



The Public Defense of the Doctoral Thesis in Medieval Studies

of
Iulia Caproș

on
STUDENTS FROM KOŠICE AT FOREIGN UNIVERSITIES
BEFORE AND DURING THE REFORMATION PERIOD IN THE TOWN

will be held on

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Doctoral Thesis Abstract
Iulia Caproș

Students from Košice at Foreign Universities
Before and During the Reformation Period in the Town

This doctoral thesis provides a quantitative and descriptive analysis of the students from Košice, a town in present day Eastern Slovakia, formerly in the Northern part of the Hungarian Kingdom, who attended universities from the end of the fourteenth until the end of the sixth decade of the seventeenth century. My research proposes to fulfill two major goals: the first is to present this group of students with empirical data and the second is to delineate a number of its characteristics, with special attention paid to aspects related to academic peregrination and the relationship between the town and its studious inhabitants, either during or after their university studies. The research is based upon a prosopographical catalogue which comprises all students from Košice who went abroad to study at universities until the year 1660, identified in the available sources. This catalogue includes academic information about each of the students supplied with further data about his family background, social status, postgraduate career, etc. depending on the information that could be gathered. Whenever possible, some indication is given on the contribution, if any, to the cultural development of the town and the region. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of this catalogue allows some conclusions to be drawn concerning the general characteristics of the student population coming from Košice and the meaning and the impact of university attendance within the framework of a specific town.

The main text begins by setting the local context: presenting political, economic, and religious aspects of the development of the town of Košice during the period of research. While located at the periphery of Western Christianity and relatively far away from the most important centers of learning, Košice was, at the same time, one of the most important merchant towns in Northern Hungary. It was a significant component of the trade network in East Central Europe at the time and a regional center of importance. The town presents interesting patterns of political, economic, and religious development, in particular from the fifteenth to the first half of the seventeenth century. This pivotal role that it played within the region provided an incentive for researching both the development of education in the town and the university attendance of its inhabitants or other type of protégées.

The third chapter of the dissertation maps out the academic peregrination of the students from Košice throughout the entire research period and analyzes the main factors that influenced the numerical evolution and the institutional choices at different stages. In addition to analyzing the numerical fluctuations and the institutional preferences, further aspects related to the academic peregrination of students from Košice have been considered, such as the content and duration of studies, graduation, social status of the students, inter-university mobility and traveling in groups. One of the important

outcomes of this work is the establishment of a comprehensive numerical picture of the academic peregrination of students from Košice during the period researched. A total number of 306 matriculations at different universities until the sixties of the seventeenth century (1660) by 278 students originating from the town of Košice was identified and systematized in the prosopographical catalogue. Two major sub-periods were delineated when analyzing the university attendance of the students from Košice. The first one lasts until the year 1530 and is characterized by an increased number of university matriculations at a rather limited selection of universities. During the second period - from 1530 to the 1660 - the number of university attendees decreases while the geographical framework of university attendance considerably broadens. In the first period, the most popular university was, undoubtedly, that of Cracow. Another favorite was the University of Vienna, where students from Košice could be identified beginning with the late fourteenth century already and until the seventeenth with several interruptions caused by various political and social events of both an internal and an external character. While during the first sub-period Italian universities were popular for Košice students to some extent and less so the German ones, the situation changed in the sixteenth century, when Wittenberg dominates from the 1550s, followed by a number of other German universities. The numerous university foundations in the German territories offered to Košice inhabitants cheaper and closer options for going abroad to study than the Italian institutions. Besides, the official adherence of the town to Lutheranism directed the institutional choice of students originating from the town to those universities where the same confession was in force. In the first half of the seventeenth century, students from Košice continued to go to Germany, yet the previously popular university of Wittenberg seemed to be replaced by that of Königsberg and other universities, in particular in the north-east of the German territories, which were relatively unaffected by military actions and tended to be more tolerant towards the religious beliefs of their students. And finally, a few students began to matriculate at Catholic universities in the first decades of the seventeenth century, yet this occurred only sporadically.

Chapter number four focuses on defining the opportunities for financing university studies that students from Košice had at their disposal at different stages of the research period. The information for the fifteenth century is rather scarce in this respect. The major support for university studies came from home, from the family and prosperous relatives. In addition to the possibility of accommodation at various bursas, as it was best illustrated for the case of the Cracow University, a number of students representing the Dominican order could be identified, who benefited from the common practice of this order to provide financial support for its members studying theology at schools or universities in Italy. However, this funding applied only until the mid-sixteenth century at the latest, after which date the members of this order had left Košice.

From the middle of the sixteenth century until the end of the Reformation period, the town council was actively involved in improving the educational opportunities for the inhabitants of the town

and the surrounding area. Several categories of beneficiaries could be identified, such as representatives of well-established families in the town, relatives of town council members, sons of former or present employees in the town administration, church or school, under-age descendants of prominent town burghers, for whom the town council was entrusted to handle the inheritance and help them financially during their studies, and individuals already employed at the school or in the church locally or in the neighborhood. Among the conditions for receiving financial support, the following could be identified: the student had to express his intention to pursue studies, or to already have studied at one of the Protestants secondary schools or universities abroad, the beneficiaries were expected to spend the money received to pursue their education and supposed to keep in touch with the town council in order to inform about their life at school and their academic progress. There are some documented cases in which a precondition for a financial subsidy was a commitment to return to the town, to take a position at the local church or school or to continue working in one of these positions, if previously employed. As is illustrated in a number of letters, a common practice in Košice at the time seemed to be financing two years of stay at the university, but the duration of the subsidy varied from case to case. Some students stayed longer and received financial support for the entire period. In some cases, a student would be sponsored starting from his secondary school studies until the end of his university studies, even while moving from one university to another, as was more typical in the first half of the seventeenth century. On average, the annual grant was 50 Hungarian florins, yet again this amount varied from one student to another. There were cases in which the student would receive this amount with relative regularity throughout several years, and other students who maybe received it only once or twice. The amount of 50 florins is commensurate with the amount of money granted to students by foundations or urban councils of different towns in the German territories, as presented in the scholarly literature. What makes the situation in Košice different from that of these other towns is the number of provided scholarships.

The last chapter of the dissertation addresses the postgraduate careers of the former students and attempts to assess the impact that university studies had upon individuals and the town or region as a whole. In spite of the many limitations, some data about the postgraduate fate of students from Košice in the fifteenth and the first two decades of the sixteenth century could be collected and analyzed, the result of which is the identification of three main patterns of postgraduate career development, namely a) students who returned to Košice, b) who stayed in the town where they completed their studies, either at the university or practicing a profession, and c) students who moved to other locations, either to continue their studies or to develop a career as scholars, doctors, artists, etc. Since university attendance required financial investment and the possibilities to find support for studies were not very numerous at that time, attending a university was the privilege of those who had already attained a certain social status and possessed sufficient material wealth. According to the cases identified, the highest

achievements acquired after the university attendance in the fifteenth century was the development of a professional career abroad or advancement in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which a few former students from Košice made use of.

The data that could be collected with regard to the development of the postgraduate careers of students from Košice after the 1530s is more numerous, and this allows for defining a number of their characteristics with more factual support. A first obvious feature is the vast *geographical mobility* of the former students, a large part of them moving frequently from one location to the other, within the region of Upper Hungary but also further away, forced by factors of economic, political or religious character. A second identified feature is a so-called “*professional*” *mobility*, which means individuals changing their “profession”, alternating between school, church and civic administration – in most of the cases the order being school-church or school-town administration. The success of this type of mobility was determined by the same type of education these employees had received at a secondary school or university and by the nearly identical standing of the teachers and priests in Košice. Employment as scribe or notary was certainly more attractive, due to the increase in political influence and the chances to advance to urban council membership. Therefore, we can state that, from the sixteenth century on university studies became a means to secure employment and professional advancement to a certain extent. Social respect for learned competences started to increase and the persons who had attended universities had more chances to become part of the urban elite in Košice. This way, a third type of mobility can be delineated to characterize the former students from the town – *social mobility*. For people not belonging to the elite by birth, university studies became more and more an essential factor in the process of intellectual and professional advancement. At the same time, additional ways of improving one’s social and financial status were often considered by former students, and sometimes pursued besides their professional career, such as family inheritance, involvement in trade or a successful marriage.

In addition to increasing the size of the urban intellectual elite, another important impact of former students from Košice from the second half of the sixteenth century is their contribution to the establishment and sustainability of the Reformation, in particular of its Lutheran branch in the town of Košice and in the other neighboring locations. Students were among the first messengers of the new religious movement and, further on, in their positions as school rectors contributed to the increase of the level of education in local schools, while the town churches were those places where the graduated priests were promoting Lutheran ideas. In general terms, the Reformation addressed two aspects of the town’s cultural development, school education and book culture, and both these directions gained a significant momentum starting from the second half of the sixteenth century, with the strong involvement of the former students.

The fact that, notwithstanding the changing context at home and at the universities of the time, individuals of Košice did not cease to go to universities throughout the entire period of this research, suggests that university education presented some importance for the town's inhabitants. The number of students, however, was lower than in other towns of similar size located in the German territories. Among the important reasons for this low representation was the peripheral character of the town, the lack of financial resources among the population, and the still-limited need for university graduates in the public and economic life. The commercial importance of Košice stayed high and the town's political, military, and religious functions increased during the sixteenth century, while the potential for intellectual activity stayed rather limited. In other words, even though Košice remained the leading member of the *Pentapolis* alliance throughout the researched period, its intellectual centrality was much weaker than its economic one. Indeed, it never became a significant intellectual centre, and none of the church leaders in the Reformation period originated from Košice. A large number of students from the town were driven to universities abroad for more pragmatic reasons than by the desire to get involved in academic scholarship (with a few exceptions pointed to in the text of the dissertation). The greater part of the population, even those pertaining to the urban administration, was satisfied with the existing secondary schools or private education of some kind and only a very few ventured to leave their homeland searching for knowledge.

Even though this study concentrated on a single town, it does not intend to be a narrow-minded local study. It was my hope to contribute to the further development of two major areas of study. The first area of interest is the medieval and early modern history of towns, to which this study contributed an essential element, namely the university education of the town inhabitants and its impact within the local urban context. The study provided further information on the urban elite in Košice during the respective time, researching the group of students and identifying it as a socially privileged category of the town's inhabitants. This research demonstrates the direct relationship between university attendance and the political, social, economic, and religious development at home and the importance of an active involvement of the town's administration in improving the educational opportunities for its inhabitants.

The other domain studied is the history of university education in East-Central Europe, before and during the Reformation, the analysis of which is advanced by providing material for further comparative studies on Upper Hungary, based on the rich and still only partially explored archival material preserved in the present-day Eastern Slovak towns. Research about other towns from this region would be very beneficial for estimating and explaining the role and position of Košice within the regional academic peregrination context, and to answer the questions about the extent to which the town conformed to or differed from the common patterns, and in what ways the town of Košice was distinctive.

Curriculum Vitae
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Education:

- 2001-2007 Ph.D. Studies, Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary;
- 1999-2000 MA in Medieval Studies, Department of Medieval Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary;
- 1990-1995 Diploma in Philology, Specialization Romanian Language and Literature, Department of Letters, State University, Chișinău, Moldova;

Employment:

- 2007-2009 Lecturer, Chair of World History, Department of History, State Pedagogical University, Chișinău, Moldova (AFP teaching scholarship);
- 2004-2005 Lecturer, Chair of Classical Philology, Department of Letters, State University, Chișinău, Moldova;
- 1997-1998 Scholarships and Youth Programs Coordinator, Soros Foundation, Chișinău, Moldova;
- 1993 -1997 Lecturer, Chair of Classical Philology, Department of Letters, State University, Chișinău, Moldova;

Scholarships and Awards:

- 2006 Research scholarship at Herder-Institute, Marburg, Germany;
- 2005 Marie Curie Fellowship in the framework of the EU doctoral training project *European Doctorate in Social History of Europe and the Mediterranean "Building on the Past"*, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia;
- 2004 Short-term research visitor at the Medieval Institute, University of Notre Dame du Lac, South Bend IN, USA;
- 2002-2003 DAAD post-graduate research scholarship, University of Konstanz, Germany;
- 2000 Annual Award for the academic year 1999-2000, Svetlana Mihaela Tănasa Memorial Fund of the Department of Medieval Studies at the Central European University Budapest;
- 1998-1999 DAAD short-term research scholarship, University of Konstanz, Germany;

Recent Publications (related to the topic of the doctoral thesis):

2008 “Influența universității din Wittenberg asupra dezvoltării intelectuale a populației urbane din estul Europei în perioada Reformei: exemplul orașului Košice” (The influence of the University of Wittenberg upon the intellectual development of the urban population from Eastern Europe during the Reformation period: the example of Košice). *Analele Asociației Naționale a Tinerilor Istorici din Moldova: Anuar Istoric* 8 (2008): 89-101.

2007: Book Review: Németh, István. *Kassa város archontológiája: Bírák, belső és külső tanács 1500-1700* (Archontology of the town of Košice: judges, inner and outer council 1500-1700). Budapest: Szentpétery Imre Történettudományi Alapítvány, 2006, 326 pages. Published in *Historia Urbana*, nr. 1-2 (2007): 289-290.

2007: “Košickí študenti na Univerzite v Krakove v 15. a na začiatku 16. storočia” (Students from Košice at the University of Cracow in the 15th and early 16th century). *Historický časopis* (Journal of the Slovak Academy of Science) 55:2 (2007): 249-266.

2006: “Kaschauer Studenten an deutschen Universitäten vom Anfang des 16. Jahrhunderts bis zur Gründung der Jesuitenakademie zu Kaschau im Jahr 1657.” In *Peregrinatio Hungarica: Studenten aus Ungarn an deutschen und österreichischen Hochschulen vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Márta Fata, Gyula Kurucz, and Anton Schindling, 81-94. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006.

2004 “University Students from Central and Eastern Europe during the Late Middle Ages: Several General Considerations.” *Analele Asociației Naționale a Tinerilor Istorici din Moldova: Anuar Istoric* 5 (2004): 227-231.