

Encyclopedia of the Jewish Communities
From their Foundation until after the WWII Holocaust

ROMANIA

Volume I – Moldavia
(Pages 114 - 117)

Husi

Map Coordinates: 46° 41' North - 28° 04' East

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N.B. Kehillah will be used where reference is to the organized Jewish community. Kehillah is the name given to Jewish communal organizations in Eastern Europe. The role and authority of the Kehillah varied greatly, depending on location and historical period. At times a Kehillah would have quasi-governmental authority over both the Jewish community and its relationship with the Gentile community.

Husi, town-district Falciu in the Moldavia region, 9 kilometers from the river Prut. The railway from Iasi to Galati runs through Husi.

Jewish Population

Year	No.	Percent of Total Population
1831	261	5.2
1839	138 (tax payers)	
1859	2,395	
1894	3,597	
1899	4,057	26.2
1910	4,000	
1930	2,514	14.6

1941	1,972	10.4
1942	2,096	
1947	2,750	

Until the end of WWI

The Beginning of the Jewish Settlement

Husi was founded in the 15th century by Husist monks, members of a Protestant sect, and this is the origin of its name. The first plot for the Jewish settlement belonged to the Cardinal. On the other bank of the river Prut, in Bessarabia, in a village named Leova, there were also Jews, and Husi's Jews formed ties with them even before WWI, when Bessarabia still belonged to Russia.

In 1676 the Moldovian Prince allowed the Cardinal to bring "foreigners" from various countries to his estate, and it was then that the Jews began to settle in the village. The plot allocated for their cemetery was donated by the Cardinal. The oldest tombstones in the Jewish cemetery date from 1747. The "Chevra Kadisha" (the ritual burial association) kept a register from 1775. In 1776 there was already a "Gmilut Hasadim" (a charity organization) in Husi and in 1794 the synagogue was built anew. The Christian neighbors stopped the building with the pretext that the synagogue is too close to Christian institutions, but the Cardinal stood by the Jews, arguing that the synagogue preceded the neighboring houses. The dispute went on until the middle of the 19th century and the Cardinals always defended the Jews.

In 1806 the Cardinal got a permit to bring 40 more "foreigners" from across the border, and the Jewish settlement grew. In 1826 the Cardinal exempted the synagogue from land tenancy payments. In 1860, the district's governor closed one synagogue because of its proximity to a church, but following an appeal by the congregation, the Interior Ministry ordered to open it again.

The Economic Structure

A document from 1769 tells us that Husi's Jews were at that time trading with alcoholic beverages and crude oil and in the weekly fair, they traded with the farmers with grains, butter, honey and leather.

On the economic structure of the Jewish population there are statistics from 1831, and according to it there were in the town one baker, 3 inn owners, 2 gardeners, 11 shoemakers, 35 tailors, one carpenter and 31 money changers.

In 1889 the Jewish traders comprised 70% of all the town's traders and in 1903, 256 of Husi's Jews were house owners.

Notorious were the Jewish physicians of Husi. At the end of the 18th century, a Jewish physician, Josef Doctor, was famous also among the Christians. He died in a plague at the beginning of the 19th century. After him there was another Jewish physician, Jankel Doctor, that even the Boyars turned to. The government sent Christian physicians to Husi, but the Boyars favored Jankel Doctor. He died in 1849 in a Cholera plague. In 1866 the Jewish physician Dr. David Almogen settled in Husi and for some time he was the only physician there. (Born in Galicia in the town Tisment in 1823). He published popular books on Medicine and wrote essays on the Jewish Problem. For 30 years he was the municipality's formal physician and upon his death, in 1897, he was buried in a formal ceremony.

The Organization of the Congregation

An organized congregation was in this place already in 1882, with a Rabbi and 4 ritual slaughterers. Its income came from the meat tax and the ritual bathhouse and this income supported the Hospital (founded in 1822). The Organization suffered from the large number of independent synagogues – 7 in number. In 1910, after the congregation managed to reorganize, the “Chevra Kadisha” transferred to them the management of the burials and its income. The Jewish hospital, which was also independent, closed in 1906 and since then the congregation employed a physician, who took care of the sick. The welfare matters were taken care by the Fraternity Society (Fraterna, established in 1895) of the Craftsmen Association, numbering 32 members. In 1908 an organization called “Tomchei Cholim” (the sick supporters) was established, for mutual assistance, with 88 members. In 1915 another organization named Caritas was established, with 84 members.

In the beginning of the 18th century, the rabbinical chair in Husi was given to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Halevi. In the years before WWII the town's Rabbi was Nachum Shmaria Schechter from Darabani. He immigrated to Israel in 1952 and died in Jerusalem in 1967.

The congregation underwent a severe crisis in 1913 because of the dispute between the craftsmen and the others. The authorities intervened and the opponents reached a compromise. A report written in 1915 tells us that 60 of the 800 families in the congregation were devoid of any income and received an allowance from the congregation.

Education

In 1875 the “Bnei Brit” bureau was established and a year later it opened an elementary school for 56 students. But, the school closed because of the ultra religious groups opposition and in 1877 they opened a “Talmud Torah,” where the kids studied only holy subjects. In 1897 an organization called “Cultura” was formed with the goal to open a modern school and indeed, the same year such a school was opened to 246 students, with the congregation's support. But, again the orthodox circles undermined it and this school also became a “Talmud Torah.”

In 1898 a Zionist branch of “Bnei Zion” was established, followed in 1901 by another Zionist organization – “Shalom Yerushalaim”.

The Persecution of the Jews

In 1822 Husi's Jews suffered from a blood libel cast on them. In 1884 the municipality forbade the Jews, who lived outside the town's bound, to be occupied in trading.

An anti-Semitic organization named Fratia Romaneasca was formed with the aim to squeeze the Jews out of the commerce affairs. In the days of the farmers revolt (1907), 400 armed farmers stormed into the town to rob the Jewish homes. They encountered the army's opposition and in the battle one farmer was killed and several injured. In 1910 the district's governor forbade the Jews to go out of the town without a special permit, which was given only to take the train. This was aimed to prevent the Jewish traders from having any ties with the local farmers. At the same time the governor ordered the gendarmes to arrest any Jew found in the farms and to bring him back into the town.

In 1911, a teacher in the local high school, Ion Zelinski – Cordeanu (from a Polish origin) began his anti-Semitic activity. He was the father of Cornel Cordeanu, who founded the "Iron Guard" after WWI. Under his influence, the students became anti-Semitic and took part in the pogroms. In 1914, in a ball organized for the enlisted soldiers, and Jews were also invited, Ion Zelinski – Cordeanu staged an anti-Semitic play and incitement songs. The bishop Nicodem Munteanu and several priests and teachers left in protest. This bishop invited in 1915 the heads of the Jewish congregation to a ceremony that took place in the cathedral of the town. To the greetings from the congregation's leader, the bishop answered that the church was always tolerant and when clashes started between Jews and Christians it was only because of personal reasons.

Between Two World Wars

In 1919, the congregation was reorganized; in 1932 it got a formal status of a legal entity.

In 1927, a Jewish cooperate bank was established with the help of the "Joint" and in 1928, 400 Jews deposited their money in this bank. The loans given to Jewish craftsmen and to small traders helped them improve their economical situation.

In 1933, quarrels started between the Zionists and the assimilators on who will run the public affairs in the town.

In 1935 a Zionist branch was active in Husi, with 100 members.

At that time the high school increased its anti-Semitic activity in the town. The students were obliged to write essays based on articles published in anti-Semitic newspapers and the school's band played anti-Semitic songs. After the Romanian Jews Union complained about it for four years, the Education Ministry ordered to open an investigation, which resulted in firing the headmaster; but, after a short time he was rehired and the riots continued. In the summer of 1922, students from Iasi were brought in a special train to Husi and rioted there. Many of the Jewish students were expelled and had to take their final exams in other cities. In 1923 the

persecutions started again. The Romanian students broke glass windows of Jewish stores and burnt the Jewish hospital's fence. Their excuse was that a Jewish wedding took place in a movie theatre where a movie on Jesus life was screened. The town became flooded with anti-Semitic pamphlets and inscriptions.

During the Holocaust

Antonescu's term was almost devoid of pogroms because of the town's remoteness. Only after war broke between Romania and Russia (1941), 120 head of families were arrested as suspects in assisting the enemy, since there was a large military camp there, from which the soldiers crossed the river Prut.

Husi was the concentration place for all the expelled Jews from the nearby villages: Raducanaeni, Dranceui and Hoceni. The congregation organized a soup kitchen that fed the poor Jews, the deported ones and also the work regiments that worked around the town. Also clothes were gathered for all the needy. 301 houses, 5 mills, a sawmill, 3 different factories, 1545 hectar of land, 247 hectar of forest land, 172 hectar of vineyards and 5 hectar of fisheries were confiscated from the Jews.

Out of 271 craftsmen, 55 became unemployed, 29 of the 60 clerks were fired from their jobs, 93 out 120 traders and merchants lost their businesses and 4 of 13 of other professions were left without work.

After the war, in the spring of 1944, when the deported returned from Transnistria, 108 orphans arrived at Husi and the congregation took care of them.

Most of the Jews that were expelled from the nearby villages were absorbed in Husi and settled there. In 1944/1945 refugees from northern Bukovina also arrived at Husi and settled there.

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The General Archive of The History of The Jewish People.
RM 195

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