

## **TSCHENE - CENE**

### **Europe steeped in history**

Tschene/Cene (Romanian: Cenei, Croatian: Čenej, Hungarian: Csene, Serbian: Ченеј, colloquially Schini or Schine) is a municipality in Banat, located on the Old Bega River 28 km southwest of Timișoara. The municipality also includes the village of Bobda.

According to findings from 2016 by the ArheoVest association and the UVT West University of Timișoara, Cene was already the central fortification within the settlements of Bobda, Nemet, Gertianosch, and Ketscha (see descriptions of Bobda) in the Bronze Age.

Tschene is one of the oldest settlements in the Banat region. The oldest documented owner was the Benedictine monastery of Iteba (Serbia, near Novi Itebej) in 1221. At the beginning of the 14th century, the owner was the Dorozsma family (Drusma, Drusina, Durusma). When the family's possessions were divided, part of the village became the property of János Botos, the ancestor of the Harapkai family. In 1330, the village belonged to the possessions of Sárád Castle (presumably located in Banat between Jahrmarkt and Bruckenu), which at that time belonged to the Hungarian-Croatian Garai (Garay, Gorjanski) family, the lords of Csesznek from the aforementioned family, who were ennobled and privileged by Béla, Duke of Slavonia, the youngest son of Béla IV of Hungary.

According to the papal tithe registers from 1332-37, there was already a parish in the village belonging to the Diocese of Tschanad, with Anton de Chene as its priest. In 1479, the village was sold by Jób Garai to Miklós and Jakab Bánffy, who were also members of the Dorozsma/Garai family. History shows that Tschene was always a valuable possession over the centuries.

After defeating the Hungarians in the first battle of Mohács in 1526, the Turks also conquered the fortress of Temesvár in 1552 and incorporated the Banat into their empire. In the final years of the Turkish occupation, on August 20, 1696, a bloody battle took place between Tschene and what is now Hetin in Serbia, known as the "Battle of the Bega" or "Battle of Olasch" / Olaschin / Ulaş between the imperial troops under the command of Prince Friedrich August and the Turks, in which up to 6,000 imperial soldiers and 4,000 Turks were wounded or killed, including military leaders such as Johann Karl Count Jörger von Tollet, while Field Marshals Donat Johann Count Heißler von Heitersheim and Karl Thomas Prince Vaudémont were mortally wounded. The battle ended in a tactical draw. However, Mustafa II held the fortress of Temeswar and thus achieved an operational success. Friedrich August was accused by his generals of being drunk during the battle, while he accused his generals of not doing their job. He resigned his command and, as Prince of Saxony, devoted himself to the Polish crown succession – he remains legendary to this day as Augustus the Strong – while his successor in the imperial army was, fortunately, Prince Eugene of Savoy!

The village was probably destroyed at this time, as it is marked as uninhabited on Count Mercy's map from 1723-25. Later, it became state property.

Serbs, Romanians, and Bulgarians originally settled there, engaging in cattle breeding and encouraged by the authorities to settle down. According to Wikipedia, a Bulgarian built a windmill in 1740, a Serbian built a watermill in 1760, and a Jew built a brewery in 1780. Beyond that, the marshland surrounding the village yielded no income. For economic reasons, Germans settled in Tschene, as they did throughout the Banat region, and

promoted agriculture and crafts. The main influx of German population – internal settlers, i.e. resettlers from other German communities – took place between 1800 and 1820.

In 1820, the village was given to the Vuchetich family as compensation for their confiscated Croatian land, which was needed for border protection. Vuchetich settled Croats in the new district of Kroatisch-Tschene, west of Serbisch-Tschene, where Romanians and Germans also lived. In 1902, both districts were merged to form Tschene. In addition, there was the so-called “Gypsy colony,” which was inhabited by Roma.

Miklós Vuchetich, a chaplain at the royal court, initially settled in Tschene. István Vuchetich, canon of Zagreb, was born here on October 29, 1836.

In 1830, Rößler from Gertjanosch built a horse mill in Tschene, and another mill was built by the Rotsching family in 1840.

In 1874, after the straightening of the Old Bega, a wooden bridge was built over the river. The efforts to drain the swamps paid off economically over time and enabled the first connection to the Hatzfeld-Großbetschkerek railway line. Only slowly did all plant debris disappear from the formerly swampy soil, and cultivated plants and grain shaped the new face of the landscape.

Later, the heirs of Baron Gyula Csávossy became the largest landowners in the village. The large landowner Kálmán Szekeres also owned a large estate in Tschene, which belonged to the government commissioner Karl Edler von Arizi (1804 Tschene - 1870 Detta) until 1861. Arizi brought the “2nd Swabian Petition” to the Viennese court, a document of resistance by the Banat Swabians against Magyarization. It did not prevent Magyarization.

There was also a manor house in the village, which was built and inhabited in 1903 by Gáspár Uzbasich, chief judge and district judge of the district.

The school was built in 1840 and was also used as a catholic house of prayer by Germans, Croats, and Hungarians. The teaching language was mainly German. Teacher Josef Dittrich, who made a great contribution to Tschene and enjoyed high recognition, worked at the school for more than 30 years from 1872 onwards (4).

The Catholic church was built in 1895-96 and consecrated to St. Augustine on August 28, 1896. The impressive document dated August 18, 1895, relating to the laying of the foundation stone is documented at <https://jaeger.banater-archiv.de/index.php?title=WK:1363>.

The villagers maintained a credit union, a casino, a volunteer fire department, and a shooting club, among other things. Teacher Dittrich also founded the first known student shooting club in Tschene (4).

The first pictorially documented church consecration festival took place in 1913 – Robert Schuld highlighted this tradition in his book “Kirchweih in Tschene – eine fast vergessene Tradition” (Church Consecration Feast in Tschene – an almost forgotten tradition), published in 2016.

The Tschene soccer team was already one of the most successful in the area in the 1930s. During this time, a fellow countryman from Tschene also made it into the Rapid Temeswar team (4).

The political and social turmoil surrounding the two world wars of the 20th century, especially the period of prosperity between the two world wars and the decline of culture associated with the exodus of the Banat Swabians after World War II, are important enough to be mentioned in the headline. I would like to refrain from further commentary of my own and instead let the demographic figures from Tschene speak for themselves:

Year	Population	Romanian	Hungarian	German	Serb./Croat./others
1910	2735	43	198	957	1537
1930	2661	82	184	1033	1362
1977	2536	706	363	416	1051
1992	2160	1030	324	92	714
2002	2013	1159	267	46	541

Source: <https://www.kia.hu/kiakonyvtar/konyvtar/erdely/erd2002/tmetn02.pdf>

I would like to conclude as a “neighbor” with two remarks:

1.

Since my childhood, I have been familiar with a small, framed, simple reprint of the 1910 triptych by the great Swabian painter Stefan Jäger (\*1877 Tschene / +1962 Hatzfeld) depicting the immigration of the Banat Swabians. Many extensive contemplations have stimulated my imagination on the one hand and influenced my values on the other. This reproduction found its way to Germany with the emigration of my grandparents.

2.

Between Tschene and Deutschsanktmichael, there are not only neighborly but also personal and family relationships that are still alive today. The two hometown associations (HOG) are very keen to maintain and develop these ties, for example through joint music-making and the 2006 bus trip to the old homeland, but also through the second joint hometown meeting planned for 2025.

The initiatives of the HOG Tschene on customs, homeland, and culture should also be mentioned. In 2016, 35 compatriots from Germany took part in the church consecration celebrations marking 120 years since the consecration of the church in Tschene, and the then HOG chairman Stephan Ruttner unveiled a plaque commemorating Stefan Jäger, which is attached to the house that stands on the site of Jäger's birthplace.

In 2022, the HOG participated in the local celebrations to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the church. A remarkable fundraising campaign—an initiative launched in 2016 by Robert Schuld, which continues to this day—benefited the renovation of the church and cemetery.

On occasion of this celebration, the HOG summarizes what makes Tschene so special:

“Unlike other villages in the Banat region, Tschene was not a purely German settlement. We have always lived together respectfully with other nations.”