

The Relations Between Burghers of Košice and Kings of Hungarian Kingdom by the Half of the 14th Century

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vol. 1, 2012, 1-2, pp. 6-11

The author of the paper presents his knowledge and opinions of bilateral political relations between the burghers of Košice and the kings of the Hungarian Kingdom by the mid-14th century. It has been accrued in the ongoing research into the history of burghers and towns in Slovakia and former Kingdom of Hungary in the Middle Ages. The author has explored this theme for over an half of a century. The author's recent findings can be broadly summarized as follows.

Key words: The Middle Ages. Towns. Burghers. Košice. Town's privileges.

Burghers and towns existed in the eastern part of Central Europe (north of the middle Danube) since the 9th century. Nitra was the oldest town on the Slovak territory. Local markets represented the economic basis for the creation and initial development of the bourgeoisie and towns. The bourgeoisie and towns had been developing spontaneously by the end of the 12th century, adopting desired and favourable customs. Since the beginning of the 13th century burghers of the Hungarian Kingdom's towns acquired privileges – collections of rights and obligations confirmed by Hungarian kings through the means of the royal charters. Only the burghers of Székesfehérvár (Hungary) continued in spontaneous development also in the 13th century, as well as the inhabitants of Bratislava (Slovakia) until 1291.¹ Acquisition of various privileges by towns on the initiative of their burghers proceeded in the 14th century.

We find that it is necessary to note that the traditional interpretation of the political relations among kings and burghers has been already exhausted. The existing scientific attitude seems to be rather unproductive for the future. Therefore, we have investigated the relations in the opposite fashion, as the burghers and the king. The basis for this exploration lies in the finding that the privileges of burghers were mainly a result of their own requirements. Kings just granted them the requested liberties and rights, as well as endurable obligations. The burghers were the initiative ones. So the traditional meaning about the kings' generous disposition loses its justification. The political loyalty of the burghers, or their military assistance to the king, must also be emphasized.

With Košice in focus, it is inevitable to get acquainted briefly of the oldest written documents about the local burghers and about the beginnings of Košice as a town. It has been long known and established in professional circles of historians-medievalists, that the oldest applicable documents are represented by a charter of Chapter of Eger from 1230

1 ULIČNÝ, F. Začiatky miest na východnom Slovensku. In *Zborník Filozofickej fakulty Univerzity Komenského*. Bratislava 1997, 111-116; ULIČNÝ, F. Trhy a mestá na Slovensku v 9. – 12. storočí. In *Zborník príspevkov k slovenským dejinám. K životnému jubileu univ. prof. PhDr. Richarda Marsinu, DrSc.* Ed. Sedlák, V. Bratislava 1998, 53-61; ULIČNÝ, F. Výsadnosť mešťanov od 13. storočia. In *Historický časopis* (49) 2001, 3, 415-431; ULIČNÝ, F. Nitra – mesto v 9. – 12. storočí. In *Nitra v slovenských dejinách*. Ed. Marsina, R. Martin 2002, 140-146; ULIČNÝ, F. Mesto Banská Bystrica okolo roku 1255. In *Minulosť a prítomnosť Banskej Bystrice 1*. Eds. Nagy, I. – Graus, I. Banská Bystrica 2006, 5-14; ULIČNÝ, F. Pôvod a vývoj miest na Slovensku od 9. do 14. storočia. In *Historické štúdie* (46) 2010, 315-335; ULIČNÝ, F. Falošná listina údajne kráľa Bela IV. z roku 1237 pre stoličnobelehradských mešťanov. In *Slovenská archivistika* (XLV) 2010, 2, 6-13; ULIČNÝ, F. Vývoj bratislavského mešťanstva v 12. – 13. storočí a listina výsad z roku 1291. In *Slovenská archivistika* (XLVI) 2011, 1-2, 17-28.

and charter of King Béla IV. from 1249. The first document contains the earliest indirect information about the burghers of Košice, the second one proves the oldest direct evidence of the burghers and the town of Košice.

According to the contents of the first charter, the inhabitants of Košice, Simon, son of Gregory a cleric of Košice, and Peter, son of Paul, had owned estates in the village Lubina lying in the vicinity of Košice even before 1230. They sold the properties to men of unknown origin in 1230 and the transaction was confirmed by the charter of Chapter of Eger.² The fact of selling estates, which belonged to Simon and Peter, proves that they owned the lands previously. So the sellers could not be peasants, because the contemporary customs excluded peasants from the right of possessing and, thus, selling estates. The sellers Simon and Peter were not nobles either. If they were nobles, it would be reflected in their social characterization by the Latin word comes before their names which was not the case. The only possible explanation which offers itself here is that they were burghers and Košice was a town, although the text is missing stating their social status expressed by the Latin words *cives* or *hospites*, as well as for Košice the word *civitas*. Due to such interpretation of the document, it can be regarded as the oldest, but indirect evidence of Košice burghers and Košice as a town around 1230.

The earliest direct information about burghers of Košice and town Košice can be found in the charter of King Béla IV. dated to 13 April 1249. The document testified to the provision of liberties for *hospites* (guests) from Seňa. The privileges were to be identical to those ones already received by burghers in Košice (granted by the same king). So the charter does not contain enumerated paragraphs. Instead of this, there is just a brief mention of the concession to the adaption of the same system of paying tithes, judicial matters and all other unspecified rights endowed to Košice.³ Naturally, there is a sentence about obligations for the Seňa inhabitants too. The tax payable to the king should have been paid in the same way, as households of Košice burghers did it.⁴ From the contents imply that the inhabitants of Košice were burghers and Košice was a town, not just in 1249, but even before that.

Based on the information of the two documents from the years 1230 and 1249 it can be established, that burghers lived in Košice, and Košice was a town, already before 1230. Moreover, it is necessary to continue exploring and discovering the circumstances, which existed during the life of the first burghers' generations.

The inception of such research lies in one part of the document of King Béla IV. from 1249. There it is written that the king grants to *hospites* of Seňa identical privileges, which had been once given by himself to Košice burghers and confirmed by a charter.⁵ As it has been already found out by exploration of the charter from 1230, Simon a Peter from Košice were burghers before this year. From the political history of the Hungarian kingdom, it is well, that Béla IV. Ascended to the royal throne in 1235. However, even during the life of his father, king Andrew II. (1205 – 1235) Béla successfully participated in the rule of the country. He acted in function of younger king. The status allowed him to govern the eastern part of the Hungarian

2 MARSINA, R. *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Slovaciae I*. Bratislavae 1971, 259. „*quod Symon, filius Gregorii, sacerdotis de villa Cassa et Petur, filius Paul de eadem*“.

3 MARSINA, R. *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Slovaciae II*. Bratislavae 1987, 223, 319. „*libertate ... qua ex concessione nostra hospites nostri de Kassa perfruuntur, tam in decimis exsolvendis, quam in iudiciis, seu etiam in omnibus aliis in eorundem privilegio nominatim per singula et articulatum expressis*“.

4 MARSINA, R. *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Slovaciae II...*, 319. „*censum ... quem ... populi nostri de Kassa*“.

5 MARSINA, R. *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Slovaciae II...*, 319. „*ut omni libertate gaudeant, qua ex concessione nostra hospites nostri de Kassa perfruuntur ... in eorundem privilegio nominatim per singula et articulatum expressis*“.

Kingdom, what is proven by several references since 1220.⁶ So the privileges could be granted to Košice burghers by Béla even in the years 1220 – 1230. Anyway, it must have happened before 1230.⁷ But the precise date remains to be one of the enigmas of Košice bourgeoisie is development in the 1230s. A surprising piece of information has offers itself at this point, and namely that the examined charter of the younger king Béla has preserved neither in the original, nor in the later confirmations or transcriptions, and even without any reference in the latter documents. This immutable fact has caused difficulties to historians for a long time in their circumstantial research related to the town privileges of Košice. Despite the adverse situation, we must try to know the factors of that time.

Košice was a crossroad of old provincial routes running in the south–north and the east–west directions. The provincial road south-north led along the lower flow of the river Hornád to Košice, and the first written evidence about this route inheres to the charter from the year 1230 listed above. There is a mention about the section of the road from Barca to Košice and further north along the river Torysa to Solivar and Prešov. Such information provides the description of the Lubina's boundaries.⁸

Two important roads led to Košice from the west. One of them ran from the castle Turňa via Moldava to Košice. A charter from 1324 has mentioned it.⁹ The second route stretched from the south-eastern Spiš to Košice. A record about this from 1330 has been preserved.¹⁰ A provincial road directing to the central part of Zemplin country towards Sečovce and Michalovce led to the east from Košice. Other road led from Sečovce crossing Trebišov to south Zemplín.¹¹

The routes listed above have been documented by written sources since the 13th century. Since they had been already known and used, their existence should be expected well before the 13th century. The roads were regularly used mainly by traders, occasionally by soldiers too. Košice was a crossroad of those routes undoubtedly in the 12th, as well as before the 12th century. Košice as a human settlement at the junction of roads occasionally attracted not only people from surrounding villages to acquire a few necessary things, but gradually also merchants. Coincidence of several factors led to the spontaneous establishment of a market. Introduction, but especially the permanent conduction of the local market, was the economic basis of the nascence and development of the Košice's bourgeoisie and of the transformation from village to town. These processes lasted undoubtedly in the 11th – 12th centuries.

Advantageous geographical location of Košice, the local market and developing life of the townspeople, were surely attractive elements for craftsmen from other villages, but especially for immigrants from abroad, who gradually settled in Košice. Life of the incomers was almost entirely dependent on a regularly held market that was also well supported by them.

The foreigners brought from abroad, in addition to craft and trading skills, also experience and ideas of civil (bourgeois) life from their native country. They were the most active group among townspeople in Košice, so that they acquired privileges from the younger king Béla in the 20's of the 13th century. By the introduction and using of the privileges in everyday life,

6 SZENTPÉTERY, E. *Regesta regum stirpis Arpadianae critico-diplomatica I/1*. Budapestini 1923, 174; SZENTPÉTERY, E. *Regesta regum stirpis Arpadianae critico-diplomatica II-2*. 1943, 185.

7 ULIČNÝ, F. *Začiatky miest na východnom Slovensku...*, 112.

8 MARSINA, R. *Codex diplomaticus et epistolaris Slovaciae I...*, 259. „*ad magnam viam, qua itur ad Castrum Salis, ... ad magnam viam, que viniens de Barca*“. ULIČNÝ, F. *Dejiny osídlenia Šariša*. Košice 1990.

9 Magyar Országos Levéltár (MOL), Diplomatikai Levéltár (DL), 84 776; 84 780: „*via magna ... de Scepsy versus Cassam*“.

10 Archív mesta Košice, Tajný archív, M – Tökés, č. 1. „*ad magnam viam ... de Scepus ad Cossa*“.

11 ULIČNÝ, F. *Dejiny osídlenia Zemplínskej župy*. Michalovce 2001, 731-732 (map).

the spontaneous evolution of the townspeople ended and was replaced by the development of public and social life according to the liberties acquired from the king, written in the charter. The privileges had the force of law for Košice burghers, for the king, the nobles and the church, and should have been respected even by foreigners.

Now we shall describe relations between the Košice burghers and Hungarian kings in a specified period of time. Since the beginnings of their burgher's life, the Košice's townspeople shaped their connections to the king, as the highest secular (political) suzerain, to the bishop of Eger, as the functionally and geographically the nearest and the highest ecclesiastical authority, to the nobles, as the owners of the villages in the vicinity of Košice, especially to the barons of the nobility, and to the burghers in other towns. These links to different social groups expressed general efforts of the Košice's townspeople with the influential contemporary human factors. Every burgher, or rather the most of the townspeople participated on the creating of the relations to the world outside the town. But the patricians were certainly most initiative who held the office of the Judge and members of the Town Council.

Evolution of the burgher's attitude to the Hungarian kings could be explored and described since the early 13th century. It was expressed during the reign of Béla as a younger king in the 1230s, or possibly since the year 1235, as he became king – Béla IV. Acquirement of the privileges from the younger king Béla had almost epochal significance for the Košice burghers, which could be hardly compared to any of their success sooner or later. There is no doubt that the inhabitants were aware of the king's encouragement and magnanimity which led them to sincerely appreciate and honor him. It was certainly the most favourable relationship of the Košice burghers with a king of the House of Árpád. The beneficial connections existed later also between the younger king Stephen and two homesteaders of Košice, Samphleben and Obl. Both hospites received Vyšné Košice (Upper Košice) in 1261. However, it was only the relation between the younger king and the deserving men, not a general attitude to the townspeople of Košice. So this personal relation was in no connection with the fact, that the donated estate became later a part of Košice's cadaster.

King Andrew III. (1290 – 1301) also had sympathy for the people from this town. He entrusted Hanus (John), son of Herbord, a Košice's burgher, clearly a rich trader who was well experienced with finances, with the administration of the Royal Chamber located in the town. It was an especially important role because of the custody of the royal revenue for the king's thesaurus. Hanus held the post in the 1297.¹²

A uniquely beneficial relation had been developing between the king Charles I. and burghers of Košice, lasting continuously for 30 years. It is known, that also purlers from Košice supported the king in his military victory in the battle of Rozhanovce (15 June 1312), when he prevailed over Omodej's family. It may be expected, that soon after the battle, the king was convalescing from the incident in Košice. Certainly he stayed in town on 10 August 1312.¹³

In 1319 envoys of Košice, especially traders, acquired from Charles I. the lucrative right allowing them not to pay tolls at all in Abov, Šariš, Zemplín and Uh counties. The king rewarded the burghers for their political loyalty, and undoubtedly also military merits, of which both parties were well aware.¹⁴ Sometimes only a polite formula of contemporary charters was fully justifiable in this case.

12 WENZEL, G. *Codex diplomaticus Arpadianus continuatus* V. Pest 1867, 169. „Hannus ... de Cassa, comes camere nostre maiestatis“.

13 NAGY, E. *Codex diplomaticus Hungaricus Andegavensis* I. Budapest, 268. „Datum prope Cassam“.

14 JUCK, L. *Výsady miest a mestečiek na Slovensku I.* (1238 – 1350). Bratislava 1984, 93. „nos consideratis fidelitatibus et multigenis serviciis fidelium hospitem nostrorum de Cassa“.

Also in 1321 the king appreciated and remunerated famous merits of the Košice townspeople by the right not to pay the annual tax payable to him.¹⁵

Charles I. visited Košice personally with his entourage on 27 June 1329.¹⁶ The burghers surely welcomed him with hospitality, which belonged to the very favorable king.

Their envoys visited the king even in 1342, six months before the death of Charles I. As the result of the negotiation the king confirmed the right to judiciary over all violations and crimes of the burghers by their Judge and the Town Council (charter dated on the castle Visegrad, Hungary, 28 January 1342). It was justified as a reflection of old merits. Needless to say, after 30 years since the battle of Rozhanovce, the then burghers of Košice and royal notary confused the information about the battle, so they mixed up the names of oligarch Matthew of Trenčín with the Omodej's clan. It reflected in the narration of the charter.¹⁷ It should be noted, that certainly from the initiative of the envoys, as well as from the king's point of view, Košice was then included among the most developed towns in the Kingdom of Hungary, and was the only such town in Slovakia.¹⁸

Very positive relationship between the burghers and the king from the House of Anjou, Louis I. the Great (1342 – 1382), the son of Charles I., continued from the early years of his reign. The young king complied to the appeal of traders from Košice already in 1344 ordering to a Russian captain not to levy from them higher tolls than from Polish merchants on the Polish–Russian border.¹⁹ Also in 1346 the king satisfied the requirement of Košice patricians allowing the burghers to capture and punish criminals in the Abov country.²⁰

But Louis I. in 1347 expressed the greatest favour when on 28 July 1347 he granted to inhabitants of Košice the same collection of rights as they had been used by burghers of Buda and hereby he enabled Košice holding two fairs lasting together 21 days. Finally, on 18 October 1347, the king specified and amplified the rights valid till then, which concerned the selling and drawing of wine, judging criminals, and possessing houses and estates.²¹ The king's donations satisfied the contemporary requirements of Košice's burghers with success. But it is necessary to be noted, that the envoys of Košice barely arrived at the royal court empty-handed. Kings and their chancellors tactfully remained silent about the gifts. The appropriate advancements to the king, however, brought the burghers lucrative benefits and liberties. There were no king's appointees in Košice, no in other towns in the Slovak territory, respectively in the Hungarian Kingdom, during the Middle Ages, who have been known in the important towns of Czech or Poland Kingdom, where such persons have been generally called as Burgermeister (Town Mayor). The absence of such a man allowed also in Košice freer enforcement of the Town Judge's official duties, even public life. Unveiling of this difference in the self-government of the burghers in the Hungarian Kingdom in comparison to those in surrounding countries is a new piece of knowledge about the history of the bourgeoisie and towns in Central Europe during the Middle Ages.

15 JUCK, Ľ. *Výsady miest a mestečiek na Slovensku I...*, 95. „*nos consideratis fidelitatibus et serviciorum ... hospitem de Cassa preclaric*“.

16 MOL, DL, 62 173; 62 174. „*Datum in Cassa*“.

17 JUCK, Ľ. *Výsady miest a mestečiek na Slovensku I...*, 134. „*contra Mattheum ... de Trenchen, ... iuxta fluvium Tarcha ... prope ... Cassa ... cum sumpma diligencia et sedula sollicitudine nobis exhibitum*“.

18 JUCK, Ľ. *Výsady miest a mestečiek na Slovensku I...*, 134. „*ad instar aliarum capitalium civitatum nostrarum*“.

19 JUCK, Ľ. *Výsady miest a mestečiek na Slovensku I...*, 139.

20 Ibidem, 142.

21 JUCK, Ľ. *Výsady miest a mestečiek na Slovensku I...*, 148-149, 150, 151, 154-155.

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