

***Babeş-Bolyai* University, Cluj-Napoca**

Faculty of European Studies

PhD Thesis

**The Jewish Community from Satu Mare
County in the 18 – 20th Century**

Summary

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Summary

Key words: Jews, History, Religious Community, Demographic growth, Economic, Social and Cultural Evolution, Rabbis, Education

The scientific researches regarding the Jewish history from Transylvania, Banat and Romania represents a new line in the historical researches which developed in Romania only in the last decade of the 20th Century. In the last two decades, many historians dedicated their researches for the study of Jewish Communities from Romania, trying to reveal the history of a nation which had an important contribution in the economic, social and cultural life of our region. The importance of the researches regarding the Jewish Communities from Romania is testified by the high number of studies, articles, books which were published and by the high number of research institutions established across the academic world. My thesis, entitled *The Jewish Community from Satu Mare County in the 18-20th Century* propose to present the history of the Jewish Community developed in the county situated in the north – west of Romania. The thesis wants to reveal new data regarding the demographic growth of the community, the economic development, the evolution of their social and cultural life.

My researches are focused on the history of Jews from this county, from the very beginning, from the first settlements until the third decade of the 20th century, when the community already reached a high level of institutionalization. The thesis is structured in 6 chapters and 10 appendixes and handles separately the demographic, economic, cultural evolution and development of the Jewish community from Satu Mare County and especially from Satu Mare, Baia Mare, Baia Sprie and Carei, the four towns from the county.

The history of the settlement of Jews and the establishment of the first Jewish community was the primary motive why I have chosen this subject. Distinctly from the past centuries, when their presence was sporadic in the Hungarian Kingdom, from the 18th century the Jews have been settled all over the country and respectively in the Principality of Transylvania.

In the counties from northern Hungary the nobles, with the purpose to increase their personal income and to develop the economy in their region permitted to the Jews to settle on their lands offering them legal and real protection. In exchange for the protection, and the right of settlement the Jews have been paid different taxes to the nobles, have been rented the mills, inns and lands¹. This model was taken over by the other nobles of the kingdom and the Jewish colonization was spread first in the counties from northern Hungary and later in the counties from east of the kingdom and was implemented by count Alexandru Károlyi in Satu Mare County at the beginning of the 18th century. The first Jews who were settled here were invited by the count and the conditions of their settlement were fixed in a contract. These contracts, the first one was signed in 1723, have fixed the rights and the obligations of the new formed Jewish community. The most important part of my thesis is represented by the researches related to these contracts, to the economical relations between the Jews and the noble and during my researches I was studying many unpublished documents, written in Hungarian, German and Latin, which survived the centuries in the archives of the Károlyi family.

The second reason why I have chosen this subject is the otherness of the history of this community, in the researched period the County Satu Mare being located at the north-eastern border of the Hungarian Kingdom. Due to the geographic location of the county, the Jewish community was directly influenced by the migrations, the population bulge and their economic, cultural development was determined by the different groups settled here. This cultural, but mainly religious influence can be felt especially at the beginning of the 20th century, when the Satmarer Hasidism and the Zionism were spread. Both, the Hasidism and Zionism, played an important role in the life of the Jewish community from County Satu Mare before the Second World War.

While in the Principality of Transylvania the only legally recognized Jewish community was settled in Alba-Iulia in the Hungarian Kingdom the Jews had the right to settle wherever the nobles offered them protection. The institutional structure of the community from Alba-Iulia was totally different from the structure and legal status of the communities settled in the Hungarian Kingdom, and due to this differences the evolution of the communities were totally different.

¹ Ernő Marton, *A magyar zsidóság családfája. Vázlat a magyarországi zsidó településtörténethez*, ed. Fraternitas, Cluj-Napoca, 1941, p. 42-43.

Once more the geographical location of the county influenced deeply the development of the Jewish community, they having religious and economic freedom which was experienced by the communities from Transylvania only in the second half of the 19th century.

In my thesis I tried to present every aspect of their history, from the social, demographic and economic development until their religious and cultural evolution. Next to the primary sources, already mentioned, which are kept in the National Archives of Hungary at Budapest and in the National Archives of Romania at Cluj-Napoca and Satu Mare, I was studying many statistical works, encyclopedias, references works and historical works. Unfortunately the archives of the Jewish communities from Satu Mare County were destroyed during the Second World War, and only a few documents survived from the beginning of the 20th century. My researches were difficult also because a lot of documents which are kept at the National Archives of Hungary can't be studied because they are kept on negative slide strips.

The second chapter is dedicated to the demographic growth of this community and is structured in several subsections, each of them treating a different century. My researches were based on the conscriptions and censuses realized from the very beginning of the 18th century until 1930. Initially these conscriptions were realized by the authorities with the obvious reason the implement different taxes and to estimate the demographic and economic power of the different Jewish communities settled in the Kingdom. For the 18th century the most important conscription were realized in 1735-1736, the fiscal census in 1768-1769 and the so called Josephin conscription realized in 1785-1787. These censuses are offering us information not only about the number of the Jewish population of the county but also about their economic status, their social stratification. The feature, the characteristic of the conscriptions was changed in the second half of the 19th century, after the emancipation of Jews, when the ethnical distinction disappeared. From the second half of the 19th century the Jews were considered as Hungarian, the difference was only their religion (Judaism) and occasionally their mother language which was Hebrew or Yiddish. In the 19th century the most important censuses were organized in 1818-1820 ordered by the Department of Interior, in 1848 ordered by the Revolutionary Government of Hungary and in 1851, 1869-1870 ordered by the new authorities installed after the Revolution was beaten. For the 20th century the most important censuses were realized by the National Statistical Institute of Hungary in 1900 and 1910 and the last census I was studying is from 1930

and was realized by the Romanian authorities installed after the First World War and was published in 1938. This chapter treats although the economic status of the communities, their fiscal duties and the urbanization process from the beginning of the 20th century.

The third chapter proposes to present the institutional structure of the different communities developed in Satu Mare County, from Carei, Satu Mare, Baia Mare and Baia Sprie. For the 18th century the information are provided by Károlyi family archives. These documents permitted us to study the beginning of the establishment of the Jewish communities in Satu Mare County and the economic relations between the count and Jews. These documents testify the establishment of the first institutions, the first synagogue, school and *bet-din*. For the upcoming centuries, the primary sources are missing and I was using for my researches the newspapers, encyclopedias published in that epoch. The most important encyclopedia is represented by the *Jewish Encyclopedia* published by Péter Újvári in 1929 which treats every important Jewish community and every important personality of the past centuries. Although an important role was played by the *yizkor* books which were dedicated to the Jewish communities from Satu Mare and Baia Mare.

The fourth chapter presents the economic structure, the economic development of the Jewish communities and the information are provided mostly by the statistical works realized in 1900, 1910 by the National Statistical Institute of Hungary and the conscription realized in 1930 by the Romanian authorities. These documents are offering a lot of information related to the occupational trends among the Jewish population, to their presence and importance in the economic life of the county. As we can see in the thesis, the liberalization of the political environment, the emancipation of the Jews permitted the transformation of the traditional Jewish society at the end of the 19th century and the Jewish community was more and more involved in every sector of the economic and cultural, intellectual life of the ambient society.

The relations between the Jewish community and the surrounding society are presented in the fifth chapter, entitled *Cultural life, assimilation and Zionism*. In this chapter I presented the educational structure, the religious and cultural life. Separately is treated the spread of the Hasidism and the Zionism and the activity of different Zionist institutions.

The thesis proposes to present the establishment and consolidation of the Jewish community from Satu Mare County and is based on personal researches in every single chapter I tried to treat separately every aspects of their history. Analyzing the primary and secondary sources, the statistical works, the encyclopedias and historical articles and studies we can follow the history of this community from the very beginning, from the settlement in the county and until the apogee reached in the first decades of the 20th century, time during which we can be the witnesses of the development of the Jewish community from Satu Mare County which played an important role in the life of the surrounding society. The main purpose of the thesis was to present the history of the community, to study their internal institutional structures, their religious and cultural life. My researches revealed a prosperous community which was integrated in the ambient society and which lived his tragic end during the Holocaust, during the Second World War.

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