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Jewish sources consider the Jewish community of Buda in the 16th and 17th centuries as one of the most important communities of the Diaspora, Galut.

After the Battle of Mohács in 1526, Sultan Suleyman had taken the Jewish merchants and artisans with him when forced to return to Istanbul. Though he then re-settled them in Istanbul and other big cities throughout the Ottoman Empire, they continued for decades the traditions they had brought with them from Buda. Soon, however, the "Jewish Street" in Buda was populated again, and Jews gained important administrative positions in this latest addition to the Ottoman Empire. They played an important role in handling business between the Ottoman territories and the Hungarian Kingdom.

Relations between the Buda and Viennese Jews were particularly good, while Jews in Buda sent their sons to Vienna to learn German and European culture; Jews in Vienna sent their children to Buda in order to learn Turkish and Eastern traditions. An observer of that period remarked that "Jews living in Ottoman Turkey generally spoke at least four or five languages and some times up to ten or twelve".

The life and fate of the Buda Jews during Turkish times played a major role in the early modern history of the both Hungary and the Carpathian Basin. Drawing from the literature of that period, Tamás Raj and Péter Vasadi's study gives an insight into this almost unknown world. In addition to the moving story of the Jewish community in Buda, both the sacred sword of the Hungarian Jews and Jewish literature of that period are also discussed.

Professor László Katus

