

GYÖRGY HARASZTI

THE RETURN OF THE JEWS TO HUNGARY IN THE XVIII CENTURY

After the Turks had been expelled Hungary, more or less regaining its previous territory, became once again in practice *judenrein*, that is free from Jews, an expression that later acquired an unpleasant ring. Only near the western border, at the territory of the modern Burgenland, in the so-called “*Seven Communities*” and in a few more settlements were there living *Ashkenazi* Jews¹, mainly the descendants of those expelled from Vienna and Lower Austria by the Emperor Leopold II in 1670. But even these communities were only a few decades old.

The Jews that lived in the central parts of the country, on former Turkish territories, such as the mixed ‘*Ashkenazi-Sfaradi kehila*’ of Buda, which was large even according to European standards, have disappeared in the storms of history². Their hardships are vividly described in Isaac Schulhof’s ‘*Chronicle of Buda*’ (*Megillath Ofen*)³ already mentioned several times in the previous lectures. In 1686 half of the approximately thousand Jewish residents of Buda were killed

¹ Hugo Gold. (Hg.) *Gedenkbuch der untergegangenen Judengemeinden des Burgenlandes*, (Tel-Aviv: 1970); Josef Klampfer, *Das Eisenstädter Ghetto (Burgenländische Forschungen 51)*, (Eisenstadt: 1965); Fritz Peter Hodik, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mattersdorfer Judengemeinden im 18. und in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, (Burgenländische Forschungen 65), (Eisenstadt: 1975); Gerhard Baumgartner, *Geschichte der jüdischen Gemeinde zu Schlaining* (Stadtschlaining: Österr. Institut für Friedensforschung und Friedenserziehung, 1988); Ivan Hacker, ‘*Judengesetze im Burgenland von Stefan dem Heiligen bis Maria Theresia (1001-1780)*’ in: “*Studia Judaica Austriaca III*”. Eisenstadt: *Edition Roetzer*: 1976), pp. 7-15; Nikolaus Vielmetti, ‘*Das Schicksal der jüdischen Gemeinden des Burgenlandes*’ in: *Burgenländische Forschungen*, Sonderheft III, *50 Jahre Burgenland*” (Eisenstadt: 1971), pp. 196-214.; Wolfgang Häusler, ‘*Probleme der Geschichte des westungarisches Judentums in der Neuzeit*’ (1. Teil) in: *Burgenländische Heimatblätter*, 42, Jg. Heft 1, (Eisenstadt: 1980), pp. 32-38.; Wolfgang Häusler, ‘*Probleme der Geschichte des westungarisches Judentums in der Neuzeit*’ (2. Teil) in: *Burgenländische Heimatblätter*, 42, Jg. Heft 2 (Eisenstadt: 1980), pp. 69-100, Harald Prickler, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der burgenländischen Judensiedlungen* (so far unpublished manuscript) (Eisenstadt: 1991); Schlomo Spitzer (Hg.), *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Juden im Burgenland*, (Ramat-Gan: *Massorah-Verlag*, 1994).

² See the adequate chapters of Büchler Sandor, *A zsidók története Budapesten a legrégibb időktől 1867-ig*. (*The History of the Jews in Budapest from the Beginning to 1867*) (Budapest: *Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társaság/IMIT* kiadása, 1901); and Komoróczy Géza et al., *A zsidó Budapest (The Jewish Budapest)* I-II, (Budapest: *Városháza – MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport*, 1995), on the subject.

³ David Kaufmann. *Die Erstürmung Ofens und ihre Vorgeschichte nach dem Berichte Isak Schulhofs; (1650-1732) (Megillath Ofen)*, (Trier: 1895).

by the mercenaries of the Emperor, while the rest fell into captivity and were later ransomed by Western European Jewry and then scattered in the West. Other Jewish inhabitants of the province left the country together with the Turks and were scattered in the Balkans⁴. Apparently the Jews invited by the Princes of Transylvania, the majority of whom were *Sfaradi*, fled from Transylvania too, when the armies of the Emperor appeared around 1687. Forty years later, in 1727, only seven Jewish families lived in Gyulafehérvár on the former estates of the Princes of Transylvania. There were a few (*Sfaradi*) Jews in Temesvár, the largest city of the Temesköz still occupied by the Turks until 1718⁵.

In this geopolitical environment the Jewish population of the country began to grow once again from the middle of the century, first slowly, then more and more rapidly. However surprising it may seem, the history of the later Hungarian Jewish community — and even the modern one, since its continuity did not stop despite the Holocaust — began only at the end of the 17th — beginning of the 18th century. As mentioned above, it is generally unknown to the public that present-day Hungarian Jewry has no genealogical link whatever with the Jewry of the *Árpád-era* which was scattered in its entirety, vanishing in the storms of the 16th century.

In reality, the first ancestors of Hungarian Jewry were the immigrants, who during the course of the 18th century, mainly in its later half, immigrated into Hungary from Vienna, Lower Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Germany and, as yet in scattered fashion, from the Council of the Four Lands (Red Russia, Volhynia, Great and Little Poland) and Lithuania. But even these groups did not settle permanently, with the exemption of the so-called *Seven Communities* (*Sheva Kehilot*). They banded together, then scattered, then again tried to strike roots, till at last around 1750 the first centres finally crystallized⁶. For those who know Hungarian history this late settlement is not a big surprise. It is a most natural consequence of the Turkish conquest that the present population of Hungary should be a multi-national conglomerate whose every historical class — nobility, middle class, peasantry — settled mainly in the depopulated central territories after the Turkish era, under similar conditions and in the same period as the Jews.

The Jewish settlement in the 18th century in Hungary was already the fourth one, not taking into account the temporary banishment around 1360, during the reign of Lajos the Great. The first one was the Helleno-Romanized Mediterranean Jewry in the era of the Roman Empire in the 2-4th centuries. The

⁴ Büchler, *passim*; Haraszti György, 'Szép új dal Budáról (A Fair New Song from Buda) in: *Keletkutató*, 1987/1 (Budapest: Körösi Csoma Társaság, 1987), pp. 66-82.

⁵ Haraszti György, 'Szfárd zsidók Magyarországon a kezdetektől a török uralom megszűntéig' (Sephardic Jews in Hungary from the Beginning till the end of the Turkish Rule) in: *Hetven év* (Seventy years). *Emlékkönyv Dr. Schweitzer József születésnapjára* (József Schweitzer Jubilee Volume). (Budapest: a Budapesti Zsidó Hitközség kiadványa. 1992), pp. 80-93.

⁶ Ernst (Ernö) Marton, 'The Family tree of Hungarian Jewry' in: R.L. Braham (Ed.) *Hungarian-Jewish Studies* Vol. I, (New York: World Federation of Hungarian Jews, 1966), pp. 1- 59, *passim*.

second one lasted from the Hungarian conquest consisting of *Kabars* and *Kazars* who adopted the Jewish religion and arrived together with the conquerors and western Jews who immigrated as well during the *Árpád-era and after*, till 1526-1540 continuously. The third one was the Jewry of the Turkish era of a different type and origin once again⁷.

The 18th century history of the Hungarian Jews can be divided into four parts: the years following the recapturing of Buda and the *Rákóczi-freedom fight*, the period of the massive immigration, the period when the Jewish communities were established and strengthened in the middle of the century and finally the years when the influence of the enlightened absolutism and of the ideas of the Enlightenment began to show in the treatment of the Jews. (Since our time is limited, I will discuss in detail only the second and the third period).

The destiny of the few Jews still living in the territory of Royal Hungary and Transylvania and those who immigrated in the first 50-60 years of the century was determined by many, sometimes contradicting, factors. The medieval institution of *Chamber Service* had ceased by this time. Until 1840 it was the privilege of the nobility to *keep Jews*, that is, whether the Jews received permission to settle or not depended entirely on the whim of the upper and middle nobility. The strengthening tendency to contra-reformation from the second half of the 17th century was, to put it mildly, disadvantageous to the children of Israel.

During the reign of monarchs who disapproved of Jews for religious reasons (e.g. Leopold I, or the “*King*” of Hungary, Maria Theresia) sometimes even the possibility of their settling was in danger. After expelling the Turks, a plan famous for its Germanizing intentions, the so-called ‘*Einrichtungs Werkh...*’. was prepared in 1689 by the order of Cardinal Kollonich Lipót, bishop of Gyôr, in order to reorganize united Hungary. Besides other issues, this plan contained some original ideas concerning the prevention of the settlement of Jews.

According to Kollonich, the Jews could be gradually induced to leave the country by increasing their burdens, though at the moment they had to be tolerated as a necessary evil. In the newly reoccupied territories, however, their settlement was to be prevented. Probably as the result of this plan, Leopold I expelled the Jews under pain of death from the mining towns and the seven miles area around them in 1693. Moreover, both the remaining Jews and the immigrants were prohibited to settle in royal towns for about a hundred years (until Joseph II’s decree, but in some towns, like Kassa or Nyíregyháza, until 1840) as a result of Leopold I’s policy of backing up the anti-Jewish efforts of the free royal towns.⁸ It is a fact that in the 18th century the Hungarian Jewry had no roots in the towns. “Joseph II did indeed order that the Jews be allowed into the

⁷ Gonda László. *A zsidóság Magyarországon (The Jewry in Hungary) 1526-1945*, (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó, 1992), pp. 13-31.

⁸ See Gonda, *passim* and Grünwald Fülöp *A Zsidók története Magyarországon 1790-ig (The History of the Jews in Hungary till 1790)*; (Budapest: unpublished manuscript kept in the *Library of the Hungarian Rabbinical Seminary*, s.d.).

towns, but his will did not prevail. In 1787 Jews could dwell in only a few of the 64 royal and chartered cities, and this comprised 2.9% of all Hungarian Jewry at that time. Even around 1840 only 7.5% of the Jews dwelt in the cities, and half of these in Pest-Buda".⁹ (The decree that expelled the Jews from the mining towns remained valid till 1860, its repeal being the last step to giving the Jews unlimited rights to settle).

Though the leading government circles had anti-Jewish feeling, the Jewish bankers, army contractors and especially the so-called *Court Jews* or *Hoffaktors*¹⁰, who co-ordinated financial activities of the highest level, gained an increasingly important role in Baroque Europe. The Vienna court needed their services more and more. The *great speakers* (*stadlonim* in Hebrew), rich and influential Jews who used their relations with the court and the upper nobility for the good of their fellow Jews, were characteristic figures of the era of absolute monarchy. As a result of their activity, the slowly forming and growing Jewish communities were given several privileges.

Through Ferenc Szakály's lecture we already know about the two most famous *court agents*, Samuel Oppenheimer (1630-1703) and Samson Wertheimer (1658-1724), and their activities. Wertheimer, in addition to his successful economic activity, was well-versed in Jewish sciences as well. He founded a Talmud school and helped to found and finance 40 Jewish communities in Hungary. It was the result of his initiative and patronage that Meir ben Isaac Eisenstadt (Maharam Asch), a famous religious thinker of that time and an outstanding representative of early Hungarian Jewish science, became the rabbi of Kismarton. (His three volume response collection, *Panim Meirot*, is a valuable source to the history of that age. It contains his commentary of some Talmud tractates as well.) As a sign of appreciation of his endowments and charity, some of the Hungarian Jewish communities gave Wertheimer the title of *national chief rabbi* (*Landesrabbiner*) which was later recognised by the Emperor Charles VI (as Hungarian King Charles III) in 1717. It is still possible to see his famous private synagogue, a masterpiece of Baroque religious architecture, at Kismarton/Eisenstadt.

In addition to the two agents mentioned above, the government used and appreciated the services of many other less powerful Jewish army contractors and merchants. Though Oppenheimer and Wertheimer lived in Vienna, a considerable part of their activities concerned Hungary. Among the Jewish bankers who lived in Hungary, Mich(a)el Simon (died in 1718), a banker and merchant, the gold and silver supplier of the mint in Pozsony and the great-grandfather of Heinrich Heine, whose tomb is in the famous *underground cemetery* in Pozsony, is worth

⁹ Ernő László, 'Hungarian Jewry: Settlement and Demography 1735-38 to 1910' in: R.L. Braham (Ed.) *Hungarian-Jewish Studies Vol. 1*, (New York: World Federation of Hungarian Jews 1966), p. 63.

¹⁰ Kurt Schubert, *Die österreichischen Hoffjuden und ihre Zeit* (Studia Judaica Austriaca Bd. XII), (Eisenstadt: Österreichisches Jüdisches Museum in Eisenstadt, 1991).

noting for the magnitude of his enterprises.¹¹ Not only the central court in Vienna, but also the government organisations and the local authorities needed the services of the Jews both in minor and major cases. Government organisations such as the *Court Chamber (Hofkammer)* or the *Council of War (Kriegsrat)*, sometimes even the big landowners, usually supported the economic activities of the Jews both as army contractors and in the trade and money circulation. They stood up for the Jews when the city or county authorities infringed or restricted their rights. For example, from the research of Sándor Büchler we know in detail the history of the Jews in Buda in the half century after the re-occupation of the city. Although the citizens of the free royal towns here, too, did everything possible to prevent the settlement of the Jews and they even prevailed during the reign of Maria Theresia, still a few families were able to settle down with the permission of the government. The reason given for this permission was that the Jewish merchants helped people and develop the city¹².

The basic difference between the previous settlements and the new era is that previously there were only a few Jews in the country while in the era discussed now large parts of the country were being continuously peopled by Jews. The new era gained its real dimensions only from the fourth decade of the 19th century when emancipation and assimilation accelerated and the Jews became an integral part of Hungarian society. According to András Kubinyi¹³, there were only 37 Jewish communities in medieval Hungary during the whole period and there is no proof that 37 communities ever existed at the same time. Since the former patronage of the kings and princes had ceased to exist, this process occurred mainly through the support of the big landowner dynasties, first in the central estate, then spreading to other estates of the landlord as well frequently prevailed even against the opposing efforts of the free royal cities.

In the first half of the 18th century the Jews, whose number increased as a consequence of the immigration, found a new and effective way of forming their communities. Analogous to the — legal — relationship of the long forgotten *chamber-servitude*, the well-to-do landowners, not only in Western Hungary, began to settle the Jews or permitted them settle on their lands in order to increase their income. As a compensation for legal and actual defence, the Jews paid several taxes, rented lands and smaller regales, worked in crafts and stimulated trade intensively.

¹¹ On Oppenheimer see Szakály Ferenc 'Oppenheimer Sámuel működése különös tekintettel magyarországi kihatásaira', (*The life and activity of Samuel Oppenheimer especially in Hungary*) in: *Magyar-Zsidó Oklevéltár / MZsO (Hungarian Jewish Archives) - Monumenta Hungariae Judaica XIV.* (Budapest: *Magyar Izraeliták Országos Képviselete/MIOK* kiadása, 1971), pp. 31-78. On Oppenheimer, Wertheimer and Michel Simon see further *Zsidó Lexikon (Hungarian Jewish Lexicon)* and *MZsO II* (Budapest: *Izraelita Magyar Irodalmi Társaság/IMIT* kiadása, 1937), XIV, XVII (Budapest: MIOK kiadása 1977), passim.

¹² Büchler, passim

¹³ Kubinyi András, 'A Zsidóság története a középkori Magyarországon' (*History of the Jewry in the medieval Hungary*) in: Gazda Anikó et al., *Magyarországi zsinagógák (Hungarian Synagogues)* (Budapest: *Műszaki Könyvkiadó*, 1989), p. 23.

The ancestors of the present-day Hungarian Jews started their slow and protracted settlement in Hungary during the beginning of the undivided rule of the *Habsburg dynasty* over Hungary. Around 1650, the first Jews settled in the northern part of Nyitra County, at the Moravian border, but larger groups first arrived in 1670-1671 when the Jews of Vienna were expelled¹⁴. Prince Miklós Eszterházy settled some of these refugees on his estates in Sopron and Moson Counties. Together with these refugees, some of the Jews of Kismarton who had been expelled four months earlier also returned. During the following few decades the so-called *Seven Communities* area, (Kismarton/Eisenstadt, Nagymarton/Mattersburg, Kabold/Kobersdorf, Lakompak/Lackenbac, Köpcsény/Kittse, Boldogasszony/Frauekirchen, Németkeresztúr/Deutschkreutz) the first complex of communities in Hungary was formed with its own internal administration.

A similar process also took place at the same time in Vas and Zala counties, on the estates of the Counts Batthyány (Rohonc/Rechnitz, Szalonak/Schlaining, Nagykanizsa), and somewhat later (1680-1700) in the immediate vicinity of the Hungarian capital Pozsony/Pressburg-Bratislava; Vödrich/Zuckermann and Pozsonyváralja/Schlossberg on the lands of the Counts Pálffy. This center became the spiritual and economic headquarters of Hungarian Jewry and kept its leading role through one and a half centuries¹⁵. Between 1660 and 1670 the first families from the Rzespospolita Polska settled on the vast estates of the Rákóczi family in Northern Hungary and leased land there.¹⁶ Also, count Károlyi Sándor who signed the *Szatmár peace treaty* settled Jews on his estate in Eastern Hungary and even had a rabbi brought there¹⁷.

From these territories and from abroad, beginning mainly from the west, the Jews started to migrate to the internal territories of the country as well. Like in Western Hungary, the majority were received into the towns and villages on the estates of the big landowners. Many decrees of protection given to the Jewish communities in Western Hungary by the landowners still exist¹⁸. These documents made the formation of independent Jewish communities possible. A *model* decree contains the names of the heads of family or the number of the houses given to the settler and determines the sum to be paid for the protection every year (*Schutzgeld*). This money was either paid individually by the families or by the whole community in one sum. According to the documents the Jews formed an independent political community. They selected their own judge and jury every year. These settled the legal suits initially. The Jews could found synagogues and schools as well as their own cemetery and public bath. They

¹⁴ About these events see David Kaufmann *Die letzte Vertreibung der Juden aus Wien und Nieder-Österreich* (Wien: 1889).

¹⁵ László, pp. 69-70.

¹⁶ Grünwald Fülöp, *passim*; László, p. 92.

¹⁷ Kovács Ágnes, *Károlyi Sándor, (Magyar História Életrajzok)*, (Budapest: Gondolat Könyvkiadó, 1988), p. 218.

¹⁸ See e. g. Hodik, pp. 42-54.

could employ rabbis, cantors, teachers, synagogue servants and grave diggers. They could trade on the territory of the whole estate. Strange Jewish merchants could do the same only on market days. In return for a certain sum the landowner permitted them to slaughter animals and sell wine for their own needs. They could accept a new member to their community only if the landowner agreed. Some decrees determined which crafts the Jews could pursue and it what number.

We only know the approximate number of the Jewish communities and that of their members in 18th century Hungary, because the data of the several censuses among the Jews is incomplete. (As a consequence of the *tolerance tax* imposed later, neither the Jews, nor the landowners were interested in giving the actual numbers. Apart from the inexact methods of data collection, this is the second reason of the unreliability of these censuses.) Consequently, the data concerning their number and financial situation cannot be accepted without doubts. Nevertheless, we are lucky enough to have three exact numbers concerning the early settlements in the 18th century.

Around 1700 Hungarian Jewry consisted of only 4.000 persons¹⁹. In the first decade of the 18th century the majority of the Hungarian Jews, together with their protectors, the landowners of Western Hungary who fought on the Habsburgs side, temporarily escaped from the *kuruc freedom fighters* to imperial territories. There is extent a list of the Jews from the left bank of the Danube who escaped from Rákóczi's army. The in 1709 in Pozsony written list contains about 200 names of heads of family (*balbosz - baal habbajit*)²⁰. At the same time, the few Jews who lived on the Rákóczi estates remained loyal to their lord. Rákóczi's prefects contracted Jewish leaseholders during the fight for freedom. The Jews supplied *kuruc* soldiers with cloth and boots, obtained steel for gun barrels and pistols and supplied saltpeter for gunpowder. They sold abroad the copper mined at Nagybánya/Baia Mare. The Alboer *brothers* from Belgrade actively traded with the Turkish Empire on behalf of the Prince²¹.

When peace returned, the *Helytartótanács (Statthalterrat - Regent Council)* ordered a census in 1725 in order to restrict further immigration²². This decision shows that the number of Jews was quiet big already. The reluctant counties — some of them never even started it — took the census of the Jews on their

¹⁹ László, p. 70 (based on the estimation of Acsády - see below).

²⁰ Büchler, p. 176, *MZsO* II, pp. 433-438. About the Jews of other territories in the same period see *MZsO* II, XIV, XVII, *passim*.

²¹ See the unpublished manuscript of the second volume of Samuel Kohn's magistral work on the history of Hungarian Jewry (Kept in the *Library of the Hungarian Rabbinical Seminary* and the article of Büchler Sándor, 'Kurucz idők' (*Kuruc-times*) in: *Magyar Zsidó Szemle/MZsSz (Hungarian Jewish Review)*, 1894, pp. 87-102.

²² About the Jewish censuses in the first half of the 18th century see Grünwald Fülöp – Scheiber Sándor, 'Adalékok a magyar zsidóság településtörténetéhez a XVIII század első felében' (*On the History of the Settlement of Hungarian Jewry in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century*) in: *MZsO* VII, (Budapest: *MIOK* kiadása, 1963), pp. 5-48 and Ember Győző, 'A magyarországi országos zsidóösszeírások a XVIII. század első felében' (*The National Jewish Conscription in Hungary in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century*) in: *MZsO* VII, pp. 49-77.

territory between 1725 and 1728. According to the extremely incomplete lists, there were about 1700 heads of family. In more than 40 settlements there were more than ten families. In the majority of these places organized Jewish communities already existed or were under formation. According to our data, the Jews still lived mainly in the towns of the Western Hungarian estates in blocks of different sizes. Moreover, they lived in the *Seven Communities* already mentioned above, at Rohonc and Pozsonyváralja.

There were a few Jews scattered in other parts of the country, with a maximum of one or two families per town or village, especially in the northern and north-eastern counties. These Jews had contracts with the landowner, usually for brandy distillation or innkeeping. Their number grew continuously, especially when King Charles III in his decree of 1726 forbade the Jews of the hereditary Austrian provinces to have more than one young man in a family set up his own household. Consequently many young men who wished to many immigrated to Hungary, especially from Bohemia and Moravia. They peopled the Jewish communities of Nyitra, Pozsony and Trencsén counties²³.

According to a new census²⁴ between 1735 and 1738, the famous *Conscripto Judaeorum* which provides us with more data, in ten years the number of heads of family increased to 2531 and that of the Jewish communities with more than 10 families to almost 60. The *Conscripto Judaeorum* was the first attempt to draw up a list of the whole Jewish population of Hungary (with the implicit aim of taxing them). This census was ordered by King Charles III and, due to the conditions of the time, was carried out at a slow pace. No census of the Jews was taken in Transylvania, the Bánság and Croatia-Slavonia. Even in reports that came to light later data for these three counties are missing. Data are available for 32 counties, while with regard to 13 counties either the census was negative or the areas involved were off limits to Jews. The actual number of the Jews must have been more than the reported 12,219, since apart from the free royal cities only 32 counties carried out the census. We have the results of these, while we have some data concerning the Jewish population of other counties, too.

The conscript shows in detail the professions of the Jews listed in it. Of the 2531 heads of family 883 were craftsmen, 143 of these tailors. There are quite a few butchers and glaziers. 230 of them were brandy distillers, 150 were innkeepers. Half of the heads of family, 1139, were merchants. Nine men were army contractors. The number of shopkeepers was 272, there were 814 peddlers. There were day labourers, a lot of poor men and beggars (in Nyitra county 26, in Trencsén 27). According to the census, there were Jews living in 536 settlements, but only 12 of these had a rabbi. There were 14 cantors, 26 ritual butchers and 25

²³ Gonda László, pp. 39-40.

²⁴ Acsády Ignác, 'A magyar zsidók 1735-38-ban' (*The Hungarian Jews in 1735-38*) in: *Évkönyv (IMIT-Yearbook)*, (Budapest: IMIT kiadása, 1897), pp. 173-188. See further Varga László, 'Zsidó bevándorlás Magyarországon' (*Jewish immigration into Hungary*) in: *Századok (Centuries)* 1992/1, (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1993), pp. 59-79.

synagogue servants. 143 teachers taught the children. At Kismarton a notary is mentioned as well. It should be noted that according to the census, 35% of the heads of family were born in Hungary²⁵.

An additional individual census ordered in 1746 - 1748 due to the *tolerance tax* showed that the number of Jews in Hungary was 14.847, the largest Jewish populations living in Nyitra (2357), Pozsony (2117) and Sopron (1313) counties²⁶. The actual Jewish population of the country — according to estate reports — could have been even twice as much.

The last large Jewish census of the 18th century in Hungary was a by-product of the famous census²⁷ of Joseph II who played an extremely important role in the emancipation of the Jews of the Monarchy and Eastern and Central Europe in general. This census contains valuable data concerning both the number and the territorial distribution of the Jews²⁸. As is well-known, the first nation-wide census ordered by Joseph II was taken in 1785 and repeated in 1787. The census covered Transylvania, the Bánság, and the Croatian-Slavonian counties. No census was held in the military frontier regions, but Jews were not permitted to reside there in any case.

According to the census of Joseph II, the number of Jews was over eighty thousand in the middle of the eight decade of the 18th century²⁹. During the century, even by the most careful estimates, the Jewish population had grown at least eight times its original size. The result is even more surprising if we compare it with that of the last peacetime census in 1910. At that time there were approximately 930.000 Jews in historic Hungary. While between 1787 and 1910 the population of the entire Hungarian Empire grew 125%, Hungarian Jewry grew 1.021%!³⁰

A considerable part of this increase derived from the immigration from the west. As opposed to the 35% who were *natives* the majority of whom must have been only second generation, in 1735-38 38% of the heads of family were found to be from Moravia. It is characteristic that in 1735-38 on the Right Bank of the Danube 83% of the heads of family were born in Hungary, while on the Left Bank this number—showing the direction of the immigration was only 24.8%.

There are endless discussions among Hungarian (and Hungarian-Jewish) historians as to when the Jewish immigration started and ended. The theory of the continuous immigration in groups of hundreds of thousands cannot be sustained. It is hardly possible to talk about *en masse* immigration in the earlier historical

²⁵ The whole material is reproduced with a precision that extends to individual families in the above mentioned VII. volume of the *Magyar-Zsidó Oklevéltár*, pp. 219-689.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 723-850.

²⁷ The tabulated summaries both for the Gentile and the Jewish population were published by Thirring Gusztáv. *Magyarország népessége II. József korában (Hungary's Population in the Era of Joseph II)*. (Budapest: a Magyar Tudományos Akadémia kiadása, 1938).

²⁸ *Map of the rate of the Jews in Hungary* between the pages 52-53.

²⁹ In Hungary (1787): 80.783 souls - Thirring, p. 49.

³⁰ László, p. 62.

periods, since before 1840 it was impossible to settle without the permission of the landowner, and later on it would have been possible to document such a major movement with statistical methods. Demographically it is a proven fact that according to the Eastern European Jewish reproduction rate about one hundred thousand immigrants will result in a population of six or seven hundred thousand in only 120 years. (The Jewish population increased six-fold throughout Eastern Europe — the so-called *vagina Judaeorum* — in the 19th century). This is enough to explain the increased Jewish population in Hungary³¹.

It can be proven that between 1726 and 1860, in almost one and a half centuries, Jews had been migrating in smaller or larger waves to the country. Up until the end of the 18th century they came mainly from the German states, the Austrian Alpine provinces and especially from Moravia, Bohemia and Silesia (about 70-80.000 people), then from the east. The number of the immigrants from east, the so-called *Galizianers*, was about 50 thousand, about two-third of that of the western immigrants. The proportion of the eastern and western Jewry — as a consequence of the much higher reproduction rates of the *Orthodox* eastern population — changed to about 50-50% by the last 50-60 years before World War I.

The western Jews settled in the northern and central parts of the country, while the eastern Jews preferred the north-eastern and eastern parts. The area of the mining towns in the central part of Northern Hungary was closed to them (Szepes, Gömör, Zólyom, Bars, Hont countries), and the Jews were not permitted to live south of this area either in the Jászság, the Kis - and Nagykúnság, Hajduság, the former Outer-Szolnok county, the Heves county, a large part of Csongrád and Csanád countries and the villages of the southern part of Bács county where a military border zone had been organised and manned by the border-guard battalion of Titel (the so-called Csajkás-Körzet/Boatman-district). For a long time the Jewish population of the country was divided into two parts, which division corresponded to the double immigration as well. The Jews, using the terminology of the western immigrants of that time, called themselves *Oberlanders* (Western Hungary, the Northwest and Transdanubia) and *Unterlanders* (Eastern Hungary and Transylvania).

Transylvanian Jewry started forming only in the second half of the 18th century. During the rule of Joseph II a larger number of Jews lived only in the former Alsó-Fehér, Maros-Torda and Szolnok-Doboka counties. Twelve of the historical 15 counties were closed to the Jewry of that period. They were not even permitted to enter the villages where the Wallachian and Székely borderguard battalions were stationed, and they could not enter the vast area administered by the various Saxon and Székely autonomous communities. Along the southern boundary of Croatia-Slavonia there was a military border zone ranging from the Adriatic to the Bácska where Jews were not permitted to live until 1861. Only

³¹ Evyatar Friesel (Ed.), *Atlas of Modern Jewish History*. (Jerusalem: Carta, 1990), pp. 12-21.

under Joseph II are the first Jews found (111 altogether) dispersed in about 10 localities in the civilian area of this province³².

There was a broad sociocultural difference between the western and eastern immigrants. The Galician Jewry belonged to a *par excellence* eastern type for they were not only *Orthodox*, but *Chasidic* to a considerable degree as well. The western Jewry had been open to the emancipation and assimilation process for a long time and in their religious habits they tended towards *Neology*. It is characteristic of the geographical distribution of the western immigrants that they settled mainly in *German (Swabian)* populated territories not only near the border, but also in the center of the country. The reason for this was not only the common language, but rather the fact that the Hungarian Germans were an already established class that made acclimatization possible for the western Jewish bourgeois element with its *German* culture.

When the data of the 18th century censuses concerning the Jews are compared with each other, the migration of the Jewish population from the border areas towards the central territories becomes obvious. Like the migration of the Jews from the villages to the cities, this process also gained its real dimensions only in the 19th century, but the tendency can already be clearly recognized. These are the extremes: in 1735 84% of the Jews listed lived in the 16 counties on the border or in counties not far from the border. On the other hand, while in 1780 only 9% of the Jews lived in the center of the country, in the territory that was later left to Hungary by the *Trianon Peace Treaty*, by 1910 this number increased to more than 60%³³.

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³² László, pp. 109-115.

³³ Gonda, Marton, Varga, *passim*. See further Kovács Alajos, *A zsidóság térfoglalása Magyarországon (The Expansion of the Jews in Hungary)*, (Budapest: 1922) and Walter Pietsch, 'Die jüdische Einwanderung aus Galizien und das Judentum in Ungarn' in: Gotthold Rode (Hr). *Juden in Ostmitteleuropa. Von der Emanzipation bis zum ersten Weltkrieg*, (Marburg an der Lahan: Johann-Gottfried Herder Institut, 1989), pp. 271-293.

Table 1. *The number of Hungarian Jewry in 1735-1738 and 1785-1787*³⁴

Province*	Jewish population	
	1735/38	1785/87
On the right bank of the Danube	4.247	21.724
On the left bank of the Danube	4.918a	23.728
Between the Danube and the Tisza	677	6.823
On the right bank of the Tisza	1.631	18.584
On the left bank of the Tisza	587b	9.104
The corner between the Tisza and the Maros	97	1.430
Transylvania	-c	1.477
Croatia-Slavonia	-	111
Total	12.157d	82.896e

a The data of Nógrád County is not known

b The data of Szabolcs County is missing; from Szatmár County we only have data referring to the county seat

c The data for this province is missing

d 0.7% of the total population of Hungary

e 1.3% of the total population of Hungary

* Since the modern county lines of the 63 Hungarian and 8 Croatian-Slavonian counties between 1876 and 1918 only evolved in 1876, the modern Hungarian statistical system divides the former area of Greater-Hungary into eight historical regions. Before 1876 the country was divided not only into counties, but also into independent regions (Partium), military frontier regions, Székely and Szász governmental seats, Hajdú, Kiskun and Nagykun districts, etc., in a very complex structure.

From the second third of the century there were certain changes in the distribution of the Jewish population. In addition to the Jewish communities in Western Hungary that remained populous, the communities of Bazin/Pezinok and Modor/Modra became important due to the counts Pálffy, and those of Tata and Pápa due to the counts Eszterházy. The importance of the Jewish communities in the central parts of the country, especially of the one on the Zichy estate in Óbuda, increased. The Jewish population of Óbuda, situated close to Pest-Buda, a forbidden city for the Jews that was becoming the cultural-economic center of the country, began to grow rapidly in the middle of the century. The big landowner Zichy family permitted the first Jews to settle there back in the first decade of the 18th century. In 1727: 25; in 1770: 208, and in 1785: already 285 heads of family

³⁴ László, p. 68.

were listed there. In the middle of the 18th century Óbuda became the second spiritual center of the country's Jewry. In 1785/87 there was a Jewish community of 1647 persons here which, with respect to numbers and importance, came very close to challenging the leadership of Pozsony³⁵.

In this era the differences within the Hungarian Jewry could already be clearly recognised. After the *Szatmár peace treaty* Charles III rewarded a few Jewish families, such as the Schlesingers, the Keppish brothers, the relatives of Simon Michel, the family of Izsák Hirschel, for their services by giving them privileges. These privileged families were more or less the aristocrats of the Jewish society. Due to the royal protection, they could live anywhere and go anywhere in the country excepting areas not permitted for Jews. They could also sell any kinds of goods in open shops. The privileged Jews did not have to wear distinctive Jewish signs and they paid the same amount of taxes as the Christians. They could practice their religion freely and their legal cases were settled not by the local authorities but by the *Hungarian Royal Chamber* that represented the king himself.

The second group of Hungarian Jewry consisted of the members of the communities. A Jew could obtain the right to become a member of a community (*cheskat hakahal*) only with the permission of the landowner and the local Jewish community itself and by paying a certain sum. The third group of the Jews consisted of poor homeless vagabonds who were temporarily taken care of by the communities, but they did not enjoy the advantages and the security of membership and they were constantly in danger of being expelled from the country³⁶.

We have already mentioned when discussing the oldest register of Hungarian Jewry that the majority worked in trade. Most Jewish merchants were peddlers who went from village to village selling ribbons, scarves, stockings and so on to the peasants and buying rabbit — and sheepskins, old clothes and scrap iron. One class higher were the shopkeepers who sold all kinds of goods such as silk and cloth that were considered valuable at that time. Some of them, the so-called Jewish stallholders, offered all kinds of goods from local crop to local and

³⁵ Gonda, p. 38, Gál Éva. 'Az óbudai uradalom zsidósága a 18. Században' (The Jewry of Óbuda-estate in the 18th Century) In: Századok 1992/1. (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1993). pp. 3-34. and Moess Alfréd, *Pest megye és Pest-Buda zsidóságának demográfiája (The Demography of the Jewry in Pest county and Pest-Buda) 1749-1846, (A magyarországi zsidó hitközségek monográfiái 2)*. (Budapest: MIOK kiadása. 1968). See further Jacob Katz 'Chátám Szófer életrajzához.' (*Touches to the Biography of Chatam Sofer*) In: Századok 1992/1. (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1993), pp. 80-112.

³⁶ Büchler. Grünwald, Grünwald-Scheiber, op. cit. passim. See further Venetianer Lajos; *A magyar zsidóság története: A honfoglalástól a világháború kitöréséig, különös tekintettel gazdasági és művelődési fejlődésére (The History of the Hungarian Jewry from the Hungarian conquest to the end of the First World War)*, (Budapest: Fővárosi Nyomda Rt.1922). (reprint. Budapest: Könyvértékesítő Vállalat 1986) and Wolfdieter Biehl, 'Das Judentum Ungarns 1780-1914' In: *Studia Judaica Austriaca III* (Eisenstadt: Edition Roetzer, 1976). pp. 17-31.

foreign manufacture at the markets. The highest and richest class pursued (long distance) wholesale trade. They were the lessees of the regales (inns, brandy distillation, landowner's taxes, ferry, mill), the *household Jews* of the aristocrats who sold the goods produced on the estates, bought foreign luxury goods for the estate, especially for the landowner and his family, and, if necessary, provided the big landowners or even the counties with credits and loans.

A smaller part of the Jewish population pursued craftsmanship. Tailoring was the most popular of the crafts, but there were many glaziers, goldsmiths, bookbinders, pipemakers, seal chisellers as well, professions that satisfied a need for a certain level of luxury. These professions were characteristic mainly of the more advanced western and central territories. The majority of Jews who lived in the northern and eastern counties rented the landowner's inn and/or distilled brandy.

The fact that the Jews paid taxes to the landowner did not influence the royal taxes. *Chamber servitude* was replaced by the *tolerance tax* as the special fee paid by the Jews in return for being tolerated in the country. The treasury struggled with financial difficulties and welcomed the possibility of an extra Jewish tax. In 1698 Leopold I already attempted to introduce a tax imposed on the Jews for tolerating them, the *tolerantialis taxa* (by the so-called *Olbern committee*), but his attempt failed as a result of the opposition of the counties³⁷.

The idea of the tolerance tax was revived by Maria Theresia decades later, in 1743, though quite possibly this was also the secret reason for the census ordered by her father, Charles III in 1735-38. The tax was introduced and its sum was determined without the consent of the *Estates* and the *Diet*. Neither Maria Theresia nor her successors asked the consent of the nobility for the taxation of the Jews who were legally protected by the landlords, though the *Estates* protested several times against the tolerance tax on the basis of their general right to initiate taxes. The new tax imposed on the Jews conflicted not only with the legal interests of the nobility, but with the financial ones as well, since it influenced negatively the income they received from the Jews settled on their estates in return for protection.

After a few years of hard work Maria Theresia managed to break the opposition of the counties and the tax was accepted. The special tax originally paid occasionally in order to support the *Austrian War of Succession* was already considered by her an obligatory tax of the Jews. Beginning in 1743 it was to be paid by families (6 florins) and from 1746 by every person, without taking into account the age or the gender, women, children and servants as well (2 florins). The tolerance tax took the place of these. Its name openly expressed that the Jews had to pay it so that their presence would be tolerated. In 1749 its sum, twenty thousand florins a year, was fixed and the Jewish community as a whole was responsible for its payment. The Jews could decide themselves on the basis of what distribution, *repartitio* would they collect the money.

The distribution of the tax caused a lot of quarrels between the counties, the

³⁷ Ember, pp. 49-50.

communities and even the members of the same community. Finally, since unlike Bohemia and Moravia, in Hungary the Jews had no united organization, the tolerance tax was imposed on each county separately on the basis of the number of the Jews living there, and the local communities had to collect the money. Usually — it varied according to the time and the place — the Jews paid this tax in a combined form. One third of the tax was to be paid by every person and the rest was divided by the leaders of the community according to the financial situation of the members. As the number of the Jews and the treasury's need for money was growing, the tolerance tax continually increased too. In 1755 it was twenty five thousand florins a year, in 1760 thirty thousand, in 1772 fifty thousand, in 1778 eighty thousand and in 1813 a full hundred and sixty thousand florins³⁸. The taxes paid by the Jewish merchants also provided the treasury with a significant income. Nevertheless, taxes for protection and other fees paid to the landlords considerably exceeded these state incomes.

The government conducted a contradictory policy. On the one hand it supported the settlement of the Jews for financial reasons. On the other hand however the monarchs periodically restricted the movement of the *Jews* both for religious reasons and because the citizens of the *free royal cities*, generally the *guilds*, demanded so. The non-Jewish merchants and craftsmen who comprised the *guilds*, did everything possible in order to prevent the settlement of the Jews or at least to restrict their *activities*.

I have already mentioned Leopold I's decree that prohibited the Jews from entering the mining towns. The monarch extended this order to the Transylvanian mining towns as well in 1700. In 1727 the *Regent Council* suggested without results the prevention of further Jewish immigration. In 1737 the same *Regent Council* reported to Vienna the steps it had taken in order to prevent the *vagrancy* of Jews in the country and requested that Jews coming from the Austrian hereditary provinces or Poland be prohibited for entering Hungary without a passport³⁹.

In 1746 Maria Theresia who decidedly disliked Jews banned them from Buda. Some of them settled in neighbouring Óbuda, but several families immigrated to Poland⁴⁰. Only forty years later, during the reign of Joseph II did a few Jewish families again move to Buda, and only 40 Jews lived in Pest (1785/87). After 1686, for more than one hundred years, no Jews were permitted to settle in this town which had been promoted to the rank of *Royal Town* in 1703. (This explains the lesser known fact that at the end of the 18th century the predecessors of the modern Jewish community in Budapest moved from Óbuda that was under the landlord's supremacy to Pest-Buda, where previously they were not permitted to settle)⁴¹.

³⁸ See Gonda, pp. 37, 40-41 and in particular Béla Bernstein, '*Die Toleranztaxe der Juden in Ungarn*'. In: *Cedenbuch... David Kaufmann*, (Breslau). 1900, pp. 599-628.

³⁹ Gonda, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁰ Büchler, pp. 256-257.

⁴¹ Haraszti György, '*Két világ határan*' (*On the border of two worlds*) In: *Múlt és Jövő (Past and Future)* (new series). 1993/2 (Budapest: *Múlt és Jövő alapítvány*. 1993), pp. 15-16

From the middle of the century, simultaneously with the introduction and increase of the *tolerance tax*, the central policy became more moderate. In 1762 Maria Theresia forbade by decree the violent conversion of Jewish children. In 1763 she called the Catholic priests to stop collecting *surplice-fee* from the non-Catholic population. In 1764 the government ordered those Jews freed from Orkuta who, in 1764 in Sáros county had been cruelly tortured in an effort to make them confess in the first modern Hungarian ritual murder case. (The scene of the second ritual murder charge was Szilágypér in the province on the left bank of the Tisza in 1791)⁴².

During the ten years of Joseph II's reign⁴³ (1780-1790) there were several changes that proved decisive in the long run in the relation of the government, society and Hungarian Jewry. Though in fact the measures taken by the monarch and the effect of these already belong to a new phase in the history of the Hungarian Jews as an ending to our survey of the 18th century I would like to briefly mention the most important orders of the *hatted king*. When the *tolerance decree* was announced in 1781, the regulation called '*Systematica Gentis Judaicae Regulatio*' was already drafted as well. As a result of a delay caused by *Hungarian Chancellery* and the counties that had to add their opinion to the draft, the famous decree was declared by the *Regent Council* on the 31st of March, 1783⁴⁴.

The decree permitted the Jews to settle freely wherever they chose except for the mining towns. In order to promote the usage of the German language, it ordered the Jews to stop using Hebrew and Yiddish and, so as to reach this goal, it decreed that Jewish schools under state supervision were to be opened and permitted Jewish children to attend Christian schools. (Within a few years more than twenty such so-called *Normalschule-s* were opened.)⁴⁵ Likewise the decree permitted the Jews to attend some faculties of the universities.

Ten years after the decree was announced, no man without school education would be allowed to work as a craftsman or merchant or lease land. The monarch opened all the crafts till then stubbornly guarded by the guilds for the Jews. They were even permitted to lease a land, provided they worked on it themselves. He repealed the distinctive signs worn by the Jews on their clothing, in some cases even allowed Jews to wear a sword. His well-intentioned, characteristically anti-clerical decree that forbade the Jews to have beards provoked such an outrage that it had to be withdrawn after three months.

⁴² László, p. 100.

⁴³ See in general Marczali Henrik, 'A magyarországi zsidók II. József korában' (*The Jews of Hungary in the Era of Joseph II.*) In: *MZsSz* 1 (Budapest: 1884), pp. 353-363.

⁴⁴ Wolfdieter Bihl, 'Zur Entstehungsgeschichte des josephinischen Patent für die Juden Ungarns vom 31. März 1783' In: Heinrich Fichtenau-Erich Zöllner (Eds.), *Beiträge zur neueren Geschichte Österreichs* (Wien-Köln-Graz: 1974), pp. 282-298.

⁴⁵ Mandl Bernát, 'A magyar honi zsidók tanügye II. József alatt' (*The School-system for Jews in Hungary during the Reign of Joseph II*) In: *Évkönyv (IMIT-Yearbook)*, (Budapest: IMIT kiadása, 1901), pp. 166-220.

Though for financial reasons he could not afford to give up the *tolerance tax*, in 1785 he replaced the insulting name with a neutral one. In the same year, at the request of the Jews he repealed the so-called personal tax (*Leibzoll Leibmaut*), a humiliating one florin sum tax that was paid only by the Jews when crossing the border of the internal provinces or of the country. Afterwards it was only paid at the borders of the empire. In 1787 he ordered every Jew to choose a German family name from the 1st January of the following year⁴⁶.

The death of Joseph II endangered the positive changes in the situation of the Jews, since on his death-bed he withdrew his decrees that concerned the Jews as well as his other orders. The cities demanded a new banishment of the Jews and the restoration of the economic restriction. This, however, was prevented by the court and the *Hungarian Diet*, since their interests in this case coincided. The 1790 law number XXXVIII called "*The Judaeis*" obliged the cities to maintain or restore the same situation of the Jews that existed on the 1st of January 1790⁴⁷. This law, extremely important and modern at that time, remained valid for half century, but in time it became an obstacle of the social-economic mobility of the Jews, an instrument restricting the efforts for emancipation and assimilation.



⁴⁶ About the Jewish names in Hungary and the Decree of Joseph II see Schelberné Bernáth Lívía, *A magyarországi zsidóság személy - és családnevei II. József névadó rendeletéig (Personal and Family Names of Hungarian Jews Until the Denominating Decree of Joseph the Second)*, (A magyarországi zsidó hitközségek monográfiái 10), (Budapest: MIOK kiadása, 1981).

⁴⁷ Leopold Löw, *Zur neueren Geschichte der Juden in Ungarn. Beitrag zur allgemeinen Rechts-Religions-und Kulturgeschichte*, (Budapest: 1874), p. 46.