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# ‘This is their profession’ Greek merchants in Transylvania and their Networks at the End of the 17<sup>th</sup> century

MARIA PAKUCS

The ‘Nicolae Iorga’ Institute of History and New Europe College Bucharest

## Abstract

*This article explores the commercial network of a Greek merchant from Transylvania at the end of the seventeenth century. Based on various archival material, it unfolds the extent of business interests and contacts of a trading network, spanning a wide territory in the Balkans and Central Europe as well, extending our prior knowledge of how the early Greek diaspora communities operated. Established in the Transylvanian juridical system with the specific role of providers of Ottoman products, Greek merchants swiftly extended their commercial activities as intermediaries of trade with Central European markets as well. The article also touches upon the difficulties of identifying individual merchants in different sources and languages.*

Keywords: Greek merchants, trade, business networks, debts

Sometime in early 1694, the Greek merchant Kozma Kis (i.e. ‘Small’ in Hungarian) was lying on his deathbed in Sibiu, Transylvania, while his creditors, not waiting for his last breath, were opening up his shop and taking away bundles of English cloth. We know these details from the testimonies of sixty Greek merchants of Sibiu, when Kozma’s creditors requested the settlement of outstanding debts. Principally, the town judges of Sibiu acted as executors and administrators of deceased merchants, under great pressure coming from István Apor, a baron of the realm, and György Bánffy, the governor of Transylvania. The inquest papers are a goldmine of information on the commercial web of local and international trade connections created by the Greek merchants of Sibiu.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> The case is mentioned by Olga Cicanci, *Companiile grecești din Transilvania și comerțul european în anii 1636–1746* [The Greek companies in Transylvania and their European trade, 1636–1746] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1981), 58. Abstracts of the entries in the town protocols of Sibiu published in *Inventarul protoalelor primăriei Sibiu, 1521–1700* [The protocols of the Sibiu town council, 1521–1700], eds Gheorghe Duzinchevici, Eyghenia Buta, and Herta Gündisch (Sibiu: Arhivele Statutului, 1958), 181–3. A digital edition of these protocols in *Hermannstadt und Siebenbürgen. Die Protokolle des Hermannstädter Rates und der Sächsischen Nationsuniversität (1391–1705)*, ed. Käthe Hienz, Thomas Șindilariu, Bernard Heigl, DVD, vol. 13 (Sibiu: Honterus, 2007). Greek merchant networks in various European polities in the early modern period have attracted more attention in recent years: Izabella Papp, *Görög kereskedők a Jász-ékanságban* [Greek merchants in the Jászukun region] (Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Megyei Levéltár Közleményei, 6) (Szolnok: Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Megyei Levéltár, 2004); David do Paço, “Le marchand grec existe-t-il? Remarques sur les

Transylvanian case of the legacy of a foreign merchant, an extraordinary occurrence in our region for this period. The surviving primary sources on the lives of the Ottoman Greeks in Central Europe before the eighteenth century are scarce, therefore the documentation created in the wake of Kozma's death in 1694 gives us a welcome insight into realities of this professional group of merchants specialised in the trade with the Ottoman Empire.

In this article I aim to recreate the commercial and social network of a Transylvanian Greek merchant at the end of the seventeenth century in order to understand how it spanned a large territory, from the core of the Ottoman Empire to Poland, and how it crossed social boundaries by building a varied clientele, ranging from barons to servants of villages priests in rural Transylvania. I shall introduce briefly the political and economic setting of Transylvania in this period; then I shall discuss in more detail the local community of these Balkan-Ottoman merchants settled here from the sixteenth century onwards. The largest part of the analysis will be dedicated to the events of 1694 in Sibiu and their implications.

For this study I am relying on documents preserved in the archives of Sibiu, such as unpublished political and private correspondence, letters of debt, loan contracts, town protocols and judicial inquests written in Hungarian, Latin or German. I do not have linguistic access to any historical sources related to the particular situation of Kozma Kis written in Greek and possibly preserved in the archives of the Sibiu Greek 'company,' which could enrich the details of my analysis. This material reveals the extent of the business undertakings of the Greeks in the second half of the seventeenth century, which exceeded the limitations of their legal status in Transylvania. Moreover, Kozma's commercial activity in Central Europe enhances our understanding of the Greek commercial networks in Hungary and Transylvania. To date, scholarship focused exclusively on the juridical status of the Greeks in these polities, and a lack of diverse primary sources prompted a unilateral perspective, informed by the official legislation. For instance, Olga Katsiardi-Hering asserted that they "extended either within those regions themselves, as part of the bi-directional commerce between rural and urban areas, or

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représentations collectives et les identités sociales viennoises dans le Kaufuf de Johann Christian Brand de 1775," in *Images en capitale: Vienne, fin XVIIe-début XIXe siècles* (Jahrbuch des Österreichischen Gesellschaft zur Erforschung des 18. Jahrhundert, 26) ed. Christine Lebeau, Wolfgang Schmale (Bochum: Dieter Winkler, 2011), 53–72; Olga Katsiardi-Hering, "Greek merchant colonies in Central and South-Eastern Europe in the Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries," in *Merchant Colonies in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Viktor N. Zakharov, Gelina Harlaftis, Olga Katsiardi-Hering (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), 127–140; Mathieu Grenet, *La fabrique communautaire. Les Grecs à Venise, Livourne et Marseille, 1770–1840* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2016); Hasan Çolak, 'Amsterdam's Greek Merchants: Protégés of the Dutch, Beneficiaries of the Russians, Subjects of the Ottomans and Supporters of Greece,' *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 42, no. 1 (2018): 115–133; Mária Pakucs-Willcocks, "«Als Kaufleute mit solchen Wahren umbzugehn jhrer profession ist». Negustori greci la Sibiu în 1694" [Greek merchants in Sibiu in 1694] *Revista Istorică* XXIII, nos. 1–2 (2012): 85–94.

within the Ottoman-ruled Balkans.”<sup>2</sup> While it is a fact that all Greeks travelled regularly into their home territories for financial and personal reasons, Kozma’s letters of debt and the testimonies of his fellow Greek merchants uncover his ambitious network of business partners and agents placed in the great commercial hubs of Central Europe, such as Nuremberg and Vienna.

The timing of this unprecedented trial in Transylvania could not have been worse: these were times of upheaval and insecurity, when the fragile balance of economic and political stability of the Transylvanian principality was changing. Until 1690, it had been under Ottoman suzerainty, paying tribute and offering gifts to Ottoman high officials;<sup>3</sup> in other respects, the political system of the principality was autonomous, based on three estates and an elected prince (albeit confirmed by the Porte).<sup>4</sup> The Ottoman defeat in 1683 in the battle of Vienna snowballed into the loss of Hungary and Transylvania to the Habsburgs, officially acknowledged in the treaty of Karlowitz of 1699.<sup>5</sup>

With this brief sketch of the political setting, a more detailed presentation of the situation of the Greeks in the principality of Transylvania is necessary for a better grasp of all the implications of the 1694 events in Sibiu. The presence of the Balkan-Levantine merchants in Transylvania became more evident beginning with the middle of the sixteenth century, when they gradually replaced the former main agents of the trade, the local Saxon merchants from Sibiu and Braşov and the Wallachian traders from the neighbouring Romanian principality.<sup>6</sup> Thriving and profitable long-distance trade along

<sup>2</sup> Olga Katsiardi-Hering, “Greeks in the Habsburg Lands (17<sup>th</sup>— 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries): Expectations, Realities, Nostalgias,” in *Austrian-Greek Encounters Over the Centuries: History, Diplomacy, Politics, Arts, Economics*, ed. Herbert Kröll (Vienna: Studien Verlag, 2007), 153.

<sup>3</sup> Georg Müller, *Die Türkenherrschaft in Siebenbürgen. Verfassungsrechtliches Verhältnis Siebenbürgens zur Pforte, 1541–1688* (Sibiu: Institutul pentru Studiul Europei sud-orientale, 1923), 12–13; Ernst D. Petrich, “Das Osmanische Reich und Siebenbürgen im Reformationszeitalter,” in *Konfessionsbildung und Konfessionskultur in Siebenbürgen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Volker Leppin and Ulrich A. Wien (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2005), 21–22; Gerald Volkmer, *Siebenbürgen zwischen Habsburger-monarchie und Osmanischem Reich. Völkerrechtliche Stellung und Völkerrechtspraxis eines ostmitteleuropäischen Fürstentums (1541–1699)* (Munich: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 498–99.

<sup>4</sup> See most recently Felicia Roşu, *Elective Monarchy in Transylvania and Poland-Lithuania, 1569–1587* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 23–4. Also Sándor Papp, *Verleihungs-, Bekräftigungs- und Vertragsurkunden der Osmanen für Ungarn und Siebenbürgen. Eine quellenkritische Untersuchung* (Vienna: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2003), 34–6.

<sup>5</sup> Volkmer, *Siebenbürgen*, 575–76; *Erdély története* [History of Transylvania], vol. II, ed. László Makkai (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1986), 883.

<sup>6</sup> Mihail Dan, Samuil Goldenberg, “Le commerce balkano-levantin de la Transylvanie au cours de la seconde moitié du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle et au début du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” *Revue des études sud-est européennes* V, nos. 1–2 (1967): 93–4; Vassiliki Seiriniidou, “Grocers and Wholesalers, Ottomans and Habsburgs, Foreigners and “Our Own”: the Greek Trade Diasporas in Central Europe, Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries,” in *Merchants in the Ottoman Empire* (Collection Turcica XV) (Paris: Peeters, 2008), 85, stating that these merchants were a ‘purely Central and East European diaspora’; Cristian Luca, “The Rise of the Greek “Conquering Merchant” in the Trade between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Romanian Principalities in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 19, no. 2 (2010): 311–12.

the land routes via the Balkan Peninsula into Transylvania and East-Central Europe had been established in the second half of the fourteenth century, with merchants from Braşov and Sibiu enjoying generous trading privileges in their respective home towns and abroad. Of these, the most prized was the staple right (*ius stapuli*, *Stapelrecht*), fiercely defended and confirmed repeatedly over the centuries. The staple right of Sibiu stipulated that foreign merchants could only sell wholesale to the locals and could only enter the town during the annual fairs; it was the single most powerful obstacle the Greeks had to overcome to trade unhindered in Transylvania. The Diet, where the Saxons were represented and the Prince could not overlook the staple right, gradually allowed Greeks only limited freedom of movement.<sup>7</sup> A turning point was reached in 1636, when Prince George I Rákóczi (1630–1648) granted the Greeks in Transylvania their own administration of justice under a principal and the right to sell freely at fairs, although strictly wholesale and only three days before and after the actual fair days.<sup>8</sup> This grant resulted in the Greek merchants setting up their first guild or association (which they confusingly called *kompania*) in Sibiu in the following years.<sup>9</sup> Their good relationships with the princes, most probably built on services rendered but also on gifts, secured their position even if their official juridical status was quite restrictive.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, the staple right of the Saxons was surpassed by the new commercial realities where Greeks controlled the lucrative transit trade with the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, faced with the juridical gains of the Greeks by the mid-seventeenth century, the authorities of Sibiu had to concede and come to an agreement with the Greek merchants. In 1656, the town council issued its own regulation for them: a set (and quite high) rent for their town shops, sale of their goods only two weeks before and after the

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<sup>7</sup> Zsolt Trócsányi, "Gesetzgebung der fürstlichen Epoche und die Rechtstellung der Balkan Griechen," *Etudes balkaniques* VII, no. 1 (1971): 94–104; Lidia Deményi, "Le régime des douanes et des commerçants grecs en Transylvanie au cours de la période de la principauté autonome (1541–1691)," *Makedonika* 15 (1975): 62–113.

<sup>8</sup> T. Bodogae, "Le privilège commercial accordé en 1636 par G. Rákócz aux marchands grecs de Sibiu," *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire* XI, no. 4 (1972): 647–653; Olga Cicanci, *Companiile greceşti din Transilvania şi comerţul european în anii 1636–1746* [The Greek companies in Transylvania and European trade between 1636–1746] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1981), 25; Mária Pakucs-Willcocks, "Between 'Faithful Subjects' and 'Pernicious Nation': Greek Merchants in the Principality of Transylvania in the Seventeenth Century," *Hungarian Historical Review* 6, no. 1 (2017): 118–9.

<sup>9</sup> Despoina Tsourka Papastathi, "A propos des compagnies grecques de Transylvanie à Sibiu et Braşov," *Balkan Studies* 23, no. 2 (1982): 423. This association was not a joint commercial undertaking; its main goals were autonomous administration of justice and access to better business opportunities. It was different from the companies of Ottoman merchants in Vienna discussed by David do Paço, *L'Orient à Vienne au dix-huitième siècle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 137–9.

<sup>10</sup> There is plenty of evidence of Greek merchants acting as agents for Prince Bethlen and, later, Michael I Apafi. Pakucs, "Between Faithful Subjects," 118. Miklós Bethlen, *Önéletrása* [Autobiography], ed. László Szalay (Budapest: 1858), 431 wrote how Greeks offered presents to influential persons in the Diet: 'he [a Greek] gave my father a few carpets, to others he gave 100 gold florins.'

annual fairs, curfew at 8 o'clock, no festive gatherings, and strictly no churches or schools in town.<sup>11</sup>

Greeks had become indispensable for supplying the Transylvanian market with oriental products, brought from the Ottoman Empire, and they assumed this formal role without hesitation. While Greek merchants definitely had broader trading interests, they adhered to the confines of their official status, for example in 1648, when they complained about Jewish traders buying stock from other merchants for resale, which was not allowed.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the services rendered by Greeks to the Transylvanian princes ranged from being their personal agents to exchanging coins into good money for the tribute sent to Istanbul.<sup>13</sup> Over the course of the seventeenth century, the distinction and opposition between the settled Greeks, members of the recognised associations of Sibiu and Braşov (founded in 1678), and the unaffiliated Greek traders from the Ottoman empire became more evident. Both categories owed tax to the Transylvanian treasury, collected by the associations and by customs officers.

In the seventeenth century, Greeks had become a recognised professional and juridical category in the social fabric of Transylvania, a 'nation' defined by specific acquired 'rights and obligations' – to follow Tamar Herzog's apt definition.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately, in Transylvania and Hungary alike, 'Greek' meant 'merchant'.<sup>15</sup> Nicolae Iorga, as early as 1906, used the phrase 'Greeks by origin or by trade' ('greci de neam sau negoț') to capture the multivalent nature of this group, acknowledging that Vlachs, Serbs, Bulgarians and even Wallachians were represented among them.<sup>16</sup> Part of the greater migratory movement from the Balkans toward East-Central Europe,<sup>17</sup> the Transylvanian Greeks forged a place

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<sup>11</sup> Ioan Moga, "Politica economică austriacă și comerțul Transilvaniei în veacul XVIII" [The Austrian economic policy and Transylvanian trade in the eighteenth century] *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Națională*, no. 7 (1936–1938): 156–7, note 1; National Archives of Sibiu (hereinafter: NAS), Acte fasciculare C 15.

<sup>12</sup> "Erdélyi görög kereskedők szabadalomlevelei" [The privileges of Transylvanian Greek merchants] *Magyar Gazdaságtörténeti Szemle*, no. 5 (1898): 403.

<sup>13</sup> As in 1670 for instance: *Erdélyi országgyűlési emlékek. Monumenta Comititalia Regni Transylvaniae* [hereinafter EOE] ed. Sándor Szilágyi, vol. XV (Budapest: 1892), 179.

<sup>14</sup> Tamar Herzog, *Defining Nations. Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 3–4.

<sup>15</sup> Dumitru Limona, "Catastihurile casei comerciale „Ioan Marcu” din Sibiu," [The accounts of the Ioan Marcu trading house in Sibiu], in Dumitru Limona, *Negustorii 'greci' și arhivele lor comerciale*, ed. Loredana Dascăl (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza Iași", 2006), 77; Márta Búr, "The "Greek Company" in Hungary," in *Proceedings of the First International Congress on the Hellenic Diaspora, from Antiquity to Modern Times*, vol. II, *From 1453 to Modern Times*, ed. John M. Fossey (Amsterdam: Brill, 1991), 155.

<sup>16</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Studii și documente privitoare la istoria românilor* [Studies and documents on the history of Romanians] (Bucharest: 1906), VI.

<sup>17</sup> Olga Katsiardi-Hering, "Commerce and Merchants in Southeastern Europe, 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries: "Micro-Districts" and Regions," *Etudes Balkaniques* LI, no. 1 (2015): 19–20; Ikaros Mantouvalos, "Greek Immigrants in Central Europe: A Concise Study of Migration Routes from the Balkans to the Territories of the Hungarian Kingdom (From the late 17<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries)," in *Across the Danube. South-East*

for themselves in all echelons of local society. The more ambitious among them became nobles of the land, endowed by the princes with coats of arms for ‘faithful services’, such as money exchange, specifically noted in the charter issued for Thomas of Ostanitsa in 1671.<sup>18</sup> The Greeks in Transylvania had a well defined juridical and professional role. At some point in the juridical proceedings of 1694, the judges suggested the solution that the debts of the dead Greek merchant be paid off in goods, to which the burghers of Sibiu replied:

It was decided that the payment should take place in wares and not in money, but we do not know how to sell them, and we would be stuck with them and suffer great loss [...] On the contrary, the accused knows how to sell, so we ask that the goods assigned to us be given to him, as is the practice in other countries, too, and that after a certain time he turn the goods into money.

The head of the Greek association in Sibiu protested, saying that merchants did their own business and they could neither trade nor pay in anyone else’s name. The Sibiu citizens insisted: ‘as merchants they handle such merchandise; precisely this is their profession.’<sup>19</sup> Their lack of understanding of how the Greeks organised themselves is evident. In turn, the Greeks rejected a solidarity that the host community expected of them, albeit it was never part of their rights and obligations. The nature of the Greek ‘compagnie’ in Sibiu also becomes apparent from this exchange: it was merely a guild, entirely different from the actual trading companies that were emerging in the same period elsewhere in Europe.<sup>20</sup>

The documents that reveal the events in the wake of the Greek Kozma’s death in Sibiu at the end of the seventeenth century touch upon the juridical situation of foreign merchants in Transylvania while exposing the dichotomy between the norm and the financial and commercial realities of business and money making. The Kozma Kis case was a legal novelty that revealed the ambiguity of legislation for contemporaries, as juridical authority over the local Greeks proved to be a concern of the Sibiu town fathers in 1694. However, many aspects of the lives of the Transylvanian Greeks cannot be thoroughly discerned and elude the gaze of the historian.

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*Europeans and their Travelling Identities (17<sup>th</sup> –19<sup>th</sup> C.)* ed. Olga Katsiardi-Hering and Maria A. Stassinopol (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 26–7.

<sup>18</sup> NAS, Medieval Documents, U VI 2402.

<sup>19</sup> *Hermannstadt und Siebenbürgen*, DVD, vol. 13, 239.

<sup>20</sup> Guillaume Calafat, “Familie, réseaux et confiance dans l’économie de l’époque moderne,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 66, no. 2 (2011): 517, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-Annales-2011-2-page-513.htm> (accessed 30 July 2018).

Who was Kozma Kis? His names in Transylvanian documents are as diverse as his enterprises: while the inquest of 1694 and his fellow Greek merchants identify him as ‘Kis’, the first mention of his death comes from the decisions of the Transylvanian Diet from the spring of 1694. Here he is named as ‘Kozma Buczi’, and this identification opens up even more connections and information on his trading activity than previously thought. A batch of twenty-one bills of debts and loan contracts (*Schuldschein, chyrographum*) from the 1670s and 1680s of a ‘Kozma Boczi’, found in the archives of Sibiu, can therefore be attributed to him, extending our knowledge of the temporal and geographical scope of his trading activities.<sup>21</sup> However, in the Greek lines on German or Hungarian bills of credit, he wrote his own name as ‘Kosta, son of the late Poulou’ and ‘Kosta Potsis’, as in fig. 1.<sup>22</sup> The accounts of Princess Anna Bornemisza, wife of Prince Michael I Apafi (1661-1690) of Transylvania, show the close contacts that Kozma Buczi, as he is named by the princess, had with the princely household. From the same account books it is clear that Kozma Kis was the head of the Sibiu Greek company in 1689, a fact which reinforces his status and his connection with the Transylvanian political elites.<sup>23</sup>

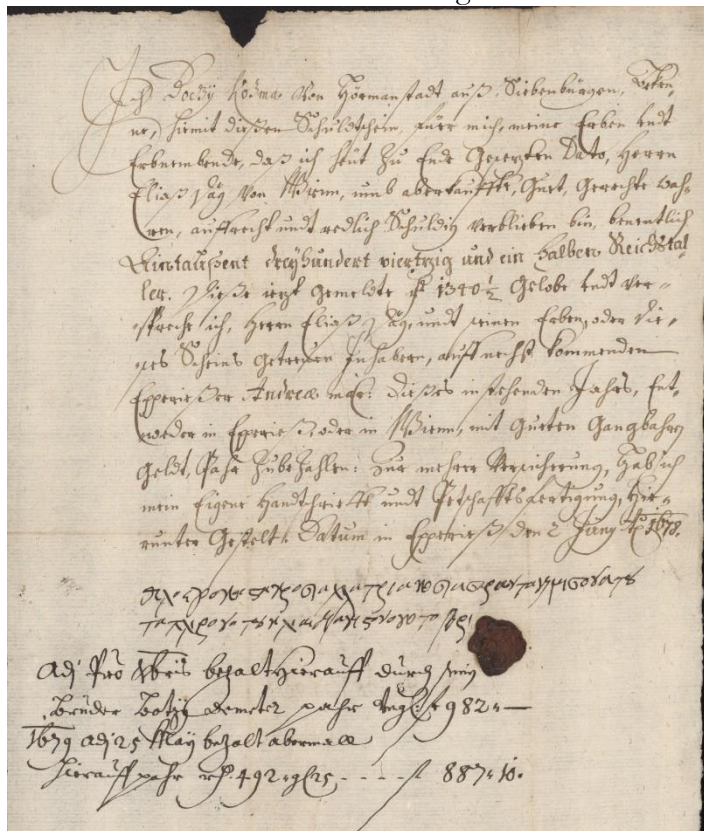


Fig. 1: Letter of debt signed by Kozma/Kosta in 1678.  
 Source: NAS, Medieval Documents U V 180.  
 Courtesy of the National Archives of Romania, Sibiu.

Kozma/Kosta,  
 Boczi/Buczi/Potsis or Kis:  
 his complex onomastics  
 match the complexity of this  
 merchant’s social relationships and commercial operations.

<sup>21</sup> NAS, Medieval Documents, U V 1800–1821.

<sup>22</sup> NAS, Medieval Documents, U V 1806 and U V 1808. My gratitude goes to my colleague Dr. Lidia Cotovanu for transcribing and translating the ‘Greek’ and for stimulating discussions on Greeks and their identities.

<sup>23</sup> Béla Szádeczky ed., *Bornemisza Anna gazdasági naplói (1667-1690)* [The financial accounts of Anna Bornemisza] (Budapest: 1911), 603, 619.



Kozma's was one of the earliest traceable merchant networks in our region. Similarly to his fellow merchants, Kozma Kis (I shall use this name for the sake of continuity with the first part of the study) was engaged in a variety of commercial undertakings: he imported oriental products from the Ottoman Empire into Transylvania; he had a shop in Sibiu; and he acted as purchasing agent for Transylvanian business partners. However, more than his other fellow merchants, he had business ties in many East-Central European towns, borrowing money and selling his and his commercial partners' merchandise at various fairs.

Kozma Kis's first appearance in the Transylvanian documents is in the 1672 customs accounts from Turnu Roşu, the entry point into Transylvania closest to Sibiu. He was recorded there, under both names of Kis and Boczi, until 1691 (see table 1). His place of departure or town of origin was never mentioned; based on his business connections I can infer that he probably came from the town of Târnovo, a hub of the trading routes in the Balkan Peninsula.<sup>24</sup>

From one of the bills of debt we learn that his brother's name was Demeter; a Demeter Boczi is recorded in the customs registers between 1683 and 1686. He might be identical with Demeter of Târnovo from the years 1690–1692. The customs accounts of Turnu Roşu reveal that Kozma travelled to the Ottoman Empire regularly, as many of his fellow Greek merchants did at the time, having their families and homes there.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the exceptional archive of Kozma's business letters shows that he had good connections and also travelled personally to markets in Central and East-Central Europe: Vienna, Nuremberg, Prešov, Wrocław, Jaroslav. Between 1673 and 1682, there is a gap in the series of Transylvanian customs accounts; thus, any travel Kozma might have undertaken to the south of the Danube and back cannot be traced. However, the bills of debt and his commercial correspondence indicate that between 1675 and 1680 Kozma was busy borrowing money, placing orders for merchandise (e.g. knives in Nuremberg in 1679)<sup>26</sup> and taking orders from his customers in East-Central Europe. He worked through agents, such as a certain 'Mr. Smetan' who represented him in Nuremberg, but he also travelled himself to these places. In 1675, Kozma spent eight months in Vienna, between

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<sup>24</sup> It is unclear which of the many places named Târnovo in the Balkans is the actual place of departure of the Transylvanian Greek merchants. The most convincing research identifies it with Veliko Târnovo, nowadays in Bulgaria, where a large community of merchants lived, as well as in the neighbouring town of Arbanassi (Arvanitohori). Lidia Cotovanu, "L'émigration sud-danubienne vers la Valachie et la Moldavie et sa géographie (XVe–XVIIe siècles): la potentialité heuristique d'un sujet peu connu," *Cahiers balkaniques* 42 (2014): 3.

<sup>25</sup> Cicanci, *Companiile*, 47, stating that generally Greeks spent half a year in Transylvania and half in their homelands. The Greeks who settled in towns in Hungary in the second part of the seventeenth century were similarly moving back and forth to their homes: Márta Búr, "Handelsgesellschaften – organisationen der Kaufleute der Balkanländer in Ungarn im 17.–18. Jh.," *Balkan Studies* 25, no. 2 (1984): 289–291.

<sup>26</sup> NAS, Medieval Documents, U V 1814.

January 24 and September 7: the dates of his departure from Transylvania and return are recorded in the accounts of count Mihály Teleki, councillor to the Transylvanian prince.<sup>27</sup> In the following year, Prince Michael I Apafi sent Kozma and a certain István Markó, whom he named ‘our Greek merchants from our realm’ (*birodalmunkbéli kereskedő görögink*), to buy goods for him in Vienna.<sup>28</sup> I cannot say precisely whether the two traders were in fact business partners or just running errands for the prince.

Signed and sealed letters of credit in Prešov and Wroclaw document Kozma’s presence in these towns in 1679. Furthermore, this is what a snubbed partner and relation (?), Jakab Vásárhelyi, wrote from Mukachevo, on 13 January 1680:

Happy New Year! I hear about your passing through Mukachevo, and I am surprised that you didn’t as much as send word to your old benefactor, now fallen into misery [...] I do not hold it against you. I would have given you some golden this and that, but it will be for another occasion. You should bring me some silk [...]<sup>29</sup>

Kozma was not alone in his ventures. His brother, Demeter Boczi, paid off some of his debts in Vienna in 1678; three year earlier, in Eperjes, a Marcus Demeter, possibly the same brother, signed a letter of credit together with Kozma for eight sacks of pepper, to the amount of 180 florins and 48 pence to be paid at a later time.<sup>30</sup> A letter of credit, undated but presumably signed before 1681, when the debt was settled,<sup>31</sup> shows that Kozma became involved with the Wiener Orientalische Kompagnie, the trading company set up in Vienna to compete with the Greeks in the lucrative trade with the Ottoman Empire.<sup>32</sup> Overtures had already been made from Vienna to the Transylvanian prince and magnates for obtaining freedom to trade in Transylvania. In 1672, the Diet issued a decision to this end, setting the requirement that the Orientalische Kompagnie sell the same Turkish goods as the Greeks.<sup>33</sup> There were even plans to banish the Greeks from the country, but the new war between the Habsburgs and the Turks in 1683 as well as the efforts of the Transylvanian Greeks to keep some of the nobility on their side thwarted

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<sup>27</sup> *Teleki Mihály udvartartási naplója (1673-1681)* [The household account book of Mihály Teleki, 1673-1681], ed. János Fehér (Cluj-Napoca: Entz Géza Múvelődéstörténeti Alapítvány, 2007), 170, 208.

<sup>28</sup> NAS, Medieval Documents, U V 1801.

<sup>29</sup> NAS, Medieval Documents, U V 1815.

<sup>30</sup> NAS, Medieval Documents, U V 1803.

<sup>31</sup> NAS, Medieval Documents, U V 1805.

<sup>32</sup> Herbert Hassinger, “Die erste Wiener Orientalische Handelskompagnie, 1667–1683,” *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 35 (1942): 14–18.

<sup>33</sup> EOE, XV, 314.

this initiative.<sup>34</sup> Kozma seems to have been involved with figures of power and influence all across Central Europe!

The last record of a trip to the Ottoman Empire, according to the customs accounts, dates from 1691, when Kozma returned to Transylvania with large amounts of *aba* (heavy woollen cloth) (see table 1).

It is not certain when Kozma Kis died, but it was probably in early 1694; the large debts and unsolved business he left behind started a rush of his former partners and investors to recover their money. Among these investors was Baron István Apor, and his pressure at the highest level of political command in Transylvania set in motion the wheels of the legal system to settle the accounts and Kozma's legacy. In 1694, Apor was administering on lease the customs of Transylvania, the salt and gold mines, and also the tax owed by the Greeks to the treasury.<sup>35</sup> István Apor had also loaned money to Kozma, so he pushed for a quick and favourable solution to the issue of Kozma's creditors. Thus, the article of the resolution reached by the Transylvanian Diet in April 1694 mandated that Apor and a few other delegates go to Sibiu on 10 May 1694 and make a record of Kozma's affairs:

X. About the debts of Kozma Buczi. Because the merchant named Kozma Buczi, of the Greek company, has died and there are many honest people who make a claim for their loans [...] The Greeks are obliged to exonerate themselves from the suspicion of hiding Kozma Buczi's goods, otherwise they should be responsible for paying off all the creditors.<sup>36</sup>

Correspondingly, the governor of Transylvania ordered the judges of Sibiu to start official inquiries. This created the expected agitation and confusion with the city council, witnessed by the entries in the town protocols. Suddenly, the issue of the Greek merchants and their company based in Sibiu revealed all the unpleasantness that the town had faced because of them. Despite their privileges and the business they provided for the town, with renting shops and providing the much sought-after oriental products, the Greeks had remained a thorn in the side of the Sibiu officials. The Greek company had a principal who acted as a judge for the non-affiliated Greeks, but any case involving a Greek and a local was tried by the Transylvanian, local or central authorities. The Sibiu judges nevertheless hesitated: they wanted to claim their jurisdiction over the inquest without upsetting the governor of Transylvania.<sup>37</sup> The suspicion of stolen goods was not

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<sup>34</sup> Hassinger, "Die erste," 52; EOE, XV, 317–318.

<sup>35</sup> Vencel Bíró, *Altörjai gróf Apor István és kora* [Baron István Apor of Turia and his times] (Alba-Iulia: 1935), 25–7.

<sup>36</sup> EOE, vol. XXI (Budapest: 1898), 197–8.

<sup>37</sup> *Hermannstadt und Siebenbürgen. Die Protokolle des Hermannstädter Rates und der Sächsischen Nationsuniversität (1391–1705)*, ed. Käthe Hienz, Thomas Şindilariu, Bernard Heigl, DVD, vol. 13 (Sibiu: Honterus, 2007), 225. See the excellent article on the interplay between jurisdiction over foreign merchants and balance of

unfounded: the first witness in the inquest, a servant of Kozma Kis, gave away the fact that the dying Kozma's shop had been broken into, and cloth had been taken away by locals and Greeks.

After an exchange of letters with governor György Bánffy, the judges of Sibiu carried out the task of resolving the unsettled debts of the late Kozma Kis. Baron István Apor came to Sibiu in person and took matters into his own hand, seizing cloth and goods from Kozma's shop and even placing them under military guardianship. Eventually, all the goods were taken by royal judge of Sibiu into his own custody. All the Greeks present at the time in Sibiu were called to testify, first the assistants and servants of the late Kozma, then sixty merchants with varying degrees of useful information. The main question and the aim of the interrogation was to find associates and partners who could be held reliable to pay off the outstanding debts. The long-term business associate of Kozma was a Nika Mucza, who was in Târnovo at the time and could not travel due to his old age. In his absence from Transylvania, the affairs were run by Nika's son, Kozma Mucza, who was treated as a scapegoat for Kozma Kis's debts and thrown into prison.<sup>38</sup> In table 2, I have compiled the information on Nika Mucza aka Miklos Kis from the customs accounts of Turnu Roşu.

The frequency of Nika's travels back and forth, with Poland as a final destination, is consistent with the description given by the Greek witnesses about him. He settled many of his business accounts and loans at the fair in Jaroslav, and he traded in large amounts of cordovan leather. There are contradictions, too: according to the Greeks, Nika had been stuck for a number of years in the Ottoman Empire due to his issues with the Ottoman authorities and because of old age; therefore, he could not have travelled to Sibiu or Jaroslav in 1692. In fact, it is very likely that merchandise was cleared through the customs in his name by his sons or his business associates; the Greek merchants mention this practice in their testimonies.

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powers: Maria Fusaro, "Politics of Justice/Politics of Trade: Foreign Merchants and the Administration of Justice from the Records of Venice's *Giudici del Forestier*," *Les Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines* online, 126, no. 1 (2014), <http://journals.openedition.org/mefrim/1665> (accessed 30 July 2018).

<sup>38</sup> The testimonies from the inquest of 1694 were instrumental in identifying Nika Mucza, Kozma Boczi's partner, with Miklos Kis, Miklos being the Hungarian for Nicholas (Nika) and Kis being probably a nickname. Because Kozma and Nika share the same nickname, we can infer that they were related spiritually, if not by blood. Furthermore, Nika's 'good son', Kozma Mucza, is identical with the Kozma Thamas from other legal documents in the follow-up to the 1694 turmoil. Nika Mucza's 'bad son' is referred to as Demeter by some Greek witnesses and as Kosztandin by others! The multiple names of the Greeks cannot be attributed exclusively to translation and third parties, such as the scribes and officials; it is a research question that would be worth exploring into more depth.

The dealings between the Greeks were based on written contracts: the witnesses refer to written agreements, most probably letters obligatory. Nika, because of his immobility, relied on his network to make money for him: he had a joint enterprise with Kozma Kis, whereby both put together liquidity and goods, sharing the losses and the cost of the salaries of any other future agents. Nika received an annual interest of roughly 30%, and a periodical reckoning was usual practice. Such partnerships, described often by the Greeks during the inquest, could involve more merchants and could run on a short- or long-term basis. The sums involved were quite impressive, too: Nika and Kozma had a joint capital of 23,000 florins (I am not sure what money of account they were using), with the largest share of the money and goods, 16,000 florins, belonging to Nika. Figure 2 presents the business network of Kozma Kis during his partnership with Nika, which included associates related to him or who were part of his household.

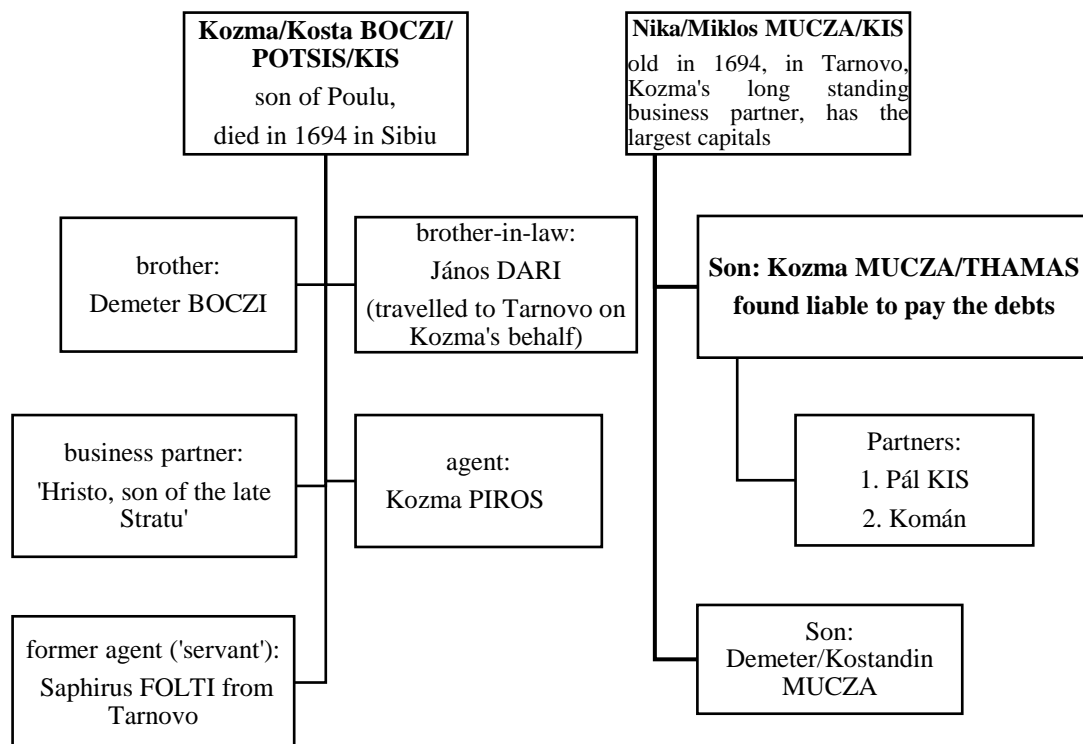


Fig. 2 The 'Greek connection': the personal and business network of Kozma Boczi according to the testimonies of Greek merchants from Sibiu, 1694

Source: National Archives of Sibiu, Acte Fasciculate C 36.

All testimonies pointed to the merchant who would take the fall: Kozma Mucza aka Kozma Thamas, who was even thrown in jail under the instructions of Baron Apor. After deliberations, Kozma Thamas was freed and Boczi's debt was paid off from the dead merchant's estate.<sup>39</sup> The litigations and claims were finally laid to rest in 1696, when the Diet decreed:

Articulus 7-imus. About the satisfaction of the creditors to Kozma Buczi. Many countrymen have suffered losses because of Greek merchants. Among others, the death of Kozma Buczi was such an occasion, because he was in debt to many people, and after his goods were inspected, they did not cover all his debts. According to his ledger, many [of our] countrymen owed him money, too [...]<sup>40</sup>

Considering that the deadlines for putting forward claims for repayment of outstanding debts had passed, the case was thus officially closed.

A fortunate overlapping of sources enables us to have a multifaceted view on the life and activity of a Greek merchant, but it also reveals the shortcomings of our insights. Moreover, I use the word 'network' cautiously and in a restrictive way: there was not a 'Greek' merchant network in South-Eastern Europe, but partnerships and business connections, based on blood and spiritual relations, to which a number of servants and agents were attached. Diasporas or networks? These are all-encompassing notions that are composed of a variety of connections, personal or commercial, that break and reconfigure constantly.<sup>41</sup> I am not convinced by the notion of one Greek network or diaspora in South-Eastern Europe however mobile and dynamic we might imagine it.<sup>42</sup> The connection between Kozma and Nika shows that the two merchants had an enduring association, but they ran separate business partnerships as well, suggesting that overlying circles and groups of interests could capture better the essence of interactions and cooperation between these Balkan merchants. Their activity spanned a wide territory, from the Ottoman Balkans to Nuremberg and Jaroslav, the merchants covering in person distances of 800–1,000 km (such as from Târnovo to Jaroslav or from Sibiu to Nuremberg). Kozma seems to have been one of the more ambitious Greek merchants, who engaged with the local princely court and the high nobility of the realm,<sup>43</sup> but he was also closely involved with the communities of the places where he lived: he sold on credit to wives of guildsmen, to

<sup>39</sup> Cicanci, *Companiile*, 58; *Protocoloalele primăriei*, 181.

<sup>40</sup> EOE, XXI, 248.

<sup>41</sup> Antonio Molho, Diogo Ramado Curto, "Les réseaux marchands à l'époque moderne," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 58, no. 3 (2003): 15; Violeta Barbu, "Les arbanassi: un réseau marchand aux frontières de l'Empire ottoman au début du XVIIe siècle," *Études Balkaniques* XLVI, nos. 1–2 (2010): 221.

<sup>42</sup> do Paço, *L'Orient*, 86.

<sup>43</sup> This was not a novel strategy; cases of grand merchants taking high offices in neighbouring Wallachia and Moldavia did not always end well: Cristian-Nicolae Apetrei, "Marele negustor grec din Moldova (cca 1570–1620). Un profil colectiv din perspectivă braudeliana" [The grand Greek merchant in Moldavia (c. 1570–1620). A collective portrait from a Braudelian perspective] *Revista istorică* XXIII, nos. 1–2 (2012): 65–84.

servants, to sons and daughters of citizens, to priests and their families. Sometimes he did not even know the names of his customers: he wrote in his ledger identifications such as ‘the red-bearded tailor who lives next to the clock-maker’. They each owed him petty sums of money but mostly the price of fabrics and spices bought in retail.<sup>44</sup> Kozma Kis’s case cannot be extrapolated and generalised. We have information on the business network of another Greek merchant based in Sibiu, Siguli Stratu, who was active in the 1690s. From the details of his affairs published by Olga Cicanci, we discover a way of doing business different from Kozma’s. Siguli carried out most of his selling and credit transactions at fairs and in the main urban centres of Transylvania exclusively. He also had good contacts with Armenian merchants established in Transylvania.<sup>45</sup>

Personal and group identities have not been discussed in depth here, as they deserve an investigation of their own. A diverse array of primary sources is required for more definitive conclusions on how individual and shared identities were presented in different settings. The various names of the Greek merchants discussed presents the possibility that many identifications go amiss. The Greek merchants paid taxes in Transylvania, but they were liable for taxes in the Ottoman Empire as well: Nika Mucza had needed money at home in Târnovo to pay his dues to the Ottoman authorities. Their mobility served the Greeks in times of trouble. When Kosma Thamas had to face his creditors, his associates escaped to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>46</sup> Subjecthood in the tributary state of Transylvania is a crucial topic that has escaped closer scholarly scrutiny.<sup>47</sup> Albeit they had obtained the right to reside and trade in Transylvania, Greeks remained subjects of the Ottoman Empire until the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>48</sup> However, evidence suggests that Greeks never articulated or capitalized on this subjecthood in their relationship to central or local authorities in Transylvania. On the contrary, Kozma presented himself as a merchant from Sibiu, from Transylvania (“von Hörmanstadt auß Siebenbürgen) in the loan contract signed by him in Vienna in 1678 (see fig. 1).

Kozma Kis displayed a remarkable mobility across borders, empires and linguistic barriers. His bills of debt from 1675 to 1681 reveal a network of local agents and of monetary loans, of commercial practices and transactions at the main fairs of Central

<sup>44</sup> NAS, Acte Fasciculate C 36, 10r–16v.

<sup>45</sup> Cicanci, *Companiile*, 124–5; Dumitru Limona, *Catalogul documentelor referitoare la viața economică a Țărilor Române în sec. XVII–XVIII* [The catalogue of documents regarding the economic life of the Romanian Principalities in the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries], vol. 1 (Bucharest: Arhivele Statului, 1966), 19–21.

<sup>46</sup> Pakucs-Willcocks, “Als Kaufleute,” 88.

<sup>47</sup> Recent secondary literature approaches this question globally: Teréz Oborni, “Between Vienna and Constantinople: Notes on the Legal Status of the Principality of Transylvania,” in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries*, ed. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 67–88, or Sándor Papp, “The System of Autonomous Muslim and Christian Communities, Churches, and States in the Ottoman Empire,” in *The European Tributary States*, 404–409.

<sup>48</sup> Moga, “Politica,” 161.

Europe. Turning goods into money was indeed the profession of the Greeks. In previous articles I have tried to give an estimate of how many Balkan Greeks were based in Transylvania, in the two companies of Sibiu and Braşov or outside them, and the figures are rather modest. Greeks were elusive and escaped the attempt to count them: in 1678, the Diet ordered a census of the Greeks, which was still pending in 1682.<sup>49</sup> In 1694, there were sixty Greeks summoned by the Sibiu town council to the inquest, a figure consistent with other estimates from that period.<sup>50</sup> All in all, there were around two hundred Greek merchants in Transylvania at the turn of the eighteenth century.<sup>51</sup> Until they settled with their families in Transylvania in the eighteenth century,<sup>52</sup> Balkan 'Greeks' were a migratory group<sup>53</sup> who left their home localities for better economic opportunities but used the gains to support the families they had left behind. I have shown that the Transylvanian Greeks were not a homogenous group, either socially or economically; however, they had arrived there from the same places over the centuries, having established their routes, their supplies and their customer base.

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<sup>49</sup> Demény, "Le régime," 110.

<sup>50</sup> Cicanci, *Companiile*, 65.

<sup>51</sup> Daniel Dumitran, "Comercianţii greci din Transilvania în surse statistice din prima jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea" [Greek merchants in Transylvania in Austrian statistical sources from the first half of the eighteenth century] *Annales Universitatis Apulensis Series Historica* 17, no. 1 (2013): 241.

<sup>52</sup> The edict of 1741 of Maria Theresia made permanent settlement in Sibiu a condition for membership of the Greek company: Cicanci, *Companiile*, 83.

<sup>53</sup> See Leo Lucassen, "Towards a Comparative History of Migration and Membership in Southeast Europe (1500–1900)," *Ethnologia Balkanica* 13 (2009): 17; Holm Sundhaussen, "Southeastern Europe," in *The Encyclopedia of Migration and Minorities in Europe. From the 17<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present*, ed. Klaus J. Bade, Leo Lucassen, Pieter C. Emmer, and Jochen Oltmer (Cambridge NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 169.



## Tables

Table 1: Occurrences of Kozma Boczi/Kis in the customs registers of Turnu Roşu (Sibiu), 1672-1691; Source: National Archives of Sibiu, Customs Accounts, Inventory 197, no. 52, 59, 66, 67.

Recorded name	Date	Merchandise	Value of transport (in gold florins)
Kozma Boczi	1 November 1672	115 <i>littra</i> silk	250 fl. Au
		10 <i>littra</i> silk yarn	
		1 <i>matol</i> turkish thread	
		10 <i>oka</i> cotton yarns	
		20 <i>pc</i> cotton batiste	
		10 <i>pc</i> mohair	
		40 carpets (to Poland)	
		50 kilims (to Poland)	
Kozma Kis	28 March 1683	2 horses	10 fl. Au
	22 October 1683	100 <i>pc</i> aba	80 fl. Au
	6 December 1683	112 horse blankets (to Poland)	40 fl. Au
Kozma Kis	3 April 1684	Venetian merchandise	80 fl. Au
		52 horses sent to Turkey	10 fl. Au
	25 September 1684	100 <i>pc</i> aba (to Poland)	80 fl. Au
Kozma Kis	2 April 1686	210 <i>pc</i> aba	
		9.5 horseloads of tobacco	260 fl. Au
Kozma Kis	25 April 1689	2 horseloads Istanbul merchandise	115 fl. Au
Kozma Kis	27 March 1691	7.5 horseloads aba	230 fl. Au

Table 2: Occurrences of Kozma Boczi/Kis's business partner **Nika Mucza aka Miklos Kis** from Târnovo in the customs registers of Turnu Roşu (Sibiu), 1672-1691;  
Source: National Archives of Sibiu, Customs Accounts, Inventory 197, no. 52, 53, 59, 67.

Recorded name	Date	Merchandise	Value of transport (in gold florins)
Nika of Târnovo	10 April 1672	50 <i>massa</i> wax	400 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	7 July 1672 (to Poland)	870 pc. of cotton textiles	800 fl. Au
		525 <i>littra</i> silk	
		450 cordovan leather	
		10 pc. Turkish taffeta	
		20 leopard skins	
Miklos Kis	31 July 1672 (to Poland)	380 kilims	408 fl. Au
		70 scarlet carpets	
		180 <i>littra</i> silk	
Miklos Kis	12 Dec. 1672 (to Poland)	700 pc. cotton textiles	508 fl. Au
		700 carmine leather	
		7 pc. satin ( <i>balbatlas</i> )	
Miklos Kis	18 April 1673	400 <i>littra</i> silk	335 fl. Au
		10 kilims	
Miklos Kis	15 June 1673 (to Poland)	160 pc. cotton textiles	125 fl. Au
		60 <i>littra</i> silk	
Miklos Kis	11 July 1673 (to Poland)	1380 pc. cotton textiles	615 fl. Au
		26 pc. silk textiles	
	11 July 1673 (to Transylv.)	103 pc. cotton textiles	
		1 pc. velvet	
Miklos Kis	6 July 1682	1 bale Persian merchandise	275 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	3 Aug. 1682 (to Poland)	2.5 bale carmine leather	270 fl. Au
		1 bale muslin	

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		2 horseloads Edirne merchandise	
Miklos Kis	4 Dec. 1682 (to Poland)	1.5 horseloads cotton yarns	46 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	15 March 1683 (to Poland)	6 horseloads cotton yarns 3 horseloads cordovan 1 horseload Edirne merchandise	315 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	30 April 1683 (to Poland)	2 horseloads silk 1 horseload Bursa merchandise 6 horseloads muslin 2 horseloads cordovan	650 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	12 Aug. 1683 (to Poland)	Lynx furs	50 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	11 April 1684 (to Poland)	2 horseloads cordovan 375 pc. muslin 1 horseload Istanbul merchandise 400 oka cotton yarns	410 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	20 April 1684 (to Poland)	1.5 horseloads Rumeli merchandise 500 oka cotton yarns	100 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	26 June 1684	2 bales mohair 200 oka cotton yarns 4 bales cordovan 4 bales mohair	430 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	4 July 1684	1.5 horseloads Rumeli merchandise 150 oka cotton yarns	115 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	11 July 1684 (to Poland)	2 horseloads cordovan	55 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	12 Aug. 1683 (to Poland)	2 bales carpets 2 horseloads silk 3 horseloads bogasia (twill)	500 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	3 Oct. 1684	2.5 horseloads Rumeli merchandise 150 okka cotton yarns	190 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	19 Oct. 1684 (to Poland)	2 horseloads Edirne merchandise 1 horseload muslin	230 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	30 Nov. 1684	2 horseloads Bursa Merchandise	385 fl. Au

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		1.25 horseloads silk 1 horseload bogasia	
Miklos Kis	10 Jan. 1685	8 horseloads cordovan	275 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	1 May 1685 (to Poland)	3.5 horseloads Edirne merchandise	231 fl. Au
Miklos Kis	22 July 1685 (to Poland)	200 oka cotton yarns 2 horseloads bogasia	150 fl. Au
Miklos Kis (?)	2 March 1692	1.5 horseloads cordovan 1.5 horseloads bogasia	70 fl. Au
Miklos Kis (?)	25 March 1692	2 horseloads Edirne merchandise 1 horseload incense	70 fl. Au