Chapter 10

Spices and Exotic Foods in 17th-Century Transylvania: The Customs Accounts of Sibiu*

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A large-scale analysis of food consumption in Transylvania in the early modern period is still lacking. This chapter aims to offer a contribution towards the ultimate goal of such a study, with a focus on one specific aspect of food consumption: the imports of spices and exotic fruits in Transylvania. Trade was the most important means of acquiring foodstuffs which were not grown locally. The merchants who brought such food items often covered long distances on routes which ran across the Balkan Peninsula, linking the Ottoman centre and Transylvania. Only certain alimentary goods were suitable for this long-haul trade, which explains the overwhelming presence of non-perishable items such as spices, dried fruits, rice, and olive oil in the Transylvanian customs accounts of the early modern period.

In this chapter I shall first discuss the legislation on the imports of spices and foodstuffs in 17th-century Transylvania. In the main body of the analysis, I shall consider spices and other foodstuffs individually. Tentatively, I shall also present a few examples of how the imported foods were utilised in the Transylvanian culinary context.

My analysis is based primarily on the unpublished customs accounts of Sibiu (Hung. Nagyszeben, Ger. Hermannstadt) from the 17th century. Owing to the particularities of these sources, the analysis of trade is restricted to the traffic of foodstuffs and spices brought from the Ottoman Empire.1 Comparisons with the 17th-century customs books of Cluj (Hung. Kolozsvár, Ger. Klausenburg)

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1 Arhivele Naţionale, Serviciul judeţean Sibiu (sJAN Sibiu), Fond Magistratul oraşului Sibiu. Inventarul 197. Socoteli de vamă vigesimă şi tricesimă [The National Archives, Sibiu county archives, Fonds magistrate of the town of Sibiu, classmark 197, customs accounts, vigesima and tricesima taxes], no. 43 (1614–1615), no. 44 (1616–1617), no. 45 (1615–1616), no. 46 (1618–1619), no. 47 (1622), no. 52 (1672), no. 53 (1673), no. 59 (1682–1685), no. 63 (1686), no. 64 (1687–1688), no. 66 (1687–1689), no. 67 (1689–1692). [Hereafter sJAN Sibiu].
and Transylvania will enable a better understanding of the trade in certain products. In 2003, Ferenc Pap wrote an article on a similar topic based on the customs accounts of Cluj. His findings shall be linked here to data from Sibiu, offering a more complete picture of the distribution of spices and exotic fruits in Transylvania and Central Europe. The same author published a collection of customs accounts from Cluj from the first half of the 17th century. A further register for 1631 was published by László Pakó. The Hungarian historian Borbála Benda has offered the most recent survey of the eating habits of the Hungarian aristocracy, including the Transylvanian nobility, during the early modern period. For Transylvania, the few studies dedicated to food consumption and foodways were written by Enikő Rüss-Fogarasi, who reconstructed the diet of hospital patients in 17th-century Cluj. In the account books of the city’s hospitals, albeit rarely, spices are present among purchases, showing that on occasion they were used by the urban lower classes in Transylvania in similar ways to other parts of East-Central Europe.

During the period between 1541 and 1699, the principality of Transylvania was a tributary state to the Ottoman Empire, and therefore its political and economic ties to Istanbul grew understandably closer. One of the most salient consequences of Transylvania’s political status was the increasing presence of Ottoman merchants of various extractions in the principality and its foreign trade. These Balkan-Levantine merchants, who were mostly Greek or Hellenised traders from particular regions in the Balkan Peninsula, became the main agents of trade and suppliers of ‘Turkish goods.’ The pairing of

2 Ferenc Pap, “A Kolozsváriak fűszer-és déligyümölcs-kereskedése (1599–1637),” *Erdélyi Múzeum* 65 (1–2) (2003): 139–51.
3 László Pakó, “Kolozsvári harmincadjegyzék 1631-ből,” *Erdélyi Múzeum* 77 (1) (2015): 145–77.
4 Borbála Benda, *Étkezési szokások a magyar főúri udvarokban a kora újkorban* (Archívum Comitatus Castriferrei, 6) (Szombathely: 2014).
5 Enikő Rüss-Fogarasi, *Egy elfeledett intézmény: A Kolozsvári Szentlélek-ispotály kora újkori története* (Budapest: 2012), 132–44.
6 Andrzej Wyczański, *La consommation alimentaire en Pologne aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles* (Paris: 1985), 38.
7 The term Balkan-Levantine merchants was first used by S. Goldenberg and M. Dan in “Le commerce balkano-levantin de la Transylvanie au cours de la seconde moitié du XVIe siècle et au début du XVIIe siècle,” *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 5 (1–2) (1967): 87–117. For the regions of origin of these merchants see Mária Pakucs-Willcocks, “Greek and other merchants from the Ottoman Empire in the trade of Sibiu, 1614–1623,” *Historical Yearbook* 9 (2012): 45–59, and Lidia Cotovanu, “L’émigration sud-danubienne vers la Valachie et la Moldavie et sa géographie (XVe–XVIIe siècles): La potentialité heuristique d’un sujet peu connu,” *Cahiers balkaniques* 42 (2014): 2–7.
‘Greek merchants’ with ‘Turkish goods’ was common in early modern Central Europe. The volume of trade and the number of merchants involved in the commercial exchange grew significantly in the second half of the 17th century, a trend documented by the customs accounts of Sibiu. These sources allow an investigation into the continuities and discontinuities of Ottoman exports of foodstuffs and spices into Central Europe over a longer period.

**Normative Sources on Imported Foodstuffs in Transylvania**

Spices had been known and consumed in Transylvania since the late Middle Ages. Sibiu and Brașov, Saxon towns in southern Transylvania, were active transit and exchange centres in the long-distance trade starting with the late 14th century. The 1412 customs tariff issued by the Transylvanian voivode Stibor for the benefit of the Brașov traders gave the instruction that the ‘thirtieth’ customs duties (tricesima) had to be paid on spices (pepper, saffron, ginger, and clove), mohair (goat’s hair), cotton, and “all goods brought by the Saracens” (i.e. Turks): “De pipere, croco, sinsibero, cariofolis et de crinibus caprarum, bombasio et de omnibus rebus mercimonialibus quae per Saracenos asportantur, habetur tricesimum.”

This document is mirrored by the customs tariff issued by the Wallachian Prince Mircea in 1413, in which goods “coming from the sea or across the Danube” are mentioned generically. In the following centuries, spices and other Eastern goods continued to arrive to Transylvania, as documented by the

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8 Lajos Gecsényi, “‘Turkish goods’ and ‘Greek’ merchants in the kingdom of Hungary in the 16th and 17th Centuries,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae* 60, 1 (2007): 55–71.
9 Mária Pakucs-Willcocks, “The Transit of Oriental Goods through the Customs of Sibiu/Hermannstadt in the sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: An overview,” in *Economy and Society in Central and Eastern Europe: Territory, population, consumption*, eds. Daniel Dumitran and Valer Moga (Münster: 2014), 21–2.
10 Radu Manolescu, *Comerțul Țării Românești și Moldovei cu Brașovul (secolele XIV–XVI)* (Bucharest: 1965); Zsigmond Pál Pach, “Levantine Trade Routes to Hungary, 15th–17th centuries,” *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 33 (1) (1987): 57–65.
11 Zsigmond Pál Pach, “A Levante-kereskedelem I. Lajos korában,” *Századok* 109 (1) (1975): 17, note 76, which explains that in contemporary usage Saracens did not refer to Arabs but generically to Muslims.
12 *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen*, vol. 3 (Sibiu: 1902), 544–7 [hereafter UB].
13 UB, vol. 4 (Sibiu: 1937), 426.
customs accounts of Sibiu and Brașov. Spices had been favourite commodities for long-distance trade since the mediaeval period.

By the 17th century, spices, dried fruits and exotic foodstuffs were part of the daily diet of the urban upper classes and the nobility. The prices of the imported goods were a concern for the Transylvanian law-makers. Prince Gabriel Bethlen (1613–1629), an avid consumer of delicacies purchased for him in Venice, including sweets, spices, raisins and dried fruits, issued two price limitations for goods produced in Transylvania or imported into the principality. They provide us with a maximal range of sold and consumed spices and fruits in Transylvania in the 1620s, at least at the princely court.

The first list of prices was submitted to the approval of the Transylvanian Diet in April 1627 and contained the following foodstuffs: almonds, Viennese olive oil, Turkish olive oil, currants and raisins, ‘Venetian’ cane sugar, sweets (confreit), Venetian saffron, pepper, cinnamon, Turkish saffron, cloves, nutmeg, rice, candied sugar (‘red’ and ‘white’), and ginger (dyed and undyed). In October of the same year, a more comprehensive list of goods with their recommended sale prices was issued at Prince Bethlen’s initiative. It included a larger variety of certain spices, such as, for instance, saffron from Bojnice (Hung. Bajmóc), Trenčín (Hung. Trencsén, Ger. Trentschin), Vienna or ‘Turkey’, and listed mace, figs as well as chestnuts from Italy or from Baia Mare (Hung. Nagybánya, Ger. Frauenbach).

Spices in the Customs Accounts of Sibiu

While Prince Bethlen had personal agents, who supplied him with the fine foods he craved for, most foodstuffs were carried across shorter or longer distances and exchanged by merchants, and were sold in shops or at fairs. I have discussed the trade in spices and other foodstuffs coming from the Balkans into Transylvania in the 16th century in previous work. It is well known that the competition between the Venetian trade in Levantine spices and the

14 Mária Pakucs-Willcocks, Sibiu-Hermannstadt: Oriental trade in sixteenth century Transylvania, series Stadtteforschung, vol. 73 (Cologne: 2007), 88–9.
15 Florina Ciure, Relațiile dintre Veneția și Transilvania în secolele XVI–XVII (Brăila-Oradea: 2013), 187–99.
16 Erdélyi Országgyűlési Emlékek: Monumenta comitialia regni Transylvaniae, ed. Sándor Szilágyi, vol. 8 (Budapest: 1882), 380–1 [hereafter EOE].
17 Ibid., 444–5.
18 Annamária Jeney-Tóth, “Kereslet és kínálat: Fogyasztási szokások a koraújkori kolozsvári polgárok mindennapjaiban,” in A fogyasztás társadalomtörténete, ed. József Hudi (Budapest: 2007), 69–71.
19 Pakucs-Willcocks, Sibiu-Hermannstadt.
Portuguese maritime supplies of spices was one of the main features of the 16th century, and that the middle of the same century saw a ‘revival of the Levantine spice trade’ which can be followed even in the Transylvanian account books. In the 17th century, however, Transylvania was receiving spices and southern products (dried fruits, fish) from both directions: from the Ottoman Empire via the Balkans and from Vienna and the Polish towns.\textsuperscript{20} The customs registers of Cluj from the first half of the 17th century illustrate the two concurrent streams of supplies with exotic foods: they are easily identifiable even when the records do not indicate the precise origin of the goods. Thus, the spices, foodstuffs, and typical Turkish goods (silk, silk yarns, specific cotton textiles) are registered with their original Ottoman weights, such as the \emph{kanthar} or \emph{okka} for spices and foodstuffs.\textsuperscript{21}

The Transylvanian customs accounts from the 17th century document a rich variety of spices: pepper, saffron, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, mace, cloves, and incense, albeit some in negligible quantities. Pepper was undoubtedly the most popular spice, used especially for flavouring meat.\textsuperscript{22} The variations in the recorded amounts at the customs of Sibiu indicate that the supplies from the Levantine trade of spices fluctuated greatly. Pepper was not registered at all in the Sibiu registers after 1684, but we know from different sources that it remained present in the consignments of Greek merchants in the following years.\textsuperscript{23}

\begin{table}
\centering
\caption{Quantities and value of pepper in the Sibiu customs accounts}
\begin{tabular}{lll}
\hline
Year & Quantities, in pounds & Value in gold florins \\
\hline
1622 & 200 lb. & 50 fl. Au \\
1672 & 285 lb. & 47 fl. Au \\
1673 & 1015 lb. & 167 fl. Au \\
1682 & 200 lb. & 33 fl. Au \\
1684 & 50 lb. & 3.5 fl. Au \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{20} Pap, “A Kolozsváriak,” 141, showing the increased role of the Polish towns in redirecting spices and exotic fruits in Central Europe to the detriment of Vienna.
\textsuperscript{21} Pakucs-Willcocks, \emph{Sibiu-Hermannstadt}, 89.
\textsuperscript{22} Felipe Fernández-Armesto and Benjamin Sacks, “The Global Exchange of Food and Drugs,” in \emph{The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption}, ed. Frank Trentmann (Oxford: 2012), 132.
\textsuperscript{23} Olga Cicanci, \emph{Companiile grecești din Transilvania și comerțul european în anii 1636–1746} (Bucharest: 1981), 184–5.
Saffron was the most expensive of the spices, to the extent that a larger than the annual average amount of the spice could distort the overall values of imported goods, such as in 1682. In the price limitations of 1627, there are several types of saffron mentioned: the saffron imported from northern Hungary was set at the highest sale price, while the Turkish saffron cakes (pogácsa sáfrán) were listed in four degrees of quality: the very good variety and three successive lower-quality ones. The saffron recorded in customs accounts of Sibiu came on the land routes of the Ottoman Empire; its quality and shape were rarely described, and only very briefly, in the account books. Saffron cakes were recorded, but also “wax” saffron (víaszos sáfrány), which was of lower quality. Sibiu had always been an attractive market for saffron, and the town seems to have played this role well into the 17th century. In the customs account of Cluj, for instance, saffron was last recorded in 1630, whereas registers exist up to 1637.

Table 2 Quantities and value of saffron in the Sibiu customs accounts

| Year | Quantities, in pounds | Value in gold florins |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1615 | 130 lb.               | 228 fl. Au            |
| 1616 | 440 lb.               | 770 fl. Au            |
| 1618 | 93 lb.                | 163 fl. Au            |
| 1623 | 220 lb.               | 382 fl. Au            |
| 1672 | 31.5 lb.              | 31.5 fl. Au           |
| 1673 | 86.5 lb.              | 86.5 fl. Au           |
| 1682 | 170 lb.               | 160 fl. Au            |
| 1683 | 50 lb.                | 44 fl. Au             |
| 1684 | 58 lb.                | 55 fl. Au             |
| 1685 | 120 lb.               | 50 fl. Au             |
| 1686 | 2 lb.                 | 5 fl. Au              |
| 1689 | 10 lb.                | 25 fl. Au             |

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24 EOE, vol. 8, 381 and 441–2.
25 Pakucs-Willcocks, Sibiu-Hermannstadt, 86.
White turmeric (*curcuma zedoaria*) appears recorded as *czitvar* (from the German *Zitwer*) in the customs registers written in Hungarian from 1672 onward; it is a rhizome very similar to ginger. Ginger, recorded as *sinsiber* and *Ingwer* in the 16th-century customs accounts of Sibiu, was not registered under this name after the end of the 16th century. It is difficult to decide at this point whether people made such a clear difference between the two roots at that time or there was just a clerical choice of naming the same spice in different languages. In the customs registers of 1672 and 1673, in the section dedicated to the expenditure of the customs office, ginger (*gyömbér*) is listed together with the other spices in the consignments sent to the princely court in Alba Iulia, even though it did not feature in the recorded stock of the merchants.

**Table 3**  
*Quantities of curcuma (czitvar) in the customs registers of Sibiu*

| Year | Quantities, in pounds | Value in gold florins |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1673 | 275 lb.               | 35 fl. Au (?)         |
| 1682 | 7300 lb.              | 600 fl. Au            |
| 1683 | 750 lb.               | 148 fl. Au            |
| 1685 | 3500 lb.              | 280 fl. Au            |

The archives of Sibiu still preserve mandates for provisioning the princely household in Alba Iulia with spices from the customs. In 1675 none other than Bornemiszsa Anna herself, the wife of the Prince of Transylvania, sent a letter to Sibiu asking for “a cantor of spices for the needs of our kitchen.” In 1672 and 1673, the scribes also entered in the customs accounts among the usual expenses (salaries, running costs of errands, wood for heating, or small repairs to the customs house) the amounts of spices sent to the princely court by request. Such transports of spices from the customs house to the court were made every three months. To take the year 1672 as an example, the *kanthar* of spices had the same composition for each of the consignments meant for the needs of the princely kitchen: 60 pounds of pepper, 30 pounds of ginger, 6 pounds

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26 Pakucs-Willcocks, *Sibiu-Hermannstadt*, 87, table 13.

27 SJAN Sibiu, Fond Documente medievale, U vI 1238: “[...] az Verestorny harminczadrul tartozando egy cantorra valo fü szerszámot [...] konyhánk szükségére.”
of saffron, 3 pounds of mace, 3 pounds of cloves, 3 pounds of cinnamon, and 16 ½ pounds of cane sugar, all amounting to a value of around 50 gold florins. However, as previous tables show, the recorded traffic from the direction of the Balkans and Wallachia did not provide for these amounts of spices. It appears that these regular consignments of spices were part of the agreement with Prince Michael Apafi when Sibiu leased the customs revenues: a notice from the 1682-1685 register mentions that when the lease was agreed in 1679, 1,000 florins of the total sum was to be paid “in aromatics for Her Highness the Princess”, i.e. Bornemisza Anna. It is highly probable that the customs officers had to find and buy these spices elsewhere when they were not supplied by the commercial traffic. Nevertheless, it is clear that an expectation existed at court that the customs of Sibiu could furnish such amounts of aromatics, therefore partial entries in the customs registers could also be a reason for the small amounts of spices recorded.

Ferenc Pap has found that the customs registers of Cluj indicate an active trade with spices coming from Vienna in the 1620s and from the Polish towns in the 1630s. Zs. P. Pach has shown that after 1665, the year when a trade agreement between Vienna and Constantinople was signed at Vasvár (Ger. Eisenburg), the Wiener Orientalische Handelskompanie was shipping spices to Constantinople, while no spices were recorded in the exports from the Ottoman Empire toward Europe. The late Hungarian historian stated that: “This is a clear indication of the fact that by the middle of the 17th century the traditional routes of the Levantine spice trade have truly and definitely declined; the Dutch and the English world sea trade had achieved a monopoly.” Pach’s conclusion resonates with the findings of Fernand Braudel about the Dutch monopoly on the distribution of spices in Europe.

While there was less pepper and saffron coming via the Balkans, the Greek merchants continued to trade in spices and other exotic products, even buying them at fairs in Hungary and Transylvania, as shown by the records of Siguli Stratu, a Greek merchant from Sibiu. At the end of the 17th century, for instance, Siguli’s agents purchased pepper and cinnamon in Baia Mare and Târgu Mureș.
Foodstuffs in the Customs Accounts of Sibiu

Foodstuffs imported into Transylvania in the 17th century consisted overwhelmingly of dried fruits, citrus fruits, nuts, olive oil, and rice. Certain items had become staples in Transylvania, since they can be traced in the customs accounts for Ottoman imports to the region from the beginning of the 16th century.

Raisins (Uvae passae, weinbeeren) were recorded in the Sibiu customs accounts throughout the 16th century, but the quantities recorded each year varied greatly, ranging from over 5,000 pounds in 1553 to merely 120 pounds in 1588.33 In the 17th century, historical sources distinguish between currants (Hung. tengeri szőlő) and raisins (Hung. malozsa szőlő). They are inexplicably not present in the Sibiu registers from 1600–1601 and in the customs accounts between 1614 and 1622, while the Cluj tricesima accounts show constant imports into Transylvania from Vienna during that period.34 In the 1630s, however, there is a constant increase in the exports of dried fruits from Cluj westwards,35 and we can safely assume that these goods originated from the Balkans. In the Sibiu customs accounts, raisins were recorded again in the last quarter of the 17th century but still in very small amounts, as shown below:

| Year | Quantities, in pounds | Value in fl. Au |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1672 | 25 lb.                | 1 fl. Au        |
| 1673 | 25 lb.                | 1 fl. Au        |
| 1688 | 700 lb.               | 28 fl. Au       |

33 Pakucs-Willcocks, Sibiu-Hermannstadt, 95, table 19.
34 Pap, “A Kolozsváríak,” 140.
35 Ibid., 141.
Brought from southwest Asia by the Turks, rice was a typical product of Anatolia and the Balkan Peninsula in the early modern period. Rice had been brought to Sibiu since the 16th century and was listed in the limitations of 1627 and in the customs tariff of Brașov of 1654.

In the customs accounts of Cluj, rice is first recorded as late as 1617 in one merchant’s transport of only 200 pounds, where the scribe noted that the rice was brought from “Turkey.” In following years, the amounts registered grew to an average of 20–25 kanthars (approximately 4000 pounds) of rice each year, and while all was definitely imported from the Ottoman Empire, it was not sold locally but taken further into northern Hungary.

Bornemisza Anna’s cookbook suggested several ways for cooking rice. Among her recipes she included rice cooked “the way the Turks like it,” namely sweetened with honey, raisins, currants, and almond milk.

The price limitations set in 1627 at Prince Gabriel Bethlen’s request distinguished between Viennese and Turkish olive oil. Just as with other goods that

| Year | Quantities, in pounds | Value in fl. Au |
|------|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1615 | 6520 lb.              | 200 fl. Au     |
| 1618 | 6500 lb.              | 200 fl. Au     |
| 1622 | 2240 lb.              | 65 fl. Au      |
| 1683 | 200 lb.               | 3 fl. Au       |
| 1684 | 8400 lb.              | 117 fl. Au     |
| 1685 | 1400 lb.              | 20 fl. Au      |
| 1689 | 3700 lb.              | 52 fl. Au      |

36 Te-Tzu Chang, “Rice”, in *The Cambridge World History of Food*, vol. 1, eds. Kenneth F. Kiple and Kriemhild Coneè Ornelas (Cambridge: 2000), 138.
37 Halil Inalcık, “Rice cultivation and the çeltükçü-Re’âyâ system in the Ottoman Empire,” *Turcica. Revue d’études turques* 14 (1982): 139.
38 Pakucs-Willcocks, *Sibiu-Hermannstadt*, 95; *EOE*, vol. 8, 442.
39 Ferenc Pap (ed.), *Kolozsvári harmincadjegyzékek (1599–1637)* (Bucharest: 2000), 269.
40 Ibid., passim.
41 *Bornemisza Anna szakácskönyve 1680-ból*, ed. Elemér Lakkó (Bucharest: 1982), 215.
42 *EOE*, vol. 8, 351.
were imported into Transylvania from both south and west, we can assume that the olive oil brought to Sibiu arrived on the land routes along the Balkans. It was one of the few foodstuffs that was sold continuously and without great variations in amounts throughout the 17th century, only to show a salient increase in the traded quantities in 1689 and 1690.

A greater array of foodstuffs reached Transylvania from the south as the century progressed. Thus, coffee was first recorded in the Sibiu customs accounts in 1689, and, starting with 1694 through to 1725, it arrived in Transylvania in very small amounts, according to the data extracted from registers of the Greek merchants’ association from Brașov by Olga Cicanci. Tobacco also made its way into Transylvania in the second half of the 17th century. This timeline is consistent with the arrival of coffee and tobacco in other parts of our region. Citrus fruits were late arrivals among the southern fruits recorded at the customs of Sibiu: lemons, lemon juice, and oranges feature in the account books only in the late 17th century. The household inventories of Prince Gabriel

### Table 6

**Quantities and values of olive oil in the customs registers of Sibiu**

| Year | Quantities, in pounds | Value in fl. Au |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 1615 | 300 lb.               | 31 fl. Au       |
| 1618 | 280 lb.               | 22 fl. Au       |
| 1622 | 650 lb.               | 51 fl. Au       |
| 1672 | 120 lb.               | 4 fl. Au        |
| 1673 | 420 lb.               | 14 fl. Au       |
| 1682 | 240 lb.               | 10 fl. Au       |
| 1684 | 420 lb.               | 10 fl. Au       |
| 1688 | 4300 lb.              | 100 fl. Au (?)  |
| 1689 | 3800 lb.              | 90 fl. Au (?)   |

43 Cicanci, *Companiile*, 185.
44 Ana Maria Gruia, *The Gift of Vice: Pipes and the habit of smoking in early modern Transylvania* (Cluj-Napoca: 2013), 27–37.
45 Aleksandar Fotić, “The Introduction of Coffee and Tobacco to the Mid-west Balkans,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae* 64 (1) (2011): 89–100. Cf. Olivia Senciuc’s study in the present volume: Senciuc places the beginnings of coffee-drinking among the elites of the Romanian Principalities in the early 18th century.
Bethlen show nonetheless that he ordered lemons, dried lemons, and oranges to be purchased for him regularly in the 1620s.46

Among the more exotic foodstuffs of the 17th century, the habarnicza (a cephalopod, octopus or squid) stands out. Habarnicza is mentioned in Transylvanian account books from the late 16th century47 and was purchased for Prince Gabriel Bethlen in 1620 and 1625 in Istanbul.48 In the 1654 customs tariff issued for the customs point near Brașov, the habarnicza was priced by the bundle and listed together with fish.49 It was most likely sold dry, as Bornemisza Anna’s recipe for habarnicza suggests:

What should be cooked from habarnicza

Make a strong lye, put the habarnicza in and let it rest for about three nights, it shall swell nicely. Wash the habarnicza twelve times and let it rest in fresh water to clean the lye off. Afterwards throw it in hot water, clean it, and cool it down. The habarnicza has many tails: bind them, put them on a skewer. Roast them quickly and sprinkle with soft butter. Serve dry and warm. It is tasty to eat with pepper. It does not require many ingredients, but it is laborious. It can be fried, according to one’s wish: it is tasty just the same.50

Princess Bornemisza also offered nine ways for preparing snail, which include using green herbs and plenty of pepper.51 Snails are documented in 1672 in the Sibiu customs registers. Occasionally, merchants were recorded carrying Turkish cheese and butter, walnuts or aniseed (1672, 1673, and 1683).

Comparing the composition of the traffic in foodstuffs in the various Transylvanian customs accounts against the purchases made for Prince Gabriel Bethlen, it is evident that the goods supplied through the agency of Balkan merchants were aimed at a wider consumer market, perhaps well-to-do townspeople and the nobility. Furthermore, in the 17th century, foodstuffs and spices were not a major group of commodities in the trade transiting the Balkans and Transylvania further into Central Europe. Foodstuffs generally made up a small

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46 Udvar tartás és számadáskönyvek, vol. 1. Bethlen Gábor fejedelem udvar tartása, ed. Béla Radvánszky (Budapest: 1888), 8–36.
47 Erdélyi Magyar Szótörténeti Tûr, ed. Attila T. Szabó, vol. 4 (Bucharest: 1984), 855.
48 Udvar tartás és számadáskönyvek, 29.
49 Nicolae Edroiu and Paul Gyulai, “Tricesima la Brașov în a doua jumătate a secolului al XVII-lea,” Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Series Historia 12 (1967): 15.
50 Bornemisza Anna, 191.
51 Ibid., 196.
percentage of the overall commercial traffic, which consisted overwhelmingly of the transports of textiles, fabrics, and yarns. Their highest share of the recorded trade was reached in 1616 and 1673, when spices and foodstuffs amounted to 5 per cent of the merchandise, only to drop to insignificant amounts in the 1690s.

**Table 7**  
 Trade in spices and foodstuffs in the customs registers of Sibiu

| Year | Value in fl. Au | % of total trade |
|------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1615 | 566 fl. Au      | 3.97%            |
| 1616 | 866 fl. Au      | 5%               |
| 1672 | 260 fl. Au      | 1%               |
| 1673 | 786 fl. Au      | 5%               |
| 1682 | 534 fl. Au      | 2.72%            |
| 1683 | 465 fl. Au      | 2.62%            |
| 1684 | 163 fl. Au      | 0.53%            |
| 1685 | 581 fl. Au      | 2.69%            |
| 1686 | 11 fl. Au       | 0.07%            |

**Conclusions**

Sibiu was a major trading centre in Transylvania and attracted the most active of the Greek merchant community in the region, therefore we can use its commercial traffic as a good indicator of the offer of Oriental goods in the region. However, it is difficult to assess the overall values of Transylvania’s imports of spices, dried fruits and other foodstuffs based solely on Sibiu’s customs accounts. Comparisons with the customs accounts for the city of Cluj in the same period have been made wherever possible.

There were several channels for exotic foods to reach Transylvania. The ruler of Transylvania, Gabriel Bethlen, paid his agents to procure fashionable fineries in fabrics and in foodstuffs. In addition, merchants coming from the Ottoman Empire can be credited with introducing novelty and exotic products onto the Transylvanian and Central European markets. In the 17th century, Transylvania became a meeting ground for the trade in spices and exotic foodstuffs arriving

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52 Pakucs-Willcocks, “The Transit of Oriental Goods,” 24.
both from the Ottoman Empire and from the West. Mediaeval cuisines across Europe made heavy use of spices, a trend which continued in Transylvania in the 17th century, at a time when it had peaked elsewhere. In addition, the Transylvanian imports in this century were enriched by new foods and other items, such as tobacco, which caught on in phase with the West.53

Although culinary practices in Transylvania were not the main focus of my analysis, I have tried to connect the data from the customs accounts to actual culinary usage, especially at the court of Princess Bornemisza. I have shown that Bornemisza Anna used Sibiu as a constant supplier of spices. Her recipe collection fleshes out the raw data with illustrations on how exotic fruits and spices were embedded in the cuisine of her time. At the current state of our knowledge of foodways and food practices in the regions covered by the present volume, we can presume that the use of spices in Transylvania was comparable to the style of cooking widely used in Europe at the time. This style of cooking had inherited mediaeval practices of mingling rich flavours of hot, sweet, and sour—as opposed to the more ‘natural’ way of cooking newly emerging in France.54 Bornemisza Anna’s cookbook shows an acquaintance with ‘Turkish’ sweet dishes, although the degree of Turkish influence on 17th-century Transylvanian gastronomy has yet to be determined.

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