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THE JUNI OF BRAȘOV

THE TRADITIONS OF THE YOUNG
MEN FROM SCHEII BRAȘOVULUI

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FOREWORD

Only someone born and raised beyond the Wallachian Gate and Catherine's Gate – someone who has truly breathed the unique and unmistakable atmosphere of Schei, someone whose life has been shaped by its events and traditions – could succeed, through this heartfelt book, in bringing to light, both artistically and documentarily, those emblematic symbols that stand as powerful testimonies to one of the most important centers of Romanian history and culture in both the old and the modern settlement of Braşov, *extra et intra urbem*.

Following his previous volume, "*Troițe – Testimonies from Other Times*", conceived in a similar manner, Eugen Moga places even greater emphasis here on the artistic image, rendered in pen-and-ink drawings with the meticulous care of a jeweler polishing a diamond. The accompanying text is reduced to the essential information, meant to guide the viewer toward a primarily visual perception of each monument or moment depicted.

At the forefront of this volume – which, without hesitation, can be considered a *sui generis* album or an art book due to the quality of its illustrations – are those elements that evoke, through their richness, the historical and cultural significance of this remarkable area, resonant not only within the city but across the entire country: St. Nicholas Church, the First Romanian School, Andrei Şaguna High School (College), the roadside crosses (*troițe*), the traditions of the Juni, the gates, and the picturesque and valuable architectural ensemble of the houses listed as heritage buildings preserved in this district, an integral part of Braşov, both past and present.

Drawing on over three decades of gathered information, Eugen Moga brings it together in this volume with the precision of a documentarian and the eye of an artist, offering a concise yet expressive image shaped

by historical detail and visual composition. Each subject has been carefully selected in accordance with the thematic purpose of the work.

In everything presented here, it becomes clear that the author is less concerned with the strictly physical or photographic aspect of the subjects and more with capturing the distinctive and picturesque atmosphere of customs, streets, and homes. The Juni processions, in particular, hold a special charm, becoming a true spectacle of original costumes, unique in their character across the country.

Dressed in these beautiful garments, the seven groups of Junii – Young Junii, Elder Junii, Albiori, Roșiori, Curcani, Dorobañți, and Brașovecheni – gather on various occasions in their traditional places. During the Holy Easter celebrations, all these groups come together after symbolically “conquering” the city of Brașov and head to Solomon’s Rocks, where legend and nature intertwine in a moment of rest, celebration, and a traditional festivity passed down through the centuries.

Beyond his deep love for his native lands, Eugen Moga, driven by an enduring creative restlessness, has explored and contributed to multiple fields of culture and art – and beyond. Painter, scenographer, caricaturist, graphic artist, screenwriter, photojournalist, journalist, essayist, book illustrator, director, and even stuntman, he has left a strong imprint through his diverse body of work, widely appreciated and recognized. What stands out most in his pursuits is his passion and affinity for artistic-documentary illustration – a genre through which he expresses himself in a graphic language that reflects the measure of his talent, once again confirmed in this volume, whose interpretation will surely be enriched by many future critiques and commentaries.

I conclude by saying that this work, too, is primarily an art book, in which the author gives special attention to drawing, in a balanced relationship with the text – a drawing that will surely bring satisfaction, in their eternal rest, to his esteemed and renowned teachers, Ștefan Mironescu and Harald Meschendörfer, as well as to the undersigned.

Dan Mihăilescu

PhD in Aesthetics and the Psychology of Art

BEYOND TIME: THE STORY OF SCHEI

If the objects, customs, traditions, events, or photographs of our ancestors are lost, then their labor and their lives fade away in vain. We have a duty to carry forward, to those who come after us, the struggles, joys, and hardships lived by our parents and grandparents. Yet it is not only what is written that must endure, but also the curiosity and the desire of those who will one day discover these stories.

This endeavor seeks to awaken that desire for knowledge, inviting the reader to take a walk into a world of the past, to relive moments that seem to belong to another dimension. Time places everything in its rightful order, separating what deserves to endure through the ages from what fades away without meaning. And yet, so often, events remain unknown, never coming to light, and are lost to oblivion. It is our duty to bring them forward, so that “time” may fulfill its “work.”

This work is therefore an attempt to record a few “signs of life,” a kind of tally of our endurance, preserving a part of the unaltered soul of Schei – something that future generations may also come to cherish. Much has been written about the Juni, and with great care, yet the subject remains open, constantly enriched with new meanings and interpretations. In particular, I have sought to highlight their heroic character and their role in the defense of Schei, as well as the lesser-known military dimension of the Juni.

The materials gathered here come both from field research and written sources, aiming to bring together living memory and documented history. They have been verified through different sources, given that oral testimonies may be lost with the passing of those who preserve them, while written records remain open to further research.

To give this work a distinct identity, I chose to use graphic illustration instead of photographs, which can be easily found in many collections. The drawings, based on old documents and historical photographs, complement the text and help recreate the atmosphere of times gone by.

Schei, a cradle of Romanian culture and civilization, located south of the Braşov Citadel, remains unique through the traditions and customs preserved over time. This space, “paved with history,” deserves to be known not only by those of today, but also by those yet to come. In these pages, I have tried to reconstruct this world through the evocation of monuments, houses, streets, people, and events that gave it life, alongside the traditions of the Juni, centuries-old roadside crosses (*troițe*), and the landmarks of an essential chronology.

This book, conceived as an illustrated album and as a form of preserving heritage, is addressed to those who love beauty and the memory of places. It is the result of long and dedicated work, and at the same time a duty towards the past and a commitment to the future. Time, ever flowing, covers everything in oblivion. Therefore, let us preserve what can still be saved.

Prof. **Eugen Moga**

THE ORIGIN OF THE ROMANIAN COMMUNITY IN SCHEII BRAȘOVULUI

The origin of the Romanian community in Scheii Brașovului is closely connected to the development of Brașov during the Middle Ages. From the 13th and 14th centuries onward, the city became an important commercial center of Transylvania, inhabited mainly by Saxons.

Romanians were not allowed to live inside the citadel, which led them to settle outside the walls, in an area that came to be known as Scheii Brașovului. According to some historians, the name “Schei” comes from the Slavic word *škoi*, used to describe Romanian or Slavic communities living near medieval towns.

Over time, a strong Romanian community took shape here, made up of merchants, craftsmen, farmers, and shepherds. Although they did not enjoy the same privileges as the inhabitants of the citadel, the Romanians of Schei managed to build a well-organized community life, in which the church played a central role.

St. Nicholas Church, a Spiritual and Cultural Center

St. Nicholas Church in Scheii Brașovului is one of the most important institutions of the Romanian community in Transylvania. The earliest recorded mentions of a place of worship in this area date back to the 14th century. Over time, the church was expanded and strengthened, becoming not only a place of prayer but also a true center of Romanian cultural life.

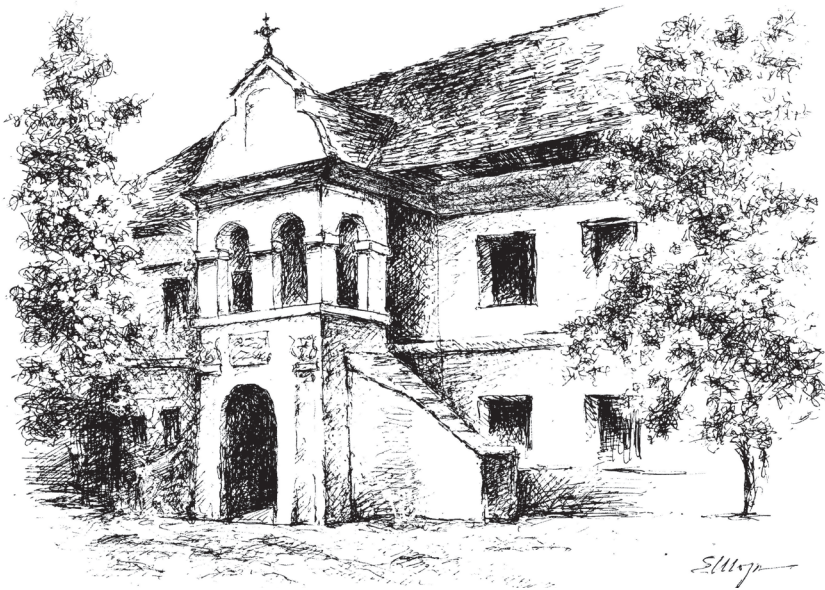


Around it, the first Romanian school in Transylvania was established, where priests, teachers, and scribes were trained. Valuable documents have also been preserved here, reflecting the life and development of the Romanian community in this region.

Through its spiritual and cultural role, the church became a symbol of Romanian identity and resilience, in a historical context in which Romanians did not enjoy the same political rights as other communities.

The First Romanian School in Transylvania

Education was one of the main concerns of the Romanian community in Schei. In the 16th century, near St. Nicholas Church, a school was established where the basics of reading and writing were taught, both in Romanian and in Slavonic, the latter being used at the time in religious services.



This school is considered one of the oldest Romanian educational institutions in Transylvania.

Numerous teachers and scholars worked here, contributing to the development of Romanian culture. It was also here that religious manuscripts were copied and valuable documents preserved, reflecting the life of Romanians in this region.



THE PEOPLE OF SCHEI OR THE *TROCARI*

The people of Schei, also known as *trocari* – a name derived from the craft practiced by their women, who wove decorative cords (*găitane*) on wooden frames with three small hammers – are cheerful, spirited, full of imagination and humor. They are good householders, proud and dignified, tidy, and skilled in many trades. Though sometimes quick to speak, they are fond of children. As Nicolae Iorga once said, “*They possess sharp, well-ordered minds, inclined toward enlightened learning and bold action—a calm, humane, and proud people.*”



There are also more critical views. A. Popovici noted that when provoked, they could become quick-tempered, describing them – perhaps in tense circumstances – as cunning and harsh. In contrast, Șt. Meteș considered them intelligent and hardworking people who, over the centuries, formed a true national force.

What is certain is that they knew how to enjoy life and were always ready to celebrate: singing, going on outings, visiting one another, playing rummy, cards, skittles, and other games of the time. Holidays such as Christmas, New Year, and Easter were special moments, but so were picnics, weddings, baptisms, or any occasion that brought people together.

Always cheerful and ready with a joke – whether at the tavern, out in nature, at home, or on the street – they knew how to create an atmosphere that chased worries away. A distinctive element was “*lepșitul*” – a unique way of joking and storytelling, a kind of lively chatter with lyrical tones and a special humor. To *lepși* meant to sit and talk with charm and wit, in a style unique to the people of Schei. Just as the Merry Cemetery of Săpânța became famous for its uniqueness, so too the *lepșala* and the local anecdotes of Schei form a phenomenon of their own. That is why Schei is a place you can only connect with through the soul.

