

Members of the Merchant Guild in Košice in the Middle Ages. Contribution to the Research of Town Elites in Košice in the Middle Ages

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Article deals with the members of medieval Merchant Guild in Košice. The first mention of this corporation comes from year 1446 when the guild rules originated. They were left in medieval guild book. Records contain names of guild members, aldermen, debtors on membership fees and the supplements of guild rules. The Guild was group of wealthy and influential Košice citizens. Members called themselves Reichin Cromern (rich merchants) to distinguish from poor tradesmen. Some of them were mayors or long-standing aldermen. They paid high taxes and owned houses, gardens and fields. Many members, according to their family names, were not only traders.

Key words: Košice. Trade. Elites. Merchants. Merchant guild.

One of the attributes with which the urbanization of a certain populated area is defined, is a concentration of craft production and trade. The economical function of a town can be quantified by a number and differentiation of craft guilds, trade potential (strategic position in a network of trade routes) and its real fulfilment of numbers of organized regular markets. The following contribution is about a particular guild – The Guild of Rich Merchants of Košice, its function, its place within the Middle Ages urban society, and its relationship with other town inhabitants.

Guilds, associations of town craftsmen with the same or similar occupation, first appeared in Western Europe at the end of the 11th century. Generally accepted thesis is that guild organizations in the Kingdom of Hungary emerged in relation to German colonization after the Tatar invasion. From their original country, the new inhabitants brought a tradition of forming associations for craftsmen of the same or similar occupation. In comparison with the craftsmen guilds in Western Europe, the guilds in the Kingdom of Hungary were mainly oriented at the production function; they were not involved in the political situation of the town as an opposition to the ruling town elites.¹ The highest representatives of guilds participated in town municipality as well, the ruling and the highest productive classes of citizens merged.

Trade had a specific status in the classification of town inhabitants' occupations, as it did not produce new goods but only provided their transport and sale. Ambiguous categorization of trade among the classical crafts of the Middle Ages puts merchants on the verge between producers and end consumers. The status of merchants within the Middle Ages society changed radically throughout the centuries, especially in relation to the acceptance of this occupation by church authorities who originally condemned it (because of handling the money and profits from sales). The preparation for the job of a merchant had different educational and financial requirements for the candidates than the preparation for crafts production. Especially the knowledge of arithmetic, writing and reading were necessary bases of every merchant's

1 ŠPIESZ, A. *Remeslá, cechy a manufaktúry na Slovensku*. Martin 1983, 34.

education. Initial capital, either inherited or gained from own activities, was also important for successful merchant practise. However, as pointed out by Aron J. Gurevič, in many cases trade was not the only source of merchants' incomes. Capital gained from their own work was warily invested in lands as a safer investment.² Moreover, merchants acquired profits from selling the land yields and in case of failure and bankruptcy it provided perspective survival, or it served as a financial cover for risky businesses.

The risks and financial costs associated with transportation of goods motivated medieval merchants to create merchant guilds. Undoubtedly the best know and the most influential one which had the largest number of members in Europe of Middle Ages was the Baltic Hansa, the association of German merchants. It connected overseas merchants from more than 200 towns stretching from Great Britain to Russian ports in the Baltic and northern ports of Norway. The word hanza was originally used for all associations of travelling merchants, sometimes its activities merged with the religious function of the guild.³

The first association of merchants within a town is documented in sources at the beginning of the 11th century in the Dutch town Tiel. These associations that can be called merchant guilds gradually spread over the majority of relevant trade centres in the north of France, Netherland and Lower Germany. Their common features were exclusivity and low number of members⁴. Thus the membership was not compulsory as was the case of craft guilds. On the other hand, the possibility to get in among the elite trade leaders of a certain town brought new opportunities in the social and business field.

The records show that in Košice, a trade centre located on the way between Krakow and Transylvania, there was a group of residents whose main interest was trade. The oldest Book of Brotherhood and/or of the Guild (bruderschaft und adir zech) of Košice Merchants namely in collection C (Cehalia) is stored in the Košice City Archives (further AMK).⁵ According to the given dating, the brotherhood of Košice merchants is the oldest merchant guild with documented guidelines in Slovakia and the Kingdom of Hungary.⁶

Košice Merchant Guild stayed unnoticed in Slovak literature for a long period, even though a study about the book was written at the beginning of the 20th century⁷ and both so called articles were re-written on pages of *Magyar Gazdaságtörténelmi Szemle* by an archivist of Košice Lajos Kemeny. The oldest Slovak paper about guilds mentioned the brotherhood only briefly as an association of Košice's pedlars.⁸ Anton Špiesz did not mention it at all in his two publications about the history of guilds and crafts in Slovaki. Ondrej R. Halaga based his papers on brotherhood rules, he did not study the accounting records in depth.⁹ Tomáš Tandlich dealt with the brotherhood and its articles the most in Slovakia, in several

2 GUREVIČ, A. J. Středověký kupec. In *Středověký člověk a jeho svět*. Ed. Le Goff, J. Praha 1999, 212.

3 ENNEN, E. *Die europäische Stadt des Mittelalters*. Göttingen 1987, 147.

4 ENNEN, E. *Die europäische Stadt ...*, 113-116.

5 Archív mesta Košice (AMK), C, Obchodníci I (Steincrom I. 7), car. 19/2, inv. number 258.

6 TANDLICH, T. Artikuly obchodných cechov v slobodných kráľovských mestách Košice, Prešov a Levoča. In *Slovenská archivistika* (32), 1997, 1, 59.

7 KERÉKES, G. A Kassai Kereskedő-czéh (Bruderschaft) Könyve. 1446 – 1553. In *Magyar Gazdaságtörténelmi Szemle* (10) 1903, 342-352.

8 HOUDEK, I. *Cechovníctvo na Slovensku*. Martin 1943, 37.

9 HALAGA, O. R. *Právny, územný a populačný rozvoj mesta Košíc*. Košice 1967, 62-63; HALAGA, O. R. *Košice – Balt. Výroba a obchod v styku východoslovenských miest s Pruskom (1275 – 1526)*. Košice 1975, 252.

studies published in Slovak Archivist¹⁰ and then also in his thesis paper.¹¹ Even one of the latest papers about Slovak guild organizations does not mention the brotherhood although Tandlich's studies are listed as a literature sources.¹² From the recent papers of Hungarian historians, Zsigmond Pál Pach dealt with the brotherhood and in detail especially with the development of the words Crom and Cromer in relation to the meaning of the word Kalmar.¹³

The Book of Brotherhood also contains guidelines of the association from 1446.¹⁴ Next record is from 1480, continuous notes were made between the years 1495 – 1522 and 1527–1536. The last entry in the book is from 1553. After a forced break, the activities of the brotherhood were renewed with the articles from 1631 and 1632.¹⁵

As suggested in its name, Košice Brotherhood and or the Merchant Guild should connect religious-social and economical interests. Before a closer look at its structure and functions, it is vital to mention the ways of its naming. The word brotherhood evokes clear religious and beneficent interests in this heterogeneous organization which stands away from the traditional family and social bonds.¹⁶ In Košice, there are the following brotherhoods documented – medieval Brotherhood of Corpus Christi, Brotherhood of St. Michal, Brotherhood of St. Leonard, Brotherhood of Our Lady of the Rosary, Brotherhood of St. Šebastián, Brotherhood of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Brotherhood of St. Anton.¹⁷ However, as A. Špiesz remarked, the name brotherhood (*fraternitas*, *Bruderschaft*) was also originally used to label the first guilds starting in Germany as per the example set by similar merchant associations. A generic title guild (*Zunft*, *Innung*) spread across only in the 14th century.¹⁸ The first guilds in the Kingdom of Hungary were called brotherhoods with a particular saint for a patron at the beginning too.¹⁹ So it is not possible to automatically connect the term brotherhood with a religious association especially when the guidelines do not state any patron or saint. In the name of organization in Košice appears also a newer term *zech/zeche* (*die Zeche*).²⁰ In this study, I will call Košice's merchants organization equally as a guild, brotherhood, association or community (not asociety) of merchants.

The oldest guidelines of the association (*Unser satzung der bruder yn den Cromen habin alle gewillert unttyndir*) were written in German (as well as the whole book of accounts) and consisted of ten points. The requirement for entering the guild (for both men and women) was to pay two red florins and give four funts (pounds) of wax. In my opinion, it is not necessary to accentuate the wax, because entrance or membership payment in brotherhoods and

10 TANDLICH, T. *Artikuly obchodných cechov...*, 58-70 (about the merchant guild in Košice see p. 59-60) and *Cechová kniha obchodného cechu v Košiciach z rokov 1446 – 1553*. In *Slovenská archivistika*. (33) 1998, 2, 69-81.

11 TANDLICH, T. *Obchodné cechy v slobodných kráľovských mestách Košice, Prešov a Levoča v 15. – 18. storočí*. [Dissertation Thesis]. Bratislava 2000, 207.

12 MAJERECH-MRZUCH, J. *Remeselnícke cechové organizácie na Slovensku*. Bratislava 2000, 211.

13 PACH, ZS. P. *Szójejtés és gazdaságtörténet. Crom – cromer – kalmár*. In *Magyar Nyelv* (72) 1976, 4, 422-429.

14 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 2 a 2 v.

15 TANDLICH, T. *Artikuly obchodných cechov...*, 60.

16 OEXLE, O. G. *Gildy*. In *Encyklopedie středověku*. Ed. Le Goff, J. – Schmitt, J.-C. Praha 2002, 177-178.

17 SLEZÁKOVÁ, M. – NÁDASKÁ, K. Košice. In ŠTEFÁNIK, M. – LUKAČKA, J. et al. *Lexikon stredovekých miest*. Bratislava 2010, 207.

18 ŠPIESZ, A. *Remeslá, cechy a manufaktúry...*, 31.

19 ŠPIESZ, A. *Remeslo na Slovensku v období existencie cechov*. Bratislava 1972, 34.

20 This term was in german countries less used than *die Zunft*. *Lexikon des Mittelalters IX: Werla bis Zipresse*. München; Zürich 1998, 496.

guilds in the form of wax was quite wide-spread and traditional in the Middle Ages.²¹ Another condition for entering the brotherhood was to organize a traditional banquet (molzent)²² with food and drinks for all brothers and sisters (in the book of accounts they used the term gross mol, klein mol or halb mol). A man who married a female member (widow) or a single female member could become a member of the association too. Thus the financial background and social contacts were required for the membership too.²³ Not taking part in the annual guild meetings, trading with non-members of the guild, disobeying the guildmaster's notices, lending their own weights and scales (the measures of length are not mentioned at all), or renting and selling their own selling spaces (Croms) to non-members, were sanctioned by a fine in form of wax (usually the weight of half the funt). Forced handover of traded goods could happen to a member who attempted to further sell products of non-members of the guild („...keynis fremdyn mannys guttir der nicht nit uns yn der bruderschaft adir zech ist...“) or who liaised with non-members. If a member left or rented his Crom, he lost the brotherhood membership and when re-entering, the same rules applied to him as to other new brothers. The guidelines do not contain the issue of the annual membership fees, the organization inside the guild, guildmasters' elections or frequency of members' meetings.

The only product directly mentioned in the guidelines was spice (pffeffer, phffir, 10th point).²⁴ There were special conditions for storage and dealing with the spice, it was important to keep the cleanliness and quality of the commodity. Trading with spices had to be done according to laws of Košice, of Levoča, of Bardejov and of Prešov („...noch der wilkor fyr stete Casscha lowtscha bartpha Eppries.“) The text of the 10th point confirms that spices were sought after, the most expensive and the most valuable trading commodities; the advantage was their rather easy transport and manipulation.

The last point of the guidelines that was not numbered can be explained in many ways. Kemeny and also Tandlich avoided its interpretation in their studies. It is not clear if this part informs about accepting new members or handling the goods on particular days, or perhaps a combination of both.²⁵ Absence of a number next to this point encourages allocating it to a previous clause. The most acceptable interpretation is by Sz. P. Pach, that brothers and sisters could not unload (i.e. sell goods) on Sundays and on Our Lady of Sorrows holiday (15th August). Those who were interested in the guild's membership had to unload their goods only after the mass on the Sending the Twelve holiday (15th July) as a declaration of their ambitions.²⁶ If this was really followed in practise and gradually desisted, it is not contained in the brotherhood's records.

Throughout the guild's existence a problem occurred with the members who did not pay the membership fees. Twenty-year old or older debts were not exceptions; in 1504 the guild

21 *Lexikon des Mittelalters II: Bettlerwesen bis Codex von Valencia*. München; Zürich 1983, 739.

22 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 2. „...und zal gebin den brudern und swerstirvn ein smolzent mit essen und mit trinken alz von alders gewonlich gewest ist.“

23 Peter Wasserbauch became a member with the help of brothers Hans Gurtler and Hermas Cupel, moreover he gave to the brotherhood a vine. AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 19 v. I Hans Schewtzlich became a member in 1509 through („... gewonne dy bruderschaft der Steyncrom durch die Namhaftigen Herren...“) two aldermen (Oswald Morgner, Stenzel Fogelwader). AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 22.

24 Sometimes the term pffeffer is translated as black pepper. PACH, SZ. P. Szójejtés és gazdaságtörténet..., 425.

25 *Item is zal keyn bruder noch swestir auslegin an eyne sonontage an uns(e)r libin frawen tag. Sunder an der XII botyn tag noch dem amacht der messe zo mag aus legen werdo wil undir uns reychein Cromern.*

AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 2 v.

26 PACH, SZ. P. Szójejtés és gazdaságtörténet..., 425.

recorded two debtors from 1480, one debtor from the years 1483, 1484, and 1488, the rest owed only for approximately last ten years.²⁷

Religiousness and its manifestation meant an important stabilizing element in the life of the medieval folk. Craftsmen guilds chose their saints, patrons, and protectors to whom the guilds addressed. Although there is no record of religious orientation in the guidelines of Košice Merchant Guild, the payments of fines in the form of wax show its using in the form of candles for church masses. The only reference to the wax for Elizabeth can be found among book entries of accounting records from 1496²⁸ a specific altar is not mentioned though. The list of expenses from the year 1504 contains the receiver of the gift-altar of St. Barbara—a product made of machelen (from a Brabantian town of Mechelen).²⁹ Also a record from the year 1514 instructed Hans Scheutzlich to give wax for candles valued two florin to the same altar.³⁰ Other cases when the wax and candles are mentioned in the records are in relation to Easter and the Holy Sepulchre holidays. The brotherhood even hired one of the town inhabitants for the role of guarding the Sepulchre in the church during Holy Saturday and look after the burning candles that the Merchant Guild donated for the holidays.³¹ The expenses for wax and candles production (namely by nuns only in the years 1495 and 1497³²) occurred a few other times in the records, however not always it stated the purpose of them. The question of the religious orientation of the brotherhood and its members, especially in relation to the brotherhood's patron, is not definitely closed and requires further research.

The potential connection between the brotherhood and city's clerical institution is indicated by the record of debtors of wax from the year 1480: Elmaris (Hannus?) Zipser donated four florin to the Dominican Order (ad fratros predicatorum) for unclear purpose (ad tu(re)ring-for a doorbell?).³³ Writing of the accounting guild record, as is obvious from several different handwritings in the book, was not a task of only one 'brother' or writer, the writing styles changed each year. I presume that the records were probably controlled by one of the guildmasters. On most of the pages in the book at the top or bottom, is stated in various writing styles the name of brother – debtor who is listed as the first record on that particular page. The notes about debtors are entered together with the unpaid sum on the last pages of the book as well, most of the entries are crossed out – the debt was paid. The records of the book which refer to one year, are divided into two parts – incomes (fines collection, entrance and annual fees), and expenses (expenses of the brotherhood „Mus geben“). The oldest entries in accounting records are related to entrance fees collection, fines, and probably annual fees. These brief notes consist usually of only the name and the sum. The style of writing about the brotherhoods' activities gradually changes – the records are denser and longer. They contain the names of new members, brothers and sisters, information about new guildmasters or annual costs of the brotherhood.

The biggest expenses of the brotherhood represented the costs for servicing the Crooms (places where they offered their goods) and a salary for the so-called „Cromhütter“, a person

27 Highest debt was 19 florins. AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 14 v.

28 „Ite(m) xxx d(enarii) umb wachs in die elizabeth“ AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 8 v.

29 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 15 v.

30 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 25.

31 Candles Year 1497 Item iiii d dem totten greber dy kertzen aws tzw warten pay dem grab. AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 10. Year 1505: „Eodem die (oster abend) vor kertzen machen zu dem grabe d 3. Der wartern das licht pey dem grabe d 4.“ AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 17.

32 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 7 and fol. 10.

33 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 3.

responsible for guarding the Crows, mending and repair work. He was paid from the common cash box, sometimes, as per the records; he was moreover paid by individual traders too.³⁴ Apart from Cromhutter, the brothers paid to craftsmen as well: masons and carpenters. The book also captures the materials needed for mending the Crows. The guild was involved in securing the sold and stored products so brothers bought a key³⁵ and a lock³⁶ too. Among the rest of the most traded goods were wine, already mentioned wax and candles, rarely bread, cheese, meat and spices. The costs related to organizing guild banquets were bored mainly by new brothers.

Specific expenses were traditional financial and tangible gifts to new elected town mayors. The financial gift was between one and two florin. Sometime spices and saffron³⁷ were mentioned as gifts-commodities that were traded by richer merchants in Košice.

The comparison of the lists of elected town representatives and of members of the brotherhood gives us a picture about the brothers' status in local community. Between 1495 and 1526 when the continuous records from the book preserved, the town mayors (even several times) were brothers Hans Opiczter, Jorg Gabriel, Michael Kukelbrecht, Hans Scheutzlich and Hans Ferber. Other members of the brotherhood served, usually for many years, as aldermen (2nd column in the table) or as members of wider council (3rd column) see table no.1³⁸ Table nr. 1. Brothers in city structures. There are some well-known names from Košice's history in the table: Hans Scheutzlich, a town archivist and the author of the first archive's registry and inventory, also in 1513 – 1519 comes tricesimarum,³⁹ Nicles (Nicolaus) Krompholz, a builder and a mason who was originally sent to Košice for the cathedral's reconstruction after Polish siege in 1491. A year later he was already recorded in the list of new accepted citizens⁴⁰ and in 1498 he joined the merchant guild with his wife.⁴¹ In 1514, Barbara, Krompholz's wife, is noted as a sister of Balthazar Geulch, another member of the guild and important citizen.⁴² The possessions of citizens are documented in the tax registry too. In Košice, some parts from the years 1475, 1480, 1483, 1484 and 1487 were preserved. Several members of the brotherhood can be found among the tax payers. Jorg Gabriel paid a tax of 18 florins and Hans Opitzter 3,5 florins in 1480. Then neighbours from the first quarter of the town, Bartholomeus Apotheke (8 florins), Hans Brechtel (4 florins) a Balthazar Roth (10 florins) were recorder in the tax registry in 1483. In that same year Jeronimus Trinkaus paid 4 florins. Bartholomeus Ap(o)teker paid a tax of 5 florins in 1487 for a garden, meadows and fields, excluding two houses in town.⁴³ Missing records about tax collections from the following years do not allow us to compare the possessions of brotherhood members more

34 For example see AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 25.

35 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 17 v.

36 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 27 v.

37 For example in year 1495: „... und Saffran den her,(r)en richtle(r) zu er(ober)ung.“ AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 5., It(e)m dem Richtte(r) zu eru(n)g pfeffer(n) Sapran Jubel 1,5 fl.“ AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 23 v.

38 Sources: Liber Civitatis Maior (AMK, Suppl. H III/2, pur 2) and NÉMETH, I. *Kassa város archontológiája. Birág, belső és külső tanács 1500 – 1700.* Budapest 2006, 37-68.

39 HALAGA, O. R. Colnice a dôverníci v rišskom monopole Košic. In *Historický časopis* (39) 1991, 1, 7.

40 AMK, Stadtbuch, Supplementum H (Suppl H), H III/2., pur 4., fol. 2.

41 FÜGEDI, E. Kaschau, eine osteuropäische Handelsstadt am Ende des 15. Jahrhunderts. In *Studia Slavica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae II*, 1956 (1957), 206; AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 9 a 10.

42 AMK, Suppl H, H III/2., pur 4., fol. 322.

43 KEMÉNY, L. *Kassa város régi számadáskönyvei 1431 – 1533.* Košice 1982, 39. (Gabriel and Opitzter), 44. (Apotheke, Brechtel, Roth), 43. (Trinkaus), 55. (Apotheke in 1487).

closely. According to the sum of paid taxes, E. Fügedi put the brotherhood merchants into the third group out of four town classes; the most highly taxed citizens made the fourth group.⁴⁴ Women of Košice were not excluded from the guild's membership, as indicated in the guidelines. In comparison with men, there were inadequately fewer women in the brotherhood, and nothing shows their aspirations for higher posts. Partial list of sisters' names was done by G. Kerekes.⁴⁵

The female members of the guild (sisters) were usually, like in other resources, listed only after their husbands (e.g. Jorg Diackyn⁴⁶ or Jorg Ferberin⁴⁷). Women appeared in the records in two circumstances: in case of their husband's name's absence thus probably after his death when they inherited all business commitments together with the brotherhood membership after their deceased husbands. Apart from widows, the wives of living members could become guild members too. One example is Barbara, wife (hausfraw) of Tobias Pleibet, who entered the brotherhood together with her husband in 1498 and both 'owed' other members after the banquet. Another documented woman is Simo Geulchin; her name on the list of members is entered before her relation (brother-in-law?) Baltazár (Baltizar) Geulch.⁴⁸ There is an exception, fraw Kattusch, who was documented among the members in 1499 for the first time.⁴⁹ Not before or after was her husband member of the guild, there is no record about her father or other relations with the same name. So we can say that she was an individual female member of the brotherhood. She even might have belonged to the Košice Merchant Company.⁵⁰

One of the attributes of medieval guilds was their social function. Guild's money was contributed to funerals, weddings, and other significant events in the lives of members; compassion with widows and orphans after the deceased members was extended too. The records of the Košice Merchant Guild do not indicate any expenses related to deaths of its members, they are not even mentioned there. One example offers itself here when an influential citizen and brotherhood member Nicles Krompholtz who was replaced by his wife (marked as Nicolaus Krumpolzin) in 1515 in the records about membership fees.⁵¹ Similarly there are no records about members who left the brotherhood for some other reasons.

We can presume that Košice Merchant Guild or the brotherhood of merchants played a role of elite organization which associated also people with different original occupations. The most obvious example is the previously mentioned Nicolaus Krompholz who left his original job as a builder, bought a house in Košice and in 1499 he even became one of the four guildmasters.⁵² The second names of some of the brothers are related to different crafts, such as Bartholomeus Apotheker, Jorg Dyakin, Scott Schreiberer, Emerich Gurtlerin, Georgius Schneider, or many with the surname Ferber and written variations of the surname Goldschmid, and they show various previous occupations of the Košice Merchant Guild members. The Cromers, whose surname described their occupation the most, were only five in the guild. We cannot automatically link the second name of merchants to their occupations— at the

44 FÜGEDI, E. *Kaschau...*, 197-198.

45 KEREEKES, G. *A Kassai Kereskedő-czéh (Bruderschaft) Könyve*. Budapest 1913, 346-347.

46 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 16.

47 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 20 v.

48 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 5 v. and fol. 8.

49 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 10 v.

50 TANDLICH, T. *Cechová kniha...*, 79.

51 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 25 v.

52 AMK, C, 19/2, fol. 11.

end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century, the surnames and jobs did not have to overlap.⁵³ There was nobody with the surnames Mercator, Kaufmann or Istitor in the guild.

There is a document from the year 1475 in the Košice City Archives and it was in my opinion incorrectly identified as the brotherhood's guidelines by Kemény, Halaga and Tandlich.⁵⁴ The document is sometimes being recognized as the articles of the brotherhood of minor merchants, pedlars but this is not accurate either. I think that a more convincing argument is that the town representatives validated the existence of the brotherhood with this document (the guidelines from 1446 were probably ratified by the brothers themselves) and so the brotherhood was promoted to a proper guild status.⁵⁵

Although the brotherhood of rich merchants is mentioned in the document, its contents are more about the regulation of the goods sales by non-members - other citizens or foreigners. Every foreigner or town inhabitant without citizenship rights („...alle awslender oder die nicht burgerrecht dieser stadt haben,...“) was allowed to sell their products only at the markets, among each other they only could trade goods valued of less than four florins. Local inhabitants (including craftsmen) were free to sell only on Thursday's markets, on all other days they could only sell in their houses or dwellings but the goods had to be of a low value, not more than four florins. Exception was given to holiday foods (festil speisze)⁵⁶ which could be sold any time at the markets. A breach of those rules was sanctioned by a loss of the products and by a non-specified punishment.

The privilege demanded directly by the brotherhood meant to protect their own business interests and reduce the competition; it did not involve the definition and regulation of internal function of the merchant guild at all.

Before analysing the goods in the aforementioned document, it is necessary to divide Košice's merchants into several categories. As obvious from analysis of the town's tax registry, the first group consisted of the well-off and rich citizens, members of the brotherhood or the merchant guild. Sometimes they themselves added to the brotherhood's name the remark rich merchants – Reichin Cromern. The expression reichin (reichen) was used to distinguish the rich merchants from the representatives of the second group where minor pedlars and merchants belonged – people of lower classes, and understandably not many written records were preserved about them.

I find it useful to analyse the subject of poorer merchants in Košice in detail from another point of view. Lajos Kemény was the first one to allocate the expression Armenkrenleyn⁵⁷ and Armen Kremlin to the poor pedlars of Košice. He backed his theory with a segment from the Košice City Book.⁵⁸ He connected the interpretation of the regulation from 1509, accepted by T. Tandlich as well, to the pedlars who were allowed to sell in the town by paying annual fee of three or four florins. However, from the mentioned town council's order is not clear that it is about the professional small merchants because especially the last sentence evokes a connection to crafts, not trade: „Das so indert eyn hantwerger doryn wolde arbeten, das her geben soll der stadt czw czínsz 3 aler 4 fl. eyn jor.“ Moreover, paying the required sum would

53 HALAGA, O. R. *Právny, územný...*, 61.

54 AMK, Schwarzenbach, č. 433. Copy in AMK, Cehalia-Mercatores, Der Steinkrome Czechbrieff 1475; KEMÉNY, L. A. Kassai kereskodók első czéhszabályzata 1475-ből. In *Magyar Gazdaságtörténelmi Szemle*. 1897, 190-192; Analysis of this document in HALAGA, O. R. *Košice – Balt...*, 253.

55 FÜGEDI, E. *Kaschau...*, 208.

56 PACH, ZS. P. Translates it as Lent meal (Fasten); PACH, ZS. P. *Szójejtés és gazdaságtörténet...*, 427.

57 KEMÉNY, L. *Kassa város régi számadáskönyvei...*, 56.

58 KEMÉNY, L. Armenkremen. In *Magyar Gazdaságtörténelmi Szemle* (9) 1902, 139.

have been possible only for the richest town citizens, even the merchant guild members paid much less for using the selling spaces every year (between 25 dinars = 1 ort or 1 florin).

A theory that pedlars themselves associated with a brotherhood or a guild is dubious. This association should have divided from the brotherhood of rich merchants.⁵⁹ The list of town's incomes from 1487 contains a remark about so called Kauffkammern,⁶⁰ storehouses, store-rooms, or shops in general. The income from renting them or tax for their keeping was insignificant (1 florin altogether) thus we can assume that they were very modest spaces, more suitable for small merchants and craftsmen.

Quantities and types of strategic trade commodities were thoroughly recorded in the above mentioned town status from the year 1475. The textiles and products made of them dominate the list: barchet, leymet, zindel (type of taffeta), goltsch (golsch, kölsch),⁶¹ untezenholt, blue fibres and yarn, veils, trousers, bedclothes; a luxurious saffron is mentioned too, and a non-specified type of spice (pfeffer) tops the list. Previous researchers did not note on the permission written in the document to sell less than eight shillings of dromel. Based on a record from the Budin's codex of town laws⁶² I assume that in the Košice merchants' case also the permission was about a certain kind of fish (or fish in general). The following items were not included in the list: products of other craftsmen, different agricultural products, livestock, groceries and drinks (especially wine). Hence the merchants associated in the guild gained the monopoly for trade with textiles from the town council. There are no records about respecting this edict.

In relation to the sales regulations in Košice, the document from 1475 had an example in the privilege of Žigmund Luxemburský from 15th July, 1404.⁶³ The decree prescribed the highest allowed quantities of commodities that could be freely sold in the town by foreign merchants. The list contained imported textiles (Polish and Cologne cloth) and products made of them, leathers, spices („...*unam libram piperis de quaslibet speciebus...*“) and armours.⁶⁴ Both documents are different, except spices and Cologne cloth, which shows the change in trade priorities of Košice merchants and citizens. I presume that Žigmund's decree was made under the pressure from Košice citizens – merchants. This illustrates their significance in trade in the northern part of the Kingdom of Hungary.

The regulation for merchants issued and confirmed by the Košice town council in 1475 contains valuable information about the status and influence of rich merchants in this town. It especially revealed the impact of merchants' influence. The document itself originated from the guild's representatives initiative because they wanted to secure their old freedoms and rights, i.e. to protect their exceptional status in town and region. So the merchant guild members were allowed to sell within the town in addition to markets.

The rich merchants of Košice associated in the brotherhood specified themselves from other town inhabitants by using the names Cromer and Reich Cromer (other merchants, non-

59 HALAGA, O. R. *Právny, územný...*, 63.

60 KEMÉNY, L. *Kassa város régi számadáskönyvei...*, 57.

61 Cloth from German town Köln, usually with blue stripes. *Matthias Lexers Mittelhochdeutsches Taschenwörterbuch*. 34. Auflages. Leipzig 1974, 112.

62 „Item Von ainem drumel, haissen oder ander visch...“ *Das Ofner Stadtrecht. Eine deutschsprachige Rechtssammlung des 15. Jahrhunderts aus Ungarn*. Ed. Mollay, K. Budapest 1959, 97.

63 Archív mesta Košice (AMK), fond Tajný archív (TA), D (Depositorium), nr. 16.

64 O. R. Halaga translated words *kyrsay* a *harnas* as names of clothes (HALAGA, O. R. *Košice – Balt...*, 251). On the basis of *Matthias Lexers Mittelhochdeutsches Taschenwörterbuch...*, 82. I suppose, *kyrsay* and *harnas* were part of warrior equipment.

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