

February 21, 2015

Preface

As I begin my handling of this topic then it shall not be a scientific treatise but a story easily understood, I almost say, a chat about a community in Siebenbürgen, about the country surrounding it, about its past and presence, about its inhabitants, their lives and work, what they owned in material and spiritual-cultural goods and still have, what they already lost or will lose soon given the present circumstances. These short statements show already that these descriptions are not only written by the heart but should also be read with it. It is a sort of taking stock of things, an inventory, but these are always associated with some nostalgia.

If you were to judge correctly the history of a place with its inhabitants, their nature, their actions, their mode of thinking and feeling then you must not only look at its geographical location, but also consider and place your story within the current events of the country, even that of the whole world at the time.

Only a contemplation in space and in the depth and width of time enables an insight in and knowledge of the true networks of life even in the smallest of details. I will attempt to remain focused on both aspects of such a complete view not only show the geographic position of the community, but also treat the historical events which had an influence on its fate and which had to be overcome if you wanted to survive.

You could object that this last statement is superfluous because the history of our people has been described in numerous works. This shall not be disputed. But who can, upon reading the history of the place of a community, presently visualize the events in their time and thus recognize the connections that uniquely bound the people in a community in time and place together. Among the readers to whom this treatise is targeted, there are probably only a few. But, just because of my goals, many will gain a greater understanding of the historical events of the greater home place and be stimulated to investigate further. Perhaps the younger ones will even detect new facts because in Romania their lessons in history withheld any information about their own past. This way they could fit in more readily into a socialist system because they had no history and no national awareness of Romania as such. They were not allowed to learn about their heritage and the achievements of their ancestors. My historical excursions shall provide information to catch-up on withheld knowledge.

At this place I will not refrain from expressing my heartfelt thanks to those who have supported me in gathering the necessary documents and who supported me with remarkable helpfulness. To list all their names would lead too far, some of them are no longer living. For the most part they were Grosskopians, who participated in this work with loving hearts for them as well as for me, who could live and work in this "God's corner of the world" in Siebenbürgen for twenty two years, and by doing so gave thanks to our never-forgotten place we call home.

Stuttgart, week of St. Johannis 1983

Andreas Türk,

Pastor, retired

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Chapter 1, pages 1-4. The geographic location

The community Grosskopisch (Copsa Mare, Nagy Kapus) s. Gruiskopesch, lies in the southern portion of the Highland of Siebenbürgen, on 46*8 degrees of northern latitude and 24*30 degrees of eastern longitude in a small valley surrounded by wooded hills, located in the Fettendorfer mountains. The valley is the watershed between the Great Kokel river and the Harbach brook and it ends at a distance of about 20 kilometers from its origin in the Kokel Valley. If you wish to visit the village you turn from the country-road Mediasch-Schässburg, still called today the Imperial Street, opposite of the community Halvelagen, to the south into a narrow side valley of the Great Kokel. Then, after seven kilometers, you reach the community of Waldhütten. Four kilometer higher up in the valley you will be greeted in the distance by the defiant church-castle Grosskopisch, situated on an eastern slope, overlooking the valley. But you can also reach the community from the better known BIRTHÄLM, which is located only two and a half kilometer west of it. A winding path connects the two villages. In the course of the centuries a deep indentation developed in the mountain that separates them, the so called "Hill". The steep, almost vertical walls show soil deposits in many colors, witnesses of an ocean in the distant pass, which used to cover all of Siebenbürgen. This cut in the mountain must have been a much used way so the "Hill" became so steep. Indeed, the economic and cultural connection to this neighbor town were very active which at the time of the settlement functioned as a county seat (Gauvorort), and after the Reformation served as the Bishop's Seat for three hundred years. Throughout the centuries it was a remarkable center for artisans. Today it has a special significance as the center of administrative government for the area, center for the schools, county physician and the apothecary.

When you walk further to the West over three mountain ranges across Tobsdorf and Hetzeldorf you reach Pretal located in the flats of the Kokel River and finally you come to Mediasch, area of the Regent's Seat (Stuhlsvorort). If you wanted to get there by wagon you would take the way which leads up-hill from BIRTHÄLM and, which below the community of Reichesdorf, climbs over a single mountain ridge, next to Nimesch, below the community Meschen and finally reaches the valley to Mediasch. This was the shortest way to Mediasch, much shorter than the route leading down through the valley of the Kokel River.

To the East you find on an up-and downhill mountain road Rauthal and Neudorf and further ahead Malmkrog, Felsendorf, Kreisch, and Peschendorf. To the North of Rauthal, at the edge of the plains of the Kokel River is Grosslasseln, the most impressive among all the communities mentioned thus far. All of them are only about one hour's walk on foot apart. Because a horse carriage must circumvent one or two mountain ranges and because each place was faster reached on foot this area previously was called Pedestrian Chapter (Fussgängerkapitel).

Going South and crossing the Fettendorfer mountains you reach Abtsdorf after about ten kilometers and then Magari, further South you come to Käbisch, Roseln, and Agnethein, the market place at the Harbach brook. South of the town the valley divides; to the right along the Kopsischer Brook the valley leads through the Marheit, to the left it leads along the Hageltbach brook to a high plain called Fettendorf. There you notice scattered lone ancient oaks and vast pastures where cattle and sheep graze in the summer. Added to this idyllic scenery you see on clear days in the autumn the snow covered Karpaten Mountains.

The Hageltbach brook flows through the narrow valley, fed by uncounted sources which provide refreshment for cattle and people on hot humid summer days. Alongside this brook there are elongated long village paths on either side of the brook with two rows of houses opposite to each other with a street in between, a small court, and, immediately behind it, the steep mountainside or the streambed. If severe thunderstorms come down the streambed often cannot hold the water, which then flows over the embankments drenching the gardens and robbing the farmer's wife of her well-earned reward for her hard work.

Above the village, on the east of the mountain side, just below the top of the mountain at 514 meters above sea level the church castle (Kirchenburg) protrudes, a significant landmark to attest to the industriousness and will to live and strive, loyalty to one's faith and joy and pride in their creations by ancestors long lost without trace, but nevertheless inherited by the present generation. As in the past, people enjoy the quiet peace of this secluded corner of their home (Heimattal). Peace that enters from the work in the fields, the hectic pace of the cities, at least on weekends, and on Holy Days, and brings a well-earned rest.

Similar to all of Siebenbürgen this little spot of homeland has a turbulent past. This will be the topic of the next section of this speech.

Legend of the illustration:

View of the Church from the North



A n s i c h t d e r K i r c h e v o n N o r d e n