



**Iulia Caproș. *Students from Košice at Foreign Universities Before and During the Reformation Period in the Town*. Kiel: Solivagus-Verlag, 2013. 426 p., ISBN 978-3-943025-10-1**

In comparing himself to his late-medieval or early-modern counterpart, the 21<sup>st</sup>-century academic might feel entitled to believe that things used to be less complicated in an era popular culture tends to portray as a simpler, more straightforward age. Academic mobility, grant applications, letters of recommendation and company-sponsored tuition wouldn't appear to fit a layperson's idea of pre-Reformation Europe. However, the data gathered and analysed by dr. Iulia Caproș in *Students from Košice at Foreign Universities Before and After the Reformation Period in Town* show that many of the issues confronting the students of today were part of academic daily life long before the Bologna Process.

The book is written in a clear objective voice. Its heroes, 278 in number, all men of various social status and means, would leave Košice in order to travel abroad to Vienna, Cracow, Prague, Wittenberg, Padua, Oxford, Cambridge, where they would register for faculties, usually paying a fee; *hopefully* study; possibly take examinations; often seek the financial help of benefactors or organisations (such as their home town council); answer job advertisements and apply for positions; join in student unions, and also, less academically, incur debts, fight, quarrel and indulge in other time-honoured activities that were an inevitable part of a *studiosus's* life.

The prosopographical catalogue alone makes for highly impressive reading. It is gratifying that dr. Caproș has included original fragments from sources mentioning the subjects of her study: apart from giving specific information about the person in question, they often offer us an insight into the doings of the academia of the

time, the manner of dealing with undergraduate misbehaviour or the exact terms in which one undertook to return a borrowed book. More than anything, these quotations encourage us to view the students as *real people* rather than mere entries in a list.

The author didn't set out to write a history of European studentship or Košice-derived migration. And yet, dwelling upon a wealth of primary evidence — including unpublished handwritten documents — and supported by an impressive list of secondary sources, the research depicts a surprisingly deep image of what it was like to be a student in Europe between 1372 and 1660. Doubtlessly, the young men arriving from other places to the University of Wittenberg, e.g., had to undergo a procedure of settling and registration similar to that described for the young cassovians intent on matriculating there. It is also likely that thousands more middle-class students used to send written reports to the town councils that were supporting their studies. Later, many of them probably pursued “postgraduate careers” (the author is careful to explain that the term is used conventionally, since not every matriculation resulted in a degree — indeed, some didn't even result in course attendance) in law, civil service, teaching, medicine, literature, or the Church. In an age when university education is increasingly viewed as a mandatory step towards essentially any occupation, as a type of life experience if nothing else, it is enlightening to learn that, for many of the study's subjects, higher education wasn't going to make a difference as far as their job prospects or social position were concerned, and dozens appear to have undertaken it merely in order to see the world before settling down.

The highly readable academic style employed by the author, as well as the fascinating documentary information and the pertinent accompanying analysis make this volume a welcome addition to the library of anyone interested in European intellectual and social history.

**Elena Suff**