

## ***Jesuit Mission in Košice and Circumstances of the Foundation of the University of Košice \****

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This paper describes the political and other influences on the foundation of the University of Košice in 1657. The surprising hesitation of the Hungarian king Leopold I and the Jesuits in Vienna in particular leads to some probable interpretations. The contemporary speculations within the Austrian Society of Jesus regarding the partition of the province in two parts and establishment of an autonomous Hungarian province are in the centre of attention.

Key words: Košice. 17<sup>th</sup> century. University of Košice. Education.

The decision to found the University of Košice was motivated by the recatholicization and its clerical and secular aspect. The secular aspect was supposed to affect broad classes, primarily the aristocratic ones, through the education. The clerical aspect was oriented on the education of young priests.

There was no university, and thus no theological faculty either, with short-term exceptions, in Hungary until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Hungarian aristocrats could receive the university education at universities in Cracow, Vienna and Prague. No seminaries, where scholastics were formed not only intellectually, but also spiritually, were established at those universities either. The medieval system of the preparation of the priests was individual. Several graduates – bachelors, masters and doctors – applied for the most significant ecclesiastical and clerical positions or they filled the parish and preacher positions in royal towns, small towns and in courts of magnates, as the case may be.

The university graduates could not cover the needs for the pastoration of the countryside and other less significant ecclesiastical positions filled by the so-called lower clergy. Depending on the circumstances, they were educated by other priests in parishes or chapters, which might be considered the predecessors of an institutional education of priests before the Council of Trent. Besides the teaching, examinations of scholastics studying elsewhere or independently was taking place in chapters as well.<sup>1</sup>

This system did not provide sufficient guarantees that all the priests would have the sufficient level of education and that their moral standard would be verified prior to the ordination. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Roman Catholic church radically changed the manner of pastoration as a result of the reformation and entered into the modern period by the Council of Trent. In case of education of the young priests in Hungary, it was reflected as late as in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century or in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The conclusions of the Council of Trent were officially introduced on the territory studied by us, that is in the Diocese of Eger, as late as in 1635 at the first Diocesan Synod since the Council of Trent, which took

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1 For more information on the topic of chapters, see the paper: HLAVAČKOVÁ, Miriam. *Kapitula pri Dóme sv. Martina. Intelektuálne centrum Bratislavy v 15. storočí*. Bratislava : Pro Historia, 2008, 210 p.

place in Jasov. The life of Catholics in the diocese was governed by the pre-Trent rules until that time, which applied to the education of priests as well.<sup>2</sup>

Due to the low number of persons interested in studying the Catholic theology coming from Upper Hungary,<sup>3</sup> schools started by the Jesuits in the Western part of Hungary, in Vienna, in other towns of the monarchy or in Rome were available. Scholastics from Upper Hungary might be among 607 students from Hungary, who studied at this Jesuit college in Rome from 1552 (foundation of the model Jesuit college Collegium Germanico-Hungaricum) to 1773.<sup>4</sup>

Schools being started by the Jesuits since the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were available (not only) to the Catholic aristocracy and the future clergy from Upper Hungary in Hungary.<sup>5</sup> Conditions for the foundation of a Catholic base in Upper Hungary of the Drugeths were created only after the conversion of several magnate families in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, namely in Humenné. A college was founded there even before Trnava and Bratislava in 1615. Although its operation was interrupted and the college moved to Uzhorod, it had the hitherto greatest share in the recatholicization of Upper Hungary due to its uniqueness. Students from Upper Hungary could also study at institutes established by Péter Pázmány, at the Jesuit college in Trnava (founded in 1616), at the college for Hungarian aristocrats in Vienna (teaching since 1623), at the aristocratic convictorium in Trnava (1624), at the college in Bratislava (1626) and Győr (1629), at the seminary in Trnava (1631) and at the Trnava University (1635).<sup>6</sup>

The Pázmány's plan to establish a Pan-Hungarian seminary in Bratislava (1634 – 1635) was implemented as late as in 1642. Pázmány was supposed to plan to establish a college in Spiš at some time in the late 1620s as well. In addition to the mentioned schools, Upper Hungarian priests or laymen could also attend the Jesuit college Sibini in Transylvania. It did not last long and was abolished shortly after its foundation due to the anti-Habsburg riots.<sup>7</sup> The search for students from Upper Hungary among the aristocracy and priests-to-be in the period until 1650 would probably mean the search for a few individuals. The number of Catholics in this area was low and the recatholicization started successfully,

2 In spite of that the Jesuits performed the pastoration and spiritual formation according to the conclusions of the Council of Trent in Humenné and Košice even prior to that.

3 Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the term Upper Hungary means the territory of Northeastern counties of Hungary (their number oscillated around 13), which were contemporarily also called Predtisie, „Partes Superiores”, „Oberungarn”, „Felsőmagyarország”, administered ecclesiastically from Eger and militarily by captains from Šariš or Košice, as the case may be, and economically by the Chamber of Spiš in Košice. For more information about the specificities and justness of this term, see: HALAGA, Ondrej. *Košická administratívna oblasť za feudalizmu*. Košice, 1958, 169 p.

4 The total of 235 students from the Diocese of Esztergom attended the school. Although it was not a high number and it was negligible in terms of the needs of the diocese, it was certainly not negligible in terms of quality. DOLINSKÝ, Juraj. *Počiatky jezuitského školstva v Košiciach a na území dnešnej Košickej arcidiecézy*. In: SEDLÁK, Peter (Ed.). *340. výročie kráľovského potvrdenia Košickej univerzity*. Prešov : Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2000, p. 16. O. Halaga incorrectly moved the date of foundation of the Roman college to 1580. HALAGA, Ondrej. *Z dejín Košickej univerzity*. In: *Historický časopis*, 1956, vol. 4, no. 4, p. 525.

5 The college in Kláštor pod Znievom (1588) was founded first. It was relocated to Šaľa later. Then the college in Humenné was founded as the second college in Hungary. DOLINSKÝ, J. *Počiatky jezuitského školstva...*, p. 16.

6 DOLINSKÝ, J. *Počiatky jezuitského školstva...*, p. 16. HALAGA, O. *Z dejín...*, p. 525.

7 O. Halaga states that there was also a college in Eger, when he mentions that it was relocated to Košice together with the chapter after 1596. Since he does not give a source and the existence of the Jesuit college in Eger is highly improbable at that time, it may not be taken into account. Otherwise, it would be the most important Catholic educational centre for Upper Hungary. Moreover, the word „college” is associated with the Jesuits in the context of the modern Catholic education system in Hungary. That would mean that both the Jesuits and their college was there since 1596. However, he might mean the chapter school by that. HALAGA, O. *Z dejín...*, p. 525.

but very slowly indeed. The number of native priests operating there was apparently exceeded by the number of missionary priests.

The Evangelicals had high quality schools and the Calvins had an excellent school in Sárospatak with a reputation of an academy, whereas the Catholics did not have any higher school (if they have any besides the chapter school at all) in Upper Hungary. It was the school of the highest quality in this region.

### **Jesuits in Humenné (Uzhhorod) and Košice by 1657**

The Jesuits endeavoured to settle in the centre of Upper Hungary, Košice, several times at that time. Although they had the support of the monarch and royal authorities, including these based in Košice – the Captaincy and the Spiš Chamber – their three attempts of 1563, 1604 and 1615 were unsuccessful.<sup>8</sup> Nothing is known about the first attempt. Both the canons and bishop of Eger arrived in Košice under the Act of 1597.<sup>9</sup> The second attempt was related to the withdrawal of the Cathedral and is described by Anton Harčar.<sup>10</sup> Neither the chapter nor the Jesuits stayed there after the outbreak of the Bocskay's uprising. The Jesuits returned there as late as sometime after 1615 as missionaries sent out from Humenné. The Jesuits did not return to Košice for the next 10 years after the outbreak of the Bethlen's uprising and martyrdom of two Jesuits in 1619. The reason was apparently the fact that Košice belonged to Transylvania under the Peace of Nikolsburg and other agreements as well (1620 – 1629).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the first Jesuit scholastic and formation institute for priests of the diocese was established in Humenné.

An instruction of Ferdinand II for the bishop of Eger, for the palatine Miklós Forgách and advisor to the Spiš Chamber Gabriel Laski to request the deployment of the Jesuits in Košice in 1629 constituted another impetus in the development of this issue. Their request was also supported by the archbishop Pázmány. In November 1631, two Jesuits arrived in Košice to establish a mission there.<sup>12</sup> Their number was gradually increasing. The meeting of Pázmány with the palatine, chairman of the chamber and some of the superior Jesuits in Trnava on 13 November 1635 brought a decision to found a college in Košice.<sup>13</sup> Pázmány immediately asked the king to donate the lands of the Priory of Myšľa. In 1636, the king responded positively and the prior of Myšľa began to purchase the original lands into the private hands. Due to the resistance of their users, this process was completed as late as in 1643.<sup>14</sup>

In January 1643, Ferdinand III issued a deed of donation for the future college, whereby he transferred the lands of the Priory of Myšľa to it.<sup>15</sup> At that time, both the title and right

8 DOLINSKÝ, J. *Počiatky jezuitského školstva...*, p. 17.

9 SEDLÁK, Peter. Život a dielo biskupa Benedikta Kišdyho – zakladateľa Košickej univerzity. In: SEDLÁK, Peter (Ed.). *340. výročie kráľovského potvrdenia Košickej univerzity*. Prešov : Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2000, p. 21.

10 HARČAR, Anton. *Historický význam protireformácie v Košiciach z roku 1604*. Budapešť : Spolok svätého Vojtecha v Uhorsku, 1942, 139 p.

11 According to J. Dolinský, there are no known reasons, for which the Jesuits did not return before 1630. DOLINSKÝ, J. *Počiatky jezuitského školstva...*, pp. 17-18.

12 DOLINSKÝ, J. *Počiatky jezuitského školstva...*, p. 17.

13 HALAGA, O. *Zdejín...*, p. 526. DOLINSKÝ, J. *Počiatky jezuitského školstva...*, p. 18.

14 HALAGA, O. *Zdejín...*, p. 526.

15 DOLINSKÝ, J. *Počiatky jezuitského školstva...*, p. 17.

of ownership was finally transferred to the Jesuits of Košice.<sup>16</sup> These lands were officially taken over by the rector of the Košice College (Miklós Széchenyi) in 1643.<sup>17</sup> However, the college as a school did not exist that year yet. During the period of 1631 – 1645, they apparently lived in the Royal House, but they probably did not establish any school. The said donation was a complicated matter, which was still not resolved legally. In late 1648 (on 19 September in Trnava), the bishop of Cenad Mátyás Tarnóci donated the Priory of Myšľa (the whole, not only the lands) to the Jesuits.<sup>18</sup>

Pázmány also asked the king to donate the Royal House to the Jesuits as well.<sup>19</sup> It was Ferdinand III, who finally made the decision in this matter in 1650. The fact that a seminary was established in Uzhhorod in 1647 is important for the history of recatholicization of the region in connection with the operation of Jesuits in Upper Hungary.<sup>20</sup> Humenné and Uzhhorod had an advantage against Košice due to the auspices of the Drugeths, but they were more vulnerable due to sudden raids of rebels. In the years 1645 – 1649, the Jesuits did not operate in Košice either due to the György Rákóczi's uprising. In 1647, an act was passed that returned the Chapter of Eger to Košice. It is said it was so due to Benedikt Kisdi, who was not the bishop of Eger then yet. He became the bishop of Eger as late as in 1648.<sup>21</sup>

The Jesuits returned to Košice again in 1649. The Chapter of Eger returned to Košice as late as three years after the decision of the assembly in 1650.<sup>22</sup> The Franciscans arrived in Košice at the same time as well.<sup>23</sup> The toleration of Catholics in Lutheran Košice was paradoxically enabled by the Calvin aristocracy, which asked the king for the freedom of religion and an own church along with other respective ecclesiastical institutions. The first seminary in the Diocese of Eger was established in Košice after 1649, so yet before the university. The college was sufficient for the education of priests and the university was not necessary. It is confirmed also by other seminaries established at the Jesuit colleges in Slovakia. A seminary was established in Trnava four years before the university, while the seminary in Bratislava was established only at the college. Colleges, and thus the seminaries, were not founded in other places in Slovakia. It is not known when exactly the seminary began to operate, but it was provided for materially since 1649.

Kisdi wrote a testament in the presence of witnesses – Franciscans – stating that he had deposited an endowment of 30,000 florins for the new seminary in the Chapter of Bratislava in 1649. The seminary was consecrated to St. Ladislaus. After the death of Kisdi, it was also called Kisdianum in his honour. The name pertained rather to the building than to the institution. Hence, the house, which Kisdi owned in Košice and donated to the

16 HALAGA, O. *Z dejín...*, p. 526. The property was transferred to the rector of the Košice College. Since the college was founded as late as in the 1650s, the term „college“ means a residence in this case. O. Halaga states Čech as a prior, who purchased the lands for the college. However, P. Sedlák states him as a canon of Eger, who was the owner of the lands of the Priory of Myšľa as the canon of Eger since 1630. In the meantime, Čech became the bishop of five churches and the king donated these lands to the Jesuits only after his death. SEDLÁK, P. *Život a dielo...*, p. 24.

17 The lands belonging to the college are briefly mentioned in the paper: SEDLÁK, P. *Život a dielo...*, p. 24.

18 Archív Univerzitnej knižnice v Budapešti (Archive of the University Library in Budapest), fund (hereinafter f.) Hevenessiana, Tomus 35, p. 80.

19 HALAGA, O. *Z dejín...*, p. 526.

20 Archív Univerzitnej knižnice v Budapešti (Archive of the University Library in Budapest), f. Hevenessiana, Tomus 35, pp. 76-78.

21 SEDLÁK, P. *Život a dielo...*, p. 21. HALAGA, O. *Z dejín...*, p. 526. DOLINSKÝ, J. *Počiatky jezuitského školstva...*, p. 16.

22 SEDLÁK, P. *Život a dielo...*, pp. 21-22.

23 O. Halaga dates the return of both the chapter and the Franciscans to 1649. HALAGA, O. *Z dejín...*, pp. 525-526.

seminary for the accommodation of theologists was then called Kisidianum (the house was initially named Mosdosianum after its previous owners, which confirms that the name did not refer to the seminary, but to the building).

Kisdi donated his lands in Gyňov to the seminary for the accommodation of the students, as well as for the coverage of other cost related to the study. This support facilitated the study of 20 theologists. The stated facts create room for raising other important questions concerning the institutes administered by the Jesuits in Košice – the seminary in this case. To what extent does the deposit of the endowment of 1649 justify the determination that the seminary was actually established that year? If Kisidianum served for the accommodation, was the teaching taking place at the college? Probably yes, but the college was founded later. The lands of Gyňov served to finance the study of 20 theologists. What was covered by that and how was the study of other theologists covered? The Jesuit education was free for the impecunious. However, the seminary was a diocesan institution and the episcopacy inevitably needed new priests. Therefore, it could not burden them with the expenditure on the study much. Kisdi issued a deed of foundation of the college already in 1650.<sup>24</sup> It was only a year after the return of the Jesuits to Košice. Ferdinand III decided to give the Royal House to the Jesuit college in the same year.<sup>25</sup>

In 1654, the king confirmed the foundation of the college. The school was in operation already before 1654, as its prefect is known. The teaching took place maybe already since 1650, when the college was founded by Kisdi, while it was conducted in the building of the Royal House. The Royal House was concurrently the residence of the Jesuits. The college was constituted as a six grade gymnasium, that is in its final form, over time.<sup>26</sup> The college sometimes means the whole residence of the Jesuits and the prefect of the college is the superior general. It also means the Faculty of Languages, which is stated as a part of the university, as well as a separate school – gymnasium. In 1657, there were 19 Jesuits in Košice, thereof 10 were priests, 3 were masters and 6 were brothers.

There is no mention of a university being planned to be founded in Košice in the sources until the 1650s. It only occurs at that time stating that Ferdinand III and Pázmány already had such intention earlier.<sup>27</sup> Ferdinand III issued a deed in 1654, where he stated that there had been plans to found an academy in Košice long ago.<sup>28</sup> The academy or university was supposed to be opened in the building of the college.<sup>29</sup>

Kisdi's letter to the king stating that he already gave a part of the money to the Jesuits dates back maybe to 1654, but more probably to 1657 or later. It is not known what part

24 SEDLÁK, P. *Život a dielo...*, pp. 22-23.

25 DOLINSKÝ, J. *Počiatky jezuitského školstva...*, p. 17. According to both O. Halaga and J. Trstánský, the Royal House was donated to the Jesuits as late as in 1654. HALAGA, O. *Zdejín...*, p. 526. TRSTÁNSKÝ, Johannes. *Cassovia vetus ac nova*. Cassoviae, 1732, p. 50. The King Ferdinand III. requested the town to hand the house over to the Jesuits in 1650. The Chief Captaincy was still based in it at that time. The king affirmed the donation in a deed in 1564. He did so only after the consent of the town. SEDLÁK, P. *Život a dielo...*, p. 24. However, the archival material mentions 29 December 1653, when Ferdinand donated the Royal House to the Jesuits. Archiv Univerzitnej knižnice v Budapešti (Archive of the University Library in Budapest), f. Hevenessiana, Tomus 35, p. 79. It concerned the legal aspect of the takeover of the house, because the Jesuits certainly used it since 1549. An issue of the placement of the captaincy had to be addressed together with the above. The fact that the king waited for the consent of the town is interesting from the perspective of yet respected town privileges.

26 DOLINSKÝ, J. *Počiatky jezuitského školstva...*, p. 17.

27 HALAGA, O. *Zdejín...*, p. 526.

28 HALAGA, Ondrej – SABOL, Eugen. *História mesta Košíc*. Košice : PKO, 1970, p. 21.

29 DOLINSKÝ, J. *Počiatky jezuitského školstva...*, p. 18.

of the money that should be, that is what the total amount and its purpose was, as only four Kisdi's donations are known: the building for the seminary, the lands of Gyňov and the endowment of 30,000 florins in the Chapter of Bratislava (all apparently in 1549). The fourth donation is the endowment for the university, which was already increased once in the meantime. Yet no financial donation of Kisdi to the Košice Jesuits is known at least until 1654. In spite of that it is mentioned in the letter. It might be the fourth donation for the university. At the same time, reconstruction work was already in progress that was supposed to adapt the Royal House not only to the needs of the college, but also for the university. And that is the first documentary mention of the university in Košice, though it is only the mention of the planned university.<sup>30</sup> The historiography accentuates that the university was founded by the promotion of the college.<sup>31</sup>

In his chronicle, Tutkó published the whole Kisdi's deed of 1657, whereby he financially provided for the University of Košice.<sup>32</sup> Kisdi stated in this deed that he had deposited the endowment of 40,000 florins for the university. The Kisdi's deed of foundation was issued on 26 February 1657. Consequently, it is usually stated that Kisdi corresponded both with the Jesuit superior general Goswin Nickel and the rector of the college in Košice František Topos about the earliest possible foundation of the university – that is about the commencement of teaching and transformation of the gymnasium into the university.<sup>33</sup> Kisdi had to communicate the foundation of the university much earlier, because the adaptation of the premises and the faculty to the university required a longer planning. It is necessary to take into consideration a promotion, so that students would apply for the study at this university. Nevertheless, the majority was to be constituted by the graduates of the college. The content of Kisdi's deed indicates that the teaching of reason was reinforced within the preparation for the foundation of the university.

In the deed of foundation, Kisdi formulated his will regarding the curricula as well. The compliance with the curricula within the general guideline „Ratio Studiorum“ was very strictly attended to in the Jesuit Order. Kisdi was well aware of that as a graduate of the Jesuit education system. A difference between the curricula of the University of Košice and the general Jesuit curricula was unacceptable. A teaching schedule within the academic year was elaborated pursuant to the Trnava University to reflect the Hungarian customs, culture and habits. Kisdi was the most initiative in the foundation and recognition of the university. The Jesuits, royal authorities and the monarch himself remained reserved. The Jesuits were already established in Košice, had the college as well, and did not necessarily need the university for their missionary activity. The Jesuit provincial officially supported the Kisdi's activity by a letter to the king, yet he did not urge its early foundation much, which the Jesuits were reproached for by Kisdi. Leopold I, who was otherwise zealous in the promotion of the recatholicization, fell behind his predecessors, Ferdinand II and Ferdinand III as well. He decided to support the university in Košice only after some hesitation. He acceded to the throne in the year of its foundation, but the very issuance of the deed of foundation was not demanding administratively and did not waste the monarch's time. Hence, the argument of lack of time<sup>34</sup> is inappropriate.

30 For more circumstances accompanying the foundation of the university, see: HALAGA, O. *Zdejín...*, pp. 526-527.

31 SEDLÁK, P. *Život a dielo...*, p. 23.

32 TUTKÓ, József. *Szabad királyi Kassa városának történelmi évkönyve*. Kassán : Nyomatott Werfer Károlynál, 1861, pp. 146, 230-233.

33 SEDLÁK, P. *Život a dielo...*, p. 23.

34 SEDLÁK, P. *Život a dielo...*, p. 23-24.

The reason for the passivity of the Jesuits might be the certain issues that occurred in the matter of the competence of the vice provincial. This matter was consulted already since June 1659, when a commission of experts from among the Jesuits was created for that purpose, until the final decision of the provincial congregation of the Austrian province held in Vienna on 17 September 1660. Furthermore, a serious dispute about the partition of the Austrian Jesuit province was taking place (at least since 1651).<sup>35</sup> The foundation of the university in Košice was not a current issue for the Jesuits. Therefore, if it were not for the enormous activity of Benedikt Kisdi, it would not have been founded at that time or at all.

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35 Archív Univerzitnej knižnice v Budapešti (Archive of the University Library in Budapest), f. Hevenessiana, Tomus 8, pp. 163-186. Archív Spoločnosti Ježišovej v Košiciach (Archive of the Society of Jesus in Košice), f. Koncepty dejín domov SJ (Concepts of the History of Houses SJ), unnumbered.