



Jewish Life in the City of Makó

ETERNAL ECHOES

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Jewish Life in the City of Makó

Makó

Makó is a small town of 25 thousand people in Csongrád county, southeast Hungary. It is situated on the river Maros, close to the Romanian border. Old, medieval Makó got desolated under the Turkish rule. The city as it is today was established in 1699.

In 1746 the first Jews were able to settle down in the north-eastern part of the city, which was uninhabited at that time. The newcomers lived in “Great Jew Street and Little Jew Street” (today Deák Ferenc and Eötvös, respectively). This area formed later the “Jewish Quarter” from which by the end of the 19th century the bourgeois Jewish district emerged.

The population of the Jewish community topped in 1920 with 2 380. Due to its religious diversity the town was often called “Little Jerusalem”. The Jews, who became bourgeois through the onion trade, seriously contributed to the modernisation of Makó.

The Religious Life

Impacted by the Jewish enlightenment (*haskala*) Jews in Hungary ceased to be unified by the second half of the 19th century. Two separate religious directions emerged: *orthodox* – strictly pertaining to traditional religious routine – and *neolog* (reform) – introducing several modern elements. Makó was more known of a stronger neolog community but due to the intensifying pace of immigration as well as the higher birth rate in orthodox families – orthodox became a majority by the beginning of the 20th century.

The Jewish community was established in Makó around 1750. In 1748 they founded the *chevra kadisha*, and established the community headed by the judge (*judenrichter*). This was the first Jewish community of East Hungary and that of the Great Hungarian Plane.



The city centre of Makó.



Onion trade was common among the Jews of Makó.



The Orthodox synagogue in Makó.

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A Jewish Orthodox family in Makó.

The most famous rabbi of the 1800s was Salamon Ullmann. Later orthodox chief rabbi Mózes Vorhand established in the town a well-known *yeshiva*. Neolog dr. Ármin Kecskeméti was a chief rabbi and scholar well-known nationwide.

The Neolog Synagogue designed by architect Lipót Baumhorn was completed in 1914 and became the most beautiful building in the town.

School, Elder Care and Trade

The Jewish elementary school accepted Jewish and non-Jewish children alike. Young Jewish boys and girls could participate and get education in various religious groups.

Elderly were also taken care of; the home for elderly was in Vásárhelyi Street.



An elderly Orthodox couple in Makó.



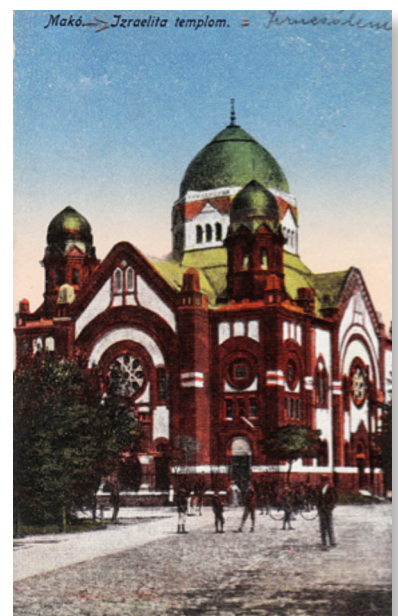
Talmud students in Makó.



Salomon Ullman.



Dr. Ármin Kecskeméti.



The Neolog Synagogue in Makó was one of the most beautiful buildings in the city.



A Jewish elementary school in Mezokovesd, Hungary, 1937.

Jewish Life in the City of Makó

Jews and Christians in Makó were in everyday contact with each other. Jews bought up the extra crops the Makó people had, and sold that in the markets of other towns, as well as supplied the townspeople with products shipped from afar.

The Jews from Makó very early – already on the turn of the 18th and 19th century – learned and spoke Hungarian language well. The relationship between Jews and the peasants of Makó strengthened further after the start of intense onion cultivation.

The yellow onion improved and grown by the onion specialists of Makó was awarded a gold medal at the 1888 Brussels World Fair. The high quality product was bought up and exported mainly by orthodox Jewish merchants, e.g. in 1925 4166 wagons of yellow onions were transported on rails to European countries.

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The picture shows a Goose Fair.



A Jewish store in Makó.

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Text: Urbancsok Zsolt, Dr. Kecskeméti Ármin Egyesület, Makó

Translation from the Hungarian original: Andrea Szonyi

Graphic design: Cecilia Undemark Péterfy