

THE UNIVERSITY AND BOHEMIAN TOWNS ON THE EVE OF THE BATTLE OF WHITE MOUNTAIN¹

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The early modern academy of Prague and the towns needed each other.² The university used to ensure the education of future municipal elites. As František Šmahel and Jiří Pešek have already shown in their prosopographical studies, the careers of the bachelors or masters usually began in a town school and in most cases continued in various positions of municipal administration.³ Just a minority of them chose careers as Protestant clerics or preceptors in noble families. A research on the field of early modern municipal elites has to take into account their intellectual equipment and the ways it was used in practice, i. e. especially in the administration, where the written word and basic knowledge of law and Latin had become essential.

In the following paragraphs I would like to focus on the relationship between Bohemian towns and the Utraquist university in the last years of its existence and to try to follow the fortunes of one group of its graduates in the following decade. The text consists of two analytical outlines. The first one is based upon two manuscripts stored in the Archives of Charles University and shows the character of the above mentioned relationship between the towns and the university. The second one is focused on the fate of the graduates of the academy who found engagement in the administration of royal towns in the 1620s and 1630s. Both manuscripts⁴ include the records about the proceedings of the university staff and the drafts of the copies of the rector's correspondence, the dean of the Faculty of Arts and the provosts of the university colleges from autumn 1616 to the summer of 1622. The

¹ This study has been created as a part of the scientific project: Výzkumný záměr MSM 0021620827 *České země uprostřed Evropy v minulosti a dnes*, blok V/d: Česká vysokoškolská vzdělanost. I would like to express my thanks to Mr. Melvyn Clarke for his kind help and useful remarks.

² An outstanding survey on the relations between Czech towns and the Utraquist university has been delivered in English by Jiří PEŠEK, *The Prague University and the town Latin schools*, in: Ivana Čornejová – Michal Svatoš – Petr Svobodný (edd.), *A History of Charles University*, I, Prague 2001, pp. 199–201.

³ František ŠMAHEL, *Existenční vyhlídky a kariéry českých humanistů*, in: idem, *Mezi středověkem a renesancí*, Praha 2002, pp. 354–363; IDEM, *L'Université de Prague de 1433 à 1622: recrutement géographique, carrières et mobilité sociale des étudiants gradués*, in: Dominique Julia – Jacques Revel – Roger Chartier (edd.), *Les universités européennes du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle. Histoire sociale des populations étudiantes*, Paris 1986, pp. 65–88; Jiří PEŠEK, *Pražská univerzita, městské latinské školy a měšťanské elity předbělohorských Čech*, *Český časopis historický* 89, 1991, pp. 336–355.

⁴ Ústav dějin Univerzity Karlovy a Archiv Univerzity Karlovy (henceforth ÚDAUK), manuscripts (henceforth ms.) A 14a (Acta universitatis Pragensis 1616–1619) and ms. A 14b (Acta universitatis Pragensis 1619–1622); see also Karel KUČERA – Miroslav TRUC, *Archiv Univerzity Karlovy. Průvodce po archivních fondech*, Praha 1961, pp. 123–126. The first (and in many aspects also the last) one who used these manuscripts on greater scale was Zikmund WINTER in the following books and texts: *Karlova akademie za bouře stavovské*, *Časopis Musea Království českého* 70, 1896, pp. 385–419; IDEM, *Děje vysokých škol pražských od secessi cizích národů po dobu bitvy bělohorské (1409–1622)*, Praha 1897; IDEM, *O životě na vysokých školách pražských knihy dvojce. Kulturní obraz XV. a XVI. století*, Praha 1899. See also Ivana ČORNEJOVÁ, *Zikmund Winter a dějiny pražské univerzity*, in: Věra Brožová (ed.), *Zikmund Winter mezi historií a uměním*, Rakovník 1996, pp. 93–100.

oldest records reflect the unsuccessful efforts to reform the university overwhelmed by political and religious turmoil.⁵ We can follow the fate of the academy in the hectic months of the Estates' Uprising until its end. The last records concern the so-called 'general pardon' as the highlight of the vast confiscation processes in July 1622. There, the masters make six points in which they refuse their guilt over, among other things, the conflict between them and the mayor of the Old Town about the person of the preacher in the Chapel of Bethlehem in spring 1618.⁶

The most significant part of the manuscripts consists of the rector's correspondence (the letters of other academic dignitaries deal mostly with less important economic and other operational matters, such as the administration of villages belonging to the university).⁷ The rector's correspondence shows us the contacts of the university with contemporary towns and their character and importance in the university agenda. In the first table we can see the addressees of the letters included in the manuscripts.

Tab. 1 – Rector's correspondence (November 1616 – July [?] 1622)

Addressees	Number of letters or other documents
1. Towns	51
2. Individuals in towns (mostly the headmasters of town schools)	32
3. Nobility	24
4. Authorities (Defensors, Royal Chamber etc.)	17
5. Clerics and church authorities	8
6. Foreign academies (Wittenberg, Altdorf)	2
7. Academic dignitaries	1
8. Other kinds of documents (testimonies etc.)	23
Altogether	158

The number of 83 letters addressed to municipal councils and to individuals from the municipal milieu – mostly the town schools' headmasters and other university graduates – constitutes more than a half of the whole. It is complemented by other kinds of documents (tab. 1, position 8), such as the receipts or testimonies for the needs of university graduates, and letters to clerics and church authorities residing in the towns. All above given numbers indicate a close connection between Czech towns and the university.

The second table shows which municipal councils the rector wrote to. Most of them belonged to the traditional area of the Prague University's influence. Both the exceptions of the more distant destinations – Žitava (Zittau) in Lusatia and Znojmo in Southern Moravia – resulted from extraordinary affairs of their recipients, not from the usual administration. After dividing all the 51 letters addressed to towns (tab. 1, position 1) according to

⁵ About the reform cf. Jiří RAK, *Karlova univerzita v pravomoci defenzorů (1609–1622)*, Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Historia Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis (henceforth AUC–HUCP) 17/1, 1977, pp. 33–46; Robert J. W. EVANS, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy 1550–1700. An Interpretation*, Oxford 1979, p. 101.

⁶ ÚDAUK, ms. A 14b, pp. 880–882, rector and masters to the governor Charles of Lichtenstein, s. d. [spring 1622].

⁷ The economic administration of the university goods by provosts and after 1612 by the university bursar was described by Lenka NEŘOLDOVÁ, *Hospodářská správa Karlovy a Rečkovy koleje (80. léta 16. století – 1622)*, AUC–HUCP 30/1, 1990, pp. 31–48.

their content, we get three groups almost of the same size. Sixteen letters dealt with the affairs of individuals, mostly the members of the academic community and the intercessions of the rector for them in lawsuits (such as the recovery of debts). Seventeen letters involved the financial and economic issues of the whole university such as taxes, borrowing money to pay them or again the recovery of debts. Eighteen letters confirmed the headmasters of the provincial town schools (marked with the bold type in the table). Moreover, the headmasters in the Old Town and New Town of Prague were confirmed by the university, but the confirmations were not addressed to the municipal councils, but to the “seniors, officials and the parish” of some of the churches. If we compare the usual high frequency of the rotation of headmasters, who had to change their school after two or three semesters, we can presume that not all confirmations were recorded in the official books. But the confirmations that were recorded offer several interesting facts.

Tab. 2 – Rector’s correspondence with municipal councils (**bold type**: the letters concerning the confirmations of headmasters in town schools)

Towns	Number of letters
Staré Město pražské (Prager Altstadt, Prague Old Town)	10
Žatec (Saaz) , Litoměřice (Leitmeritz)	5
Kutná Hora (Kuttenberg)	4
Nové Město pražské (Prager Neustadt, Prague New Town), Hradec Králové (Königgrätz) , Turnov (Turnau)	3
Brandýs nad Labem (Brandeis a. d. Elbe), Dobruška, Jičín, Louny (Laun), Kolín, Malá Strana (Prager Kleinseite, Lesser Town of Prague), Mělník, Nymburk, Pardubice, Písek, Poděbrady, Příbram, Roudnice nad Labem (Raudnitz a. d. Elbe), Slaný, Sušice (Schüttenhofen), Velvary, Znojmo (Znaim), Žitava (Zittau)	1

1/ According to the persuasive results of Jiří Pešek’s research, the boundary of the network of town schools administered by the rector of the Prague University was almost identical to the Czech-German language boundary.⁸ At the turn of the 16th and 17th century the influence of the Prague University covered the central, east, southwest and northwest parts of the country,⁹ but the strengthening counter-reformation brought some Catholic islands into this almost intact Protestant area. During the two years between the Defenestration in May 1618 and the Battle of White Mountain, the academy endeavoured to reach again the positions that were lost in the religious struggle in the former years. We can especially see this in the successful efforts to win back the confirmations of headmasters in the towns belonging to the royal chamber or to the leaders of the Catholic party. Probably immediately after the Defenestration the rector confirmed a new headmaster in Poděbrady, the seat of the administration of the chamber estate.¹⁰ In this case we can presume the active participation of Master Jan Chebdiovsky of Felsov, local municipal scrivener and former ques-

⁸ Jiří PEŠEK, *Univerzitní správa městských latinských škol v Čechách a na Moravě na přelomu 16. a 17. století*, AUC–HUCP 30/2, 1990, pp. 41–58 (especially pp. 42–43).

⁹ The southern and western parts of the Bohemian lands were traditionally Catholic; the students from this area most frequently graduated from the universities in Vienna, Gratz or Cracow. The northern parts of the country with the majority of German speaking inhabitants of Lutheran religion lay in the focus area of German Lutheran universities. See Jiří PEŠEK, *Pražská univerzita a městské latinské školy*, in: Michal Svatoš (ed.), *Dějiny Univerzity Karlovy*, I, Praha 1995, pp. 220–221.

¹⁰ ÚDAUK, ms. A 14a, p. 385, rector and masters to the municipal council in Poděbrady, s. d. [May 1618?].

tor of the university.¹¹ A month later a Utraquist headmaster in Brandýs nad Labem, another administrative centre of the royal estates in the Middle Labe (Elbe) Region, was appointed through a rector's letter.¹² In Brandýs, the occasional emperor's residence,¹³ the pre-war tension between the Catholic minority and the Utraquist majority was most apparent. In the aforementioned letter to the councillors of Brandýs, the rector applauded them for eventually acting in accordance with the Letter of Majesty. Moreover, the directors quickly ordered the councillors to exclude two Catholic members from the council.¹⁴ Furthermore, in Brandýs we can find one of the former alumni of the university, Matouš Šiblík of Světice, who (as the councillor already before the Defenestration) pleaded for the right of the Utraquist academy to confirm the headmaster in the town school, situated under the royal residence on the Labe (Elbe).¹⁵ A similar situation arose later in Roudnice nad Labem,¹⁶ which originally belonged to the highest chancellor Zdeněk Popel of Lobkovice, one of the leading figures of the Catholic Party, and thus was confiscated during the Uprising.¹⁷ All in all it is possible to state that the university masters focused their efforts on getting back the areas that had previously been included under their administration and not winning new ones by going beyond the language boundary. Higher aims would probably exceed the capacities of the university and also the time was not on their side.

2/ Another interesting fact is the inertia of the administration system in the first two years after the battle of White Mountain. The same phenomenon can be observed in the spheres of religious or municipal administration in general. The victorious Catholic party needed time to prepare the forthcoming changes, that is why many representatives of the defeated party on the lower scale were temporarily left in their positions. The rector was to confirm the headmasters of town schools twice more: in October 1621 (four schools in Prague,¹⁸ one in Kutná Hora and one in Turnov¹⁹) and at the turn of March and April 1622 in Louny²⁰ and Hradec Králové.²¹

There is one more aspect of the records that I should briefly mention: the passive role in the uprising, which was shared by the academy and the Third Estate (i. e. royal towns).²² The university masters did not show much willingness in paying the extraordi-

¹¹ Z. WINTER, *O životě*, pp. 113–114; Eva ŠMILAUEROVÁ, *Poděbrady v proměnách staletí*, I, *Do roku 1850*, Dolní Břežany 2001, pp. 88–89.

¹² ÚDAUK, ms. A 14a, p. 386, rector and masters to the municipal council of Brandýs nad Labem, July 16, 1618; Z. WINTER, *Děje*, p. 156.

¹³ Justin Václav PRÁŠEK, *Brandýs nad Labem. Město, panství i okres*, I, Brandýs nad Labem 1908, passim; Vladimír BERÁNEK, *Hospodářská proměna panství Brandýs nad Labem za Rudolfa II.*, *Historický obzor* 16/9–10, 2005, pp. 211–217.

¹⁴ Marek ĐURČANSKÝ, *Katolický intelektuál v pobělohorském labyrintu. Osudy studenta jezuitské univerzity a brandýského radního písaře Melichara Podhorského*, AUC–HÚCP 47/1–2, 2007, pp. 183–191 (especially p. 186).

¹⁵ Josef HEJNIC – Jan MARTÍNEK, *Rukověť humanistického básnictví v Čechách a na Moravě*, V, Praha 1982, pp. 61f.

¹⁶ ÚDAUK, ms. A 14a, p. 416, rector and masters to the municipal council in Roudnice nad Labem, s. d. [August 1619].

¹⁷ About the emancipatory efforts of the burghers of Roudnice see Petr KOPIČKA (ed.), *Deníky roudnického hejtmána Blažeje Albína z Weissenberku z let 1611 a 1625*, Praha 2003, pp. LIII–LV.

¹⁸ ÚDAUK, ms. A 14b, pp. 867–869, rector and masters to the officials of the following churches a) Our Lady in the Old Town of Prague (kostel Panny Marie před Týnem), b) St. Haštal in the Old Town of Prague, c) St. Havel in the Old Town of Prague, d) St. Peter 'na Pořičí' in the New Town of Prague; October 11, 1621.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 866–867, rector and masters to the municipal council in Turnov and Kutná Hora, October 9, 1621.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 874–875, rector and masters to the municipal council in Louny, after February 24, 1622.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 875, rector and masters to the municipal council in Hradec Králové, March 26, 1622.

²² Yet the most important study about the politics of Prague and other Czech royal towns during the Estates' Uprising was published by Jiří DVORSKÝ, *Praha v českém stavovském povstání (1618–1620)*, *Pražský sborník historický* 10, 1977, pp. 51–120.

nary war taxes and contributions; they pointed out as much as they could that the collections raised earlier by the Estates for the good of the academy had not been completed.²³ The professors were also not very active in political affairs, except for the rector Johann Jessenius. They even criticised some of the activities undertaken in the name of the academy without consulting the whole body, such as the pretentious gift for King Frederick and his coronation.²⁴ Also in Bohemian towns we find active individuals rather than whole councils or municipalities. It seems to be a bit of a paradox that in spite of their relatively passive attitude towards the contemporary political changes the university and the towns were later punished so harshly. But this contradiction is just a first-sight one. The obvious reason for the forthcoming repression of the university members and school staff was that there was no place for any Utraquist school in the plans of the victorious side, even if its actual rebellious action had been minimal.

The second analytical outline is devoted to the fate of the graduates of the academy who found engagement in the administration of royal towns in the 1620s and 1630s. I should probably mention that I have come across this topic when researching municipal administration.²⁵ That is why the results are not based on systematic prosopography of the graduates, but on the prosopography of the bodies of administration of royal towns from 1624 to 1636. It was possible to reconstruct the participation of the university graduates in the municipal councils in Czech royal towns thanks to an official book called *Protokoly o obnovování městských rad 1624–1636 (Proceedings of the renewal of royal town councils 1624–1636)*, which originated in the office of the vicechamberlain as the administrator of royal towns and the manuscript of which has been preserved in the National Archives of Prague.²⁶ It contains 249 records about renewals of the council, municipal elders (in Czech ‘obecní starší’), who controlled the municipal economy, and electors (‘volenci’) in 23 towns. In two cases the records do not cover the whole period: the Lesser Town of Prague was taken from the administration of the vicechamberlain by the Emperor in 1628. On the other hand Stříbro (Mies) in western Bohemia joined the group of royal towns again in 1635 after having been subject to confiscation for more than ten years. It is necessary to notice that the records still contain one or two rounds of not completely Catholic councils. The process of recatholicisation was finished no sooner than approximately in 1626.

The councils in Bohemian royal towns consisted of twelve councillors. Their sessions were led by the councillor who at the time held the authority of Burgermeister (‘purkmistr’). Each member of the council became Burgermeister for four weeks – the first of them was called ‘primátor’ (I suppose we can use the term mayor as a parallel). He was a kind of a doyen of the whole administrative body. The council was renewed after all of its members took their turn in the authority of Burgermeister. The renewal however did not mean that all of the former councillors were replaced (in fact there used to be just 2–4 replacements).

²³ ÚDAUK, ms. A 14a, p. 415, rector and masters to defensors, July [?] 1619. For the financial liabilities of the academy during the Uprising see also Z. WINTER, *Děje*, pp. 164–166.

²⁴ Z. WINTER, *Děje*, p. 161.

²⁵ My dissertation about municipal administration and chancelleries in the Middle Labe/Elbe region during the Thirty Years’ War (Marek ĐURČANSKÝ, *Městská správa a kanceláře ve středním Polabí za třicetileté války*, Praha 2007); forthcoming 2011.

²⁶ Národní archiv v Praze, file Podkomoňský úřad, inventory number 3, ms. 2850a (Protokoly obnovování městských rad 1624–1638). See also Marek ĐURČANSKÝ, *Obnovování rad v českých královských městech v letech 1624–1636*, in: Olga Fejtová – Václav Ledvinka – Jiří Pešek (edd.), *Osm set let pražské samosprávy. Sborník příspěvků z 18. vědecké konference Archivu hlavního města Prahy (4.–6. 7. 2000)*, Praha 2002, pp. 93–101 (Documenta Pragensia 21).

The manuscript contains the data about 1188 persons; we can say these people belonged to political elites in Czech royal towns in 1624–1636. I have compared this group of burghers with the prosopographical data of the *Handbook of Renaissance Poetry (Enchiridion Renatae Poesis)*, released in five volumes thanks to Josef Hejnic and Jiří Martínek.²⁷ After letting out the incomplete or unreliable entries I came to numbers shown in the following table:

Tab. 3 – The graduates of the Utraquist university of Prague listed in the Proceedings of the renewal of royal town councils 1624–1636 (Protokoly o obnovování městských rad)

	Number of persons	Graduates from the Utraquist university	Percentage
Total number of persons listed in the proceedings	1188	33	2,8%
Councillors	713	27	3,8%
Mayors	89	6	6,7%

In some ways we can see the numbers as the minimal measure of continuity with the situation before the Uprising. Most of the 33 graduates converted to the Catholic Church and held their offices for many years. There are five exceptions of persons, who died already in the half of the 1620s or emigrated, such as Pavel Stránský ze Zapské Stránky. This protestant and anti-Habsburg oriented author of a well-known book *Respublica Bojema* was still a member of the municipal council in Litoměřice in 1625. Other 28 persons held their positions for a number of years during the second half of the 1620s and in the 1630s. A very interesting, but probably not a startling phenomenon is the increasing percentage of the graduates promoted to the highest ranks of municipal administration. The new system simply needed their professional skills, of course under the condition of their conversion to Catholicism (no matter how make-believe a conversion it might have been).

As far as the careers of the Utraquist university graduates are concerned, we find the usual model described by František Šmahel and Jiří Pešek fitting in most cases. At least 20 of the 33 graduates began their careers as headmasters at town schools, most of them got married afterwards and held various positions in municipal administration. Seven of them were employed as municipal scribes; two of them had former experience as preceptors in noble families.

Generally I would like to emphasize, that the above mentioned numbers represent the minimum counts, because the entries in the *Handbook of Renaissance Poetry* sometimes do not contain the data needed for a full comparison with the data from the Proceedings or for the unambiguous identification of a certain person. The deepening of such prosopography could surely improve our knowledge of the number of the graduates from the Utraquist University in the municipal councils during the first decade of the Thirty Years' War.

I hope I would not exaggerate too much if I say that the defeat of the Estates' Uprising in 1620 brought to a close the period in the history of our university beginning with the Kuttenberger Decree in which the interests of the university and of Bohemian towns were very close to each other.

²⁷ Josef HEJNIC – Jan MARTÍNEK, *Rukověť' humanistického básnictví v Čechách a na Moravě (Enchiridion renatae poesis)*, I–V, Praha 1966–1982.