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## Demeter Hadzsi's "proskynetarion" in Jászberény

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## *Demeter Hadzsi's Proskynetarion in Jászberény*

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To the best of our knowledge, there are altogether six *proskynetaria* in Hungary, including the one which is the subject of the present study (il. 1). In two earlier items the time of their painting (1748, 1768) and the name of the painters are also depicted. Two other items were made in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and a fifth one in 1791. All of them are painted in oil on canvas,<sup>1</sup> similar to the one described here, which is in the possession of the Jász Museum of Jászberény.<sup>2</sup> Out of the six artefacts this is the only one which does not come from a church environment, but was originally owned by a private person.<sup>3</sup>

The compositions of the *proskynetarion* are schematic. Their identification is based on the analogical scenes mentioned in special literature and on the inscriptions, which are published here without any changes. Compositionally the item can be divided into three clearly separated units: the narrower lower and upper sections, and the wider central one.

### **The upper section**

**1) An eagle with a Gospel-book in a circular shape** (inscription: Ιω), Saint John the Evangelist as an Apocalyptic symbol (*Rev.* 4,6–7).

**2) Nazareth** (inscription: H NAZOAPET). The view of the town is shown from the outside. It is surrounded by the town wall, which is divided into sections by four towers. There is a church building with a cu-

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis of these items is still in process.

<sup>2</sup> Jászberény is a town located in the central part of Hungary, east of Budapest. In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries there was a significant Greek community living here. About their settlement, activities and testaments cf. I. Papp, 'Görög kereskedők a Jászkunságban', *Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Megyei Levéltár Közleményei*, 6 (2004).

<sup>3</sup> Inventory number: 55.40, size 89.20 x 54.50 cm.

pola in the centre. This is the view of the town seen by an approaching traveller.

The next motif follows a high cedar tree standing on its own:

**3) The Mount of Olives** (inscription: ΟΡΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΕΛΕΩΝ). The view of Jerusalem can be seen from a distance. It is encircled by the town wall, which is divided by two tower-capped gates. A church building with a dome can be found in the centre. Tiny trees are distinguishable around the cupola in the background.

**4) The baptism of Jesus** (no inscription).

Jesus is wearing a loin-cloth, he is standing in the River Jordan, while the Holy Ghost appears above him as a dove with outspread wings. Saint John the Baptist in his raiment of camel's hair and himation can be seen on the left as he is pouring water on Jesus' head. On the right there are two winged angels, the nearer one holding the heavenly garment for Jesus. There are fish swimming in the river. The scene is depicted following traditional Byzantine iconography.

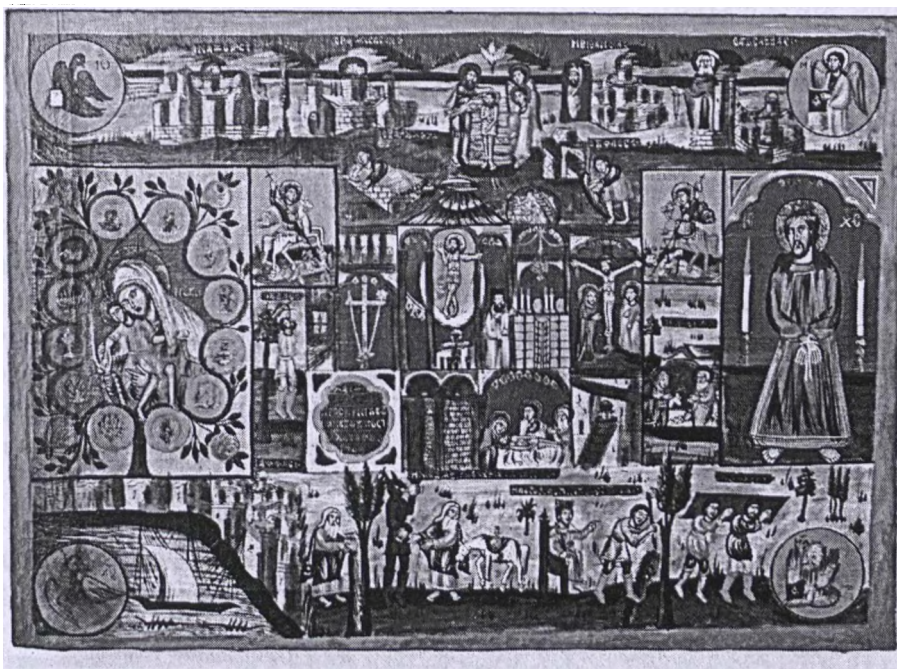
The line of the river at the bottom, the figures on the sides and the mountain closing the composition from above form together a symbolic mandorla referring to the heavenly world around Jesus. This composition is the central scene of this section, which is also emphasised by the fact that with its oval closing it spreads over the section to a small extent. The scene is painted on the same scale, or even maybe on a larger one, as the depictions of the town.

**5) Bethany** (inscription: Η ΒΙΘΑΝΟΙΑ). The town is shown from a distance, but, as opposed to the previous views, the town wall is not represented here. There is a church with a dome towering over tiny little houses in the picture. Lazarus, bound with graveclothes and standing in his grave, appears on the left from the town. He is on the same scale as the town.

**6) Saint Savvas** (inscription: Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΚΑΒΒΑΚ). The ascetic-saint is standing next to the tower built by the Empress Eudoxia, in which he lived his ascetic life. His figure is on an even larger scale than the tower itself. His hair and beard are grey, there is a halo surrounding his head. He is wearing the clothing of monks, a mandias. His hands are spread out in the 'orans' position, a rosary is hanging from his right hand. Savvas founded his monastery in the vicinity of this tower and he also died here in 532.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The monastery was considered the most significant one in Palestine. Cf. K. Babraj, 'Melchitisches Proskynetarion vom 19. Jh. aus der koptischen Kirche des Erzengels Gabriel in der An-Naqlun (Oase Fayum)', *Materialy Archeologiczne*, 27 (1995), 2, p. 84.



1. *Proksynetarion*, Jasz Museum, Jaszbereny

This monastery can be seen on the right from the tower, a bit in the distance, to indicate that it was 3.5 km away from the tower. The wall of the monastery, with its domed catholicon in the centre, is depicted slightly from a bird's-eye view. The dome and the tower are linked by a rope with little bells hanging on it, which used to call the monks to meals.<sup>5</sup>

7) **The bust of an angel, with a book in his hands, in a circular shape** (inscription: Ma), the Apocalyptic symbol of St. Matthew the Evangelist (*Rev.* 4,6–7).

Under the scenes of the upper section the schematic depiction of a natural environment can be found. The rhythm of this section is determined by the seven chains of mountains above the scenes. The dark horizontal zone running above the scenes also holds the episodes of the section together. The right side of each little mountain is also decorated by a reddish black shadow, which is in harmony with the black horizontal zone, as well.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

The lower section

In this section there are exactly as many scenes as in the upper one.

**8) An ox with wings, in a circular shape**, without a book (inscription: ΛΟΥ). The Apocalyptic symbol of St. Luke the Evangelist (*Rev.* 4,6–7).

**9) A ship on water with white sails**, separated by a dark wide zone from the buildings aligned on the right and above, behind which a domed church appears faintly. Above the composition the name of the town can be seen: Jaffa (inscription: ΙΑΦΦΑC). Babraj supposes<sup>6</sup> that pilgrims arrived at the port of Jaffa with such sailing ships.

A series of scenes follows, consisting of four interrelated episodes, which can be seen in most *proskynetaria*. This series is embedded in a stylised natural environment and it relates the legend of the tree of life.<sup>7</sup> It is divided into two parts, having the tree as their common element. Both parts consist of two episodes respectively.

**10) Lot is watering the tree of life** (no inscription). Lot appears as a grey old man with a long grey beard, wearing a khiton and a himation. He is watering the tree with three branches<sup>8</sup> from a long-necked jar.

The next scene involves three characters:

**11) “And the devil is drinking water from Lot”** (inscription: ΠΙΝ/Ε/Ι Ο ΔΙΑΒΟΛΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΝΕΡΟΥ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥ ΛΟΤ). Lot, dressed as in the previous picture, can be seen in the centre. On his right there is a white horse, with a long-necked jar full of water hanging on its side. On his left a horned devil appears. He is holding a jar in his left hand, from which he is drinking up the water which was meant for the tree. In his right hand he is also holding a jar, which he has just taken from Lot’s hands.

**12) “And there came Solomon and cut the tree off”** (inscription: ΗΛΘΕ Ο ΣΟΛΟΜΟΝ ΚΟΨΕ ΤΟ ΞΗ/Υ/ΛΑ) is the title of the next scene, which involves two characters. Solomon, sitting on his throne, can be seen on the right. He is wearing a khiton with a robe over it, his head is crowned. He is holding his sceptre in his right hand, while with his left he is pointing at the bough of the three-branched tree that a moustached man in a knee-

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> M. Immerzeel, *Syrische Iconen – Syrian Icons*, collection A. Touma, Snoeck-Ducaju and Zoon (Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, University of Damascus), Damascus 1998, p. 124.

<sup>8</sup> Originating from the Old Testament apocrypha and legends a legend became widespread after 1231 in Palestine according to which the three boughs (pine, cypress, cedar) planted at the head of Adam’s tomb, which grew together into one single trunk, were tended to by Lot. About the textual origins of the series of scenes cf. Babraj, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–89.

length tunic and boots is just cutting off to use for building the king's church.<sup>9</sup>

13) The inscription **“For the cross”** (TOY ΣΤΑ/Β/ΡΟΥ) is in the next picture, involving two characters. Two servants can be seen – one of them is familiar from the previous scene –, who are carrying a branch resembling an elongated wooden board on their shoulders. Their clothes are similar to the servant's in the previous scene. In the upper right-hand corner four trees of two different species are depicted on a smaller scale.

14) **A winged lion with a book in a circular shape** (inscription: ΜΑΡ). The Apocalyptic symbol of St. Mark the Evangelist (*Rev.* 4,6–7).

The lower section is beautifully divided into sub-sections by the two high three-branched trees, which also hold the series of scenes together.

### **The central section**

The central section can be divided into three parts. There is a large picture on both sides, with two smaller ones adjusted to their vertical sides, while the third group is formed by the scenes they frame.

The left side:

15) **Mother of God of Kykkos** (inscription: Η ΤΟΥ ΚΙΚΟΥ). Mary is wearing a reddish maphorion, her head, decorated with a crown, is bent to the right, toward the Child. The Child is sitting on her arm in a reddish khiton and is bending his head to the right, so their faces touch each other. Jesus is spreading out his left arm, while his right is placed in his mother's lifted right hand and both his naked shins are visible. Their heads are in a halo. Mary appears in the foliage of a tree with twelve medallions surrounding her. There are unidentifiable objects in the medallions (maybe a candle among them?). There are four large-headed roses reaching out from the foliage of the tree into the four corners of the picture. The rose is a multi-layered symbol, which primarily refers to Mary.<sup>10</sup> This scene is a combination of the elements of the iconographic types of “The Mother of God of Kykkos”, “The Tree of Jesse” and “Mary, the Never Fading Rose”.

To this large picture adjusted on the right:

16) **Saint George** (inscription: Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ). George is sheathed in armour and his robe soars behind his shoulders. He is mounted on a white horse and he holds a spear ending in a cross in his upraised right hand with which he stabs the dragon. The shape of the cross is very special: it is

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> About the symbolism of the rose with reference to Mary cf. *ibid.*, pp. 74–75.

a combination<sup>11</sup> of the so-called “potent”,<sup>12</sup> forked<sup>13</sup> and the Orthodox cross.<sup>14</sup> The spear ending in a cross is doubly symbolic. On the one hand, it refers to the fact that Saint George, as a soldier of the Roman army, was able to defeat the dragon with the help of the cross and in the name of the cross, on the other hand, it reminds the onlooker of George’s death, who undertook martyrdom for his faith.

Under the picture depicting Saint George there is a narrower picture with **17) the scene of the death of Judas** (inscription: HOYΔAC). This vertically arranged composition fits perfectly into the vertically heavily elongated picture. On the left there is a leafy tree with a long trunk from whose pendent branch Judas is hanging. He is wearing a knee-length tunic girdled at the waist and boots. His hands are hanging behind. The scene is based on *Mt. 27,5*.<sup>15</sup>

On the right side of the central section there can be seen in the large picture

**18) the scene of Ecce Homo** (inscription: IC XC), which is based on *Jn. 19,5*. According to this, Jesus is wearing a purple kolobion, he is barefoot with his hands bound in front, a crown of thorns on his head and the letters *OωN* in his halo. Jesus has a short beard here, his long hair is hanging over his shoulders. This depiction of Jesus belongs to the Syrian type. In his three other depictions he has a longer beard and shorter hair. Next to Jesus there are two long-stemmed candles. The composition is closed from above by an openly divided arch.<sup>16</sup>

Adjusted to this large picture on the left there is a scene depicting

**19) Saint Demetrios** (inscription: O AΓΓΟC ΔΙΜΗΤΡ/Ι/ΟC). It is a symmetrical companion to the picture of Saint George. Its iconography is

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<sup>11</sup> St. George holds the same type of cross in a Coptic icon from the 18<sup>th</sup> c. Cf. Nabil Selim Attala, *Coptic Icons*, Orbis Terrae Aegyptiae, Barcelona, 1986, p. 43. The saints of some early icons hold a similar cross, though without the transversal arms: ‘The Virgin Enthroned with the Child, Saint Theodore, Saint George and Two Angels’, 6<sup>th</sup> c. Cf. K. Weitzmann, M. Chadzidakis et al., *Frühe Ikonen*, Sofia–Belgrad 1972, p. 1, or ‘Saint Peter’, 7<sup>th</sup> c. (*ibid.*, p. 5).

<sup>12</sup> The attribute of Saint Anthony the Anchorite; *A keresztény művészet lexikona*, ed. J. Seibert, Budapest 1986, p. 169.

<sup>13</sup> It is a shape of exsufflation which refers to the water of baptism; *Liturgikus Lexikon*, ed. I. Verhényi and M.O. Arató, Budapest 1988, p. 122

<sup>14</sup> The short horizontal arm at the bottom of the Orthodox cross refers to the feet support of the crucified Christ; cf. *ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>15</sup> About the iconography of Judas’ depiction cf. K. Babraj, *op. cit.*, pp. 78–79.

<sup>16</sup> This is a reference to the remnants of the triumphal arch with three openings from Roman times, which is called the Ecce Homo Arch even today; cf. G. Kroll, *Jézus nyomában*, Budapest 1985, p. 454.

similar to that of the Saint George icon, but Demetrios is stabbing the neck of a moustached man with his spear ending in a cross, spilling his blood abundantly. The man lying on the ground is holding a sword and the horse is trampling on him.

Under this composition, in a vertically elongated field, one can see the scene of

**20) The Nativity** with the inscription: Η ΒΙΘΛΕΕΜ. In the composition, which is squeezed into the lower half of the field, Mary and Joseph, in garments customary in Byzantine painting, are kneeling in front of a house with an arch-like entrance, turning toward the manger. The light figure of only one animal, the ass,<sup>17</sup> appears behind them. A star is descending toward the Child from a three-branched ray under the arch, which refers to the cave. On the left of the roof there is a tree and some bushes indicating vegetation, while the inscription is also placed here.

The painter has combined the elements of Byzantine Nativity scenes in this composition. Joseph, who usually appears in the Byzantine representations in an independent sub-unit, has ended up in a kneeling position in front of the shed here as Mary's symmetrical pair. Mary is not in the position usual for Byzantine representations, she is not half-reclining but kneeling.<sup>18</sup> The roof constructed above the cave also testifies to a western influence.

The three scenes on each side of the central section (nos. 15, 16 and 17 on the left, and nos. 18, 19 and 20 on the right) practically form a frame around the central group of compositions, which represents the church buildings of Jerusalem in a vertical cross-section, and also Biblical and other liturgical events.

In the middle of the central section the Church of the Resurrection, whose cupola is divided into three horizontal zones, can be clearly recognised. In the upper section of the dome there is an opening for the descent of the Holy Fire, for which is waiting either a group of pilgrims with burning candles, or a Greek Orthodox patriarch, who will share it out.<sup>19</sup>

Under the cupola three elongated fields can be seen, which are closed from above by an arch.

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<sup>17</sup> The figure of the other animal, that of the ox, which appears in the Biblical text (*Is.* 1,3) and in the Byzantine representations based on it, is missing here.

<sup>18</sup> The figure of the kneeling Virgin Mary appeared on the Greek mainland and became widespread in Orthodox painting from the 15<sup>th</sup> c. on under Italian influence.

<sup>19</sup> Babraj, *op. cit.*, p. 91. The ceremony, called the Ceremony of the Holy Fire, took place at Easter Eve from the 11<sup>th</sup> c. on and is related to the appearance of the Holy Fire above Christ's sepulchre.



**21) An empty field**, which has been formed obviously only for the sake of symmetry.

**22) The Resurrection** (no inscription). Christ can be seen in a loin-cloth, his himation soars above his shoulders. In his left hand he holds a long stick ending in a cross, while his right is lifted in blessing. He is surrounded by a reddish mandorla, which also reaches over to the two neighbouring fields. The Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre can be seen under the mandorla.

**23) A Greek Orthodox Patriarch** (no inscription), with a black kamilavka on his head, an omophorion hanging on his neck and a burning candle in his hand with which he is sharing out the Holy Fire to the two pilgrims appearing in the next field.

**24) Two pilgrims with four burning torches** (no inscription). This scene is also enclosed by an arch from above. However, the colour of this arch is different from that of the previous ones, which indicates that we are in the Greek Orthodox Chapel, which is also crowned by a dome. The silvery colour of the cupola is also different from that of the previous one. Only the heads of the pilgrims can be seen, their bodies are hidden by the schematically represented doors of the iconostasis.

**25) The Crucifixion** (no inscription). The crucified Christ on the cross can be seen in the centre of the composition, with Mary on the left and St. John the Evangelist on the right. Water and blood, the symbols of the foundation of the Eucharist, are flowing from Christ's side. The scene follows traditional Byzantine iconography. It is enclosed from above by an arch, which is segmented by several tiny waves.

On the left from the Church of the Resurrection there are two highly stylised compositions, which are difficult to identify for this reason.

**26) Christ's gaol?** (no inscription).

**27) Choir? Railing?** (no inscription).

**28) A cross with a spear and a sponge stuck on a reed** (no inscription). It is the Chapel of Saint Helena which is usually depicted in this field in other *proskynetaria*, with the scene of "Constantinos and Helena with the Cross"<sup>20</sup> represented in its interior. In this case the cross may be a remnant of that scene, which the painter obviously did not want to represent on its own, so he decided to place the spear and the reed, the devices of torture, next to it. The field is enclosed from above by an arch with several curves.

**29) Inscription.** This will be discussed at the end of the article.

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<sup>20</sup> M. Immerzel, 'Proskynetaria from Jerusalem', *Essays on Christian Art and Culture in the Middle East*, 2 (1999). Item number 7 on the list, from Cairo, 18<sup>th</sup> century, plate 1.



2. Triptych, Jasz Museum, Jaszbereny

**30) The open and closed doors of the Church of the Resurrection** (no inscription). The scene has been identified on the basis of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century *proskynetarion* which includes the same composition in this field, first described by M. Immerzel.<sup>21</sup> The door on the right is walled in.<sup>22</sup> Both doors are arched at the top. There is honey-suckle in both arches. This composition can be seen under the Church of the Resurrection.

**31) Christ's burial** (no inscription). The dead Christ is lying in the centre on the sepulchre. Mary is on his left, Joseph of Arimathea is on his right, while St. John the Evangelist is in the middle of the background. They are all wearing the clothes customary for them in Byzantine painting. The scene is enclosed from above by an arch. The composition follows Byzantine iconography.

**32) Buildings and stairs** (no inscription). The field can be identified on the basis of the *proskynetation* described by M. Immerzel.<sup>23</sup> There is a building with a dome and the stairs leading to it in the picture.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., plate 1.

<sup>22</sup> Following the order of Salah an-Din, the other two Islamic nations were trusted to tend it; Babraj, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>23</sup> Immerzel, 'Proskynetaria from Jerusalem...', plate 1.

<sup>24</sup> They must be the stairs leading to the chapel of the Calvary; L. Gyürki, *A Biblia földjén*, Budapest 1990, p. 60.

Above the central section two scenes each involving one figure can be seen, on the left and right side of the Church of the Resurrection and of the dome of the Greek Chapel, respectively:

**33) The Prophet Baruch.** The scene includes the inscription Ο ΒΑΡΟΥΧ. One can see a man in the picture who is sleeping behind or above a section of a wall, wearing a khiton and a himation and bending his haloed head on his right palm. The scene is identical with the ones published by M. Immerzel<sup>25</sup> and K. Babraj.<sup>26</sup>

**34) The blind man** (inscription: Ο ΤΗΦΛΟΣ). A simple building with a gate is depicted in this scene. There is a road leading to it, on which a man is walking, with a long stick in his hand. He is wearing knee-length clothing and he is barefoot. The same scene can be found in the *proskynetarion* described by K. Babraj. In his opinion this is the symbolic representation of Paradise and a saved man approaching it.<sup>27</sup> The question is how the saved man walking towards Paradise has turned into the 'blind man' cured by Jesus (Matthew 9,27). The painter might not have understood the meaning of the scene. However, among Byzantine representations of Jesus' miracles the blind man appears with a long stick in the scene of 'The Curing of the Blind Man'. This might be the reason why the saved man walking towards Paradise has gained the name 'Blind Man' in this *proskynetarion* from Jászberény.<sup>28</sup>

The *proskynetarion* from Jászberény belongs to the topographic-hagiographic group of *proskynetaria*. Its specialty is that the town wall of Jerusalem is not depicted in its centre. The topographical scenes alternate with the hagiographical ones, the hagiographical elements are sometimes mixed with the topographical motifs (e.g. composition no. 5). The hagiographical scenes are on the same scale as the depictions of the town.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Immerzel, 'Proskynetaria from Jerusalem...', plate 1.

<sup>26</sup> Scene no. 10 in the *proskynetarion* described by K. Babraj.

<sup>27</sup> Babraj, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>28</sup> Painters seem to have had their uncertainties about the interpretation of this scene. In one of the items from Hungary (Museum of Szentendre, inventory no. 91) it bears the inscription 'James, the Son of Zebedee'. In all probability the reason for this is that the attribute of one of the apostles, the younger James, is a club or fuller's stick (a shovel-like tool used in making felt). Both are similar to the stick held by the man in the present scene. However, it must be noted that it was the elder James who was the son of Zebedee and Mary Salome, while the fuller's stick is the attribute of the younger James, who was Alphaeus's son; *A keresztény művészet lexikona...*, pp. 134, 136.

<sup>29</sup> To find out when the hagiographical scenes started to appear on *proskynetaria*, which developed from views not including such scenes, must be the target of further research.

Concerning their iconographic aspects, the scenes can be divided into several groups: Byzantine (within these several types can be differentiated, such as the traditional ones, like the Baptism of Jesus, and the ones marked by western influence, like the Nativity and the Resurrection) and the compositions used exclusively in proskynetaria, for instance the pictures related to the tree of life and the depictions of the town. The textual basis for the scenes is supplied by the Old and New Testaments, the Apocrypha and ordinary events.

The compositions are drawn and painted in a very simple manner. The unknown painter uses only a few colours, mainly orange and dark blue. While he obviously worked on the basis of archetypes, he also structured the whole composition absolutely consciously. His leading principle was a striving for *symmetry*. This reveals itself in the division of the whole picture into lower, upper and central sections.

The painter also tried to achieve symmetry within the separate units. For example, in the upper unit he placed the same number of compositions on each side of the central scene of the Baptism of Jesus. Within the given units the scenes following each other have a certain *rhythm*, which is spectacularly illustrated by the arrangement and colouring of the tiny mountains in the upper section. The painter strove to balance the number of compositions in the upper and lower units as well. The symmetry of the whole surface is significantly amplified by the four orange mandorlas placed in the four corners with the symbols of the Evangelists. The whole picture is framed by the wide orange stripe running along its edge. The painter's leading principle was so dominant that he was not even afraid to break the symmetry, for example in the case of the sailing ship surrounded by a dark blue frame in the lower left-hand corner. All in all the unknown painter can be said to have created a tightly structured, clear and easily discernible composition.

The not too highly qualified master has an obvious penchant for ornamentation. It reveals itself in the consistent application of the three little decorative dots next to the inscriptions and in the central section in the decoration of even the interior curves of the arches. His naïve manner of painting, the simple decorations, the application of large and harsh splashes of colour relate the item to icons painted in folk art style.

Finally, let us examine field number 29, which solely consists of an inscription.

In the dark blue circular field segmented by tiny curves and framed by an orange stripe the inscription reads as follows: XATZH Δ/IMITPI/O/Σ/

ΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΙΤΗ/Σ/ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΝΑΓΙΟΥ Κ/ΑΙ/ ΖΩΩΔΟΧΟΥ ΤΑΦΟΥ 1796, that is, 'Demeter Hadzsi,<sup>30</sup> the pilgrim of the holiest life-giving sepulchre 1796'.

The text is of a light colour, with the exception of one single word, the fragmented name 'Dimitrios', which is of a darker colour. The name is also written in a different script, which indicates that – according to the customs of the time – the pilgrim's name was inscribed in a previously written text in a ready-made icon when he actually bought the canvas. Thus, the proskynetarion was made in 1796 for a pilgrim to the Holy Land called Demeter Hadzsi.

The artefact is in the possession of the Jász Museum of Jászberény. Unfortunately, we cannot determine when and how the museum acquired it. However, the Hadzsi family was well-known in Jászberény. Demeter Hadzsi is even mentioned twice in contemporary documents.<sup>31</sup>

A census written in Hungarian in 1775<sup>32</sup> testifies to the facts that 'the Greek merchant called László Hadzsi took an oath of allegiance<sup>33</sup> in 1773. He buys and sells Viennese goods by the ell. He has no wife, he is a widower, has two sons, Antal (21) and Demeter (17)'. The László Hadzsi first mentioned in the document is none other than Demeter Hadzsi's widower father. Other documents reveal that he had been living in Hungary for twenty years when his son arrived here, since his name also appears in the first nationwide census of Greeks in Hungary in 1754.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The name 'Demeter' is equivalent to 'Dimitrios' in Hungarian usage.

<sup>31</sup> Let me express here my gratitude to Izabella Papp, a worker in the Archives of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County, for her invaluable help in finding these documents.

<sup>32</sup> Following the Emperor's ordinance, the census of Greek merchants in Hungary was taken several times. One of these occasions occurred in 1775, when László Hadzsi was also mentioned; Szolnok Megyei Levéltár (henceforth SzML), *Közgazgatási iratok* (henceforth *Közig. Ir.*) D Capsa IX Fasc. 4, № 5.

<sup>33</sup> The Greeks living in Hungary took the fortunes, which they made here, back home to their family living in the Greek mother country. To prevent the further exodus of Greek capital the Council of the Governor-General issued its ordinance № 3523 dated on 8 August 1774 requiring an oath of allegiance; cf. Ö. Füves, 'Görögök a Duna-Tisza közén', *Antik Tanulmányok* 1 (1966), p. 96. According to this, Greeks were allowed to stay in the Empire as would-be subjects of the Habsburg Empire, only if they were willing to expatriate themselves from the Turkish Empire and take an oath of allegiance. It resulted in the loss of the privileges to which Turkish subjects were entitled. It was no longer really advantageous to trade with the mother country, and thus commercial relations with Greek traders were quickly broken; moreover, almost all kinds of relation were interrupted, since Greek merchants living in Hungary were obliged to resettle their families in that country. This ordinance was the starting point for assimilation of Greeks living in Hungary.

<sup>34</sup> Országos Levéltár Misc. Fasc. 2, № 8.

The other document which mentions Demeter Hadzsi was written in Latin six years after the census of 1775, in 1781.<sup>35</sup> According to this he was '[...] 22 years old, belonging to the Orthodox denomination, single, with a clean-shaven face, and with auburn hair and brows. He comes from Kozani. He came to Hungary to a Greek merchant ten years ago. He crossed the border at Zimony,<sup>36</sup> he has no travel documents. He lives in Jászberény, he is an apprentice (sodalis) at László Hadzsi's (that is, at his father's). He wishes to take an oath of allegiance'.

From the two documents it is possible to reconstruct the main turning points of Demeter Hadzsi's life. Accordingly, he was born in the Macedonian town of Kozani in 1759. He might have had Macedo-Vlach origins, like the majority of Greeks in Hungary who were born in Macedonia. In 1771 the twelve-year-old boy must have followed his father to Hungary with his brother after their mother's death. Ten years later, at the age of 22, he was already working as an assistant in his father's business. Marital status: single.

Unfortunately, the documents make no other mention of Demeter Hadzsi.<sup>37</sup> His father and his brother Antal, however, are mentioned several times in contemporary documents. From these it turns out that they were fairly well-off and had significant shops.<sup>38</sup> Though they were foreigners, they even gained citizenship,<sup>39</sup> which was a rarity in Jászberény, a town which jealously protected its privileges. Their tombstones have been preserved.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> SzML *Közig. Ir.* D. Capsa XIV Fasc. 7, № 37. Let me thank Izabella Papp for her help with the Hungarian translation.

<sup>36</sup> Zimony (Semlin, Serbian Zemun) is next to Belgrade. At Zimony the Greek merchants approaching the Habsburg Empire by boat could usually regain their travel documents and enter the territory of the Empire after clearing their quarantine of 20 to 60 days in order to disinfect their goods and bodies; E. Petri, 'A görögök közvetítő kereskedelme a 17–19. századi Magyarországon', *Századok* 1 (1996), p. 72.

<sup>37</sup> However some documents mention a merchant called Demeter Hadzsi in the town of Kunszentmárton, which is close to Jászberény. He took the oath of allegiance in 1795, but it is still only a coincidence of names, since he was born in Siatista; SzML *Jászkun Kerület Közig. Ir.* Fasc. 8, № 2268/1795. The document is published in Papp, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

<sup>38</sup> László Hadzsi rented shops (SzML *Közig. Ir.* D Capsa Fasc. 17, № 40) and had the right to sell salt (SzML *Jászberény városi tanácsi jegyzőkönyv* (1802–1803): 406), moreover, this right was also obtained by his son, Antal, in 1812 (SzML *Jászberény város iratai* Cs. 44 Füzet 3, № 141/1813). The latter document is published in Papp, *op. cit.*, p. 190. László Hadzsi donated a significant sum to the school foundation of Jászberény, the second largest amount of money of the sixteen donators (SzML *Jászberény város iratai* Capsa 50 Fasc. 4, № 66 ½, the document is published in Papp, *op. cit.*, p. 203).

<sup>39</sup> At least the inscriptions on their tombstones testify to this; Papp, *op. cit.*, pp. 316, 317.

<sup>40</sup> According to their inscriptions the father László Hadzsi died in 1818, at the age of 90,

However, there is no word of Demeter later on. He is not supposed to have left Jászberény because this is where his *proskynetarion*, which gives information about the next stage of his life, has been preserved. According to its inscription he visited the Holy Land in 1796, at the age of 37. He kept the family tradition and followed his father's example, who also must have completed a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, since, as it turns out from the documents, he bore the name Hadzsi (Hadji).

There was nothing special about the pilgrimage to the Holy Land among Orthodox believers. Demeter Hadzsi, however, did not live in the motherland, but in a distant diaspora. For Greek minorities living in a foreign environment the preservation of their national identity had an outstanding importance in maintaining their community. Its most important devices were the preservation of their mother tongue and ancient religion.<sup>41</sup> For Demeter Hadzsi the pilgrimage to the Holy Land meant strengthening his Orthodox faith, which also helped him in keeping his national identity. His Greek identity must have been very important for him, as it is indicated by the following facts.

The *proskynetarion* reveals that Dimitrios Hadzsi completed the pilgrimage in 1796, that is, twenty years after the 1774 ordinance to take the oath of allegiance. The oath of allegiance means a turning point in the life of the Greeks living in Hungary, it is the beginning of their aggressive assimilation.<sup>42</sup> Following its introduction, relations between the Greeks in Hungary and the motherland were broken. For those living abroad it started to become more and more difficult to preserve their mother tongue, religion and national identity. Demeter Hadzsi completed the pilgrimage to the Holy Land in this especially critical situation, as if expecting spiritual guidance from it. And the *proskynetarion*, as a devotional object brought along from the Holy Land, offered such a fortification of his faith by its continuous presence.<sup>43</sup>

The fact that Demeter Hadzsi declared his intention to take the oath of allegiance at all only in 1781, a long time after it was made compulsory,

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while his son, Antal, 'a citizen of merit in Jászberény and an honest merchant', passed away in 1813, at the age of 60; cf. Papp, *op. cit.*, pp. 316, 317.

<sup>41</sup> E. Horváth, 'Magyar-görög bibliográfia', *Magyar-Görög Tanulmányok* 12 (1940), pp. 13–15.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. footnote 33.

<sup>43</sup> In contemporary Bulgarian language the pilgrimage was identical with acquiring the *proskynetarion*, since in that language the *proskynetarion* itself is called 'Хаджия'; С. Москова, 'Пътят на хаджията – Структурна схема на една изложба', *Проблеми на изкуството*, 2001, 2, pp. 18–26.

also reveals how ardently he tried to preserve his national identity: he strove to postpone breaking all his ties with his mother country as long as possible.

The Jász Museum of Jászberény acquired a triptych (inventory number: 55.27.1) from the 1770s together with this *proskynetarion*. In its central panel the Virgin with Child is depicted, while in the wings some saints appear.<sup>44</sup> It is also supposed that Demeter Hadzsi brought along this Melkite icon from the Holy Land together with the *proskynetarion*. He had the small object set in a large stylised wooden edifice decorated with Hungarian popular motifs, which could have functioned as his home altar when folded out.

Demeter Hadzsi's *proskynetarion* from Jászberény is one of those quite rare artefacts in special literature, whose commissioner's name is known, and what is more, several pieces of information have been revealed about the commissioner's origins, birth-place, age, occupation, appearance and family, and to top it all, one can even make up a highly probable hypothesis about his extraordinary motivation for the pilgrimage.

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<sup>44</sup> M. Nagy, *A magyarországi görög diaszpóra egyházművészeti emlékei I – Ikonok, ikonosztáziók*, Debrecen 1998, no. 61.