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DURING THE PERIOD OF SULTAN ABDULHAMIT II  
II. Abdulhamit Döneminde Ankara Vilayeti'nde İskân Edilen Romanya  
Göçmeni Yahudiler**

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**M. Fatih SANSAR**

(Öğr. Gör. Dr.), Çukurova Üniversitesi, Rektörlük Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Bölümü,  
Adana / Türkiye, e-mail: fatihsansar@yahoo.com, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7439-2084>

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## ROMANIAN IMMIGRANT JEWS SETTLED IN ANKARA PROVINCE DURING THE PERIOD OF SULTAN ABDULHAMIT II

### *II. Abdulhamit Döneminde Ankara Vilayeti'nde İskân Edilen Romanya Göçmeni Yahudiler*

**M. Fatih SANSAR**

**Abstract:** AIn the 19th century, as a result of the prevalent anti-Semitism in Europe and the politics of becoming a nation-state, Jewish migration to the Ottoman lands started. In consequence of the policies implemented after Romania gained independence, other religious/ethnic groups, especially Turks from Romania, began to emigrate. During this period, around 250,000 Jews emigrated to other countries owing to the increasing anti-Semitism in Romania. The majority of the Jews who emigrated from Romania took refuge in the Ottoman Empire, but the increasing Jewish migration started to become a problem for the Ottoman Empire. While the Jews from European countries and Romania persistently wanted to settle in the Palestinian territories, Sultan Abdulhamit II accepted Jewish immigrants but prevented them from settling in Palestine and Jerusalem. In this regard, Jewish immigrants from Romania were allowed to settle in provinces such as Izmir, Thessaloniki and Ankara. Between November 10, 1899 and April 16, 1900, 883 Jewish immigrants who emigrated from Romania and came together in Istanbul were granted citizenship and settled in Ankara Province. Names, previous cities, ages and genders of these Jewish immigrants are determined from the book kept by the Directorate of Foreign Affairs.

**Keywords:** Jews, migration, settlement, Romanian Immigrant Jews, Ottoman Empire

**Öz:** 19. yüzyılda Avrupa'da yaygınlaşan Yahudi düşmanlığı ve millî devlet olma siyasetinin bir sonucu olarak Osmanlı topraklarına Yahudi göçü başlamıştır. Romanya'nın bağımsızlığını kazanmasından sonra uygulanan politikalar sonucu, Romanya'da kalan Türkler başta olmak üzere diğer dini/etnik gruplar göç etmeye başlamıştır. Bu dönemde Romanya'da artan Yahudi düşmanlığı ve antisemitizm nedeniyle yaklaşık 250 bin Yahudi başka ülkelere göç etmiştir. Romanya'dan göç eden Yahudilerden büyük bir kısmı Osmanlı Devleti'ne sığınmış, fakat giderek artan Yahudi göçü Osmanlı Devleti için bir sorun olmaya başlamıştır. Avrupa ülkeleri ve Romanya'dan gelen Yahudiler ısrarla Filistin topraklarına yerleşmek isterken, Sultan II. Abdülhamit ise Yahudi göçmenleri kabul etmekle birlikte Filistin ve Kudüs'e yerleşmelerine engel olmuştur. Bu bağlamda Romanya'dan gelen Yahudi göçmenlerin İzmir, Selanik, Ankara gibi vilayetlere yerleşmelerine müsaade edilmiştir. 10 Kasım 1899-16 Nisan 1900 tarihleri arasında Romanya'dan göç ederek İstanbul'da toplanan 883 Yahudi göçmene vatandaşlık verilerek Ankara'da iskân edilmişlerdir. Söz konusu Yahudi göçmenlerin isimleri, geldikleri şehir, yaş ve cinsiyetleri, Hariciye Nezareti Tabiiyet Müdüriyetinin kaydettiği defterden tespit edilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yahudiler, Göç, İskân, Romanyalı Yahudi Göçmenler, Osmanlı Devleti

### **1. Introduction**

The last quarter of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century were a period when Anatolian lands intensively met immigrants. Migrations were coming from the Crimea, the Caucasus, the Balkans and the Middle East, in other words, from all quarters. Furthermore, the immigrants were not only Muslims but also Jews and Christians. In this period, migrations to Anatolia had many economic, cultural and social reasons. The common reasons for the migration of immigrants were the pressures they faced in the country they lived in. These pressures were rather seen in the newly founded Balkan countries. The purpose of the pressures in the Balkan countries was to ensure the migration of groups considered *others*, and to establish the nation-state model which turned in to a fashion in the 19th century. In this respect,

as in Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria, both Muslims and Jews in Romania were considered as *other*, and economic, political and cultural pressures were put on them to emigrate from Romania.

The subject of this study is the examination of the Jewish immigrants who took refuge in the Ottoman Empire from Romania and settled in Ankara Province between November 10, 1899 and April 16, 1900 due to the aforesaid reasons. The study primarily concentrated on the reasons for migrations from Romania. Afterwards, the policies implemented by the Ottoman Empire on Jewish immigrants were examined. In the last chapter of the study, Jewish immigrants who emigrated from different cities of Romania to Istanbul and were granted citizenship and settled by the Ottoman Empire in Ankara Province are discussed. Since the Ottoman Foreign Ministry granted citizenship to these Jewish immigrants, it issued a book in which all migrants were registered to send to the Romania. For this reason, valuable information such as the names, ages, genders and previous cities of Jewish immigrants who emigrated from Romania and settled in Ankara province between November 10, 1899 and April 16, 1900 is reached. These data on Jewish immigrants recorded in the book are shown in graphs.

On the other hand, considering the Jewish emigration to the Ottoman Empire and the politics of The Jews to settle in and around Jerusalem during the period of Sultan Abdulhamit II, it grabs attention that the Jews from Romania were settled in Ankara Province.

## 2. Reasons for Jewish Emigration from Romania

After the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War, an intense wave of migration began from the lands lost by the Ottoman Empire towards the Ottoman borders, especially Anatolia. The immigrants were mostly Muslims, but non-Muslims were also among the migrants.<sup>1</sup> An important group of non-Muslims who emigrated from Romania during this period was the Jews.

The reason for the emigration of the Jews from Romania was not different from the reasons for the emigration of the Muslims. However, during this period, there were also migrations not only from Romania, but also from Russia and other European countries resulting from anti-Semitism. Russia, where the number of Jewish migrations is the highest, is followed by Romania.<sup>2</sup> Anti-Semitism and the idea of founding a nation-state constituted the main reasons for Jewish immigration.

Anti-Semitism, which began to be influential in the 18th century but intensified in Europe after the mid-19th century<sup>3</sup>, caused approximately 500 thousand Jews to migrate to the USA, British, Canadian, Argentinean and Ottoman lands between 1880 and 1891. After this period, a significant increase was observed in Jewish immigration, particularly due to Russia's harsh policy. It is estimated that approximately 1 million Jews emigrated from Russia in 1891 alone.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For detailed information on topic, see Nedim İpek, *Göçler: İmparatorluktan Ulus Devlete*, (Trabzon: Serander Yay., 2006); Bahattin Ayhan, *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Balkan-Kafkas Göçleri ve Mübadiller*, (Ankara: Dorlion Yay., 2020).

<sup>2</sup> For Jewish immigration from Europe and Russia, see *Jewish Migration in Modern Times The Case of Eastern Europe*, eds. Semion Goldin, Mia Spiro, Scott Ury, (Routledge 2019); John D. Klier, "Emigration Mania in Late-Imperial Russia: Legend and Reality", in *Patternsof Emigration, 1850-1914*, eds. Aubrey Newman et al. (London 1996), 21-30; Nurdan İpek Şeber, "II. Abdülhamid Döneminde Rusya ve Romanya'dan Gelen Yahudi Muhacirler", *Tarih Dergisi*, 53 (2011/1), (İstanbul 2012): 39-60; Ali Arslan, *Avrupa'dan Türkiye'ye İkinci Yahudi Göçü*, (İstanbul: Truva Yay., 2006); Caestecker, Frank; Torsten Feys, "East European Jewish Migrants and Settlers in Belgium, 1880-1914: A Transatlantic Perspective", *East European Jewish Affairs*, 40, No. 3, (December 2010), 261-284

<sup>3</sup> For detailed information on anti-Semitism, see Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700-1933*, (Cambridge 1980); William I. Brustein and Ryan D. King, "Anti-Semitism in Europe before the Holocaust", *International Political Science Review*, 25, (2004), 35-53.

<sup>4</sup> Şeber, "II. Abdülhamid Döneminde", 46.

During this period, 256,000 Jews were being prepared for emigration due to the pressures in Romania.<sup>5</sup>

Another reason underlying the forced migration of the Jews in European countries, especially in Romania, was usually the desire of countries to found a nation-state.

During this period, the leaders of the Balkan countries came under the influence of conservative German nationalism. Conservative German nationalism has become an accepted model, particularly in the Balkans, by bringing together the concepts of religion and nation. The German nation-state model, which became more prominent in the late 19th century, was modeled in many countries, especially in Balkan countries such as Greece, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria.<sup>6</sup> Contrary to the French nation-state model, which is distant to religion, the German nation-state model is against gathering people of different religions and sects under the same roof. Therefore, Romanian King Carol, who wanted to found a German-style nation-state in his country, put pressure on Muslims and Jews, forced them to migrate, and wanted to establish a homogeneous structure in his country.<sup>7</sup>

King Carol, who wanted to build the German nation-state model in his country, was also subjected to the pressure of countries such as England and France, with the influence of powerful Jewish lobbies. The influence of Jewish lobbies played an important role in the pressures of European states. In this sense, firstly, the success of the Jewish lobby called *Alliance Israelite Universelle* led by Adolphe Crémieux showed its effect on the Treaty of Berlin in 1878. With Article 44 of the Treaty of Berlin, Jews gained equal rights with the original elements of the country.<sup>8</sup> However, this situation resulted in the reaction of the Romanians. Furthermore, the pressures of the countries influenced by the Jewish lobbies during the preparation of the Romanian constitution gradually increased the anti-Semitism in Romania. The pressures were perceived as interference in Romania's internal affairs and used by anti-Semites for propaganda purposes.<sup>9</sup> While the pressure of the Jewish lobby increased anti-Semitism in Romania on the one hand, it also led to a change of government in the country. External pressure arising from the Jewish lobby led to the resignation of the Interior and Foreign Ministers, who acted slowly about the Jewish question, the fall of the cabinet and the election of a new cabinet.<sup>10</sup>

Since the idea of considering Jews as the main element of the country was also contrary to the nation-state model that King Carol wanted to establish, Carol was implementing his own policy in the Jewish question, despite all the pressures and negative developments. King Carol, who wanted to establish his dream nation-state, forced the Jews for emigration. For this purpose, he did not implement Article 44 of the Treaty of Berlin (1878) on the one hand, whereas he raised difficulties for the Jews in many questions on the other hand. One of these difficulties was the issue of military service. Jews who wanted to become Romanian citizens were required to do military service. The Jews, who were generally engaged in trade, preferred to emigrate since military service was difficult for them.<sup>11</sup>

Another pressure on the Jews was the political bans imposed on non-Christians (Muslims, Jews) with the *Dobruja Organization Law dated 1880*. With this law, a class distinction was

<sup>5</sup> Şeber, "II. Abdülhamid Döneminde", 48.

<sup>6</sup> Abidin Temizer, "Nikola'nın Millî Devlet Kurma Çalışmaları ve Karadağ Müftülüğü (1878-1912)", *History Studies*, 13 (2), (April 2021): 613; Abidin Temizer, "Nikola I Petrović-Njegoš's Efforts to Nationalize Montenegro and His Obstacles", in *Nationalism and Balkans*, ed. Abidin Temizer, (Lyon: Livre de Lyon, Lyon 2020), 38-39.

<sup>7</sup> Mehmet Fatih Sansar, *Bağımsızlıktan Balkan Savaşlarına Osmanlı - Romanya İlişkileri*, (Ph.D. Thesis, Balıkesir University, 2020). 99-103.

<sup>8</sup> Raul Cârstocea, "Anti-Semitism in Romania: Historical Legacies, Contemporary Challenges", *ECMI Working Paper*, 81, (October 2014): 5.

<sup>9</sup> Cârstocea, "Anti-Semitism", 6.

<sup>10</sup> Directorate of State Archives Ottoman Archives (İstanbul) (BOA), *Y.A.HUS.*, 162/8.

<sup>11</sup> BOA. *HR.SFR.04.*, 661/26

created between citizens in Romania. Thus, non-Christians were considered second-class citizens.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, Article 44 of the Treaty of Berlin was acted against.

Due to the afore-stated pressures, around 256,000 Jewish people wanted to leave the country. One of the countries where Jews wanted to go the most was the Ottoman Empire.

### 3. The Ottoman Empire's Settlement Policy and Perspective on Jewish Immigrants

The Ottoman Empire was relieving their suffering by settling the immigrants in suitable places within its borders. While there was no problem in Muslim immigration to Anatolia, problems were experienced partially with Christian immigrants and mostly with Jewish immigrants. Since the number of Christian immigrants was low, as in Catholic Georgians, they were either returned or settled.<sup>13</sup> However, as we will detail below, problems were faced from time to time due to the high number of Jews and their insistence on their settlement in Palestine or Istanbul.

The intense emigration of Jewish immigrants not only from Romania but also from various European countries, Russia and Balkan countries brought the problem to an international dimension. Especially the fact that the Jewish lobby and European states wanted to settle the Jews in Palestinian territories<sup>14</sup>, and some wanted to settle the Jews in Istanbul if not Palestine caused the Ottoman government to take measures against Jewish immigrants and then to reject Jewish immigration. Despite all the measures, Jewish migration could not be prevented, and immigrants were somehow tried to be settled outside Palestine or Istanbul.<sup>15</sup>

The Ottoman government first announced that it would accept only the Jews who had become Ottoman citizens, and that they would be settled in Ottoman lands outside Istanbul and Palestine. However, not only did the Jewish population of that emigrated or were preparing to emigrate reach millions, but the Jewish lobby's insistence on Palestine and their serious financial support in this matter forced the Ottoman government to take more radical measures. Jewish notables such as Mr. Lawrens Oliphant, a member of the British Parliament, Baron de Hirsch, a banker who undertook the construction of Rumelia Railway, Edmond Rotschild, a member of the Rotschilds who were one of the famous Jewish families, and Teodor Herzl both put pressure on Sultan Abdulhamit II and promised for financial support. After the increase in the number of Jewish immigrants in 1882, the persistence of the Jewish lobby on Palestine, and the settlement of the Jews in Palestine despite all the bans, the Ottoman government had to ban Jewish immigration except for those who became Ottoman citizens. Furthermore, the condition of settlement outside Palestine and Istanbul was imposed on the Jews who adopted Ottoman nationality. However, the immigration of the Jews who did not adopt Ottoman citizenship continued under the ground of trade or bribery.<sup>16</sup>

The Ottoman Empire settled Jewish immigrants rather in places such as Izmir, Ankara and Thessaloniki. This study includes the Jewish population who emigrated from Romania and settled in Ankara Province.

### 4. Romanian Immigrant Jews Settled in Ankara Province

The Ottoman Empire granted citizenship to 883 Jewish immigrants who emigrated from Romania and came together in Istanbul between November 10, 1899 and April 16, 1900, and decided to settle in the Sivrihisar, Bala and Boğazlıyan towns in Ankara Province.<sup>17</sup> To notify

<sup>12</sup> Sansar, Bağımsızlıktan Balkan Savaşlarına, 102.

<sup>13</sup> Nebi Gümüş, "Türkiye Gürcüleri Üzerine Bazı Mülâhazalar", *Actual Problems of Kartvelology*, IV, (2015): 99; Nedim İpek et al., *Osmanlı'da İskân ve Göç*, (Eskişehir: Anadolu Üniversitesi Yay., 2019), 151.

<sup>14</sup> Bayram Kodaman and Nedim İpek, "Yahudilerin Filistin'e Yerleştirilmeleriyle İlgili Olarak II. Abdülhamid'e 1879'da Sunulan Lâyiha", *Belleten*, LVII, No.219, (August 1993): 566.

<sup>15</sup> Şeber, "II. Abdülhamid Döneminde", 58-59.

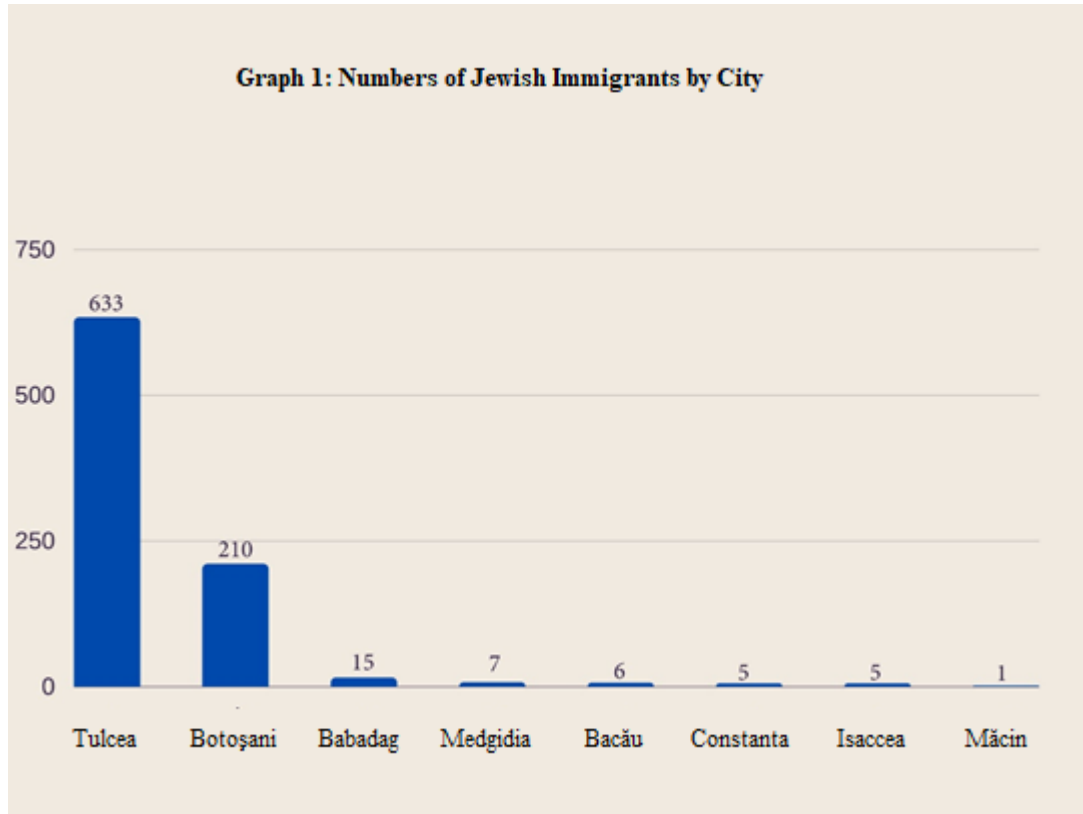
<sup>16</sup> Şeber, "II. Abdülhamid Döneminde", 52-53.

<sup>17</sup> BOA.DH.MKT, 2309/86.

the Romanian State of the immigrants granted citizenship, all immigrants are registered in the registration book.<sup>18</sup> Because the Jews whose names were written in this book adopted the Ottoman nationality, the denaturalization of their Romanian citizenship was confirmed by the Romanian Embassy. Names, ages and previous cities of Jewish immigrants are written in this book.<sup>19</sup>

The Ottoman Empire put forward some conditions while granting nationality to Jewish immigrants from Romania. Accordingly, assurances were obtained from the Jewish immigrants that they voluntarily adopted the Ottoman nationality, they would not adopt the nationality of another state later, they would finance their migration and settlements themselves, they would settle in the places determined by the Ottoman Empire, and they would obey the orders of the state.<sup>20</sup>

The book is registered with No. BOA.HR.TH, 242/108 in the section of Ottoman Archives in the Department of the State Archives of the Presidency and consists of 20 leaves. The number of Romanian immigrant non-Muslims recorded in the book is 883 in total in 152 households. A total of 19 people, including 4 households and 1 single person, were registered as Catholics.

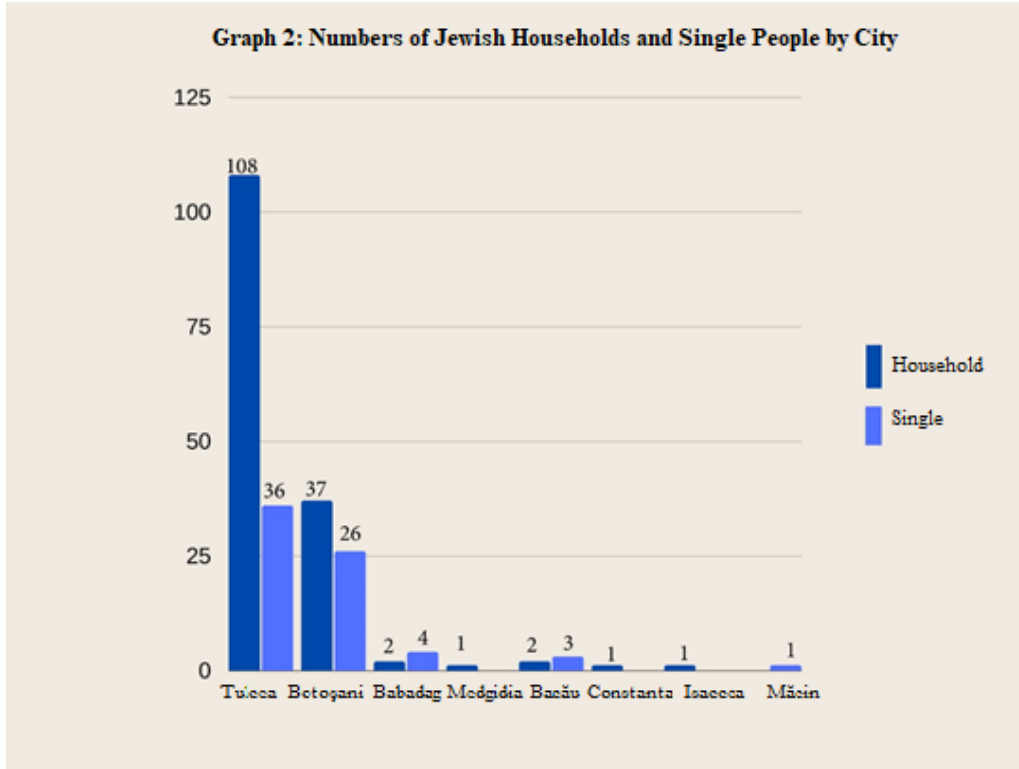


Settled Jewish immigrants came from Romania's Dobruja region, the cities of Tulcea, Botoşani, Babadag, Bacău, Constanta, Isaccea and Măcin. The highest number of immigrants, that is, 633 people came from Tulcea. Tulca is followed by Botoşani with 210 people and Babadag with 15 people. 7 people came from Medgidia, 6 people from Bacău, 5 people each from Constanta and Isaccea, and 1 person from Măcin.

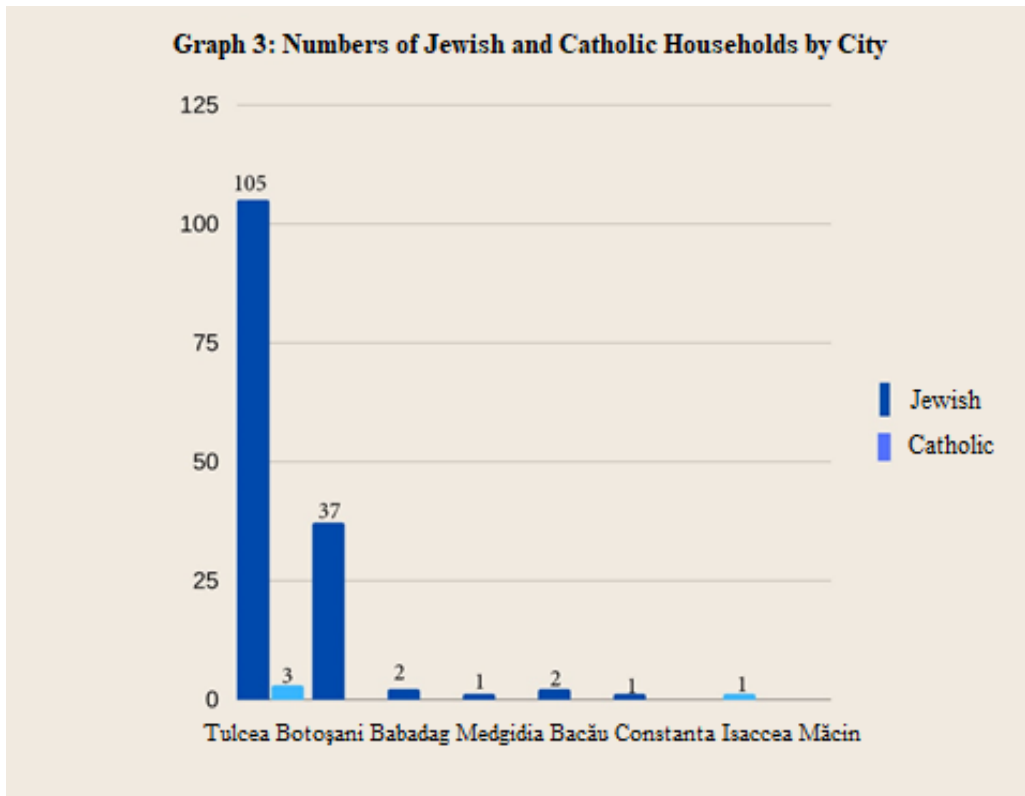
<sup>18</sup> See the subject of nationality and citizenship in Ottoman Empire. İbrahim Serbestoğlu, *Osmanlı Kimdir? Osmanlı Devletinde Tabiiyet Sorunu*, (Istanbul: Yeditepe Yay., 2014).

<sup>19</sup> BOA.HR.TH, 242/108.

<sup>20</sup> BOA.HR.TH, 242/108.

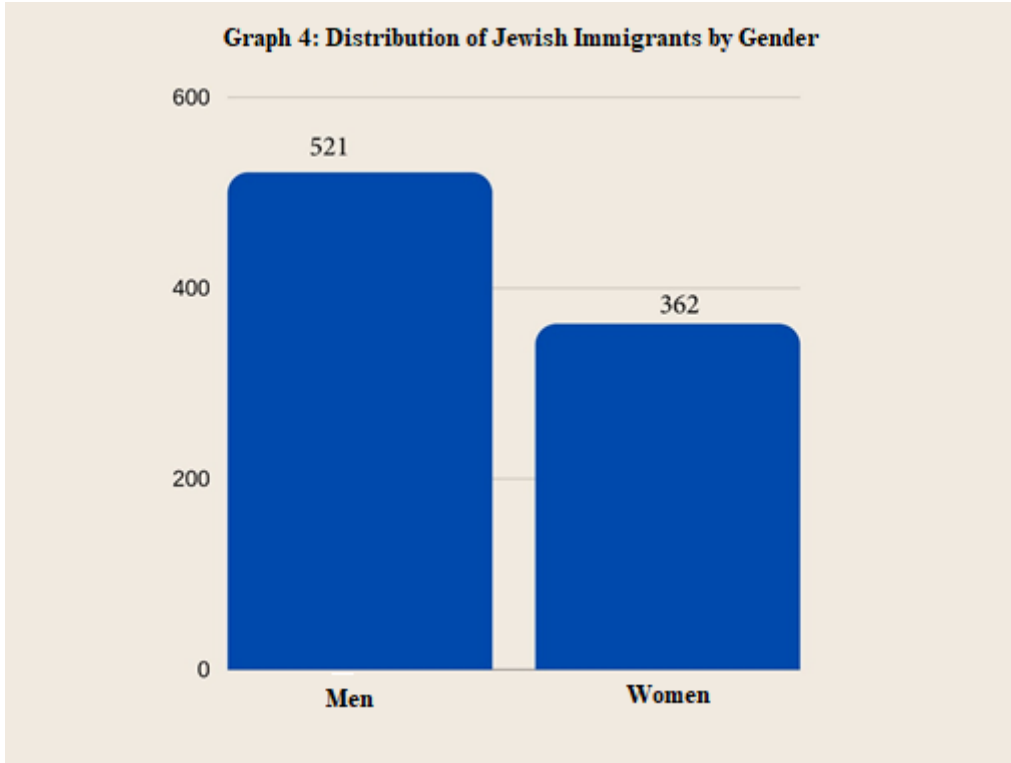


The number of incoming Jewish households is 152. The number of those who came alone (single) is 70. The number of those who came alone was mostly from Tulcea with 36 people and Botoşani with 26 people.

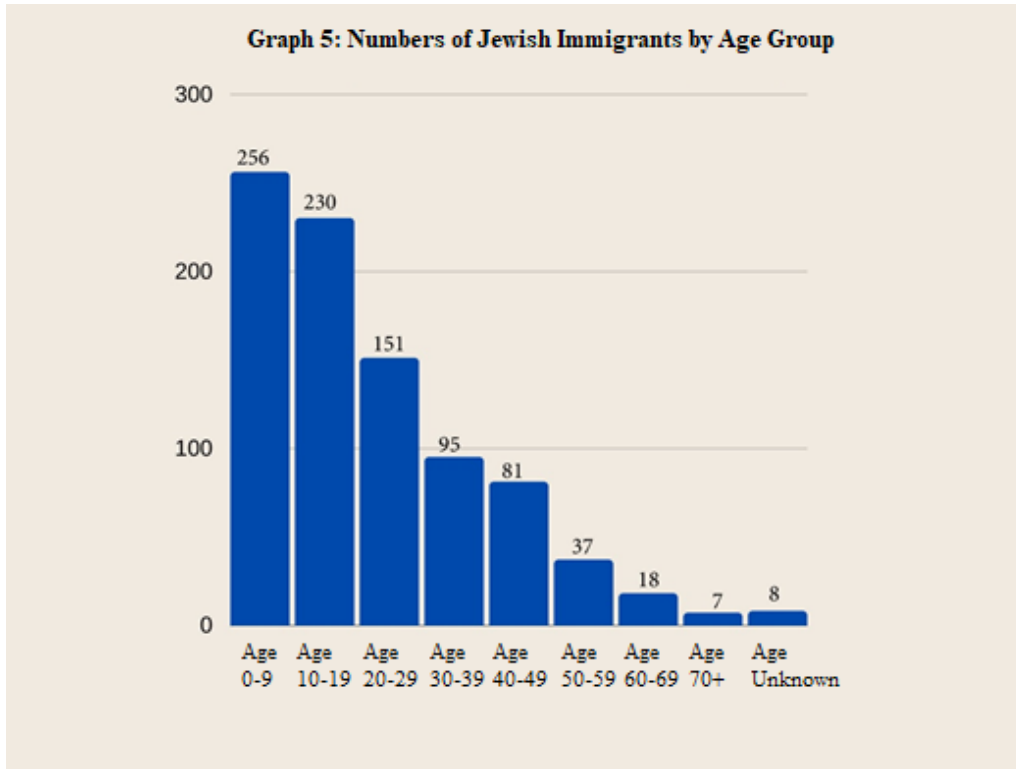




Among the immigrant Jews, 4 families are Catholics. 148 families are Jewish. Among those who came alone, 1 person is Catholic, and 69 people are Jewish. Only one family came from Isaccea, and this family is a Catholic family of 5 people.



Regarding the gender issue of the Jewish population, the high number of men is striking. Out of 883 people, 521 are men and 362 are women.



When the age distribution of Jewish immigrants is reviewed, it is seen that young individuals (aged 0-29) constitute 72% of the immigrants. There are 256 people aged 0-9, 230 people aged 10-19, 151 people aged 20-29, 95 people aged 30-39, 81 people aged 40-49, 37 people aged 50-59, 18 people aged 60-69, and 8 people aged 70+. The ages of 8 immigrants are unknown. However, as they are mentioned as children, they can be included in the younger age group.

### Conclusion

The fact that it was desired to found a nation-state in Romania, which gained its independence after the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War, and this desire was induced by the German nation-state model caused the emigration of Jews as well as Muslims in the country. This is because the Jews were forced to become citizens, the Jews who became citizens were required to do military service, and the Jews were considered second-class citizens in the constitution. Moreover, the anti-Semitism movement, which spread over Europe and influenced Romania, increased the pressures on Jews.

Owing to these pressures, 256,000 Jews in Romania were forced to emigrate. The primary preference of Jewish immigrants, who were financed by Jewish lobbies and supported by European states such as England and France, was the Palestinian lands, if not possible, then Istanbul. However, Abdulhamit II, the Sultan of the period, imposed restrictions on Jewish immigrants, both because he knew the objectives of the Jewish lobby and Western states about Palestine, and due to the excessive pressure of the Jewish lobbies. He first stated that the Jews who became Ottoman citizens would be accepted, and then it was declared that the immigrants would be settled in the places shown to them outside Palestine and Istanbul. Furthermore, it was assured that the settled Jews would not acquire the citizenship of another country.

Under these circumstances, the Jews who came to the Ottoman Empire were settled in places such as Izmir, Thessaloniki, Ankara. The book we examined contains the information of 883 Jewish immigrants comprising 152 households settled in Ankara and its surroundings. Immigrants mostly came from Tulcea and Botoşani. Of the 883 Jewish immigrants, 633 came from Tulcea and 210 from Botoşani. Others came from Babadag (15), Medgidia (7), Bacău (6), Constanta (5), Isaccea (5) and Măcin (1). Seventy of these immigrants did not have households and came alone. Concerning the ages of the immigrants, it is seen that the majority of the population is young. Among the immigrants, there were 256 people in the 0-9 age group, who can be addressed as children, 381 people in the 10-29 age group, who can be addressed as young people, 213 people in the middle age group (30-59), and 25 people in the elderly group (60-70+). Since 8 people at unknown ages are mentioned as children, they should also be considered in the child or young age group. There is a superiority in the number of men among the immigrants. Accordingly, there are 521 male and 362 female immigrants. Of the immigrant Jews, 151 households are Jewish, and 1 household is Catholic.

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