



# Expedition of the Center for Jewish Art to Romania



*Synagogue in Lugoj, interior view toward the east*

## May 2022

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The Morris and Beverly Baker Foundation**



The expedition of the Center for Jewish Art to Romania took place in May 2022. The expedition surveyed synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, cemetery chapels, communal buildings, and Holocaust Memorial Monuments in Hunedoara County in Transylvania, Timiș, and Caraș-Severin Counties in Romanian Banat. The expeditions also revisited Făgăraș and Brașov in the Brașov County.

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All photographs published in this report were taken by Dr. Vladimir Levin

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## Deva

The city of Deva is the capital of the Hunedoara County. Jews settled in the city in the 1830s and organized the community in 1848. In 1910, there were 791 Jews and in the 1930s about 900. During World War II about 700 Jews from neighboring villages were brought to Deva. The majority of them emigrated to Israel after 1948.

## Synagogue

The synagogue of Deva was built in 1896 and reconstructed in 1925. The core building of the synagogue is removed from the street so that a low addition faces the street (currently it is rented out as a restaurant). Notwithstanding the modest urban position of the synagogue, its northern façade is topped by the Tablets of the Law (Fig. 1).

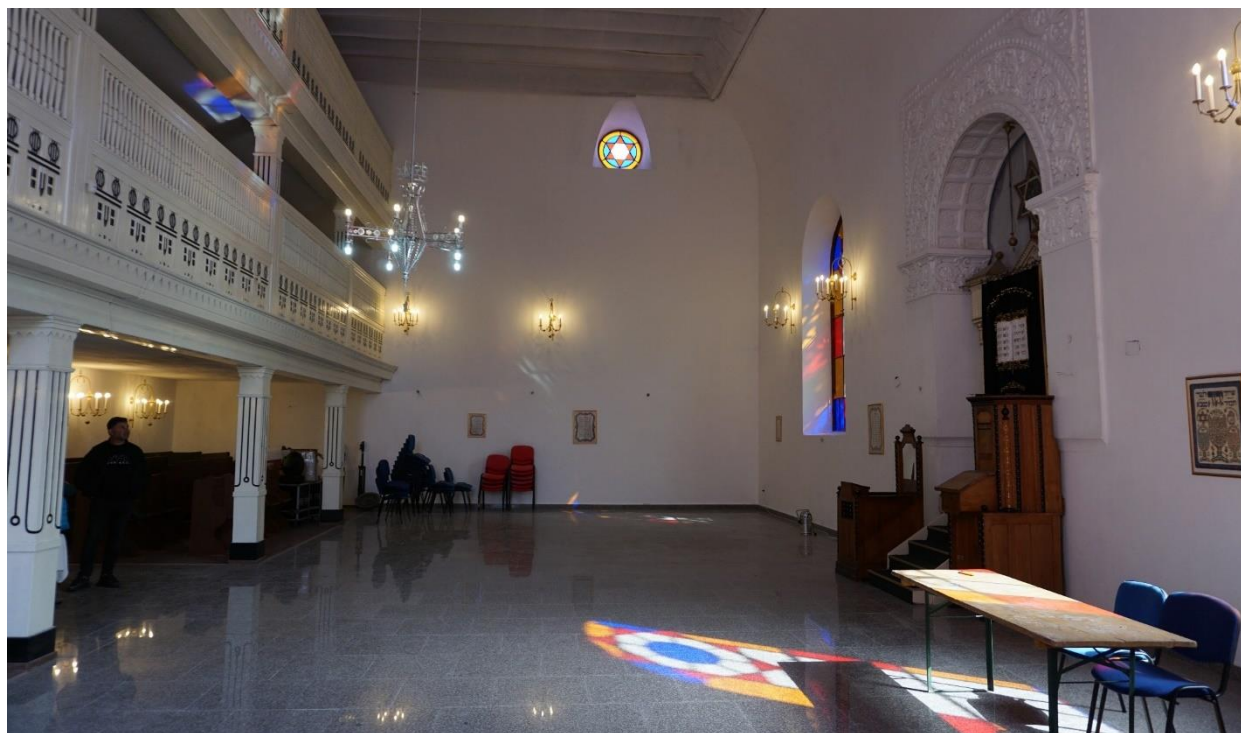


*Fig. 1. The Synagogue of Deva, view from the north*





The broad prayer hall has a niche with the Torah ark on the eastern side and two women's galleries, one above the other decorated in the Hungarian Secession style. All of the windows are stained glass producing a play of colors on the walls (Fig. 2).



*Fig. 2. The Synagogue of Deva, interior view toward the north*

## Cemetery

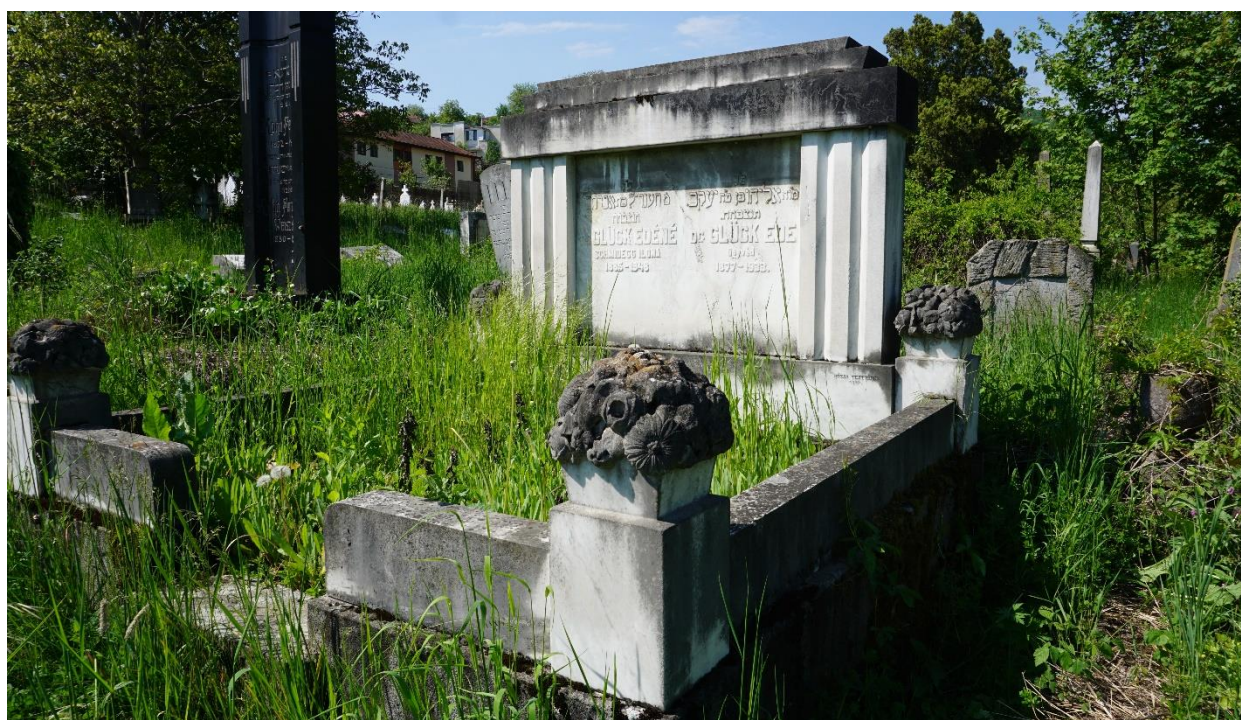
The Jewish cemetery of Deva is situated between two Christian cemeteries. A cemetery chapel at the entrance consists of a ritual hall and an apartment for the caretaker. Like many cemeteries in Romania, there is a grave with soap that was believed to be made by the Nazis from the bodies of dead Jews. The monument on the soap grave is a small building, the outer walls of which are covered by marble plaques in memory of perished relatives of the Deva Jews (Fig. 3).

Some gravestones in the Deva cemetery bear the names of the stonemasons who produced them. We found stones signed by two local workshops, of Schnabl and of T. Gerstenbrein, and by three workshops from Arad: Sik and Co., Steiner, and Rózsa Brothers (Fig. 4). The works of two latter stonemasons were documented in Vințu de Jos, Alba Iulia and Râmnicu Vâlcea by the expedition of 2019, which was supported by The Morris and Beverly Baker Foundation.





*Fig. 3. Jewish cemetery Deva, the “soap grave”*



*Fig. 4. Jewish cemetery Deva, the grave stone of Dr. Ede and Ilona Glück, made by the workshop of Rózsa Brothers in Arad*





## Hunedoara

Hunedoara is a town in Hunedoara County known for its castle that was the home of the Hunyadi (Corvins) noble family. Only 166 Jews lived in Hunedoara in 1910. Two Jewish cemeteries are preserved in the town.

### Old Cemetery

The Old Jewish cemetery of Hunedoara is situated on a hill behind the castle. About a dozen of graves are preserved, mostly from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Fig. 5). Their form has similar characteristics to the Transylvania Jewish cemeteries.



*Fig. 5. Old Jewish Cemetery in Hunedoara*

### New Cemetery

The New Jewish cemetery of Hunedoara is located among dwelling houses on 1 Mai Street. The cemetery was established after World War II and is still in use today with the latest tombstone erected in 2020.





## Haṭeg

The Jewish community of Haṭeg emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century with the first synagogue being consecrated in 1864. In 1910, there were 369 Jews.

## Synagogue

The preserved synagogue in Haṭeg was built in the late nineteenth century. It is a modest structure in the center of the town. Its western façade is topped by the Tablets of the Law. Currently (2022) the synagogue is completely abandoned (Fig. 6).



*Fig. 6. The Synagogue of Haṭeg, view from the west*

## Cemetery

The Jewish cemetery of Haṭeg is situated among houses on Suseni Street. It is screened from the street by an impressive cemetery chapel which was probably built in the early twentieth century





with elements of Hungarian Secession (Fig. 7). Some of the tombstones were made in Budapest and some in Arad.



*Fig. 7. Cemetery Chapel in Hațeg, southern façade*



*Fig. 8. Jewish Cemetery in Hațeg*





## Orăştie

Jews settled in Orăştie in the second half of the nineteenth century with their numbers reaching 273 in 1910. The Jewish community ceased to exist in the 1950s when the majority of Jews left the town. The synagogue and the Jewish cemetery are preserved in Orăştie.

### Synagogue

The synagogue was built in 1896. It faces the street with its eastern façade which is decorated by the Star of David in the middle and topped by the Tablets of the Law. A marble plaque on the façade informs in Hebrew, English, and Romanian that the synagogue was renovated by the Romanian Government in 2004-2006 and “given for use to the town” by the Federation of Jewish Communities of Romania (Fig. 9). In the interior there are no original features aside from the women’s gallery and stained glass windows. The synagogue is used by the town as a venue for cultural events.



*Fig. 9. The Synagogue of Orăştie, view from the east*



## Cemetery

The Jewish cemetery is situated in the southwestern end of the town (Fig. 10). It consists of about 150 tombstones, some of which were produced in Budapest, Deva, Arad, and Alba Iulia. Tombstones made by S. Stef were documented by the expedition of 2019 in Alba Iulia.



*Fig. 10. Jewish cemetery in Orăștie, the oldest part*

## Geoagiu

The Jewish cemetery of Geoagiu (123 Jews in 1910) is located outside of the town, about 500 m into the woods. The cemetery of about a hundred tombstones is surrounded by a fence and relatively well preserved. While very little is known about the history of the Jewish community in Geoagiu, the preserved tombstones testify to its existence from the 1850s (the oldest found grave marks are dated 1852 and 1854, Fig. 11), to the 1930s (the latest found grave mark is dated 1935, Fig. 12). The Geoagiu Jews ordered their tombstones from workshops in Deva, Arad, and Budapest. Some tombstones look very expensive testifying to the prosperity of the local Jews.





*Fig. 11. Tombstone of Yitzhak son of Shmuel (d. 1854) in Geoagiu.*



*Fig. 12. Tombstone of Reyzl daughter of Haim Hacohen (d. 1935) in Geoagiu.*

## Ilia

The Jewish cemetery of Ilia (108 Jews in 1910) is situated in the eastern part of the town, next to the Christian cemetery. The preserved tombstones convey the lives Jewish people in this small town from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century. Tombstones of the early twentieth century bear the signatures of stonemasons from Budapest, as well as from Deva, Arad, and Alba Iulia. The works of all those stonemasons were found in other cemeteries visited during this fieldtrip.

The latest burials in the cemetery were made in 1976 and 1981 bearing Jewish symbols: the Star of David on the grave of Emanoil Salamon and the Menorah and Sabbath candlesticks on the tombstone of Sarolta Salamon (Fig. 13).





*Fig. 13. Tombstones of the Salamon Family in the Jewish cemetery of Ilia, 1976 and 1981*

## Gurasada

The Jewish cemetery of Gurasada (14 Jews in 1910) is situated behind houses in the southwestern part of the village. There are about ten tombstones, some of which are partially destroyed. Only one tombstone bears the signature of the joint stonemason workshop of Menrath and the widow of Frank in Arad (Fig. 14).



*Fig. 14. Tombstone base with the signature of Menrath-Frankne in the Jewish cemetery of Gurasada*





## Dobra

The Jewish cemetery in Dobra (42 Jews in 1910) is situated at the western entrance of the village near the Christian cemetery. It is divided from the street by a concrete fence. About two dozen tombstones are preserved (Fig. 15).



*Fig. 15. Jewish cemetery in Dobra*

## Zam

A small Jewish cemetery in Zam (46 Jews in 1910) is situated between two Christian cemeteries. It is separated from the street by a concrete fence. About ten tombstones are preserved.

## Vața de Jos

A small cemetery in Vața de Jos (11 Jews in 1910) is situated near the Romanian Orthodox church and very well maintained. There are eight tombstones.





## Brad

The Jewish cemetery in Brad (180 Jews in 1910) is situated near the Christian cemetery. About fifty grave marks are preserved from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries. The latest gravestone bears the date 1985. All tombstones with signatures of stonemasons were produced in Arad in the early twentieth century. The most prominent is the plot of the Kugel family which comprises a platform with five marble obelisks (Fig. 16).



*Fig. 16. The plot of the Kugel Family in the Jewish cemetery of Brad*

## Simeria

The Jewish cemetery in Simeria (99 Jews in 1910) is situated among dwelling houses. Only three tombstones are visible in the cemetery and its territory houses more than twenty beehives.

## Vulcan

The Jewish cemetery in Vulcan (434 Jews in 1910) is situated in the southern part of the town, among garages. Eleven tombstones are visible with only four that are not damaged.





## Baru Mare

The Jewish cemetery in Baru Mare (21 Jews in 1910) is situated in the center of the town. A memorial cemetery of the World War I soldiers is adjacent to it on the south. Eleven tombstones are preserved in the cemetery, at least two of which bear the signatures of stonemasons from Arad.

## Petroșani

The large Jewish cemetery of Petroșani (818 Jews in 1910) is situated on the slope of a hill. More than a hundred tombstones testify to the importance and prosperity of the local Jewish community, many of which were involved in the local mining industry. The latest grave mark is dated 2010. A cemetery chapel in the middle of the cemetery is abandoned and dilapidated (Fig. 17). Signed tombstones were produced in Arad, Carei, and Budapest. The tombstone of Haim Klein (d. 1939) was made by S. Goldeanu in Bucharest. Until now it is the only evidence found in Transylvanian Jewish cemeteries to the adjustment of Hungarian-speaking Jewry of Transylvania to the new political and cultural reality of interwar Romania.



*Fig. 17. Cemetery chapel in Petroșani*





## Făgăraș

The Center for Jewish Art team documented the synagogue and the Jewish cemetery in Făgăraș in 2017. We decided to visit it again since restoration works were undertaken in the synagogue in the last year.

### Synagogue

Indeed, the synagogue of Făgăraș has significantly improved since the restoration project has begun in 2021 by the Center for Built Environment, Țara Făgăraș Community Foundation, and the Făgăraș Research Institute, with the support of Făgăraș City Hall (Fig. 18). The roof and roof constructions were repaired (Fig. 19) and three façades of the synagogue painted (Fig. 18). The continuation of works, including the preservation of stencil paint on the interior walls is planned for the future. After the end of the works, the synagogue will serve as a venue for cultural events in the city.



*Fig. 18. The Synagogue of Făgăraș, view from southwest*





*Fig. 19. Synagogue in Făgăraș, roof constructions, eastern part*

## Cemetery

During the visit to the synagogue, we discovered a memorial plaque in the staircase to the women's gallery. It was made in 1887 and contains a German text although the stonemason's signature was made in Hebrew by the Christian stonemason Johann Herzum from the village of Peršani – a village situated half a way between Făgăraș and Brașov (Fig. 20). This discovery brought us again to the Jewish cemetery where two tombstones made by the same stonemason were found (Fig. 21). Numerous headstones in the cemetery were produced by his son Robert who had his workshop in Făgăraș, as well as some by his other son Károly from Brașov. Notwithstanding the presence of stonemason workshops in the city, the Făgăraș Jews also ordered headstones for their family members in Budapest, Sibiu, Arad, and Timișoara. The earliest one was made by S. Komorner from Budapest in 1870, and the latest one was produced in 1928 by J. Roubischek from Sibiu. Our expedition has already documented J. Roubischek's works in Sibiu and in Râmnicu Vâlcea.





*Fig. 20. Memorial plaque in the Făgăraș synagogue (1887), signed in Hebrew (lower right) by Johann Herzum*



*Fig. 21. Tombstone of Tzvi Yehuda Goldstein (d. 1888), head of the Hevrah Kadisha in Făgăraș, signed by Johann Herzum*

## Brașov

Likewise, the expedition of the Center has been in Brașov in 2017, documenting two synagogues, two Jewish cemeteries and one cemetery chapel. We came to Brașov again in order to examine the situation with the ruined Orthodox Synagogue in this city. The synagogue, built in 1924–1925, is a little known gem of modernist Jewish architecture of the 1920s. Its western façade features a large window flanked by a pair of huge semi-columns and surmounted by a relief of two winged lions holding a menorah (Fig. 22). Unfortunately, this splendid façade is hidden in the locked courtyard and only those who have a key can admire it. The eastern wall of the synagogue collapsed many decades ago and the former prayer hall opens to the garden behind the synagogue (Figs. 23, 24). The garden is accessed through a long dark corridor in the ground floor of the synagogue, which produces a feeling of a mysterious underground passage.





*Figs. 22-24. The Orthodox Synagogue of Braşov, western façade and interior views to the east*





## Lugoj

Lugoj is a city in the historical region of Banat, with a large Jewish community numbering 1,878 according to the census of 1910.

## Synagogue

The synagogue of Lugoj is situated at one of the main streets of the town (Fig. 25). It was initially built in 1843 and reconstructed in the late nineteenth century. The synagogue is well preserved and well maintained. A beautifully made pipe organ is placed in the women's gallery above the Torah ark (Fig. 26). It is regularly played in public concerts during the summer months.



25. *The Synagogue of Lugoj, eastern façade*

The unique feature of the synagogue in Lugoj is a bimah-pulpit – a construction which usually serves as a table to reading the Torah scroll, but could be easily converted into a pulpit for a preaching rabbi (Figs. 27, 28). According to Mr. Ivan Bloch, the President of the local community, the last time the bimah was converted into pulpit was in the 1950s during a visit of the Chief Rabbi





of Romania, Moses Rosen. The only similar object known to us is the bimah-pulpit in the present-day synagogue of Zagreb which originated from the synagogue in Koprivnica, Croatia (see the documentation and photographs of that *bimah*-pulpit in the Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art, <https://cja.huji.ac.il/browser.php?mode=set&id=15373>).



26. *The Synagogue of Lugoj, interior view towards the east*



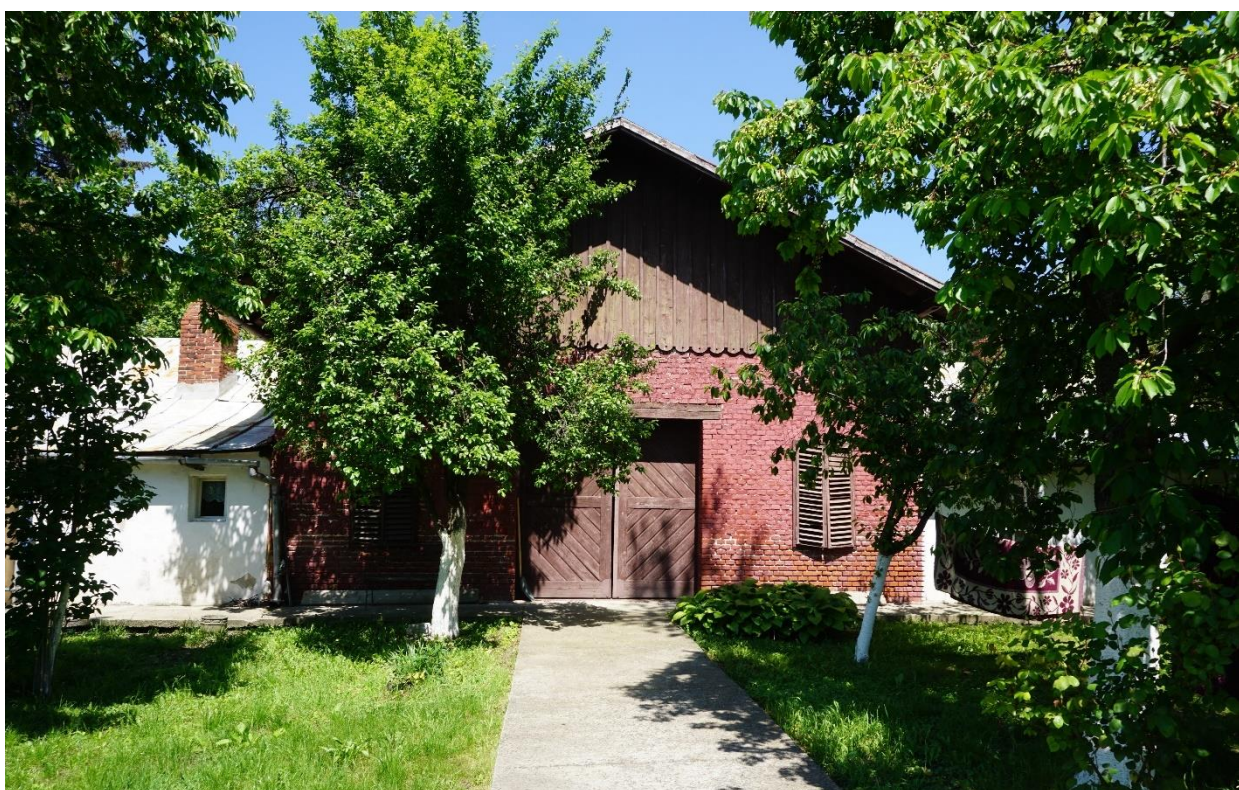
27-28. *The Synagogue of Lugoj, bimah-pulpit*





## Cemetery

The Jewish cemetery of Lugoj is situated at the same street with the synagogue. The cemetery is surrounded by a high fence and is preceded by a red-brick cemetery chapel – the building for ritual cleansing and farewell ceremonies (Fig. 29). Like many other cemetery chapels in Romania, this one has wide gates on its facades facing the street and the cemetery. Such gates allowed easy movement of the bier and of the people participating in funeral.



*Fig. 29. Cemetery chapel in the Jewish Cemetery of Lugoj, view from the south*

Two memorials stand side by side in the cemetery (Fig. 30). The first one marks the grave of several Jewish soldiers of World War I and mentions the names of those whose place of burial is unknown. The second memorial is dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust. Besides the two memorials, there are thousands of tombstones of different varieties preserved in the cemetery (Fig. 31). Among numerous obelisks bearing the signatures of stonemasons, the headstones produced in Vienna, Budapest, Timișoara, and Lugoj are discernible.





*Fig. 30. The memorial to the Jewish soldiers of WWI (left) and the monument to the victims of the Holocaust in the Jewish Cemetery of Lugoj*



*Fig. 31. Jewish Cemetery of Lugoj*





## Reșița

The city of Reșița has been considered as the second-largest industrial center of Romania in the twentieth century with it being an important center of steel and vehicle production. In 1910, 457 Jews lived there. Currently the community is shrinking.

## Synagogue

The synagogue of Reșița was built in 1907 as a Neolog synagogue. The southern façade, which faces the street, does not reflect the interior division of the space (Fig. 32). Its center is accentuated by tripartite windows on the ground and upper floors, surmounted by an attic wall with a rose window. The corners of the façade are marked by small domes with the large prayer hall being crowned by a dome as well. A balcony above the Torah ark housed a pipe organ which disappeared during Communist time (Fig. 33). Three very similar Torah ark curtains are preserved in the synagogue (Fig. 34).



32. The Synagogue of Reșița, southern façade



33. The Synagogue of Reșița, interior view to the east



34. Torah ark curtain in the synagogue of Reșița, 1929





## Cemetery

The Jewish cemetery of Reșița is situated near the Christian cemetery at a mount slope above the town. The cemetery is surrounded by a concrete fence and is heavily overgrown.

## Caransebeș

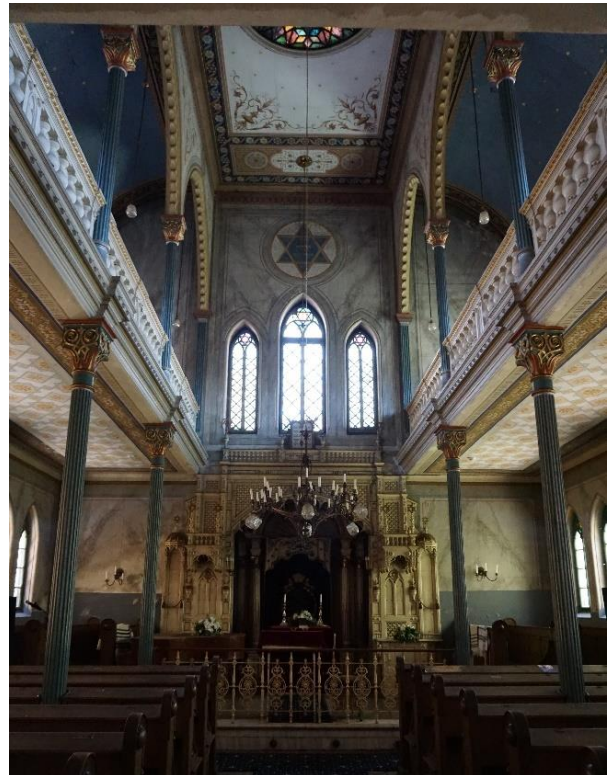
Caransebeș is a city in the historical region of Banat, with a Jewish community numbering 412 Jews according to the census of 1910. Notwithstanding their not so large number, the Jews of Caransebeș established an impressive synagogue and cemetery.

## Synagogue

The synagogue of Caransebeș was built in 1893 and still preserves its original features. Its eastern façade facing the central square of the city, is flanked by two Gothic turrets (Fig. 35).



35. The Synagogue of Caransebeș, eastern façade



36. The Synagogue of Caransebeș, interior view toward the east



The pipe organ and delicate wall paintings in the prayer hall are well preserved (Fig. 37). The very dynamic President of the community, Florin Schwartz, strives to make the synagogue a vivid place and has begun building a Jewish museum in the synagogue courtyard.



*37. The Synagogue of Caransebeș, ceiling of the prayer hall*

## Cemetery

The Jewish cemetery of Caransebeș is screened from the street by an elongated building of the cemetery chapel (Fig. 38). A white obelisk in the southern part of the cemetery is a memorial to the Jewish soldiers of World War I as well as to the victims of the Holocaust. It bears a low relief with a military helmet, a sword, and an olive branch (Fig. 39). An important feature of this cemetery is that the photographs of the deceased appear on gravestones already in the 1880s, this being quite early. Signed tombstones in this cemetery were produced by two local stonemasons, J. Dunst and H. Liegl, as well as by masons in Lugoj, Szeged, and Vienna. Interestingly, J. Dunst continued to sign the tombstones that he made even after World War II, when this custom disappeared in other cities.





*38. Cemetery chapel in Caransebeș, eastern façade*



*39. Memorial to the Jewish soldiers of World War I and the Holocaust victims in the Jewish cemetery of Caransebeș*





## Bocşa

The synagogue of Bocşa (49 Jews in 1910) was demolished during Communist time. The stone Tablets of the Law that once topped its façade are preserved in the courtyard of the Reşiţa synagogue.

The Jewish cemetery of Bocşa is adjacent to the Christian one. The former cemetery chapel served today as a gate to the Christian cemetery while the Jewish cemetery is surrounded by a concrete fence, and overgrown bushes (Fig. 40).



*40. Cemetery chapel in Bocşa, view from the east*





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