

History of Solomon Ancestors Moldavia, Romania

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Historical Synopsis: When King Carol (Karl Hohenzollern, German Prince) was installed as King of Romania (1860), anti-Semitic laws were quickly decreed that took away the privileges of Jewish immigrants (Sudits) in Moldavia. About 1880, business licenses for "Pubs" were revoked for Jews. Our Solomon ancestors were mostly leasees of Pubs and earned their living as such. Jews faced bankruptcies after loss of those privileges. They could not own land or pubs, could not send their children to public schools, and were burdened with special "Jewish taxes."

By the 1880's, Charelik Salomon immigrated to London and served as a shipping agent among other jobs. He migrated to Bulawayo in 1894 with Oscar Kaufman, who married Charelik's sister. Charelik created the famous C. Salomon Company of wholesale traders in Bulawayo. Later a partnership with Oscar Kaufman was formed. Charelik brought out most of his siblings and many of the Jews from the ancestral village of Negresti, Romania, to work for him in Africa (patron – client relationship). Charelik and Oscar became immensely wealthy, but most Jews including our relatives in Central Africa were extremely poor. Charelik and his siblings were descendants of Dov Ber (Bercu sin Solomon).

Our branch of the Solomon family descended from Schneer Zalman, who we believe was a brother of Dov Ber. He had twelve children with two wives, Dina Gross and Feige (surname unknown). Some of Feige's children, Dina, Max, and AZ (Aaron Zalman) Solomon migrated to Africa and settled in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia. Dina Gross' first son, Ilie Salomon immigrated to Belgian Congo in the 1890's, while his wife, Golda remained with their children in Manchester, England.

Our grandfather, Saul Solomon, (and his family) was the only Solomon that immigrated to America. Saul was a Cantor and owned his own dry goods business in the town of Pungesti, Romania. He was not interested in the African business world. His two son's, Aaron (Harry) and Rudolph (Rachmeil), were sent to New York in 1907 in order to earn the money to bring the rest of the family to America. Saul and Sophie Solomon, Claire, Jeanette, and our mother, Betty (Rebecca), moved to Manchester, England, in 1913. After WWI, Rudolph brought them to New York in 1923.

Jack Solomon, the oldest son of Saul and Sophie Solomon, married Feige (Fanny) Milegson in Galatz (Galati), Romania, and remained until their

deaths. Only Shelika survived (including the Holocaust). She married Herman Sapusnik in Galati and immigrated to Israel in 1960. Shelika expired in 2004 at 94 years of age.

Geopolitical History of the Solomon Ancestors: The given name, Great Ancestor Zeilic, is hypothetical. We have not located any document with his name. However, that fictitious person's name was created to enable us to link the names of our other ancestors on this database. We used patronymic naming customs and assumed that the person, Great Ancestor Zeilic or someone with a similar name, did exist and he was the father of both Leiba sin Zeilic and Strule or Strule sin Zeilic.

We do not know if Great Ancestor Zeilic immigrated to Moldavia with his family. Only the children's names were located in the earliest 1820 Census record of Vaslui County. Five individuals were listed. There was only one additional census taken in Moldavia in 1772-1774 by the Russian Occupation Authority, who administered Romania at that time. Unfortunately, there was no Jewish census taken by the Russians. Most likely, the Solomon ancestors arrived in Moldavia after 1800. They were all Jewish leaseholders under Russian Protection: Pascal Jidovul (Pascal the Jew), Meier Jidovul, Lazor Jidovul, Leiba Jidovul, and Bercu Jidovul. Leaseholders held leases for businesses that were allowed to sell alcohol (Pubs). Jews were forbidden by law from owning the business. The wealthy noble families or Boyers owned the businesses, but leased the management of them to Jews. Therefore, the sale of alcohol by Jews was a great benefit to the nobility in Romania because the noble families made a lot of money from the sales of the alcohol, but at the same time, it was the Jews who were criticized for providing alcohol to the peasants. Jews had the "rights of propination," as it was called. The sale of alcohol was possibly the most frequent business for Jews in both Moldavia and Transylvania, a fact that was published by our colleague, Professor, Dr. Ladislau Gyémánt, in his recent book, *The Jews of Transylvania in the Age of Emancipation, 1790-1867*, Editura Enciclopedica, Bucuresti, 2000. Dr. Gyémánt created several tables of data, which summarized the distribution of occupations and crafts in Transylvania, 1819-1845. The socio-professional structure in 1819 consisted of 9 leaseholders, 9 publicans, and 64 brandy distillers, which totaled 82 businessmen (60.3 percent) of the 136 within the entire Jewish community of Transylvania. Because the Jewish communities were successful, their populations increased remarkable over the next century. That was a result of both the increased number of children from those families, and the increased numbers of immigrants, who migrated to Moldavia.

In the time period of 1835-1845, there were 759 merchants and craftsmen

in Transylvania. However, among them were 9 leaseholders, 9 brewers, 34 publicans, and 1 brandy distiller, totaling 53 individuals (14.3 percent) out of the 759, whose occupations dealt with sales of alcohol. At the same time, there were 447 salt-mine clerks, 70 glass blowers, and 57 blanket makers, among the Jews.

By 1848, the number of merchants and craftsmen increased even more dramatically. In the two counties of Crasna and Solnocul de Mijloc alone, 656 Jews were employed. That included 59 leaseholders, 157 publicans, and 119 brandy distillers, which totaled 335 individuals or 50.1 percent of the Jews employed in sales of alcohol.

In the 19th century, most of the Jews in Moldavia were immigrants, but only about twenty percent of them were privileged Sudits. Estimates of the Jewish population of all provinces in Romania in 1803 were about 30,000. By mid-century there were about 135,000 Jews. By the end of the 1800's, there were 267,000 Jews.

The evidence from our research of patronymic names linked Leiba Jidovul (Leiba the Jew) and Bercu Jidovul (Bercu the Jew), of the five individuals listed, as our "Solomon" ancestors. However, the Solomon surname was not used until forty years later in 1865.

Only one additional earlier Census was made in Moldavia in 1774-1774. According to Dr. Ladislau Gyémánt, Professor of European History at the Faculty of European Studies of the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, in an e-mail letter dated 17 June 2002 to Robert Sherins in Pacific Palisades, California, he stated, "As concerns previous Census records, I will look for them but for the 18th century [there] is little hope, because the first Census was performed only in 1778 by the Russian occupational authorities during a Russian-Turkish war and it was preserved only at the level of [the major and larger] counties and larger cities."

Our Solomon family ancestors had Russian origins in the 18th century. Possibly, as with our Goldenberg and Rottenberg families, they might have migrated from Russia to Brody, Galicia, where they became Austrian subjects before they immigrated to Moldavia. Perhaps the answer to that very interesting question about our ethnic origins will be discovered in our future research.

There have been published accounts of the history of the Jewish immigrants in Moldavia, which have direct bearing upon our Solomon and Goldenberg family history:

1. Paul Pascal, The Sudits and Other Jewish Discoveries, ROM-SIG NEWS,

Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 1996, pages 26-35.

2. Stela Maries, The Sudits of Romania: Invited and Privileged Guest? ROM-SIG NEWS, Vol. 4, No. 3, Spring 1996, pages 3-9.

3. Stela Maries, The Sudits of Romania: Invited and Privileged Guests? ROM-SIG NEWS, Vol. 4, No. 4, Spring 1996, pages 5-9.

4. Silvin Sanie, *Studia et Acta Historiae Iudeorum Romaniae*, Published by the Goldstein-Goren Centre for the History of the Jews in Romania, Diaspora Research Institute, School of Jewish Studies, Tel Aviv University, Ramat Aviv, Israel, Volume I [mail to the attention of: Professor Mina Rozen]. This latter article is expected to be republished in English.

The archival records from Moldavia in the 19th century have special significance in our genealogical research because the information contained in those records held many historical clues about the immigration of Jews to Moldavia. Particularly, Jews were grouped separately from the general census and their archives were bound separately from the general census of Orthodox Christians.

Romania was very late in adopting the use of hereditary surnames. In fact, as late as 1940, there were still some children, who had no surnames until they entered public schools, at which time the surname was required.

In the earliest census records of 1820, a few immigrants had hereditary surnames, but they were usually Austrian subjects whose families acquired those surnames in Austria prior to their immigration to Moldavia. Austrian subjects were more likely to have surnames than the Russian immigrants. Importantly, the surnames were not always "hereditary." On occasion, surnames had been adopted as a convenience to fulfill a legal requirement and may have had no hereditary implications. Therefore, caution must be exercised in genealogical research when assuming ancestral linkage between certain individuals. We have attempted to obtain as many clues about ancestral linkage as possible before we created our family tree.

Census records were taken in Moldavia as early as 1772-1774 by Russian Occupations Forces during the Russian-Turkish war and next by the Ottoman Turks in 1803, 1808, 1820, and 1824 for all of Moldavia. They were called *Catagrafia*, which meant economic census. However, the records were used as a political census, not as an economic instrument. Those census documents were directed towards specific groups. Hence, the first of those records was a Census of the Jewish Sudits in Moldavia in 1820.

In 1821, there was an uprising of the Greek Orthodox Christian community in Iasi against the Muslim Ottoman Turkish overlords. The Ottoman Sultan

suspected that the rioters had obtained false papers to enter Moldavia. Sultan Mahmood II ordered the first census in 1824 of all Sudits, and created a special census of Jewish Sudits in the process. Fortunately, that was the specific document required for our genealogical research.

The Romanian word Sudit, which we know to mean privileged immigrant, was created from the original Latin, *subbo subter*, to put together, and the Italian word, *suddito*, subject of a foreign power. Sudits were foreign guest workers, who were invited to Romania by the Ottomans, Romanian nobility (Boyers), and Orthodox Church, in order to promote import-export business with Europe, create a skilled professional and artisan community, and to populate remote agricultural lands. Sudits became the most successful, prestigious, and influential inhabitants of Romania in the 19th century. In the first half of the 19th century alone, there were sixty new communities established by Sudits.

Furthermore, Sudits gained the legal protection from their country of origin. Rarely could native Jews in Romania obtain such status, which was extraordinarily important because of the economical advantages granted to Sudits. However, native Jews and non-Jews did at times succeed in being granted Sudit status. Occasionally, even noble families attained Sudit status after making exhaustive attempts to petition the Muslim Sultan overlord.

Census information was recorded in the Orthodox Slavonic Cyrillic alphabet rather than the official Persian Turkish script of the Ottoman Empire. The census was called a *Catagraphia*. It was very well indexed in alphabetized Latin letters. The search for data from census records required knowledge of the Romanian language in Latin letters to locate information in the index, while the Romanian text of the *Catagraphia* was handwritten in Cyrillic.

After the defeats in the two Russian-Turkish wars, Western European powers altered Ottoman power by the Capitulation Treaties. Austria, England, France, Prussia, and Russia made demands upon Romania. Austria was the most successful and maintained a prolonged political pressure upon the Ottomans for "most favorable regulations." Foreign governmental interest in the regulations was probably due to the overt Austrian interest in expanding trade with the Austro-Hungarian Empire in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, and covert interest in future annexation of Romania. Austrian Sudits were definite benefactors of the disproportionate rules governing Romanian immigration, business regulation, and favorable taxation or exemption from taxation.

Despite the multitudes of complex regulations, there was a difference between de jure and de facto Sudit status for Jews in Moldavia. The census of 1824 listed Jewish Sudits, who owned or leased fixed assets, i.e. mills, properties, orchards, and vineyards, despite laws that prohibited such entitlements.

A thorough analysis and research of the Sudits' businesses and crafts in Moldavia was compiled by Dr. Ladislau Gyémánt, Professor of European History at the Faculty of European Studies of the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. He discovered that in 1838 there was a total of 79,164 Jews in Moldavia, of whom 1 in 7 (14.7 percent) were Sudits. By 1845, there were 4,624 Jewish families or 31 percent, who were Sudits. Of them 5,350 were merchants, 4,898 were craftsmen, and 1,427 were other occupations and businesses.

The first foreign consulates to be established in Moldavia were in the late 18th century: Russia in 1871, Austria in 1782, Prussia in 1786, France in 1796, and England in 1803. Sudits were under the protection of foreign governments from where they originated. Special civil rights were established, which included the inviolability of a person's residence, guarantee of personal liberty, protection of private property, freedom of religious practice, and freedom of conscience. Such guarantees offered enormous opportunities for Eastern and Western European immigrants, who began to immigrate to Moldavia in increasing numbers.

Furthermore, subjects of foreign powers could not be arrested or fined without prior notification of the individual's consulate. Litigation required the presence of a qualified professional translator for the defendant's benefit. Sudits were absolved of most taxes, except they were obligated to pay their consulate a Sudit Tax for their special privileges. The French Consul called them *Sujet Étranger*. Sudit status became so important that even the landed gentry, Boyers, from the upper classes sought the protection of a foreign consulate. Well-established native artisans and merchants also sought Sudit status in order to gain economic equality. The Austrian term was *Schutzgenossen* and the Romanians referred to those privileged individuals as *Atirnat*, which meant clinging to foreign protection. However, the local villagers called the Sudits *Tartani*, which was taken from the German word, *Untertan* or subject of a sovereign.

Overall, the Sudit status conferred enormous opportunities for the new immigrants. Austrian Sudits were the most numerous and profited the most. It certainly was a fortunate opportunity for Jewish merchants and craftsmen in the late 18th century. For Jewish bankers, in particular, the Sudit status conferred a guarantee of bank loans by the very foreign

governments, which protected the individual bankers. In the case of Austrian subject, the loans were guaranteed by the Hapsburg dynasty of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The economic benefits to the Sudits were also the cause of grave consequences for the native Jews and Christian Romanians. Those negative economic and social repercussions to Romanians in the 1850's may have served the covert desires of the Austrian Empire to eventually try to annex Romania. However, it was not a priority to France or Russia.

Immigrants, who were protected under the Sudit laws consisted of both Christians and non-Christians from Austria, Armenia, Bulgaria, France, Greece, Hungary, Poland, and Russia. The laws distinguished between Christians and Orthodox Christians, as well as non-Christians, such as the Jews and Muslims. The Austrian immigrants held the greatest advantages, and may well have been a major reason why our Solomon, Goldenberg, and Rottenberg families migrated to Moldavia beginning in the late 18th century.

Although Sudits were exempt from personal taxes, they were subjected to import-export customs taxes. Initially the taxes were levied at the rate of 3 percent ad valorem (wholesale value). However, after 1850 the rate increased to 5 percent, and after 1866 the rate became 7.5 percent. When the customs taxes were raised, the Austrian government exerted enormous political pressure upon the Ottomans and succeeded in maintaining the tax rate at 3 percent for Austrian Sudits.

When the Russian Organic Laws were decreed in 1831, special license taxes for merchants and artisans were applied. Sudits were exempted from those taxes. In 1852-1853, a special census for Business Licenses was taken in Moldavia. Many of our Solomon family ancestors were identified in that special census in Negresti and Pungesti.

Eventually, the differential taxes placed upon the Jewish communities of Moldavia between the Sudits and non-Sudits created a disparity of economic opportunities. Jews were organized under a form of the Administrative Kahal System, in which the Jewish communities themselves elected representatives that governed the methods and allocations of their own taxes and local apportionment of funds. These funds were critical in caring for the poorer Jews and synagogues.

Sudits were required to pay the special taxes, known as Gabela or Crupca that the native Jews paid. It was part of a collective solidarity system of community governance. At the time of the Russo-Turkish war in

1787-1792, special Jewish taxes were assessed on the communities and were applied to Sudits and native Jews equally. A tax was imposed for the kosher slaughtering of meats. In 1776, the tax of 7 parale per oca (about 3 pounds) was assessed on the slaughter of beef, 4 parale for geese or turkeys, and 2 parale for chickens or ducks. In 1796, by a charter of the Prince, a tax of 16 pungii (bags) or 8000 piasters annually was mandated. Taxes were determined by Representatives, who were selected from the synagogues through a method of an auction held before local authorities and the Jewish Representatives. Those taxes paid for the services of the rabbis, hospital maintenance, and philanthropies. On the whole, those special Jewish taxes served as the best method of assessing taxes on the entire Jewish community. Jewish Sudits contested those taxes, despite their obvious economic privileges.

As mentioned, the first consuls installed in Romania in 1780-1800 were Austrian and Russian. The offices were established in Iasi and Bucharesti. Regarding judicial privileges in Moldavia, Sudits were granted rights of appeal directly to the Prince, if a Sudit disagreed with the decisions rendered by civil courts. After the establishment of the Organic Laws in 1831, judicial decisions were rendered by ordinary tribunals for civil and commercial cases. Courts of Appeal were called Divanul de Tara de Sus and Divanul de Tara de Jos (taken from the Organic Laws of Moldavia, Article 320). After 1831, the highest Romanian Judicial Court was the Court of the Prince (Article 280 of the Organic Laws). In 1827, a disastrous fire engulfed Iasi. Over 50 percent of the court documents were destroyed. However, the documents of the Russian occupation of 1806-1812 were unharmed and have survived.

Ottoman Court Edicts from 1792-1824 have also survived. Important decisions from those Edicts can be summarized. Foreign subjects were forbidden from owning any fixed assets or leasing land in Moldavia. However, Jewish Sudits owned both urban and rural properties by the end of the 18th century. In many cases, they also engaged in retail trades and professions that were technically restricted by local laws to native Romanians.

Special rules governed religious rights between Christians and non-Christians, and Orthodox versus non-Orthodox Christians. Jews and Armenians were categorically forbidden to buy or own rural properties in Moldavia, which was considered to be a political right of native Romanians. However, Jews could buy houses or shops in towns and cities. Armenians were allowed to own vineyards. Jews were allowed to practice commerce, but were forbidden to own or buy land, fixed assets or lease land.

Jewish Sudits in Iasi did not have to pay taxes on their businesses, provide labor conscriptions to the community, nor quarter military personnel. The advantages for the Sudits were enormous. Therefore, the non-Sudit Jews fought the Sudits' claims for tax exemption. Money was required to care for the poor and other philanthropies. Native subjects were being exploited. By 1820-1850, Jewish Sudits agreed to pay an equal share of the tax burden in support of the administration of the Jewish communities. The Kahal-Hahambusha Administrative System was essential for the governance of the Jewish communities. Under that system, the Hachambasi, a functionary, who was appointed by the Ottoman Sultan in Bucharesti, Wallachia, presided over the Jewish taxation of all Jewish communities in Romania. However, Sudits still retained advantages. The authority of the Hahambusha was always a Sudit. He was known as the Staroste. Apparently, it was the rabbis, who convinced the Sudits that they should, love thy neighbors and offer a helping hand to needy brothers.

In 1832, the Administrative System of the Hamhambusha disappeared and was replaced by licenses, Patentei, on businesses and artisans, who engaged in retail trades rather than the exempted wholesale trades. Those licenses were known as Amanuntul. In 1845, a new Head Tax of 60 lei was levied upon the Jews in Iasi, but only 45 lei in smaller towns and villages. By 1856, and after the signing of the Treaty of Paris, taxes were levied equally upon the Sudits and native Jews.

Leiba sin Zeilic (1743 -)

Leiba the tailor was listed, (individual) # 62, as an old man on the 1845 Census of Negresti. Leiba the tailor was also listed on the 1831 Census of Negresti and was probably the same individual. Similarly, we believe that he was the same individual, **Leiba Jidovul**, Leiba the Jew, who was listed on the 1820 Census of Negresti. It was stated that Leiba Jidovul was an inhabitant from Vaslui County from 1820. Possibly he lived there much longer. The Census stated that he lived in the **Circle Fundului de Jos from 1820**. At that time in Romania the word "**Circle**" was a geographic term, which denoted a cluster of local villages that were within a prescribed area. Several **Circles** were contained within a County. It was not a term that denoted the "Jewish area" within a village. Most importantly, he was one of the five leaseholders listed in the census, which probably meant that he had a leasehold for the "rights of propination" or sale of alcohol. All five of the Jewish leaseholders were "...under Russian Protection." Therefore, they were "Sudits" or privileged merchants. Unfortunately, there was no indication of the place from which Leiba or his ancestors may have originated before they immigrated to Moldavia.

Solomon sin Zeilic (1785 – 1860)

Zeilic Leiba's son, Solomon Zailic (aka Solomon sin Zeilic), was listed on the Vaslui Business License Census of 1852-1853. Solomon sin Zeilic lived in Negresti, Romania, near Pungesti and he had many pub leaseholds: in the villages of Buhaiestii de Sus and Buhaiestii de Mijloc, which had only 71 inhabitants; and leases in the isolated pub in the village of Bahlesti, which began on January 4th [1852]. He was not listed on the 1860 Census, which might indicate that he was either deceased or no longer in business. Shortly after the 1860 Census was taken, our family began using legal surnames, which appeared in all metrical records of birth, death, and marriage documents. To the best of our knowledge, Solomon sin Zeilic was the individual from whom our SOLOMON legal surname originated.

Shneer Zalman Solomon (1838 – 1910)

Zalman is Yiddish for the Hebrew name Solomon. Both names have several variations in spelling. Romanian records as early as 1868 showed SOLOMON as the legal surname. In the 1860 Census of Pungesti, an individual named Solomon sin Iancu was listed in House # 162 with his presumed father, Iancu sin Abram. We do not know if Solomon sin Iancu was the same individual as our great grandfather, Schneer Zalman SOLOMON.

The Vaslui Business License Census of 1852-1853 listed his occupation as a pub leaseholder in Tufesti, which was a small village located nearby Pungesti. Schneer Zalman's granddaughter, Jeanette Solomon Schweid (daughter of Saul SOLOMON), told cousin, Robert Sherins, that Schneer Zalman also owned a flourmill [Doagele, a small village just south from Pungesti] and rented out several other businesses in Pungesti.