but also the influences of urban fashion, the availability of industrial cloths and the better life standards of the peasants.

As a member of the Croat clergy, Cepelić described using harsh words, in which an anti-german stance can be noticed, the disappearance of the finest domestic *misir*, and commented: «...*Unfortunately in these modern times they forget about our finest and best cloth, because ladies and young women crave for the German blouses<sup>21</sup> and commercials*». (Cepelić, 1917: 18).

A part of the traditional Šokac woman's robe was oplećak, a woman's long-sleeved shirt, made of knitted linen or hemp and made by hand, the most common oplećak had long sleeves made of two or three measures<sup>22</sup> of knitted cloth, and had a string on each sleeve that could be pulled and tied around the elbow. There is also a 'Swabian'<sup>23</sup> or a small oplećak, with narrow sleeves, recorded by Josip Lovretić in 1897, with a remark that it has been recorded in Otok in the last 10 years, but in the nearby Nijemci and Đeletovci for 25 years (Lovretić, 1990: 82). Unlike the common one the sleeve of the Swabian oplećak is narrower, reaches the wrist and is not tied to the elbow by a string, and is rimmed with a small lace. (Lovretić, 1990: 102).

*Rekla, reklja, špencl, špenzle*, is a short coat made of rolled wool worn by the Šokac frontiersmen serving on the Military frontier. Usually it was colored in blue with ornaments on the sleeves and the bottom rim of the coat. Because of the material it was made of it could be worn in the spring, the summer but also in the winter and because of that it was worn often and very willingly. According to the pattern (the wheat head or rosemary, cherries, apples or stripes) one could recognize the place from which the frontiersman came. Every company had a specific pattern. *Rekla* with good socks, *fusekle*, which showed the same pattern as rekla (on rekla as an item of clothing in Slavonia and Srijem more in Ćosić – Bukvin, Ivica, Špenzle – The importance of German craftsmen in the production of the traditional Šokac frontiersmen clothing in the Twelvia, i.e. the Brod and Petrovaradin regiment, the German ethnic community yearbook, VDG Jahrbuch, 2005, str. 239 – 252, Osijek, 2005). They were first made by German craftsmen, and after that Croats. They were a clothing item of men, and later of women too.

<sup>21</sup> Blusen, germ. shirt

<sup>22</sup> Pola – a cloth knitted on a traditional horizontal stocking frame, also called *stative*; linen, *hemp* or «bought» cotton, as well as a mix of these textiles, cloth, 40 to 50 cm in width.

<sup>23</sup> The Swabian oplećak is also sometimes called French francuski oplećak and is known as such in the ethnological literature.

The Croats wore white clothes; men wore pants, underpants and a shirt, *rubina*, and opanci on their feet, while women wore white oplećak and *vezenke*, with underskirts and a colorful apron. The Šokac women held hand knitting and, later, sewing with industrial material bought in shops, with high esteem. With them they made clothes and textile items for the household. How a Šokac woman, girl or wife<sup>24</sup> was robed<sup>25</sup> was an important thing in the rural community. Grandmothers, mothers and girls devoted a lot of time to making a rich robe and other traditional items.

In opposition to the Šokci who *dressed nicely in a Šokac fashion* (ornate clothes) (during holy mass and other holiday), the German peasantry dressed in "civilian" clothes at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The German peasants wore pants made of rough blue cloth, and colorful, squared or one-color shirts. On ceremonial occasions they would wear a black civil suit, white shirts and black leather shoes and socks on their feet. On such occasions the women would wear wide skirts made of blue, brown, green or black cloth, which went below the knee. The girls and young women wore a few starched underskirts. The blouses had big collars, and they would wear dark or black aprons on their skirts. Older women wore black clothes. On their feet they would wear socks and black leather slippers, *pačne*, made from rolled wool (Geiger, 2002: 308-309). The Šokac children, both male and female wore shirts until they turned fifteen – long white robes which were embroidered<sup>26</sup> on the bottom rim, and they wore leather opančići on their feet. They didn't wear underwear. The German children wore trousers with suspenders, shirts; the girls wore shirts and skirts, and underwear, all of them knitted from industrial textile, while on their feet they wore white socks and shoes.

The intensive changes in the traditional clothing occur in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the influence of the German immigrants were being accepted. The knitting by hand was slowly abandoned, first in the German then in the Croatian families. The differences in clothing were noticeable, but it seems that the traditional robe of the Šokci was under the influence of the urban fashion and the Germans.

### **The coexistence of the Šokci and the German peasants in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The German population lived in nuclear families. After marriage, a young couple would go their own way independent of their parents. As a rule, a married couple in would rent a place to live, *kvartir*. After some time a couple would build a house, and for some their parents would finance the building of a house at the beginning of the couple's married life. Two brothers with families would rarely share a living space among Germans. If in a rare case an only son stayed in his parents' house, he and his wife would separate from their parents and cook only for themselves. A frequent

<sup>24</sup> Snaše, married Croatian/Šokac women.

<sup>25</sup> Dressed in the traditional folk dress, everyday or ceremonial.

<sup>26</sup> Šlinga, pierced white embroidery which is interweaved with a thread and needle (using hands and, in newer times, machines) by a linear cut cloth.

case among Germans would be that the groom would marry into the girl's house, in case she didn't have any brothers (Gerstner, 1996: 120). After children and parents separated into independent families, the family ties wouldn't be interrupted. They would often go to each other to help the other with their farm duties. Every family had its own horses, but they would borrow the farm machines to each other. The task would be planned a week ahead, and for every day in the plan it would be known who among the brothers would be doing the planned job. With a Šokac man with sons, it would be different; the duties were divided differently and an effort was made for every member of a numerous family to have a particular duty assigned (cultivating land, pig husbandry, *weaving* and other).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a Croat (Šokac) lives in house cooperatives, big extended families, with an elder at the head. The Croats considered the division of a cooperative to be a bad thing and that its members would get poorer (*weaker*) by division. The way of life of the German immigrants was completely different from the Croatian one, and according to the words of the narrators the wealth of the Germans would increase, unlike the wealth of the Croats.

The immigrants, mostly Germans cultivated the soil much more efficiently, and so the crops were greater. They became owners of large tracts of land at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which could be cultivated easier and faster, and machinery could be used on it. They planted monocultures on that land. At the same time, because of the division of the cooperatives the individual land of the Šokci was getting smaller and scattered and was more difficult to cultivate because of that. (Geiger, 2001: 49-50). A peasant needed a lot more time to do his job because he wasn't connected into the cooperative, and he had to do everything alone. This situation lasted until the first land compassations were executed in the 1920's and 1930's. In the 1920's the Germans have agricultural tools, which they acquired from Austria and Germany. The Croats remember that the Germans 'had backup' from these countries. A narrator Josip Zaluški from Vinkovci (born in 1944) heard from his grandfather that in the same time the Germans had *secer za saditi kukuruz, a Šokci su kukuruz sadili pod petu*. Usually the man would harness a horse to pull a plow, which would make a furrow into which his wife would throw some ash and plant the corn seed. The German had a reaper, while a Croat would still reap using a scythe.

Both Croats and Germans had property outside the village; the Croats would call it stan, and the Germans salaš. The Germans probably brought that name from Bačka, where it is still used today.

Pero Penavić (born in 1916) and his wife Marija (born 1923) from Berak remember that their German neighbors were exceptionally hardworking and *good housemasters*. They all had two to three children, in any case more than the Croats. While the Croats desperately tried to keep their cultivable land, the Germans tried to increase theirs at any cost. They would take business risks and they would use the money they earned to buy more land. With their own hands and using their knowledge they would acquire wealth, and their Croat neighbors would often call them *greedy*. They would diligently clean the brush, and coming to the village with no land of their own, in 10 to 20 years they would acquire fifteen, sixteen acres of land. Often, the head of the

Swabian house would go to Vukovar to ask for loans from Jewish traders, to increase their property. More often than Croats they would get credit to buy harvesters to harvest wheat, as well as other machinery. Grandpa Pero remembers: «...*A German plants 10 acres of corn in the spring and sells the crop that he would harvest in autumn to the Jew, and buys an acre of corn for that money. And then he has 11, not 10 ...*».

Backing this up is a claim by the parish priest of Sotin Ferdo Gerstner who wrote in 1918: »... the Germans would come to Sotin as servants or field hands, and with hard work and often because of the carelessness of our peasant acquire a nice property. That was especially easy around 1880-1890, when a peasant would sell his land for meager sums – it was too much for him to cultivate...» (Gerstner, 1996: 73). The parish priest of Sotin deems the Germans to be materialist, people who even eye marriage with financial motives (Gerstner, 1996: 119).

From the Swabian Rosina Vuletić (born in 1920) from Stari Jankovci we find out: «*Šokci prattled a lot, and the Swabians had a lot of land*», and the Swabian Marija Mišić (born in 1937) from Ilača remembers the saying «*Šokac sits and drinks and a Swabian plows and seeds*». This is confirmed by Teresia Moho, citing the words of her grandfather: «... *The stems of the corn were as thick as an arm and on each hung two or three ear of corn, none shorter than 30 cm. Whoever passed by our corn was astonished. Everyone asked themselves how that Swabian made such useless soil so fertile. One square meter after the other, which I cleared and made it capable of bearing crops, cannot be compared with gold. This ground and I have grown into a single being. On account of that I have one request: let no one among you sell a single part of the land, nor abandon it, care for it in the times that come, for I would turn in my grave if I knew that you have forsaken it were sold it to someone unknown. People here are different from us. At the beginning they would smirk at me with pity, or maybe even scorn as they watched me working in the field. I don't want to say that we're better, I don't, we're just different. While we work till we break, they enjoy life, have fun and make jokes – yet no one among them is hungry* » (Moho, 1998: 22).

Josip Lovretić writes too about this difference in performing the farm duties, in a monograph about Otok, citing how the girls of Otok sing about beating hemp<sup>27</sup> making fun of their Swabian neighbors: «*Mom told me yesterday that the Swabian is beating hemp, and she says of the same time, let her beat, who helps her anyway?!*».

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<sup>27</sup> The beating of hemp was a phase in the procedure of producing fibers from the hemp plant. It was done using a wooden piston. The piston was made in two parts made of wood. The lower part had a couple of teeth, while the lower had one less than the upper, so the upper teeth get between the lower. The lower part is on the ground, with the teeth turned upwards. The pieces are connected like scissors, so the piston is always opening and closing, when the opposite ends of the pantile are pressed. On both sides of the stupka there are two poles connected with another pole which is grabbed by the person who is beating the hemp. The other person, who sits, is pulling the small sheafs, *ručice* between the pantiles and thus the hemp is beaten. This was usually a woman's job, but it was done by men too. One person would pull the sheafs of the hemp in the stupka and the other would press its other part with a leg. The beating would press the hemp, and the women would turn the handle between the teeth of the stupke until fibers would come out. What is left at the handle is *puzder*, and the good residue, which would later be processed, *povjesmo*. After being retted in water and dried, the beating in a stupka was the first phase of processing of the raw material, which would finally produce a thin fiber, which could be knitted on a stocking frame. This job was usually performed in the evening to avoid moistening the stupka and the already dried hemp.

All the narrators say that the Germans were advanced in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They remember that the Germans had the first sunflower harvesters, wheat harvesters, corn shellers, wheat threshers, mills for livestock fodder and so on. Allegedly, they were helped by their native country with money and the technology for cultivating soil. Ladislav Švedl, a coachbuilder from Petrijevcı, said that the Šokci were not interested in learning a craft, working on soil was enough for them. Unlike them, Germans would often go to vocational schools along with being in apprenticeship, and would go through the process of learning a craft from being an apprentice and a journeyman to being a master craftsman of a certain craft. They were blacksmiths, coachbuilders and carpenters. The first car mechanics, electricians, and locksmiths in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were the Germans of Slavonia. «*The Swabians liked crafts*», said this master craftsman of German origins.

In the country the Germans try to preserve their national and religious identity. They intermarry, and the marriages with members of other national groups and religions were few and they were frowned upon. In the cities mixing occurred more often. If a Croatian woman married a German, the children would be German, and if a Croat man married a German, the children would in most cases be German again, Gerstner, the parish priest of Sotin claims (Gerstner, 1996: 73). Only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century there are marriages between the Šokci Croats and Germans in the area of Vinkovci. German women married to Šokci men would use their language and teach it to their children, which weakened the link to the Šokac identity of some families in Vinkovci. Rare are the cases when a German would become a Šokac (Šalić, 1999: 32). Some inhabitants of Vinkovci turned craftsman from being a peasant in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they would marry a German women or a member of other nationalities and religious groups, and then lose their Šokac identity (Šalić, 1993: 147). The marriages between the members of the Croatian and the German nation were frowned upon in the Đakovo area too (Šalić, 1990: 66).

Although marriages between the two nationalities were rare, mutual socializing and growing up of village girls and boys of both nationalities occurred frequently. While still children, through mutual play, Croats learned the German language and Germans would learn Croatian. Mutual socializing and respect was kept up in adult life.

The relationship between the two nationalities was good until the national socialist propaganda spread among the Germans. Then Croatian would sometimes hear this from their German neighbors: «*You, Croat neighbors, will go to the Carpathians, while we will stay here!* »

### **The German influence on the «public» life of the village**

In the market towns in the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was much less tolerance and respect for differences than in the villages. The German stores and the craftsmen were often singled out because of their nationality, not the quality of their service. An illustrative example was the one of the traveling salesman representing the firm F. L. Bier

from Vukovar, in 1907, who sold cigarette papers to storeowners from Vinkovci as “his own” brand with the title “Our future” and the picture of a Croat man and woman, the Croatian crest and flag, but who issued a receipt in German, thus drawing the anger of one of those who called him out in the papers as a promoter of a foreign firm, «...that those intrusive foreigners should be taught for once that they are in Croatia and it's their duty to respect the Croatian language» (Svjetlost, Vk, nr. 35, pg. 5, Jan 9 1907). It is a surprising protest because at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century all the names of the stores and workshops in Vinkovci were written in German, and it was fashionable and prestigious to speak in German, especially on a square and among «...young gentlemen and ladies...», and among people with higher social status (compare with Geiger, 2002: 311). Although unsigned, the writer of these lines objects: «...Some of our poor and pathetic Vinkovci citizens, although they know Croatian well, talk in German and give Vinkovci the character of a German town ...»<sup>28</sup> (Svjetlost, Vinkovci, nr. 22, pg. 3, 2 Jun 1907).

The resistance to Germanization in the public affairs was continuous since the arrival of Germans. German was the official language in tandem with Latin, in the civilian Croatia until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in the Military Frontier until the demilitarization in 1881. It had to be used outside the home too. When a child would leave for school and close the door of the yard, it couldn't talk Croatian anymore, but German, and if it did the parents of the offender were punished. (Janković, 1968: 167).

In the villages with Croatian and German population there were often a Šokac and a German inn, *birtija*<sup>29</sup>. It can be assumed that they were a German import. The Šokac population would entertain themselves by dancing the kolo after the Sunday Mass, on holidays or during a wedding party, always outdoors. In a Croatian inn there would always be a *tamburica* band, or a Gipsy *egeda*, and in the German one, there was always a brass band (Blech music) and dancing the Waltz. The Germans would rarely visit the Croatian inns, and the Croatians would rarely visit the German, although it was recorded that they sometimes partied together in the only inn in the village and «got together like brothers». Germans settled in the newly founded Novo selo (New village) near Vinkovci, Neudorf, in 1819, and it took them a long time to enter the advanced class of peasants. They were evangelicals, (Virč: 2002, 54) and we find news about them a century later when they loudly celebrate a *fair* with a good drop (of wine), and many Vinkovci citizens visited them (Svjetlost, Vinkovci; nr. 42, 21 Oct 1906, pg. 6), which doesn't correspond to the stereotypes of Germans who always work and rarely party. The Germans of Vukovar who lived on the Swabian Hill also hosted their visitors to their *kirvaj* with a rich table (pork roast, lamb, cakes) (Schreckeis, 1990: 221-223). The word *kirvaj*, *kirbaj*, so usual in Slavonia also comes from a German word (Kirchweihe) and it means a church festivity. Every village, i.e. a parish had a church festivity once a year, which was celebrated with guests, usually relatives from places nearby.

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<sup>28</sup> Vinkovci got the status of a city as late as 1922.

<sup>29</sup> From the German masculine noun *Wirt*, the keeper of the inn



The churches in the villages were usually Roman Catholic. The Croats would celebrate their Mass on Sundays and holidays, and the Germans theirs. At that time the Mass was celebrated in Latin, and the sermon was read in Croatian or German. The children would celebrate children's Little Mass together.

## Conclusion

The past of Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srijem is not only the history of the Croatian population, but also of other peoples who inhabited the area. Some people, especially the Germans, became the seeders of the new economical and cultural tradition that deeply incorporated itself into the history of the eastern Croatia between the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The German influences and their transformed forms: in everyday life, the ways of cultivating soil, the crafts, folk architecture, living arrangements, clothing, nutrition, and so on, were present in the traditional life too. The influences of the German immigrant population were taken over through centuries. From their experiences new values, skills, behaviors and habits were extracted. The culture, whose carriers and their descendants are gone, and yet it still lives today, transformed and adopted, and among the majority of the population it is considered to be original, "their own", autochthonous, Slavonian, Šokac. Although it was bringing the innovations which improved the quality of life and civilized progress in general, the foreign authority mostly made up from the German population was confronted with a strong resistance by the local population, which was broken with military or civilian repressive measures.

The task and the basic purpose of this work was to ascertain what was left of the numerous German influences. It was attempted to answer the question what will the German inheritors of the Croatian lands be remembered by except the aggressive wars of their home country in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They worked hard together with the Šokci, and considered their new country as their own homeland.

This short review showed some historical facts relevant for the understanding of the life of Germans in Croatia. It shows the data which were not widely known in their true light and liberates from the stereotypes and prejudices acquired in the socialist Yugoslavia.

After the World War Two the traces of this important culture disappear and vanish under the pressure of the merciless communist system, which sent hundreds of thousands of citizens of German origins into exodus. Unjustly punished, the members of the German people left the new federal Yugoslavia. After the World War Two only a few Germans were left in Croatia and their influence was invalidated and hidden, especially from the generations born and grown in the new socialist system.

The German influences cross the boundaries of the researched area and exist in Vojvodina where Germans were colonized too. It is also important to mention that



the traditions listed here were not invented by Germans, and that some of them exist since ancient history (for example the crop rotation is in existence as an agricultural method since the times of the ancient civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia as well as building in mudbrick) or were created in the developed Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Enlightenment through the written word, individuals who performed various economic and administrative duties, the noble families, craftsmen, and colonized peasants were always present and got into every crevice of the social and private life in the country and in the town, and thus left a permanent and inerasable trace in the culture of the eastern part of Croatia.

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