

THE GERMAN FREEMASON SETTLERS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF FREEMASONRY IN BANAT IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES¹

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Abstract

This study underlines the fact that Freemasonry, brought to Banat by the Austrian settlers, did not leave this area as an isolated provincialism. It was in direct contact with the Central European elite, exchanging ideas and experiences. At that time, Freemasonry facilitated the access of representatives of the small and middle bourgeoisie, merchants, entrepreneurs, military and civil servants, creating a real community outside the traditional structures. This was also the case in Banat in the 19th century. The Masonic lodges of this period continued the inherited Masonic tradition, carrying on the elitist spirit brought by the Austrian colonists in the previous period. In the 19th century, two lodges in the Mountains Banat, continued this Austrian Masonic tradition. These were the Lodge 'Glück auf' in Oravița and the Lodge 'Licht und Wahrheit' in Reșița. Both contributed significantly to the complex process of modernisation of Banat society, but also to the success of the Romanian national movement during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

Keywords: Banat; Freemasonry; elites; colonists; lodges; modernisation.

1. Introduction: The transition from operative to speculative Freemasonry in Europe (18th century).

At the beginning of the 18th century, the creation of the United Grand Lodge of England, *Mother of the World*, marked the first major step in the transition from operative to speculative Freemasonry. In other words, the place of the stonemasons, builders of Gothic cathedrals, was taken by intellectuals and philosophers, and the guilds were replaced by temples of Masonic brothers. They claimed to be the successors of the old medieval guilds (Fay, 1961, pp. 75-76).

It was also at this time, at the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment, that Freemasonry began to spread to different parts of the world. The aforementioned United Grand Lodge of England, the *Mother of the World*, played an important role in this. At that time, London was already a commercial and financial metropolis, and its relations with many European port cities were also strengthened by the political influence of Great Britain over northern and Mediterranean Europe. Thus, the main 'axes' of the spread of speculative Freemasonry in Europe were as follows:

1. Northern Axis - The first areas of contact with the influence of British Freemasonry were the northern countries, namely the Netherlands. It was under British economic

¹ Article History: Received: 23.12.2024. Accepted: 19.02.2025. Published: 15.05.2025. No funding was received either for the research presented in the article or for the creation of the article.

- tutelage, then the northern German cities of Hamburg and Hanover (Thual, 1994, pp. 22).
2. Western European axis - In France, the rise of speculative Freemasonry was due to the immigration of the Stuarts and the classic expansion of English Freemasonry. By 1730 there were already important lodges in Paris, Saint-Germain-en Laye, Bordeaux and Toulouse. Freemasonry in this area was an urban phenomenon, and now, in the first half of the 18th century, it could not be separated from the widespread Anglomania (Thual, 1994, p. 42).
 3. Iberian Axis - Portugal, a British colony, accepted the principles of Freemasonry among its elite in the 18th century. In Spain, the first Masonic lodge appeared in Madrid in 1728. Later, between 1748 and 1765, Masonic activities also took place in Barcelona, under British obedience (Thual, 1994, p. 42).
 4. Baltic Axis - this area included the Kingdom of Denmark, which at the time exercised influence over Norway, Iceland and Greenland, and the Russian Empire. The latter, through its Baltic façade, was in contact with the English world: through Riga and St. Petersburg, British Freemasonry spread to several cities (Thual, 1994, p. 36).
 5. Central European Axis - during this period, the Viennese Court also extended its influence into Belgium, which was linked to England by the North Sea. Thus the Habsburg Empire came into contact with British Freemasonry through the regions of present-day Belgium (Thual, 1994, pp. 37. See also Varga, 2013, pp. 14-15).

2. Freemasonry and Austrian Colonisations in the Banat Mountains (18th century)

In the first half of the 18th century in Banat, or rather in the Banat Mountains, the framing trade entered the *Austrian channel*. This is connected with the first wave of colonisation that took place between 1718 and 1740. After the end of the war between the Habsburg Empire, the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Venice in 1714-1718 and the conclusion of the Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718, the Court of Vienna took control of Serbia and Banat. It became part of the Habsburg Empire (Ehrler, 2006).

Banat was divided into 13 counties. Each district was headed by an administrator, assisted by a deputy. The powers of these administrators included the collection of taxes, the development of resources, the administration of justice, the maintenance of peace and the welfare of the population (Bota, 2008, p. 138). In the newly created political context, the imperial authorities sought to make the most of the province's remarkable resources and economic potential. For this reason, they pushed the boundaries of institutional and administrative modernisation in this area as well, implementing the model of a centralised bureaucracy.

In a first phase of this effort to exploit the potential of the province, the Viennese authorities began the first organised colonisation of Banat in the autumn of 1718. By 1740, between 15,000 and 40,000 German settlers had arrived. They were joined by Serbs, Bulgarians, Italians and Spaniards. These settlers had to make up for the massive population losses caused by the previous wars.

They therefore served the interests of the Austrian state and its policies. To this end, the authorities wanted to ensure good living conditions for the colonised population and started to reorganise all the villages in Banat. In the context of the administrative reorganisation of Banat and the modernisation of the region, Oravița became one of the most important mountain centres.

This centre was located in an area rich in land and subsoil resources. For this reason, in the course of time, important modernisation projects, construction works and waterworks were carried out in this place. In Oravița, such works began as early as 1720.

The area was prepared for the arrival of 456 settlers, by order of the Commission of Mountain Endowment in Timișoara. They came from Tyrol and Schmollnitz, and were given land and considerable financial support to come here (Bota, 2008, p. 155). The mining potential of the area required the training of new generations of specialists, and in 1729 the Oravița Mining School was founded. It was the first vocational school in nowadays Romania (Bota, 2008, p. 155).

Such a professional upsurge in an area rich in resources justified the presence of specialists (chartered engineers, geodesists, geologists, topographers) from the major cities of the Habsburg Empire. Some of these settler-monarchists were Freemasons. We owe to them the beginning of the Masonic movement in the area of the Mountains Banat.

3. The first prominent promoters and lodges of the Freemasonry in Banat (18th century)

A prime example is Iosif Motsidlowsky, the coordinator of the dam and hydrotechnical works at Lacul Mare. When he came to Oravița, in 1741, he was a member of the *Zu den Drei Adlern* lodge in Vienna (Bota, 2011).

Later, in 1741, the Empress Maria Theresa appointed the Augustan councillor Ferdinand Kollowrath Krakowsky (1682-1751), a member of the Viennese Freemasonry, president of the commission that established in this province an Aulic Commission for Banat, Transylvanian and Illyrian Affairs (Bota, 2008, p. 139).

In the same year, Councillor Krakowsky came to the town to inspect the situation of the communities in Banat Montan. On this occasion, he inaugurated a 'local lodge' with the status of a subordinate lodge to the one in Vienna, to which he also belonged. Therefore, the year 1741 can be considered as the date of the first documentary mention of Freemasonry in the territory of Oravița and in the Mountains Banat (Bota, 2011).

Two years later, sources mention four other Freemasons who settled in Oravița: Julius Baumann, Jacob Belgrader, Mathias Fischer and Peter Eirich senior. Julius Baumann came from the Austrian Tyrol where he had been initiated into a Scottish Masonic Lodge in Schwaz. Of Jacob Belgrader, son of the geodetic engineer Arnold Belgrader, we know that after living in the buildings of the Heraldry Office, he moved with his family into a house built by Julius Baumann, his brother-in-law. Both had married the Hoffmann sisters, daughters of a local mining entrepreneur (Bota, 2011).

Later, in 1751, the owner of the Mountain Cyclops brewery, Mathias Fischer, was initiated into the same Vienna lodge. He had been recommended by Jean-Baptiste Marie Ragon, venerable of the corresponding lodge in Constantinople, the owner of the Palanka trading system on the Danube. Together with Peter Eirich senior, owner of the Hotel *Kaiser Karl*, Mathias Fischer laid the foundations of a nucleus that became the Areopagus in 1756 (Bota, 2011).

He held the title of *Freischützen-Corps* and was under the obedience of the Lodge 'Saint Andreas zu den Drei Seeblätten' in Berlin after 1767. Until then, the Oravița Areopagus was under the protection of the venerable Pro-Grand Master of the Vienna Lodge, von Hechengarten. He was present in Oravița for many years, as an imperial advisor in the matters of the Mining Directorate and the Mining Treasury (Bota, 2011).

At the same time, Baron Maximilian Josef Linden (1736-1801), a freemason of the Vienna Lodge *Zur Hoffnung* (founded in 1770), founded a Rosicrucian Lodge in Timișoara in 1772. He had the approval of the high-ranking freemasons in Vienna, with whom he corresponded at the beginning of 1772 (Abafi, 1884). After Linden's departure from Timișoara the lodge was led by Josef Sauvaigne, then by Josef Bohoninczky, then by Baron Johann Wenzel Maria Pötting and, from 1779, again by Sauvaigne, who had meanwhile returned to

Banat (Kakucs, 2016, pp. 470). Because of the lodge's financial irregularities, Josef Sauvaigne was expelled from the Rosicrucian Order in August 1782.

Its ranks included eminent personalities: The Orthodox Bishop of Arad, Petru Pecrovici (1733-1780), the Canon of Cenad, the Bulgarian Vuko Branko de Pal (1725-1798), Gherasim Adamovici (1733-1794), who became the Orthodox Bishop of Transylvania (between 1789-1794) and Iosif Ioanovici Șacabent, the Orthodox Bishop of Vârșeț (1786-1804) (Kakucs, 2016, pp. 470). As for Joseph Sauvaigne, who was expelled from the Rosicrucians, he played an important role in the foundation and activity of the Masonic Lodge 'To the Three White Lilies', founded in Timișoara in the spring of 1776.

It received its statutes in 1780 from the Vienna Lodge 'Zu den drei Adlern'. The Timișoara Lodge belonged to the Federation of Lodges of Galicia, which was one of the 17 provincial groups of the St. John Rite in the Habsburg Empire. (Kakucs, 2016, pp. 472) The ranks of this lodge included important personalities of the time: *Josef Bohoninczky*, military adviser, *Baron Friedrich Eckhard*, chief accountant of the chamber estates in Kanizsa, *Baron Johann Wenzel Maria Pötting*, chamber adviser, *Franz Heigl*, merchant in Timișoara, *Engelbert Kirchgeher*, head of the transport service, *Baron Franz Anton Vinzenz*, court advisor, *József Ignic Muller*, accountant, chief chamberlain, *Baron Golz*, vice-colonel, commander of the Esterhazy regiment, *Baron Andreas von Basselilly* (1747-1805), administrative officer, *Ernst Nigg*, chamberlain in Lipova, *Johann Joachim Gross* (1725-1791), chief physician of Timiș county between 1756-1791, *Johann Jakob Swoboda*, administrative officer, *Baron Friedrich Willberg*, captain of the border regiment in Panciova, *Sebesteny Baron Wenzel Sauer* (1742-1799), president of the chamber administration, *Albert Wenzeslaus Karliczky* (1747-1803), director of the chamber schools, *Nikolaus Heimeyer*, chambelan in Vienna, *Baron Rehback*, president of the Lugoj chamber estates, *Janos Breauer*, chief accountant in Receaș, *Dr. Ferenc Hoffmann*, surgeon in Oravița (1769-1775), *Franz Heigl*, doctor in Bocșa, *Fülop Dellevaux*, chamber clerk, *Barzellini*, administrator of the Starhemberg rice mill (Kakucs, 2016, p. 472. See also Abafi, 1893, pp. 1-16).

The founding of the Timișoara Masonic Lodge took place shortly after the end of the second wave of colonisation in Banat, between 1744 and 1772. At that time, about 75,000 settlers arrived in Banat and made an important contribution to the development of the province. The development of the Masonic movement in Banat, since the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment, also highlights the favourable context in which a professional elite, directly linked to the decision-makers in the capital of the Empire, was consolidated. Thanks to the Freemasonry brought by the Austrian settlers, who belonged to the upper class of the Austrian society, the local elite of the Banat and the Mountains Banat did not remain in an isolated provincialism. They were in direct contact with the Central European elite, exchanging ideas and experiences.

During this period, Freemasonry attracted representatives of the lower and middle bourgeoisie, merchants, businessmen, military and civil servants, creating a real community outside the traditional structures. In these lodges, modern values were reconciled with traditional landmarks, and they became veritable "laboratories of ideas". These ideas were put into practice and contributed greatly to the complex process of modernising society (Nicoară, 2005, p. 256). This was also the case in Banat in the 19th century.

4. Masonic lodges in Banat (19th century)

The Masonic lodges of this period continued the inherited Masonic tradition, carrying on the elitist spirit brought by the Austrian colonists in the previous period. In the 19th century, two lodges in the Mountains Banat, continued the Masonic tradition introduced by the Austrian Freemasons. These were the Lodge *Glück auf* in Oravița and the Lodge *Licht und Wahrheit* in Reșița.

In 1873, when it was decided to open a workshop in Reșița, there was already a flourishing Masonic activity in the Mountains Banat. This was due to the efforts of the Brethren of the 'Glück auf zu den drei Schlägeln' Lodge from Oravița. In fact, in the case of this province, this was truly the *cradle* of modern Freemasonry. In addition to the 'Glück auf' lodge, which operated under the obedience of the Hungarian Grand Lodge of the Johannite Rite, there was another important lodge, 'Kosmos'. However, it operated under another rival obedience: the Grand Orient of Hungary. Both lodges in Oravița were German-speaking, which is not surprising (Varga, 2011, pp. 69-76).

As mentioned above, there had been a large influx of German settlers here since the second half of the 18th century. They were specialists in mining, metallurgy and related trades, brought from Tyrol, Bohemia and Styria. With their help, compact and stable settlements such as *Oravița Montana* were created (Varga, 2011, pp. 69-76). The peak of Oravița's development under Austrian administration came in 1867 with the establishment of the Austro-Hungarian Dualism.

Oravița continued to play an increasingly important economic and cultural role. In 1872 the weekly newspaper *Oravitzaer Wochenblatt* was published. Six years later, the 'Marilla' resort for the city's elite was built in the same area. Other important industrial developments followed (Varga, 2011, pp. 69-76). In such an economically and culturally well-developed environment, the elite of the lodge, under the obedience of the Grand Lodge of the Hungarian Ioanite Rite, considered it opportune to open a new Masonic nucleus in the neighbouring town. The circumstances were very favourable. Reșița was an industrial city in full expansion, it already had an elite middle class with progressive views.

Moreover, and more importantly, the Hungarian Grand Lodge of the Johannite Rite itself, beyond the heated polemics with its great rival on the subject of the formation of a single Grand Orient, managed to fully consolidate its own identity (Varga, 2011, pp. 69-76).

At the central level, it had secured a first-rate elite who, in the boom period that had just begun, realised that the strength of the newly formed Grand Obedience was also closely linked to the strengthening of local positions. This was also the reason for opening new workshops, especially where there was significant human potential. This was exactly what the Hungarian Grand Orient Obedience really wanted. The competition at the top between the two Grand Obediences was inevitably transferred to the local level.

Under the auspices of 'competition', the Brethren of Lodge *Glück auf zu den drei Schlägeln* realised that a lack of constructive initiative could only be to their disadvantage. It is hard to believe that the Grand Orient of Hungary did not even consider the possibility of opening a lodge in Reșița, operating according to the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Such lodges also existed in Caransebeș (Lodge *Irenea*), Oravița (Lodge *Kosmos*), Vârșeț (Lodge 'Egalitas'), Biserica Albă (Lodge *Fels der Wahrheit*) (Varga, 2011, pp. 69-76). Such lodges also existed in Caransebeș (Lodge *Irenea*), Oravița (Lodge 'Kosmos'), Vârșeț (Lodge *Egalitas*), Biserica Albă (Lodge *Fels der Wahrheit*).

Under these circumstances, the Oravița Brethren decided to open a lodge in Reșița on 4 October 1873, after an event organised by the "Glück auf zu den drei Schlägeln" Lodge. It was named "Light and Truth" by the founding members, who have been associated with Reșița Lodge since 30 November. These founders were German elites: Georg Adam Heinbach, Petru

Broșteanu (intellectual), Ludwig Fessler (cashier), Stangl Scheible, Johann Pantyik (Protestant preacher), Anton Heger (baker), Alexander (Sándor) Schönberger (blacksmith) and Johann Wachlinger (clerk). The lodge was therefore predominantly German (Varga, 2011, pp. 77-86).

A year later, when the 'Internal Regulations' were completed and sent to the Grand Lodge of the Hungarian Rite of St. John for approval, in addition to these eight names, the following Brethren were mentioned Alexander Williger (secretary), A. Horváth, the teacher Ion Simu and Georg Sinfelberg. All of them were initiated into Freemasonry in Oravița and received their promotions in the new lodge they founded.

In the case of the 'Licht und Wahrheit' Lodge in Reșița, these positions were filled as follows: Georg Adam Heinbach - Worshipful Master of the Lodge, Petru Broșteanu - Secretary, Ludwig Fessler - First Overseer, Stangl Scheible - Second Overseer, Johann Pantyik - Orator, Anton Heger - Treasurer, Alexander Schönberger - Master of Ceremonies, Johann Wachlinger - Archivist (Varga, 2011, pp. 77-86).

From the moment these documents were sent to the Grand Lodge of the Hungarian Rite of St. John, the 'Licht und Wahrheit' Lodge of Reșița operated under a provisional status. Due to the fact that a large part of the documents in the lodge's archives have been lost, it's not possible to say exactly when the Reșița Lodge received permission to operate. It could have come in the first months of 1874 (Varga, 2011, pp. 77-86).

Although we do not yet know the exact location of the historic headquarters of the 'Licht und Wahrheit' Lodge, we do know that it was not a very comfortable and spacious location, and that the conditions there were very poor. In a detailed report sent to the Grand Lodge of Budapest on 13 October 1875, it is made very clear that the lodge had a major problem with the storage of its archives that year, with that many of the important papers being gnawed on by rats (Varga, 2011, pp. 77-86).

5. Masonic activity in the Banat in word and deed (19th century)

Based on the idea of tolerance, Freemasonry has, since the beginning of the modern era, been able to offer a real alternative that challenges traditional structures. This is all the more so because, as has already been said, it promotes the internal application of fraternal equality, i.e. the appreciation of man according to his just value, despite the different social conditions of its members. Internally, therefore, rank, wealth, social position, religion or nationality were of little importance. Tolerance was the glue of a secret world that produced true elites. This was also true of the lodge in Reșița.

As stated in a letter sent to the Grand Lodge of Budapest on 14 July 1875 concerning the Freemasons of Reșița: "As regards the cultural level of our fellow citizens, we can say that they are educated people who have a healthy view of the world and of the conditions in which they live." (Varga, 2011, pp. 77-86). Throughout the second half of the 19th century, their concerns did not exclude projects aimed at the economic development of a province with extraordinary potential.

As Georg Adam Heinbach himself admitted in a letter of 1880:

The Banat region is fortunate to have a railway network that is a constantly developing (...) I have travelled through the Banat region from one end to the other and have had the pleasure of observing a land inhabited by many nations living in harmony and good understanding. The area has unlimited economic potential, which is being exploited by the presence and work of an industrious population. In order to make better use of the land and subsoil resources, the railway network, which is well maintained but still underdeveloped compared to the economic potential waiting to be tapped, should be extended. (Varga, 2011, pp. 77-86)

The project to build a railway between Reșița and Dognecea was supported by the Brethren of the Lodge 'Licht und Wahrheit' from the beginning of 1874. The same Georg Adam Heinbach admits that:

at the beginning of 1874 I started to work as an engineer at the k. & k. St. E. G. Vienna. My work took me to Reșița and Dognecea. During our weekly trips we became aware of the need to build a secondary railway line between these two towns. This would bring innumerable economic benefits to the region and facilitate communication within the Imperial Government's postal system. One of the supporters of my idea was my mentor, the Worshipful Master of Reșița, Johann Pantyik. He prepared me for promotion to the leading ranks of the Hungarian Grand Lodge of the Johannite Rite. (Varga, 2011, pp. 77-86)

The idea itself was very popular. Between 1868 and 1870, an industrial horse-drawn railway was built between Reșița and Secu, with a length of 12.3 km. It was later converted to steam traction and opened on 26 July 1871. At the same time, during this period, the internal railway network of the Reșița factories was extended and reconstructed, providing connections with the warehouses and workshops of the factory (Varga, 2011, pp. 77-86).

In 1871, the construction of the industrial railway line began on the Reșița-Bocșa Română-Ocna de Fier section, which was inaugurated on 3 September 1873. This was the link with the mining activities in the Bocșa area. However, apart from the ambitious projects of the Freemasons of Reșița aimed at the economic development of the province, a number of challenges remained within the organisation, which could hardly be solved in time (Varga, 2011, pp. 77-86).

6. Petru Broșteanu (1838-1920), dominant personality of the Masonic movement in Banat

One of them was the involvement of the Masonic movement in the Banat Mountains in the support of the Romanian national cause. This involvement was mainly through a scholar, member of the Romanian Academy and Freemason in the Reșița Lodge. It is the famous Germanist Petru Broșteanu. He was secretary of the Austro-Hungarian Railway Society, working for the magazines *Romänische Revue* and *Rumänische Jahrbücher* (1886-1889), mainly as a translator (Rusu, 2003, p. 144).

He worked extensively on the publication of *Romänische Revue* (Reșița-Budapest-Vienna, 1885-1891). One of Petru Broșteanu's most important intellectual achievements was the translation from German into Romanian of Heinrich Franche's voluminous work on the Emperor Trajan. It was published in fascicles in Brașov in 1895 by the author's own publishing house. As a Freemason, Petru Broșteanu distinguished himself as a prominent member of the *Licht und Wahrheit* Lodge in Reșița. He was initiated into Freemasonry on 26 February 1872 in the *Glückauf* Lodge in Oravița and quickly received his three degrees (Zaberca, 1999, pp. 14-18).

On 24 June 1872 he was already awarded the rank of a Master. Thanks to this fact, from 1872 to 1876, Petru Broșteanu held the high dignity of Deputy Worshipful Master of the Reșița Lodge. (Zaberca, 1978, pp. 87-90). Most of the documents of the Lodge were kept and signed by him. From their contents the figure of an extremely active and committed Freemason emerges.

He was a very good organiser and most of the solutions to the administrative problems of the lodge in Reșița were due to him. He travelled extensively, including the Carpathians, on various missions which inevitably brought him into closer contact with the Romanian political elite. By his own admission, he had already undertaken a mission to Bucharest in 1878. Then he found a place to live, a job, he integrated very well into the daily life of the city and, above

all, he carried out the instructions given to him by the Grand Master of the Hungarian Grand Lodge of the Johannite Rite (Zaberca, 1978, pp. 87-90).

These were not the most favourable times for the ideals and demands passionately supported by the Romanian elite in Transylvania. His correspondence with the great man of culture George Barițiu took place at a time when the Romanian political elite was preparing to issue the famous *Memorandum* of 1881. It is linked to the *memorandum* movement that began towards the end of Austro-Hungarian dualism. The Hungarian political elite then succeeded in repealing the laws passed by the Transylvanian Parliament (Diet) of Sibiu in 1863-1865. The latter recognised the Romanians as a fourth nation with political, cultural and ecclesiastical rights equal to those of the historical Transylvanian nations, and Transylvania preserved its territorial autonomy (Zaberca, 1978, pp. 87-90).

The repeal of these decisions and the recognition of Transylvania's union with Hungary provoked a swift reaction from the Romanians. The Transylvanians declared themselves passive and abstained from the elections. They sought the support of the Emperor against Budapest for the restoration of Transylvania's autonomy, with all the consequences of the laws of 1863-1865.

The Romanians from the Banat and from Hungary, who were outside the borders of Transylvania (autonomous province before 1867), followed a policy of active participation in the elections and in the work of the parliament in Budapest. They believed that supporting the separatist Kosuthist movement (supported by the Hungarian emigration) would lead to an independent Hungary. Therefore, the Romanians had to win the freedoms they wanted, either in good agreement with the Hungarian governments or with the support of the other nationalities (Zaberca, 1978, pp. 87-90). George Barițiu was entrusted with the drafting of this political document, entitled *Memorial composed and published by order of the General Conference of the Representatives of the Romanian Voters assembled in Sibiu on 12, 13 and 14 May 1881*.

Together with Vincențiu Babeș and Ioan Rațiu, he chaired the Sibiu meeting. (Zaberca, 1978, pp. 87-90) The memoirs were printed in 1882 in four languages (Romanian - 2000 copies), French (750 copies), Hungarian (700 copies) and German (600 copies). They were to be sent to leading European political figures, magazines and newspapers, academies, universities, scientific, cultural and literary institutions as an indictment of dualism (Varga, 2011, pp. 88-94). Petru Broșteanu was also involved and he welcomed the idea of distributing the material in Western European countries (Varga, 2011, pp. 88-94).

In a letter dated 11 January 1882, Petru Broșteanu informed George Barițiu that he had met the rector of the Royal Gymnasium in Tübingen, Dr. Ramsler, in Karlsbad. According to sources, the German professor spoke sympathetically about the Romanians and knew a lot about the Daco- and the Macedonian Romanians. The author of the letter stressed that Rector Ramsler could be persuaded to defend the cause of the Romanians and the 'Memorial' of 1881 in the German press. George Barițiu agreed with this initiative, as evidenced by the fact that Petru Broșteanu thanked him in another letter for the copies he had sent (Varga, 2011, pp. 88-94).

In addition, Petru Broșteanu published an article in German, as shown in another letter to Barițiu dated 30 November 1882. He mentioned that the aim of the article was to draw attention to the Memorandum and to the identity of the Romanian struggle with that of the Transylvanian German-Saxons. In the struggle for the social and national liberation of the Romanian people, Petru Broșteanu said, all means must be used and all possibilities exhausted. He said with conviction: 'I would ally myself with Satan and descend to hell if only I could find there the remedy for the wound of the nation, for the salvation of our nation' (Varga, 2011, pp. 88-94).

Petru Broșteanu was determined to act decisively to spread the aspirations of the Romanians of Transylvania and Banat throughout the continent.

Besides Petru Broșteanu, another illustrious Mason of the Light and Truth Lodge corresponded with George Barițiu. He is the already known teacher Ion Simu. George Barițiu received similar letters from other parts of Banat, which clearly shows that the local elite was animated by deep patriotic feelings. In time, it reached its political maturity, and in the complicated process of social modernisation in the 19th century, the Masonic movement in Banat played a central role.

Conclusions

In Banat, i.e. in the Banat Mountains, Freemasonry entered the “Austrian channel” in the first half of the 18th century, an aspect that must be correlated with the first wave of colonisation that took place between 1718 and 1740. The Masonic lodges of this period (the Oravița and Timișoara lodges) continued the Austrian Masonic tradition.

They continued the elitist spirit brought by the settlers from the Habsburg Empire in the previous period. In the 19th century, in the Banat Mountains, two lodges continued this Masonic tradition introduced by the Austrian Masonic settlers. These were the Lodge ‘Glück auf’ in Oravița and the Lodge *Licht und Wahrheit* in Reșița. Based on the idea of tolerance, Freemasonry has been able to offer a real alternative to traditional structures since the beginning of the modern era.

This is all the more so because, as shown in our study, Freemasonry promoted the internal application of fraternal equality, that is, the appreciation of the human person according to his fair value, despite the different social conditions of its members. Throughout the second half of the 19th century, its concern did not exclude projects for the economic development of a province with extraordinary potential.

The idea of building a railway between Reșița and Dognecea was supported by the Brethren of the *Licht und Wahrheit* Lodge as early as 1874. Apart from economic projects, the involvement of the Masonic movement in the Banat Mountains in supporting the Romanian national cause was significant. This involvement was mainly through a scholar, member of the Romanian Academy and Freemason of the Reșița Lodge, namely Petru Broșteanu.

With the support of the Reșița Lodge, he opened up the Romanian national movement to the German academic and Masonic world in the second half of the 19th century, polarising the local elite on the side of the Romanian cause. His famous memoirs were published in 1882. They were subsequently sent to leading European political figures, magazines and newspapers, academies, universities, scientific, cultural and literary institutions as an indictment of Austro-Hungarian dualism.

Therefore, the Freemasonry was brought to Banat by the Austrian settlers during the Age of Enlightenment, which opened up new perspectives for strengthening the bridges between the local elite and the Central-Eastern European elite. The Austrian Freemasonry developed in this province became a vector of influence with a central role in the complicated process of modernisation of the Banat society.

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