

Neusiedler im Land. Der Einwanderungsartikel des ungarischen Landtags von 1723 im Kontext seiner Zeit. Edited by Márta Fata.

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In July 2022, a two-day conference was held at the Institut für donauschwäbische Geschichte und Landeskunde (IdGL) in Tübingen to commemorate the eighteenth-century settlement of Germans in Hungary. In addition to most of the papers presented at the event, the manuscripts of two young researchers from Hungary were included in the volume *Neusiedler im Land*, published in 2024 as volume 41 of the *Geschichtswissenschaft* series by the Berlin publisher Frank & Timme. The volume was edited by Márta Fata—who also organised the conference—a retired senior researcher at the IdGL and a professor at the University of Tübingen.

The book focuses on the law enacted in 1723 concerning the repopulation of the country, according to which the ruler “shall permit that any free person may be invited into the country for a period of six years, under the condition of exemption from all public taxes, and that this liberty may be proclaimed throughout the realm” (Act CIII of 1723). It is hardly surprising, however, that the volume examines not only the legal-historical aspects of this law but even more so its social-historical contexts.

One of the most significant areas of Márta Fata’s scholarly work is the history and memory of migration in the eighteenth century, as demonstrated not only by her numerous publications but also by her 2020 book *Mobilität und Migration in der Frühen Neuzeit*. The contributors to the volume are likewise distinguished scholars of the subject, ranging from young postdoctoral researchers to experienced university and archival researchers and university professors.

In the opening study, William O’Reilly, professor at the University of Cambridge, reinterprets German immigration to Hungary as part of a broader European competition for migrants. Ulrich Niggemann, professor at the Institut für Europäische Kulturgeschichte in Augsburg, examines early modern practices of migration

regulation. Karl Härter, professor at the Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory in Frankfurt am Main, analyses migration-related regulations of the period from the perspective of the history of policing. Márta Fata surveys the communicative arguments and linguistic imagery surrounding emigration to Hungary at both official and personal levels.

Bence Ament-Kovács, researcher at the Institute of Ethnology of Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest, reconstructs the mobility of the population of an estate in Southern Transdanubia, examining the position of Germans alongside other ethnic groups living with them. András Forgó, professor at the University of Pécs, provides a systematic analysis of the emergence of Act CIII of 1723. Krisztina Kulcsár, chief archivist of the National Archives of Hungary, presents contemporary perceptions of settlement in her study, ranging from Emperor Joseph II's travels through the country to those of settlers and other travellers. Finally, Péter Schweininger, assistant professor at the Institute of History of ELTE in Budapest, traces the process of internal migration following settlement through a micro-level analysis conducted in a village in Northern Transdanubia.

As follows from the contributions of the authors, the volume examines the processes of eighteenth-century German emigration, settlement, and organised colonisation on three levels: from the perspectives of the state, society, and the individual. The illustrated volume—equipped with indexes of places and names—also emphasises in its introduction the advantages arising from this complex approach. By this, the editor means not only the different analytical scales employed but also the richness of the sources used and the diversity of the methodologies applied.

A fundamental question runs throughout the book: at what point, and to what extent, did it pay off for mercantilist policy to allow the outflow of labour? Which groups, and for what reasons, would authorities have been willing to relinquish, and when and how did imperial and state institutions attempt to restrain the migration of individuals considered economically useful? The local and communicative analysis of migration also reveals the interests and reactions of landlords, as well as those of both the sending and receiving environments. At the same time, attention is given to the memory of the efforts that shaped the collective self-image of German settlers across generations—namely, the transformation of wild, marshy regions into habitable landscapes. From the perspective of the history of mentalities, the richest section of the volume allows the settlers themselves to speak through their letters, revealing how they experienced the change of residence and what emotional ties they maintained to their homeland—if they continued to regard it as such at all.

The complexity visible on the level of sources also stems from the diversity of methodological approaches. It would be impossible to provide an exhaustive list of the sources that were used or usable, but the authors' conclusions rely heavily on the laws, decrees, privilege charters, edicts, political speeches, recruitment materials,

contracts, and travel accounts of the period. Population registers, *urbaria*, tax registers, parish registers, estate records, and personal letters are likewise utilised. The methods used to analyse these sources are equally varied. Comparative and qualitative analyses grounded in legal, political, and institutional history—as well as micro-historical approaches, occasionally supplemented by discourse analysis—are complemented by quantitative analyses drawn from historical demography, economic history, and social history, including descriptive statistical methods.

The volume offers numerous results worthy of further reflection for the study of migration processes directed toward Hungary in the eighteenth century. By analysing European migration movements of the period alongside emigration to the Americas, O'Reilly refines our understanding of Hungary's economic opportunities. The territories liberated from Ottoman rule represented for the Habsburg Monarchy the potential for economic expansion, making the organisation of a productive labour force a matter of considerable importance. For this reason, the state sought to reshape the image of a country—particularly the Banat—which, due to its unfavourable natural conditions, had been known as the 'graveyard of the Germans', presenting it instead as the 'America of Europe', endowed with a more attractive profile.

Niggemann explores the reasons behind early modern reservations toward migration, attitudes that were increasingly reconsidered in the German-speaking lands in the wake of new population policies and mercantilist principles following the Thirty Years' War. The author reconstructs the historical background of these principles through the example of England, tracing developments back to the Middle Ages, before turning to the concrete population policies and legislative measures implemented in Brandenburg and Prussia. In doing so, he vividly demonstrates the selective nature of immigration policy, in which case-by-case judgment predominated and support was primarily given to the settlement of groups considered useful for providing economic and demographic advantages.

Härter's study, as an organic continuation of the previous one, presents the practical workings of a migration policy directed by the state through permits, taxes, penalties, and supervision. The author points out that the German-speaking states had little interest in losing their industrious and enterprising population; therefore, alongside propagating the risks of migration to Hungary—such as the long, exhausting journey and migrants' physical and existential vulnerability—they often imposed punitive sanctions as well. Although Emperor Charles VI, in his capacity as King of Hungary, asked the imperial estates to permit emigration, in many places this only resulted in a slight easing of strict emigration policies, while at the same time the legislation regulating migration became increasingly professionalised.

Márta Fata examines the significance and impact of three key topoi related to migration and settlement. In discussing the notions of 'Hungary as the bulwark of Christianity', nourishment and livelihood, and the figure of the 'good emperor',

she convincingly demonstrates that these arguments—appearing at different social and communicative levels—were instrumental in making the country attractive to migrants. Her argument that migration was essentially also a communicative process allows for a more nuanced understanding of the motivations, behaviour, and thinking of those who participated in it.

Ament-Kovács portrays the repopulation of Hungary's formerly Ottoman-occupied territories as a fragmented and unstable process. Reconstructing this development is made difficult by the fragmentary nature of the sources, yet the settlement history of the villages he examines provides a vivid example not only of the struggles of the Germans, but also of those of Hungarians, Serbs, and Slovaks.

In his analysis of Act CIII of 1723, Forgó convincingly argues that the legislation can be interpreted as a framework law that did not open an entirely new phase in Hungary's migration history, but rather sought to provide a state-recognised legal framework for a large-scale process that had already been underway for some time. The author reconstructs in detail the process of the law's creation, paying particular attention to the personal interests that lay behind it.

Kulcsár interprets the differing contemporary assessments of settlement on the basis of descriptions and letters written by the state—especially Emperor Joseph II—as well as by settlers and travellers. Her study sensitively portrays the fate of those who set out from their homes, encouraged by the enticing promises of landlords, only to discover upon arrival that these promises were often misleading (a similar example can also be found in Härter's study). This is important because, in the eyes of contemporaries, settlement appeared successful despite all its hardships; the key to this perceived success was seen in the settlers' determination and disciplined work ethic.

Schweininger's study analyses the demographic behaviour of the settled German population, emphasising the directions and possibilities of further internal migration within Hungary. In this context, he assumes a level of demographic awareness that, according to the Malthusian interpretation, was most characteristic of Western Europe.

From the perspective of Hungarian history, the settlement of Germans was a process that fundamentally shaped the country's economy, society, and politics. The book helps to understand—and, for both research and teaching purposes, to emulate—the exploration of the logical connections through which we may also find answers to relevant problems such as the moral-economic functioning of receiving and excluding communities, the antecedents of the emergence of state biopolitics, and the process of the nationalisation of landscape.

