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# GREEKS IN JÁSZBERÉNY IN THE 18th AND 19th CENTURIES

A special feature of the Hungarian social evolution was that people of not Hungarian origin such as Germans, Greeks and Jews played an important role in the process of modermization and bourgeois development.

The merchants from the Balkan, who were collectively called Greeks in the vernacular, had an important role in establishing the conditions for the early capitalism in the 18th century. The Greek merchants were forced to leave their country by the increasing Turkish oppression and the lack of means of subsistence. The customs policy of the Vienna Court ensured favourable possibilities for them to take part in European trade. The peace treaties between the Habsburg empire and the Turkish Porte gave them disproportionate advantages; in some towns their activities were often followed by the displeasure and protest of native merchants<sup>1</sup>. The Vienna Court often issued restrictive orders, the authorities, however, could not and did not want to enforce them for a long time. Foreign policy had a priority and till the Turkish Empire was considered to be a major force, it was not advisable to modify international treaties. The situation changed only after the Russian-Turkish war (1768-1774) that resulted in the weakening of the Turkish Empire. After that there were more determined measures taken as far as the legal status of the Greek merchants is concerned. A royal order in 1774 abolished their former privileged status and made them settle finally.

The reception of the Greeks was changing in the Hungarian territories. In the northern part of the country and in the royal free boroughs they were not welcomed as they meant a threat to the positions of the local merchants. However, in Jászkunság, between the Danube and the Tisza, their activity

<sup>1.</sup> In 1718 the Pozsarevác Treaty let the citizens of the two empires trade with a 3 per cent duty, which later was raised to 5 per cent. The Vienna Court wanted to ensure an easy market for their own product but the lack of conditions enabled the Balkan merchants to take advantage of the situation. Eckhart Ferenc, "Kereskedelmünk közvetitöi a XVIII. században", Századok, LII. (1918), 357-358, Bur Márta, "A balkáni kereskedök és a magyar borkivitel a XVIII. században", Történelmi Szemle, 1978, 285-287,

was very important. The privileged area always closed to aliens welcomed the Balkan merchants from the very beginning and by the 18th century in most of the settlements almost all activities related to trade, leasing shops and inns or credit operations were conducted exclusively by them.

Archival documents made it evident that the settled gained the most important role in Jászberény, the centre of Jászkun Kerület. It did not only mean economic importance but they had a major part in the public life of the town.

In a previous paper I outlined how the Greeks settled in the Jászkunság, their number and the main characteristic features of their activities<sup>2</sup>. This paper describes the activity of the Greeks settled in Jászberény, the centre of Jászkunság and the way they assimilated into the local economic and social community.

# Greeks in a privileged community at the beginning of the 18th century

The legal and administrative status of the Jászkunság consisting of three areas —Jászság, Kiskunság, Nagykunság— was totally different from other municipalities of the country. The differences rested on the 13th and 14th century royal privileges that were given to the Cumanians and Jazygians settling here. Later they were reinforced several times and resulted in a special legal status of the people living here. The main element was that the inhabitants were exempt from feudal subjection and the duties attached to it. In return for the rights they were to perform military service<sup>3</sup>.

The settlement of the Greeks at the beginning of the 18th century was simultaneous with two major events in the life of the inhabitants of Jászkunság. In 1702 Leopold I (1657-1705) sold the territory to the Order of the Teutonic Knights, which act put the inhabitants into the state of feudal tenants. As a result of their repeated applications Maria Theresa (1740-1780) made the redemption possible on condition that the inhabitants would repay the selling price to the treasury. The fact that some inhabitants could take the financial sacrifice of contributing to the redemption some could not, made the local

<sup>2.</sup> Papp Izabella, "Greek merchants in the eighteenth-century Jászkunság", Balkan Studies 30,2, Thessaloniki 1989, 261-289.

<sup>3.</sup> Op. cit., p. 262, the supplement to the paper contains the map the area, p. 281. About the legal status of Jászkunság: Bagi Gábor, A Jászkun Kerület és a reformországgyűlések' Szolnok, 1991, pp. 9-14; Bánkiné Molnár Erzsébet, "A Jászkun Kerület helységeinek közigazgatási szervezete", Cumania, 10, Kecskemét, 1988.

society split into redemptuses and irredemptuses, which later determined the degree of the privileges they enjoyed<sup>4</sup>.

The centre of the privileged area was Jaszberény. The town was first mentioned in a document in 1357 already as the centre of Jászság. Its geographical position made it the natural middle of the area. It kept its administrative leadership during the Turkish occupation. The Turks respected its privileges and the town had great military importance for them. From its occupation it was considered the private possession of the sultan that gave its people a certain degree of protection. Though during the Turkish occupation it was destroyed several times and it became partially depopulated, it was during this period that the town became the centre of not only the Jászság but the whole Jászkunság, as well<sup>5</sup>.

After the Turkish period the economic development of the town could start. It was promoted by the fact that Leopold I. gave the right of holding three markets in Jászberény. Mills and bridges were built that were important conditions of trade. According to a census in 1699 there lived 388 families, 2256 inhabitants in the town 57.4 per cent of which were local residents. More people could remain here during the past centuries than in other Jazygian settlements. It kept its central position after 1702 when sold to the Teutonic Knights, even some economic development can be traced in the period<sup>6</sup>.

The administrative role of the town made it more and more important for it to take part in commercial, credit and financial activities. They, however, were performed not by the local residents but by merchants arriving here from the Balkan.

The Greeks got into special circumstances in Jászberény, the most characteristic aspect of which was its privileged status. Privileges created a relatively closed society that was not willing to accept aliens. On the local scale of values land and activities connected to it had a high position. The central role of the town, however, made commercial and credit transactions very important. The inhabitants, on the other hand, did not undertake these

<sup>4.</sup> In the Jászkun Kerület they, who redempted land in 1745 could become redemptuses. In the 19th century, however, the condition of being a redemptus was having a given size of land. Bânkiné Molnár Erzsébet, a "Jászkunság társadalma és igazgatása 1748-1848", in A Jászkunság kutatása 1985, Kecskemét-Szolnok, 1987, 352.

<sup>5.</sup> Fodor Ferenc, A Jászság életrajza, Budapest, 1942, 430-437; Tóth Tibor (ed.), Adatok Szolnok megye történetéből, Vol. 1., Szolnok, 1980, 240-242.

<sup>6.</sup> Fodor (1942), 437,

tasks so alien to their inclinations and talents and let the Greeks perform them.

The Jászkunság and Jászberény in it belonged to the territories occupied by the Turks. The Greeks may have appeared here first simultaneously with the Turks<sup>7</sup>. Later the main trade-routes from the Balkan to Pest and Vienna did not cross Jászberény<sup>8</sup>. The nearest trade route crossed Eger, Gyöngyös, and Hatvan. It was in these towns that the Greeks settled first and from there they moved to Jászberény later.

A Jászberény document from 1701 is the first to contain data reterring to the activities of the Greeks<sup>9</sup>. Before the spring market Greeks from Pest and Eger applied for a permanent place for their tents. The town council fulfilled their wishes. Their decision reveals that the town needed the goods sold by the Greeks. The inhabitants demanded the western and eastern articles that could be obtained only through the Greeks. As there were no local merchants, the Greeks started to settle in Jászberény as early as the beginning of the 18th century. Running shops became the main sphere of their activity and they supplied the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, as well often exchanging their goods for agricultural products. When in 1737 a list of Greek shops was ordered to be compiled, there were three of them already working in Jászberény.

The history of the Greeks in Berény, as well, was influenced by the orders of the governmental authorities issued from time to time as changes in foreign policy or complaints of native merchants demanded. The first restrictive order appeared in 1725<sup>10</sup>. It let the Greeks sell retail only at markets and only goods of Turkish origin. In Jászberény and in many other settlements, however, the order could not be enforced and authorities were tolerant. In 1737, during the Russian-Turkish war the goods of the Greek merchants were ordered to be inventoried and the shops selling prohibited articles were closed down in many towns<sup>11</sup>.

The goods in the Jászberény Greek shops belonging to András Kristof,

<sup>7.</sup> Füves Ödön, "Görögök a Duna-Tisza közén", Antik Tanulmányak, 1966/1, 93.

<sup>8.</sup> Füves Ödön, Greeks in Budapest between 1686 and 1931 (thesis for candidate's degree-Budapest, 1972), 281. Based on censuses the author prepared a map of the main routes the Greek merchants used.

<sup>9.</sup> Szolnok Megyei Levéltár (Archives of Szolnok County, hereinafter SZML), Jászberény tanácsi jegyzökönyve 1701, 2.

<sup>10.</sup> Füves (1966), 93.

<sup>11.</sup> Op. cit.

Mihály Nestor, and Kozma were mainly of oriental origin<sup>12</sup>. The tact reveals, that though they had already settled in Jászberény their connection with their mother country was not cut and they could supply themselves with goods from there. It was drapery that the inventory takers found in the greatest quantity and value. A special kind of felt (aba) was of exceptional value<sup>13</sup> and all kinds of linen, silk and felt were entered into the inventory. They had oriental spices and small articles like combs, pipes, knives, mirrors etc. in their shops. On the other hand, despite of all prohibitions, they sold western goods, as well: Vienna and Silesian fine linen, Polish cambric and linen from Eperjes. All three of them had gunpowder and shot in their shops; both were fully prohibited articles for them. Despite of the obvious malpractice the town council did not have them close the shops either in Jászberény or in other settlements in the Jászkunság.

The Greeks rented the shopbuildings from the local inhabitants for a fixed annual sum. The rent period was a year to begin with, which later they extended for three years. Lease contracts were usually signed in the presence of the leaders of the town and the district usually after a bid. The elders of the town must have been satisfied with the activities of the Greeks, because in 1747 they rented another five shops out to them. Beside the rent the merchants were to pay a certain amount as tax that increased the income of the town. In 1747 the tax they paid was as follows<sup>14</sup>:

Márton Kristót	35 forint
Demeter Ágoston	10 forint
Deme Görög	15 forint
Mihály Görög	15 forint
András Görög	20 fprint
Gyurka Görög	15 forint
Altredo	15 forint
Jankó	8 forint

<sup>12.</sup> SZML, Papers of the Jászkun Kerület, Capsa D Fasc. 2, No. 9. The inventory contains the stock of all Greek shops in Jászberény.

<sup>13.</sup> Aba felt was an important article imported from the Balkan. During the war of independence led by Rákóczi (1703-1711) the felt his army needed was imported by Greek merchants from the textile manufacture in Thessaloniki, cf. Imre Bánkuti, "Egy görög kereskedö tevékenysége Kecskeméten és a Délalföldön", Cumania, Kecskemét, 1975, 80; Bur Márta, (1987), 312.

<sup>14.</sup> SZML Jászberény, tanácsi jegyzökönyv (Council minutes) 1747, 219.

The names do not reveal a lot about the persons, because the Hungarians instead of the Greek names, which were difficult for them to remember, used the word Görög (Greek) as a family name for them. This practice makes it difficult to identify them in later times, as well.

The merchants' activities ensured nice income that made it possible for them to accumulate a fortune. Though officially the Greeks were not allowed to buy realities, one of our sources mentions that Andiás Kristóf had a house in Jászberény as early as 1740<sup>15</sup>. Later the town itself had houses and shopbuildings built for the merchants<sup>16</sup>.

The good relationship the Greeks had with local people was advanced by the fact that beside the compulsory taxes they shared other burdens with the them. It had a special importance that they contributed to the sum the residents of the territory had to pay for their redemption. The burden of the redemption in 1745 was exceptionally heavy for the inhabitants of the Jászkunság<sup>17</sup>. The sum the inhabitants of Jászberény paid for the Redemption was 65.150 Rhenish forints altogether, the majority of which was paid by raising loans. The Greek Demeter in Jászberény lent 1000 Rhenish forints to the town, which was a direct help in the Redemption<sup>18</sup>. As the inhabitants amortized the loans for long years, they had to have new loans from the Greeks in later times, as well.

The period after the Redemption proved to have been the most successful phase in the history of Jászberény. From this time on its role as an administrative centre became obvious. The administration of the Kerület was carried out here, it was where justice was administered, the elections took place, and it was the scene of public life. In 1780 the secondary school moved here from Jászapáti, a town hospital was built, and the hall of the Jászkun Kerület was erected in 1782<sup>19</sup>. The successful period of town history, coincided with the assimilation of the Greeks, their entering the stage of economic and later political life.

It might seem to be strange that the closed Jászkun society so proud of

- 15. SZML Jászberény, Hivatalos tudósitások (Official reports) 8.cs. 15 sz., 1740.
- 16. Fodor, (1942), 203.
- 17. In her diploma on 6th May, 1745 Maria Theresa allowed the redemption. The Jazygo-Cumanian committed themselves to repay the selling price, 500 Rhenish forints with its interest for the treasury, to equip 1000 horse-soldiers and pay the palatine census.
- 18. SZML Jászberény tanácsi jegyzökönyv (Minutes of the Jászberény council), 1747, 234.
- 19. Fodor F., (1942), 443; Scheftsik István, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok vármegye múltja és jelene, Pécs, 1935, 542.

its privileges was ready to receive the Greeks in without any resistance, in a period when others declined their applications for settling. There were no signs of religious controversies, either. The Greeks preserved their Orthodox religion for a long time in an almost totally Catholic environment. Their common fate, the fact that the great changes in fortune were lived through together and that financial burdens were always shared resulted in the phenomenon that local residents otherwise wary of strangers never regarded the Greeks alien. In an area, where the Jews had great struggles even for the possibility of selling their goods, the Greeks were not restricted in their activity, sometimes they were even helped in adapting themselves to the life there. Beside the economic interest we have to take the fact into consideration, as well, that the recipients, the Jazygs of Iranian origin were immigrants themselves one time. They settled in Hungary in the 14th century. Their Eastern origin and similar mentality may answer the questions arising about their connections other than economic.

## Data in censuses and the oath of allegiance

In the process of establishing the legal status of Balkan merchants there were a number of censuses prepared that later became valuable sources of information. The first national census of the Greeks was prepared in 175420. At that time there worked 75 Balkan merchants in the Jászkunság, most of them were in Jászberény. It was in here that the value of goods in their shops was the highest. The stockpile was similar to that registered in 1737, but the proportion of Western goods was even higher. The shops basically sold articles of clothing with accessories. The fact that they still had the prohibited gunpowder and shot was again without any disadvantageous consequences. The census reveals that there already existed some kind of division of labour among the merchants. There were some independent merchants among them who chose partners to their businesses to make it possible for one to run the shop and for the other to wander in the neighbourhood selling goods and purchasing the products of the inhabitants. Some of the merchants had an apprentice in their shops, too. Their apprentices were people who after arriving from the Turkish Empire looked for a job at the merchants already living here. Athanasius Genovics and his brother, for example started to work at Tamás

<sup>20.</sup> Országos Levéltár, (National Archive), Helytartótanácsi iratok. Görög nem egyesült Osztály, Misc. Fasc. 2, No. 8. Quoted in Papp I., (1989), 268.

Petrovics, who had already settled in Jászberény<sup>21</sup>.

The second national census in 1769 was already taken in preparation for the oath of allegiance. The census with detailed personal data lists 62 merchants in the Jászkunság<sup>22</sup>. Fifteen of them lived in Jászberény:

Name	Place of origin	Age	Marital status
Demeter Joannes	Seres	21	single
Demeter Michael	Kozani	19	single
Demeter Georgius	Kozani	23	single
Gergely Joannes	Tornan (Rumania)	53	single
Juhász Joannes	Servia	38	married, wife is from Eger
Kristóf Bernardus	Kasztória	32	single
Kristóf András	Servia	62	married, wife is Turkish
Demetrovics Daniel	Dorian	36	married, wife is from Eger
Demetrovics Christophorus	Dorian		married, wife is from Szentendre
Morzal Petrus	Sziasztisztya	33	single
Morzal Stephanus	Sziasztisztya	25	single
Nestor Michael	Kozáni	38	single
Sigmond Paulus	Kozáni	46	married, wife is Turkish
Thodor Ladislaus	Kozáni	41	widower
Sredo Demetrius	(no data given)		

(the names are given in the form appearing in the census)

<sup>21.</sup> SZML Jászkum Kerület közigazgatási iratai (Papers of the local government of the Jászkun Kerület), Fasc. 8, No. 165/1793.

<sup>22.</sup> SZML Jászkun Kerület közigazgatási iratai (Papers of the local government of the Jászkun Kerület), D Capsa, VI, Fasc. 4, No. 24.

All the Greeks in Jászberény but one originated from Macedonia and all of them belonged to the Orthodox Church. The wives of three were already Hungarians, two from Eger, and one from Szentendre. According to the census they traded with goods from Vienna and the Turkish empire. To the question of the committee most of them answered that they are ready to take the oath of loyalty.

1774, when Maria Theresa demanded taking the oath of loyalty from the Balkan merchants, was a turning point in the lives of the Greeks in Hungary. They had to decide whether they would settle in Hungary and lose the duty concessions or return to their own country. Most of the Greeks in Jászberény took the oath of loyalty as they had settled in the town once for all. Some of them had already married and their children were born here. Morzal Péter had a one year old daughter, Júnász János had a one year old an a new born daughter, and Bosnyák Antal was the father of two, a three year old daughter and a one year old son<sup>23</sup>. Some other merchants returned to their country, Demeter Joannes and Demeter Georgius did not take the oath.

In other parts of the country the oath of loyalty meant the end to the immigration of the Greeks. To Jászberény, however, there arrived Greeks in later times, as well. Georgius Constantin and Joannes Jankovics arrived in 1792 and in 1793 Athanasius Genovics and his brother took the oath of loyalty in front of the representatives of the Kerület<sup>24</sup>.

## The activity of the Greeks at the end of the 18th century

With their permanent settlement the assimilation and later Hungarization of the Greeks started that resulted in considerable social success for them. The golden age of their economy was in the second half of the 18th century, as well. The Jewish merchants were not serious rivals at that time and they still had living connections with the Greeks in their mother country. They could offer both Eastern and Western goods in their shops and could meet the needs of the local inhabitants at a high standard. Their assimilation and entering social life was helped by the 1790 edict of Leopold II (1790-1792), which made it possible for the Greeks to keep their religion, to acquire property and to hold offices<sup>25</sup>.

<sup>23.</sup> SZML Jászkun Kerület közigazgatási iratai (Papers of the local government of the Jászkun Kerület), D Capsa, IX, Fasc. 4, No. 5.

<sup>24.</sup> SZML Jászkun Kerület közigazgatási iratai (Papers of the local government of the Jászkun Kerület), Fasc. 8. ad 62/2700/1793.

<sup>25.</sup> Papp I., (1989), 279.

As we have already seen there were a Greek Jászberény who owned a house as early as 1740 and 1747 it was the town that built shops for them. In 1772 the town erected houses by the shops, as well. In 1771, when the house of Demetrovics Daniel was ruined, they built a new one for him<sup>26</sup>. The council was ready to help as the wealthy merchant often gave loans to the inhabitants. In 1774 the old jail in the yard of the town hall was rebuilt into a shop that was let out to the Greek merchant István Morzál<sup>27</sup>.

Selling goods in their shops remained the main field of the Greeks' activity. By the end of the century all shops were rented by them, to which they had the financial basis and the professional skills, too. In the 1760's, however, the leaders, of the town aimed at giving preferences to the local residents. As a result some shops were really rented by them<sup>28</sup>. Most of them, however, gave the shops back before the end of the lease period as the business was not profitable for them and they did not really like this type of work. The lease of valuable public houses and inns was often kept for the town itself.

In 1770 Maria Theresa gave the permission for another annual fair to be kept in Jászberény<sup>29</sup>, that led to the further development of the town. New roads were built, the streets were replanned and the activity of skillful merchants was needed, too.

As time went on the activity of the Greeks became many-sided. In 1790 István Morzal requested a permission for opening a coffee-tavern at his house. The council gave the permission and the first coffee house in Jászberény opened<sup>30</sup>. In 1796 the town applied for the right of selling salt hoping for considerable profit from it. The licence was first given to a local resident, József Pölöskei, but at a bid some years later the licence was won at an annual rent of 150 forints by the Greek Antal Hadzsi<sup>31</sup>. Later the Greeks also rented the rights of fishing and hunting. The practice of granting credits was formed: not only the residents but the town itself bought things in the shops of the

<sup>26.</sup> SZML Jászberény tanácsi jegyzökönyv (Minutes of the Jászberény council), 1773, 195. 27. SZML Jászberény tanácsi jegyzökönyv (Minutes of the Jászberény council), 1774,

<sup>28.</sup> SZML Jászberény tanácsi jegyzökönyv (Minutes of the Jászberény council), 1760, 236.

<sup>29.</sup> Kálman Ödön, A zsidók letelepülése a Jászságban, Budapest, 1916, 36.

<sup>30.</sup> SZML Jászberény tanácsi jegyzökönyv (Minutes of the Jászberény council), 1790, 347.

<sup>31.</sup> SZML Jászkun Kerület közigazgatási iratai (Papers of the local government of the Jászkun Kerület), Fasc. 7, No. 376/1796.

Greeks —often on credit— and they frequently borrowed great sums from the Greeks. In 1795 László Hadzsi lend 1000 Rhenish forints to the town, and in 1813 another 5000 forints for the purposes of the meat house<sup>32</sup>.

#### Towards assimilation

By the end of the 18th century the Greeks in Jászberény got among favourable circumstances. The had a role in economic life that others were not willing to undertake. Their financial status made it possible for them to give loans, which was very important both for the local residents and the town itself. At this time a new group of merchants appeared, the Jews, who threatened the positions of the Greeks more and more. The leaders of the town, however, gave preference to the Greeks and they showed a negative attitude to the settling and trading activity of the Jews.

The Greeks' activity was beneficial to the town leaders in many ways. They did not only filled a gap with their activity but they undertook to pay the various taxes, paid the rents of the shops, houses, the annual tax on their income and the war-tax. Besides they made pledges for the sake of the community that accepted them, for the country and for the town. In his request in 1779 Antal Bosnyák referred to his having equipped two soldiers at the time of Belgrade's siege and having paid 25 forints for the war against the French<sup>33</sup>. They took part in other expenses of the town. In 1810 fifteen inhabitants of Jászberény offered some money for the purposes of the school: László Hadzsi, Konstantin Harsányi, the Jankovics brothers and Demeter Konstantinovics paid large sums among them<sup>34</sup>.

Their last wills testify how important it was for them to leave bequests to the country and the town. András Kristóf left a considerable sum to the town church and its chapels in 1781<sup>35</sup>. István Morzal offered the king 200 forints in his will for the purposes of the war against the French, and left some money to the two Jászberény churches and the hospital<sup>36</sup>. The merchant

<sup>32.</sup> SZML Jászberény tanácsi jegyzökönyv (Minutes of the Jászberény council), 1795, 45, 1813, 114.

<sup>33.</sup> SZML Jászkun Kerület közigazgatási iratai (Papers of the local government of the Jászkun Kerület), Fasc. 7, No. 376/1779.

<sup>34.</sup> SZML Jászberény, Hivatalos tudósítások (Official reports), Capsa 50, Fasc. 4, No. 66.

<sup>35.</sup> SZML Jászberény, Végrendeletek (Last wills), Capsa 26, Fasc. 1, No. 54.

<sup>36.</sup> SZML Jászberény, Végrendeletek (Last wills), Capsa 25, Fasc. 2, No. 153.

lived in Budapest at that time but, as he wrote, Jászberény gave him the first opportunity of money-making and he felt he owed his thanks for it. Bequests to their own church was always in the first place in their wills and they did not forget about their fellow-countrymen living in Hungary among humble circumstances.

A part of the assimilation process was that some Greeks were raised to noble rank. There were about 500 noble families of Greek origin at the end of 18th century<sup>37</sup>. There lived Greek noblemen, David and Serafin Avakumovics in Jászberény, too<sup>38</sup>. In the special society of the Jazygo-Cumanian nobility did not mean any social advantage. While in other parts of the country the nobility took the highest level in the social hierarchy, here this place belong to the *redemptuses*. Their nobility was not important for the two Greek, either. They kept their original occupation and remained merchants.

Though trade remained the main occupation for the Greeks at the beginning of the 19th century, as well, at that time more and more of them bought lands. Earlier sources listed them as shopkeepers or Greek lease-holders then they were often referred to as landowning inhabitants, later the public offices they held were added to their names. László Hadzsi, who had been very successful as a merchant, was mentioned as a landowner in the sources after the 1840's<sup>39</sup>. He was proposed for a membership of the town council in 1845<sup>40</sup>, a condition of which was being a redemptus<sup>41</sup>. Local laws determined that only redemptuses could become aldermen. By this time László Hadzsi must have been in the possession of all the necessary conditions and the Jazyg community did not only accept him but appointed to an important office.

The Harsányi family had an important role among the Jászberény Greeks. Their history is a good example of the two sides of assimilation characteristic of the Greeks. While one member of the family remained a successful merchant, the other gave up trade and chose another occupation<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>37.</sup> Shäfor László, A görögök vezetöszerepe Magyarországon a korai kapitalizmus kiala-kulásában, Budapest, 1930, 40.

<sup>38.</sup> SZML Jászberény, Conscriptiok 1803-1804, 82-85; à member of the family, Pál was a bishop of Arad.

<sup>39.</sup> SZML Jászberény tanácsi jegyzökönyv (Minutes of the Jászberény council), 1839, 40.

<sup>40.</sup> SZML Jászberény tanácsi jegyzökönyv (Minutes of the Jászberény council), 1845, 1129 sz.

<sup>41.</sup> Bánkiné Molnár Erzsébet, (1988), 121.

<sup>42.</sup> For more data about the family see Papp Izabella, "Görögök és zsidók gazdaságí helycseréje a Jászkunságban", in Zounuk 5, Ed. by Botka János, Szolnok, 1990, 36-38.

Szilárd Harsányi was born in 1785 and died at the age of 95 in 1880. His long life is an example of the successful career of an assimilated Greek. He had a decisive role both in trade and the public life of the town. First he worked as the partner of László Hadzsi and in 1817 he applied to the town council for the status of an inhabitant. From this time on he worked as an independent merchant. There are a lot of notes in the papers and minutes of the town referring to his financial and trade activities. His disposition was proved by his being the chairman of the Jászberény Chamber of Commerce, the members of which were nearly all Greeks. In 1848 he was the first to meet the appeal of captain-general Móric Szentkirályi offering the necessary goods and bed linen from his shop for the national guard. In May 1848 he was elected to be a town representative. As a mounted member of the national guard he himself took part in the war of independence together with other Greeks, György Hadzsi, János Constantin, Mátyás Dantsa. In 1859 he became an alderman and could take part in decisions concerning the town. He had a decisive role in the successful resistance of the Greeks against the settlement of Jewish merchants.

Mihály Harsányi was the brother of Szilárd Harsányi. He gave up the trade of his ancestor and became a lawyer. He became a deputy clerk then a juryman of the Kerület and from 1850 he held the highest Jazygian administrative office, that of the captain of the Kerület. The Harsányi family was related to Júlia Szendrey, the wife of the great Hungarian poet, Sándor Petöfi<sup>43</sup>.

Of course not all the Greeks in Jászberény were so successful. We find data referring to merchants who became poor and indebted. In one of the minutes we can read that György Ilits had no possessions before his death and he lived on charity<sup>44</sup>.

## Economic change-over

The central position of Jászberény and the good market of the Jászság attracted not only the Greeks. The Jewish merchants would have settled in this area as early as the 18th century. They, however, experienced a strong resistance here that was unfamiliar to them at other parts of the country. It

<sup>43.</sup> Julianna Harsányi, the great granddaughter of Mihály Harsányi is living in Budapest and disclosed important data about the family.

<sup>44.</sup> SZML Jászkun Kerület közigazgatási iratai (Papers of the local government of the Jászkun Kerület), Fasc. 4, No. 1964/1832.

were not only the Greeks who objected their trading activity and settlement here but the orders issued by the higher administrative authorities of the Kerület prohibited their activity, as well.

The first complaint about the Jews was written by the Jászberény saddlers and shoemakers in 1750<sup>45</sup>. The next hundred years saw a continuous flow of complaints and protests mainly by the Greeks. The leaders of the town and the Kerület always took a strong stand against the Jews, using all measures to prevent their settlement. The basis of their resistance was an article, in the patent by Maria Theresa stating that the Kerület and it settlements cannot be compelled to admit aliens. It did not prevent the settlement of the Greeks. They were let to move there even at times when the Jews' applications for settling were repelled in one instance after the other. The leaders of the town and the Kerület were of the opinion that the Greeks and the few local merchants could meet the commercial needs of the area. They did not change their views even when time proved the opposite.

The first Jewish merchants to appear in Jászberény were not competitors for the Greeks. They traded with waste iron, feather and tallow. Later they tried to sell brandy, skin, wool and other articles, which resulted in the strong protest of the Greeks. The first common action was initiated by the plaintive letter of two Jászberény Greeks, László Hadzsi and András Kristóf in 1782. All other Greek merchants in the Jászkunság joined the application for restricting the Jews' activity. The leaders of the Kerület forwarded the application to the council of the governor-general<sup>46</sup>.

The letter does not only summarize the main complaints of the Greeks but it reflects the privileged situation they had in the Jászkunság. As members of full right of the privileged territory they referred with self-assertion to their sacrifices when paying taxes and equipping soldiers. Their main complaint was that the Jewish merchants sold their goods not only at times of markets but all year round without paying taxes.

For the Jews it was impossible anywhere in the country to get the rights the Greeks had already got. They were not given citizenship, could not buy real property; they invested their capital into trade and financial activities.

<sup>45.</sup> Fodor F., (1942), 216.

<sup>46.</sup> SZML Jászkun Kerület közigazgatási iratai (Papers of the local government of the Jászkun Kerület), D Capsa, Fasc. 18, No. 64. This was the second occasion when the Greeks of the Jászkunság joined in a common action. First, in 1732 they asked that they could stay and trade in the Jászkunság. The leaders of the Jászkun Kerület supported their application on both occassions.

They were not allowed to settle in towns, did not pay taxes and could sell their goods cheaper than the Greeks.

The first plaintive letter written by the Greeks was followed by several more from various parts of the country<sup>47</sup>. The decline of the Greeks' economic power and role made it possible for the Jews to settle first in the Kiskunság. However, in the Jászság and especially in Jászberény they met a strong resistance supported by the leaders of the Kerület, as well<sup>48</sup>.

Despite of the prohibitions the Jewish goods reached the market of Jászberény. In the nearby, non-privileged villages they had depots and from there they sent their merchandise to the markets. The range of the articles they offered met the needs of the inhabitants better than that of the Greeks. The Greek merchants realized the danger and in 1830 they turned to the captain of the Kerület asking him to forbid the Jews to sell at weekly fairs. Their application was forwarded to the palatine of Hungary, who asked the opinion of the leaders of the town<sup>49</sup>. The opinions of the Kerület and the town were different this time. The leaders of the Kerület wanted to keep the Jews off even now, while the elders of the town thought it useful for the inhabitants to let the Jews visit the fairs.

By this time the Greeks' assimilation was nearly complete. Their way of life was more comfortable and they sold home products. Many of them bought lands and gardens and trade was not their main means of living. They, however, wanted to guard their privileges. Their influence is proved by the fact that as a result of their complaint the Jews were forbidden to sell at weekly fairs.

The status of the Jews was changed by the 29th statute in 1840<sup>50</sup>. The statute let the Jews settle and trade everywhere except in mining towns and military frontiers. The towns that had not let them move in became open for them. Jászberény, however, continued its strong resistance to their settling. The Greeks' still had and important role here and their public offices made their influence even stronger. They addressed various authorities with their common complaints. In 1842, they asked the palatine to let the Jews take only the goods to the fairs that cannot be found in the Greeks' shops<sup>51</sup>. They tried to prevent the Jews form setting up warehouses in the town. One of the

<sup>47.</sup> Papp I., (1990), 30-36.

<sup>48.</sup> Kálmán Ö., (1916).

<sup>49.</sup> Papp I., (1990), 41.

<sup>50.</sup> Magyar Törvénytár, ed. by Dezső Márkus, Budapest, 1896, 175-176; 1840, XXIX. tc.

<sup>51.</sup> Papp I., (1990), 48.

last manifestations of their resistance was their application for terminating weekly fairs only to make it impossible for the Jews to continue their trade. The palatine did not agree to it and the town council had the interest of the inhabitants in their mind when they gave permission to the first Jew, Gábor Buck to move into the town in 1850<sup>52</sup>. After that great numbers of them settled in the town, but the Greeks kept their unsympathetic attitude towards them. As an alderman Szilárd Harsányi, their last distinguished representative took sides against the Jews' settling<sup>53</sup>.

Economic forces proved to be stronger than legal prohibitions. By the end of the 1850's an economic change-over was carried out; the Jewish merchants took over the role of the Greeks.

# Relics of the Greeks in Jászberény

The Greeks in Jászberény are fully assimilated today and most of them have moved from the town. As a result of their assimilation there is hardly any secular relics left after them. Two religious objects in the Jászberény museum and their tomb-stones in the graveyard are all that are left to us.

For the Greeks were scattered in the world it was their language and religion that worked as cementing power. While the language in foreign surroundings was soon forgotten, their religion was preserved. Religion for them was more than keeping their orthodox faith. It symbolized their identity with their fellow citizens living far from the mother country and with the great Hellenic nation before the Turkish occupation.

After the edict of tolerance of Joseph II (1780-1790) the Greeks were allowed to erect churches in Hungary. The only place in the Jászkunság with a Greek orthodox church was Karcag<sup>54</sup>. The Greeks in Jászberény did not build a church. Beside their small number it is explained by the fact that when they settled in the town there already functioned meetinghouses in the nearly towns, Gyöngyös and Eger. Later, when the churches here were finished connections of the Jászberény Greeks with these towns became even closer. Their register books were kept there, they got married in Eger or Gyöngyös

<sup>52.</sup> Op. cit., 49.

<sup>53.</sup> In 1859 he was charged with pass judgement on Joszef Weisz's application for settling, which he rejected.

<sup>54.</sup> Marta Nagy, "The Iconostasion of the Greek Orthodox Church in Karcag", in: Balkan Studies 28<sub>2</sub> (1987), 237-258.

and when they died they were buried by the priests of one of the above towns according to orthodox ceremony.

The two religious objects in the Jászberény museum, which are a rarity in the Jászság, prove their persistence in their religion. One of them is an 18th century triptych. The northern Greek popular work of art has its symbolic meaning; it stands for the destiny of the Greeks and their settlement in foreign lands. Its owner took it with himself when he started his wanderings and after he settled in Jászberény he had it put in a carved wooden frame and used it as a house altar<sup>55</sup>. In the middle piece of the triptych there can be seen Mary with the child and the wings depict St George, St Demetrius and half figures of other saints. If the wings are closed the ascription "Jesus Christ will triumph" can be read. The wings are decorated with wood carving from the outside the motifs of which resemble that of Hungarian folk art.

There remained an icon from the Holy Land, as well with Mary and the child on its left side. The multilevel picture consists of a lot of biblical scenes. The icon had Greek inscriptions with the name Hatzi (Hadzsi) Demeter and the date 1796 in the middle. The title "hadzsi" was given to those who visited the Holy Land<sup>56</sup>. Later it was attached to their names often becoming their tamily names. The earliest sources in Jászberény mentioned a merchant called Demeter Greek, who in later documents was referred to as Demeter Hadzsi. He must have visited the Holy Land during his wanderings or one of this acquaintance who arrived later had the icon made for him.

The Greeks' attachment to their religion is reflected by their wills, too. They did not only leave some money to the Greek churches in the neighbouring settlements but András Kristóf in his will in 1781, for example, left certain sums to all the Greek churches already existing in the whole country<sup>57</sup>.

The Greeks buried their relatives in a separated area of the Catholic cemetery, where ten of their tomb stones still can be found<sup>58</sup>. The inscriptions on the stones and the archival documents on some of the persons there made it possible to reconstruct the family connections (Table 1). It can be stated

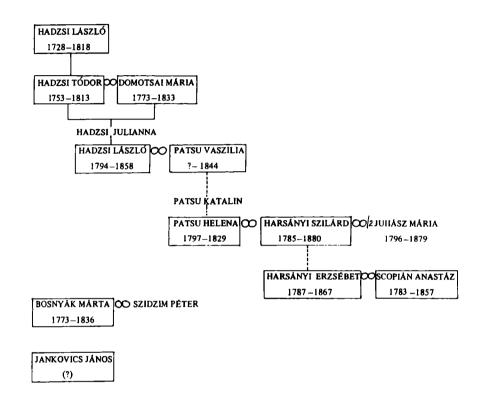
<sup>55.</sup> Márta Nagy, Görögök a Tiszántúlon, Kecskemét, Szentes, 1988, 7.

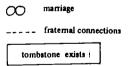
<sup>56.</sup> Füves Ödön, "A pesti görögök nevei", In: Nyelvtudományi értekezések, Budapest, 1970, 262-263.

<sup>57.</sup> SZML Jászberény, Végrendeletek (Last wills), Capsa 25, Fasc. 10, No. 104, cited in Papp I., (1989), 276.

<sup>58.</sup> The tombstones in the Jászkunság are described by Izabella Papp, "Görög síremlékek a Jászkunságban", in Zounuk 7, ed. by János Botka, Szolnok, 1992, 61-86; about the motifs of the tombstones see Márta Nagy, "Jászkunsági görög sirköformák", in Zounuk 7, ed. by János Botka, Szolnok, 1992, 87-98.

### FAMILY RELATIONS OF THE JASZBERÉNY GREEK FAMILIES





that the tombstones —with the exception of that of Márta Bosnyák and János Jankovics— belonged to the members of two, related families, the Hadzsi and the Harsányi. Three generations of the Hadzsi family rest here. László Hadzsi, the leader of the Greek community at the time of their settlement, is buried here and Szilárd Harsányi, as well, who had an outstanding role in the life of the community and in the social life of the town in the 19th century.

The inscriptions on the stones are in Hungarian even in the case of the earliest one dated in 1813<sup>59</sup>. The inscriptions reveal that their owners were proud of their citizenship, and mentioned them in the epitaphs: "László Hadzsi merchant and burgher of Jászberény", "Tódor Hadzsi worthy burgher and righteous merchant of Jászberény". Some of the tombstones are heart-shaped and were made in baroque or rococo style followed at that time in Hungary. Some examples of them are the stones of László Hadzsi, Mária Domotsai and Tódor Hadzsi. In the second half of the 19th century neoclassic stones were erected as in the case of Vaszilia Patsu and Erzsébet Scopian Harsányi. All tombstones end in a Greek-cross with equal limbs that are sometimes decorated. A weeping willow, symbolizing death and sorrow was carved on the cross of László Hadzsi. On the stone of Anastaz Scopian erected in 1857 a twig of rosemary appears that was considered to frighten evil spirits away from the dead. The stones reveal that the families who ordered them had high standards and chose skillful masters<sup>60</sup>.

Further research will hopefully result in discovering earlier tombstones of the Greeks possibly with Greek inscriptions.

#### Conclusion

The paper has given a roughly outlined picture of a hundred year in the history of Jászberény Greeks. We can conclude that the Greek merchants had a very important role in the economic and religious life of the town in the 18th and the first part of the 19th centuries. The privileged territory did not object to their settlement and helped their assimilation. The Greeks themsel-

<sup>59.</sup> The inscriptions on the Greek tombstones were published in 1966 by Ödön Füves. The stones in the Jászkunság were not know at that time. Füves Ödön, «Επιτύμβιοι επιγραφαί Ελλήνων εις την Ουγγαρίαν», in: Δημοσιεύματα της Εταιζείας Μακεδονικών Σπουδών, Thessaloniki, 1966.

<sup>60.</sup> Márta Nagy, (1992), 94.

ves were ready to accommodate themselves to the community they found here, took part in its burdens and offered their voluntary help on several occasions. First they were successful in their trade then they held important public offices. Assimilation, on the other hand, had its disadvantages. They adopted themselves to a more convenient style of life, their possibilities for laying up their merchandise narrowed and they traded with home products in greater and greater proportion. Jewish merchants became their competitors, who could offer a more uptodate choice of goods. In Jászberény the Greek community was successful in hindering the Jews' settlement for a long time. The leaders of the town and the Kerület supported the Greeks even when it was disavantageous economically.

By the middle of the 19th century feudal privileges became outworn and got into conflict with the spirit of bourgeois development. Economic disadvantages resulting from rejecting the Jews' settlement and citizenship could not be met any more. In the 1950's the Jews took the role that had been played so successfully by the Greeks in the economic and religious life of Jászberény.

The memory of the Greek families that lived in Jászberény is kept by numerous archival documents, a few religious objects and beautiful tombstones in the cemetery.

Szolnok Megyei Levéltár

[Translated by Klára Koltay]

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2. The Last will of András Kristóf from 1781.

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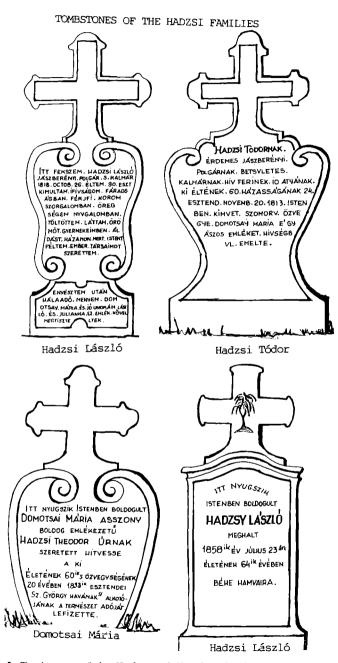
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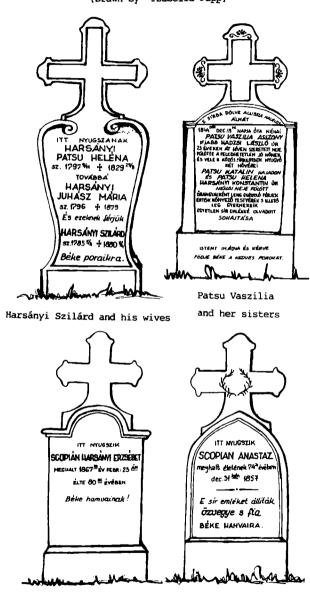
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5. Tombstones of the Hadzsi and Harsányi families (drawings).

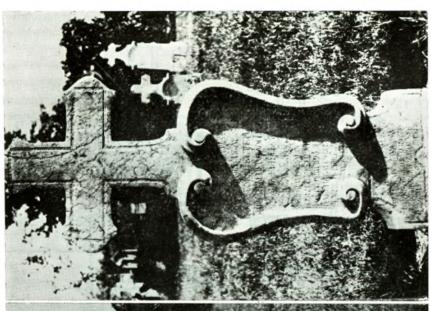
# TOMBSTONES OF THE HARSÁNYI FAMILIES (Drawn by Izabella Papp)



Scopian Anastaz

Harsányi Erzsébet

17





6. Tombstóne of Szilárd Harsányi (photograph).

7. Tombstone of László Hadzsi (photograph).