

THE VENERATION OF SAINT NAUM IN 17TH AND 18TH CENTURY HUNGARY

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This paper is an effort to call attention of the business activity of merchants and the religious and cultural life of their communities, which were linked to the Greek Orthodox Church within the Kingdom of Hungary, and who were therefore labeled Greeks although the authorities had them registered as Turkish subjects who came from the Balkans.

The Balkan merchants appeared within the Kingdom of Hungary in the 16th century as subjects of the Ottoman Empire which was expanding as a great power. They attained conditions allowing successful operation in the Principality of Transylvania which was dependent on the Ottomans and in Royal Hungary, which was being heavily prodded by the conquerors, through negotiations with the local authorities and the assistance of „Greek Companies“. A significant portion of the newcomers carried on trade through this organization, which had century-long roots. While information on the role of the Greek Companies in the lives of the Turkish subjects is far from complete, activities to enhance the organization and secure the religious life of its members certainly heightened their attraction, for the identities of the Balkan merchants, who actually came from different ethnic groups, were defined by their belonging to the Orthodox Church. This era was concluded by the consistent implantation of decrees requiring the subjects to take oaths of allegiance (in 1769 and 1774), which resulted in the families of the merchants also settling within the Kingdom of Hungary and creating a new situation for people who had been enjoying benefits as Turkish subjects.