

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2020.055.003](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2020.055.003)

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**THE GREEK REVOLUTION AFTER 200 YEARS. GREEK REFUGEES IN  
TRANSYLVANIA DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF THE GREEK  
REVOLUTION OF 1821.**

**Abstract:**

Immediately after the defeat suffered by the Greek and Romanian revolutionaries, in Dragasani, in June 1821, many of the Greeks who fought for Filiki Eteria and not only, took refuge in Transylvania, to avoid the repression of the Ottoman Empire. The two Hellenistic centres, where these refugees have found shelter and protection, were Sibiu and Brasov. Among the refugees, in addition to students and fighters of the Sacred Band of Filiki Eteria, were also intellectuals, boyar families, two of the founders of the Filiki Eteria, doctors, and high Greek dignitaries from the Romanian Principalities. From Sibiu and Brasov, Greek revolutionaries continued to spread revolutionary enthusiasm and continue their liberation struggle against the Ottoman Empire, using the resources of Greek merchants companies in these cities, which had close ties with the Hellenistic centres in Europe. In response to the large number of refugees arriving in the Austrian Empire, the refugees were placed under the supervision of local authorities who informed their superiors in Vienna.

**Keywords:**

Austrian Empire, Greek merchants, Filiki Eteria; Ottoman Empire, Secret society

**JEL Classification:** N93

## Introduction

The presence of Greek communities in Transylvania is part of the commercial, cultural, spiritual, and political network of the Greeks, which facilitated the connection between Orient and Western Europe, since the Byzantine period. Here were founded in the second half of the seventeenth century, the only two known trading companies in Southeast Europe (Karathanasis, 2003, p. 19), in Brasov and Sibiu. The study of the revolutionary activities and the presence of the Greek secret society known as Filiki Eteria in these two Hellenistic centres in Brasov and Sibiu in 1821, was treated by historians partially, as part of other studies or as a chapter in a broader research. Among the most important and recent works in Romania on the involvement and revolutionary activities of the Greek merchants in Transylvania, we mention the research conducted by Cornelia Papacostea Danielopolu and Athanasios Karathanasis, both using as sources archival documents and manuscripts, mostly from the collection of the Greek Company Brasov and from the collection of Eudoxiu Hurmuzaki documents. For Danielopolu it is the third research on the life of the Greek Company in Brasov, after those published in "Balkan Studies" 14 (1973) 313-325, and in "Revue des Etudes Sud-Est Européennes" 12 (1974) 59-78. In the Romanian literature, the scholars refers to the Revolution of 1821, Wallachian Uprising or the Revolution of Tudor Vladimirescu and deals with the revolutionary activities of Romanians, with some reminders of the implications that the Greeks had through Filiki Eteria, among the most important researches being those of Nicolae Iorga<sup>i</sup> and the works of Nestor Camariano<sup>ii</sup>, and for a better image of the presence of Filiki Eteria in the Romanian Principalities see also (Ciorănescu, 1934), (Mureşianu, 1930), (Sabău, 1939), (Siruni, 1929), (Filitti, 1934), (Farsolas, 1979), (Stroia, 1994). Regarding the researches in Romania that present the events of 1821 through external sources regarding the activity of the Greek fighters or Filiki Eteria, we mention the Turkish ones (Siruni, 1940), (Veliman, 1980), (Veliman, 2003), Italian (Bodin, 1942), Russian (Iancovici, 1961), (Stroia, 1997), (Taftă, 1997), (Stroia, 1998) and Portuguese (Mocanu, 2001). The research of the Greek Revolution of 1821 returns today to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the events that led to the independence of the Greeks, a struggle that influenced other Balkan states too.

## Historical context

The spread of Greek Enlightenment in Europe (Andriakaina, 2013) and the revolutionary movements in America and France inspired and influenced the revolutionary activities of the Greeks in the Balkans. One of the most important messengers of these ideologies was Rigas Feraios (1757-1798), possibly the most important exponent of Balkan radicalism<sup>iii</sup> (Hassiotis, 2010). With extensive experience in the Romanian Principalities where he held important positions<sup>iv</sup>, Rigas Feraios influenced and laid the foundations of what was to happen in 1821, proving his last words before he was hanged: *"I have sown a rich seed; the hour is coming when my country will reap its glorious fruits"*. Through his works, Rigas Feraios promoted the "political equilibrium"<sup>v</sup> and a new imaginary model of modern nations (Samardžić, 2015). In addition to the revolutionary impetus of Rigas Feraios, the Greek Companies in Transylvania received, during the eighteenth century, several concessions<sup>vi</sup>, first offered by Maria Theresa (1775 and 1777) and later a series of privileges offered by Joseph II (1783), to the Greeks Companies from Transylvania. Following the rescript given by Joseph II (July 16, 1783), Greek companies in Transylvania were allowed to co-opt Greek trades and merchants from any part of Turkey<sup>vii</sup>, not just those in Greece or Macedonia. In the same year (August 1783), the Austrian government allowed the Greek Companies in Transylvania to receive as members also those from Wallachia and Moldavia. Following these concessions and privileges, the Greek companies were reorganized in the period 1770-1791 and through the new net formed between merchants to which is added the close connection with other Hellenistic centres in Europe (Vienna, Trieste, Venice, Buda, Leipzig), was provided the environment conducive to the dissemination of revolutionary materials. Also, by intensifying trade<sup>viii</sup>, they were able to finance many of these revolutionary activities. The Greek churches in Sibiu and Brasov together with the Greek schools<sup>ix</sup> in these cities provided the basis for the production of printed materials and the spread of the new ideological current of the Greeks, and between 1800 and 1802, the high number of immigrants in Transylvania meant the necessary human capital to fulfil this ideal.

Brasov, through its geographical position, with access to Wallachia and Moldova, was the main commercial centre for the Greeks in Transylvania, during the Greek Uprising. The importance of this city is also noted in the company's protocol from 1827, where it is noted: *“as it is known, in Transylvania, the only city of Brasov exists for the exercise of Levantine trade, because almost all eastern goods in the Turkish provinces are transported to Brasov”*<sup>x</sup> and in 1830, Brasov became the most important economic and cultural centre in Transylvania (Imreh, 1961).

### **Greek refugees in Brasov during Greek Revolution of 1821**

A fundamental element of the revolutionary struggle was the printing and dissemination of the liberation materials, and in this sense, we find in Brasov in 1813 the publisher Zaharia Carcalechi and the writer Gheorghe Nicolae (Mureşianu, 1932). Carcalechi has printed in Brasov between 1813-1825 "Biblioteca Română". The two also collaborated in printing calendars in Buda, where Gheorghe Nicolae wrote stories inspired by the Napoleonic Wars (Mureşianu, 1932, p. 224). In addition to these two, we also mention Theodor Geanli and Ştefan Cervenvodalis who supported financially G.G. Bredow's book that has been published in 1828. In the beginning year of the revolution, the presence of the Greeks in Brasov increased substantially even before the battle of Dragasani. Thus, we find in 1821 in Brasov, merchants, traders, intellectuals, dignitaries, partisans of Filiki Eteria (Karathanasis, 2003, p. 152) and later fighters of Ypsilanti. Among the Romanian boyars who arrived in Brasov were Nicolae Şuţu, Grigore Brâncoveanu, and Constantin Bellu, with a large staff members. Among them, the opulent life of Nicolae Şuţu attracted the attention of the Brasov inhabitants who were dissatisfied by his attitude<sup>xi</sup>. In addition to the boyars, fighters from the sacred battalion led by Alexandru Ypsilanti, and who had been defeated at Dragasani by the Ottoman troops, also arrived in Brasov. Their presence is surprised in the letter sent by Baron Schustekch to his superior, in which he reported that the young Greek fighters were still wearing the Sacred Band uniform. They sought the financial support of the Brasov comrades to continue spreading the revolutionary desire, as evidenced by a letter of Anastasie Polizoidis from Leizing informing his friend Dudunis in Vienna that Greek students were receiving money and messages from the Greeks of Brasov<sup>xii</sup>. The same Anastasios Polizoidis from Leipzig and Stefan Canellos arrived in Brasov together, with the intention of going to Greece, most likely to fight for the Greek cause, through Trieste<sup>xiii</sup>. Another Greek who arrived in Brasov was Mihail Cochinis, who learned construction techniques here, information that he used to strengthen fortifications and other works in Missolonghi where he had arrived in 1823<sup>xiv</sup>. This large presence of Greek refugees in Brasov attracted the attention of local authorities who asked the Greeks in the Company to declare that they are not registered in any secret society since the actions of Rigas Feraios (Karathanasis, 2003, p.152). The police in Brasov has repeatedly taken action against the Eteria movement (Danielopolu, 1996, p. 197), wanting to prevent aid sent from Transylvania to the revolutionary forces in Wallachia and Moldova, which leads to the borders closure and the adoption of severe measures around Brasov, in March 1821<sup>xv</sup>. In addition to the large presence of Greek refugees, their membership in the secret society Filiki Eteria and their activity against the Ottoman Empire, the Austrian authorities were also alarmed by the printing activity<sup>xvi</sup> of the Greeks in Transylvania (Danielopolu, 1996, p. 197) through which political news was spread in the Hellenistic centres around Europe.

### **Greek refugees in Sibiu during Greek Revolution of 1821**

Sibiu had become one of the most important Hellenistic centres and a natural refuge for Greek refugees from the beginning of the revolutionary movement. The reason why the Greeks chose to take refuge in Sibiu is the same as in the case of Brasov, that of escaping the repercussions of the Ottomans against their liberation activities from Turkish rule. The links between the secret societies, the Greeks, and Transylvania are visible in the actions of the personalities. In 1776, the Phanariot Alexandru Mavrocordat-Moruzi, initiated in Freemasonry where he had advanced in the lodge, was in Sibiu<sup>xvii</sup>, Athanasios Hristopoulos<sup>xviii</sup> was initiated, by the Filiki Etria member Panaioti Anagnostopol, into the secrets of the Eteria (Karathanasis, 2003, p. 81). In Sibiu, in 1821, we also find the great Greek Enlightenment personalities such as Manase Eliad and Professor Atanasie Stagiritis, Nicolas Skoufas, and Athanasios Tsakaloff<sup>xix</sup>, Grigore Şuţu,

Alexandru Rizos, Gheorghe Manu (Karathanasis, 2003, p. 86). Immediately after the battle of Dragasani, we find in Sibiu many of the students who had fought in the Sacred Band, together with their teachers Ștefan Canellos and Gheorghe Ghenadie, the two being registered in Sibiu as merchants, to eliminate local police suspicions (Karathanasis, 2003, p. 87). In the report of July 16, 1821, in Chisinau, the general of the 9th Army sent to Prince Volkonsky about the situation at the border and the possibility of launching military actions by Turkish troops, confirms Alexandru Ypsilanti's run to Transylvania but without offering details of the city where he took refuge<sup>xx</sup>. The same information is reported by general Kiselev, to Prince Volkonsky on July 29, 1821<sup>xxi</sup>. All the activities of the Greeks in Sibiu were supervised by Austrian agents who immediately informed their superiors in Vienna<sup>xxii</sup> in which they announced how the Filiki Eteria members from Brasov and Sibiu disseminated in all directions secret orders, materials necessary for the revolution and information about the situation evolution in Transylvania<sup>xxiii</sup>. Beginning in 1822, most of these refugees left Sibiu for Greece or other Hellenistic centres in Europe from where they could continue their struggle for freedom.

## Conclusions

We can observe an intense activity among the Greeks who arrived in Transylvania during the revolution led by a patriotic sense nourished by the European and Greek Enlightenment. This activity is not limited to the Transylvanian space but is scattered throughout Europe, where there are strong Hellenistic centres. The Greek diaspora played an important role in liberating Greece from Ottomans, and we can see the political and cultural ties between the centres of Transylvania with those of Odessa<sup>xxiv</sup>, Russia<sup>xxv</sup>, Leipzig, Vienna, Pisa, Buda, Venice, Trieste, etc. These connections were not meteoric and were based on the economic activity carried out between these Greek communities centuries ago and which constantly maintained the connection between them, forming a very strong economic, cultural, political and spiritual network. Of course, as the historian Karathanasis wondered, did Brasov and Sibiu actively participate in the 1821 revolution? Karathanasis also comes with the answer by which he denies the possibility that the Greeks from Transylvania were actively involved in the revolutionary struggles, but only provided the necessary conditions for the refugee revolutionaries in Brasov and Sibiu. Discussions in this regard remain open, especially because of the presence of Filiki Eteria in Transylvania even before 1821, the publications and magazines published during this period and which were disseminated in Europe, the financial support offered to those who fought for the common cause, and more. This topic still provides room for research and insight, with many of the archive materials waiting to shed more light on this.

## Acknowledgement

This work was supported by the project "Quality, innovative and relevant doctoral and postdoctoral research for the labour market": POCU/380/6/13/124146, project co-financed by the European Social Fund through The Romanian Operational Programme "Human Capital" 2014-2020

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<sup>i</sup> published in the „*Bulletin de l'Institut pour l'étude de l'Europe Sud-Orientale*” II (1915) p. 247-250 and VIII (1921) p. 91-100, „*Revue Historique du Sud-Est Européen*” VIII (1931) p. 223-226 and „*Revista Istorică*” XXVI (1940) p. 52-59

<sup>ii</sup> see „*Revista istorică română*” XVII (1947) p. 80-97, *Revista arhivelor X* (1967) p. 97-102, „*Studii și materiale de istorie medie*” II (1960) p. 73-103, „*Revue des études sud-est européennes*” II (1964) p. 433-446, „*Balkan Studies*” I (1965) p. 139-164, „*Studii. Revistă de istorie*” XX (1967) p. 1163-1175 and the volume published in 1958 (Camariano, 1958)

<sup>iii</sup> The most important figure of Balkan radicalism known until the Congress of Vienna in 1814

<sup>iv</sup> Secretary to the Phanariote Alexander Ypsilantis, clerk for the Wallachian Prince Nicholas Mavrogenes and dragoman for the French Consulate in Bucharest

<sup>v</sup> A concept of European states structured in a legally regulated system in which each particular sovereignty would be regulated at the supranational level (Sofka 1998, 148–149).

<sup>vi</sup> See Κρηπής Θεοπισμάτων, p. 36-38

<sup>vii</sup> Those who wanted to escape Ottoman pressure

<sup>viii</sup> in 1822 a merchant from Sibiu noted: “So much sugar, coffee, oil that came and passed here and what passed in Brasov, since it is Transylvania, not so many goods came, they were scared here at the customs so many goods that have come and are coming” (Iorga, 1925).

<sup>ix</sup> See Polihronis Gruzudis, *Școala grecească din Brasov*, București 1970

<sup>x</sup> Archive of the Holy Trinity Church, Brasov, Registrul protocol, 1827, p. 203

<sup>xi</sup> Hurmuzaki, *Documente*. 420-421. *Răscoala*, vol. 3, p. 82, 98, 101

<sup>xii</sup> Λάϊος, *Ανέκδοτες επιστολές*, p. 88

<sup>xiii</sup> *Ibid*, p. 171

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<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid, p. 272

<sup>xv</sup> Hurmuzaki, Documente, X, p. 237

<sup>xvi</sup> Mercurul Savant, Kalliopi, Ελληνικός τηλεγράφος, etc.

<sup>xvii</sup> see Δημαράς, Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός, p. 173, 453, 472

<sup>xviii</sup> High Greek dignitary at Caragea's court, and who took refuge in Sibiu

<sup>xix</sup> Nicolas Skoufas, Athanasios Tsakaloff and Emmanuil Xanthos founded Eteria in Odessa in 1814

<sup>xx</sup> National Archives, USSR Microfilms Collection, roll 106, no. 184-185

<sup>xxi</sup> Ibid, nr. 193

<sup>xxii</sup> Hurmuzaki, Documente, III, p. 374

<sup>xxiii</sup> The agent was identified as ΑΩ

<sup>xxiv</sup> The place where the Etherist movement started and the presence of the two founding members in Transylvania

<sup>xxv</sup> Through Alexandru Ipsilanti, whom we find in Transylvania and who worked closely with the Tsar of Russia.