

The Hungarus Identity and Student Mentality at the Göttingen  
University in the 18th Century – with a Special Focus on  
Medicine – as reflected by Friendship Albums and Other  
Peregrination Sources

**PhD thesis**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I study the "Hungarus identity" and the student mentality of the 18th century. The research is based on sources from the archives of University of Göttingen: matriculation lists, friendship albums, diaries, and other documents. Among the Hungarus students studying abroad, graduates from Göttingen achieved a leading role in Hungarian cultural and scientific life. In this study I focus on persons who are not very well known in our days but who were very important in their own time, playing significant roles in the cultural development of Hungary.

There are several publications on the University of Göttingen, on the effect of this university on Hungarian scientific and cultural life. Seemingly, there is nothing to add. I believe, however, that the results of my research might prove that there is still a plethora of unprocessed sources in national and university archives which complete our knowledge and understanding of the relationship between Hungary and the University of Göttingen.

## II. OBJECTIVES - TOPICS

### 1. Hungarus identity

The "Hungarus identity" or "Hungarus-consciousness" is a special national self-awareness which used to join the people living in the Carpathian Basin (historical Hungary) independently of their mother tongue. The Hungarus consciousness is a kind of cultural identity, a wish for integration into a greater community without an external pressure of assimilation. The concept of Hungarus was used in earlier studies in many ways. In this study, I call everyone whose second language was Latin a Hungarus, regardless of their ethnic origin: some of these people were Germans, others Hungarians, Slovaks or members of other ethnic groups. These persons were mostly of bourgeois origin. Their high intellectual level made them role models not only for lower but also for higher social classes. They were the representatives of that intellectual class which initiated a modern scientific and cultural life in Hungary.

Hungarus as a self-definition turns up mostly in the matriculation documents of foreign universities. Studies in a foreign country increased the graduate's social appreciation and chances to launch a successful career in Hungary. These educated people joined the

highly regarded intellectuals, independently of their original social background. In the middle ages the church needed educated people, the reformation spread not only new religious ideas but the need for higher education, and in the new age higher education became secular and widespread. The intellectual lifestyle became inheritable: pastor, physician and teacher dynasties appeared. In these families, knowledge was a high prestige virtue; the most important aim of life became to ensure higher education for the next generation. In addition to the obligatory Latin, the Hungarian language became increasingly important for these intellectuals. The infamous language decree of Josef II was refused by every "Hungarus", regardless of their mother tongue.

## 2. Peregrinatio academica

To study at a foreign university became a well-known form of the higher education termed "peregrination" at the time. Student peregrination from Hungary had been known since the middle ages and peaked in the 18th century. Roman Catholics were able to attend a university in Hungary too: they could go to Nagyszombat and later to Pest as well. Peregrinating Catholics usually went to Italy, Vienna, Prague or Krakow. Protestants did not have any academy in Hungary and obviously did not even want one. Queen Maria Teresa attempted to establish a university for Protestants, but she faced resistance. Protestants feared state control within the Habsburg Empire. What is more, peregrination provided education, besides the highly regarded foreign experience. The protestant churches did not want to lose these advantages because of a university at home.

Students from Hungary and Transylvania studied mostly at German and Dutch universities. If they had the possibility, they attended more than one institution. In the 18th century, all in all 4,500 Hungarus studied at German universities. The most popular universities were that of Jena (1,228) followed by Wittenberg (775) and Halle (622). Interestingly, even though Wittenberg's importance decreased in Germany (in 1812 it was closed), it remained very popular with the Hungarus students. Halle was the centre of Protestant renewal, and practically every Hungarus student went to Jena for at least one semester.

## 3. The importance of Göttingen

Göttingen was a special place in Germany. It had the first modern university where the theological faculty did not play any leading or controlling role above the other faculties. The university followed the English Enlightenment in its attitude, and in its structure and educational methods the know-how from Halle was used here. There was an outrage in Halle as Thomasius gave a lecture in German instead of Latin at the beginning of the 18th century. In contrast, in Göttingen hardly any lectures were given in Latin. The education included vocational training and cutting-edge research besides the traditional lectures. Coupled with modern educational methods, the free, liberal spirit made Göttingen University one of the leaders in Europe. In social sciences, the role of primary sources was recognised. In science, ongoing practical experiments were introduced. With the introduction of the term "research university" a new era began. In this way, this institution, which was established as an institution for the elite, became the elite institution for science and art. Compared to other universities, Göttingen was not overly popular among the Hungarus students: altogether 249 students attended this university in the 18th century. These students, however, played an outstanding role in Hungarian scientific and cultural life.

#### 4. Types of students and their mentalities

In my study I outline the structure of Göttingen at this time, the system of learning and lecturing, and the procedures for promotion. This introduction is done for every faculty and the "Hungarus" details are added to them. Furthermore, to illustrate each faculty the curriculum of one Hungarus student is discussed:

- SámuelCseh-Szombaty dedicated himself to the physician's profession. His story is based on his diary and on his two friendship albums
- through the person of Joseph Freysmuth I demonstrate the curriculum vitae of an untypical theologian
- through his self-handwritten CV and his correspondence, I portray the contradictory character of ÉzsaiásBudai
- the lecture notes and friendship album of LászlóTeleki portrays a young aristocrat studying law

My aim is to introduce the various types of peregrinating students. The four persons portrayed represent four different social classes. Teleki was a reform oriented Calvinist

count from Transylvania. His family members were high-ranking officials in the Hungarian administration. Budai originated from a gentry family living in the Partium. His only chance for making a career was to attend higher education. Cseh-Szombaty and Freysmuth came from Western Hungary, from developed cities. Cseh-Szombati was Hungarian and a Calvinist; Freysmuth was German and a Lutheran.

These types of students also reflect different mentalities. It is a further question how the family culture can be connected to the foreign culture. Is it possible to integrate it into a foreign environment? After all, how did the Hungarian students live in the foreign countries, who were their friends, how did they spend their spare time? What did the Hungarian identity mean in a foreign country?

Friendship albums, diaries, and letters give us the answers to these questions. The answers provide new details to our present knowledge and sometimes even revise our beliefs.

### III. METHODS

1. Documents, manuscripts and published contemporary diaries, letters and memoirs from archives in Hungary, Slovakia and in Göttingen have been the primary sources of this dissertation. I have used the know-how of the InscriptioesAlborumAmicorum team at the University of Szeged. This group dedicates itself to reprocessing friendship albums. I am one of the leading members of the team.

2. I have used the methods of microhistorical research. This means that I studied the life, relationships, and attitudes of lesser known persons. Through their life I draw generalized conclusions.

3. For the historical parts of this thesis, I have studied the national and international literature.

4. In this study I have used a lot of unprocessed files from archives and manuscript departments. The types of sources I have used in this thesis are as follows:

- finding and analysing sources in archives: National Archives of Hungary, Central Archives of the Lutheran Church in Hungary, Archives of the Göttingen University, City Archives of Göttingen;

- finding and analysing of sources in manuscript departments of different libraries: DRK K (College Library of the Transtibiscan Church District) HANS-SUB (Department of Manuscripts, University Library of Göttingen), MTAK K (Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), OSZK (Department of Manuscripts, National Széchényi Library), UKSAV (Library of the Slovak Academy of Sciences);
- collecting and analysing print versions of contemporary diaries and letter;
- analysing matriculation notes;
- using biographies to verify personal data.

#### 5. Using and checking the biographical data

To identify German persons, I used the “Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie” [ADB] (1875-1912, 56 volumes), which can be accessed via the internet. Another source I have used is the “Biographisches Lexikon der hervorragenden Ärzte aller Zeiten und Völker” by August Hirsch. To identify Hungarians, I used the Biographies of Szinnyei József [Szinnyei 1891], the volume “Erdélyi peregrinusok” by Miklós Szabó and László Szögi [Szabó and Szögi 1998] and the Biographies of István Weszprémi [Weszprémi 1960-68]. I did not cite these sources in my thesis as they would have made the text unreadable. In all other cases, the citation is given according to the regulations.

#### 6. Spelling variants of names

In several cases, there are different spelling variants for names. In that age, there was no practice for standardising names and letters. Hungarus students usually used the Latin versions of their names in the matricula form or in friendship albums. In this dissertation, I have used the spelling variants used in the primary source. There are two special cases. I used that spelling of Cseh-Szombaty’s name which he used on the opening page of his friendship album (R 693). The other special case was Joseph Freysmuth, whose name turns up in five different versions. I have used the one which he used for himself in a manuscript.

Throughout the dissertation, I write Latin or German terms in italics, translated by myself.

## IV. RESULTS

## 1. University registers

The matriculation registers have been processed since the beginning of the 19th century but the processing has never been completed. Franz Eulenburg calculated the number of students who attended German universities. Between 1385 and 1800, 1.5 million students went to universities in the German speaking countries (including Switzerland and the Habsburg Empire).

The matriculas of various universities have been processed by a number of research teams without a common concept. As a consequence, it is challenging to use the processed files and one can find a lot of inaccurate data. This is also true for the processed data of the “Hungarus” students. After some early attempts, the research team headed by László Szögi at the Budapest Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) processed the whole era of peregrinating students. There are several contradictions in these data, there are overlaps in periods of time between separate papers and the spelling of names is also not consistent. Nevertheless, these papers are of great help for researching “Hungarus” students. When all these studies are digitised and made accessible on internet, it will be easier to make the necessary corrections and it will be possible to gain a clearer picture of this era.

To identify the “Hungarus” students of Göttingen University, I have used the published list of matriculas [Selle 1937], and the student lists compiled by István Borzsák [Borzák 1955]. Furthermore, I have used papers by Attila Tar [Tar 2004], László Szögi [Szögi 2001 and Szabó and Szögi 1998]. The latter paper includes exclusively the data of students from Transylvania. The data of students from Hungary have not been processed in this way yet. The matriculas of the schools in upper Hungary (today Slovakia) are not processed either, although these institutions still exist. It is unfortunate that the best published source for the Hungarian academies to date is Szinnyei 1891. This is, as one might imagine, inaccurate in many places.

## 2. Friendship albums

In recent years, data from students' friendship albums were processed into databases. Friendship albums were first used by aristocrats in the beginning of the 16th century. Originally, inscriptors added merely their name, titles and the crest of their family. In Wittenberg, in the middle of the 16th century, common citizens started to imitate this

aristocratic habit. Initially, students used blank pages of books for this purpose. Later on, there were books specially made for this purpose with blank pages only. Students asked their professors and fellow students to write notes in these books. Later on, they asked practically everyone who seemed to be interesting to do so. In the 18th century virtually no Hungarian student left home without a friendship album.

The booklet had a different name in every language. Germans called it *Stammbuch* (literally, “the book of origin”), which hints on the original function. In Latin, this booklet was called *Album amicorum*, which means “friendship album”. This name was also used in English in addition to *autograph album*. In Hungarian, it is called *emlékkönyv*, which means “the book of memoirs”. I use this term in my thesis in addition to the term “album”.

In time, a kind of formalism of the friendship albums emerged. The "compulsory" parts of an inscription were the following: date, place, address form, in which the inscripator dedicates the inscription to the owner, signature, and the inscription itself, which was usually a quotation or an original piece of wisdom (the latter being rather rare). The inscripator sometimes added his own motto or a drawing. Drawings were usually scenes from student life, thus these are important sources for the contemporary history of mentality. At the end of the 18th century, the portrait silhouette became fashionable.

The systematic collection of friendship albums started in the early years of the 20th century, but they were recognised as important sources of cultural history only much later. In 1998, Wilhelm Schnabel started to build a database to collect the bibliographic data of these albums. This database, the Repertorium Alborum Amicorum [RAA] includes data from approx. 24,000 albums. In case of 2,500 albums, it is possible to search for inscripator in 164,000 inscriptions. Compared to this, the Inscriptiones Alborum Amicorum [IAA], the database of the University of Szeged, is rather small. This database focuses on the albums of Hungarian relevance only. By now, 11,000 inscriptions from 99 albums have been processed, all from the period of between 1560 and 1800. The number of albums waiting to be processed is much higher than this, and due to the diligent research, this number continuously increases. I am a leading co-worker of this project.



“*Ohne die Stammbücherläßt sich Studenten-Geschichte nichts schreiben*” (“without friendship albums, there is no way to write the history of the students”) [Deneke 1938]. Indeed, friendship albums are indispensable sources of micro history. They represent the contemporary social ties, curricula, culture and mentality. One can follow the journeys of the owner, what he did, who he met, the way his friends were thinking, what kind of relationships were important to him. From the point of view of modern sociology, these albums show social networks. Owners of the friendship albums were aware of this: “*Visszaküldémnekik Albumomat, megtetszikabból, mitjegyzettekfel, mind maga, mind pedig a hoffmesterefrissésamabilis ember.*” (*I sent them my friendship album. His and the inscription of his mentors reveal their progressive and delightful character*) As late as the end of the 18th century, Hungarians used Latin quotations and citations from the Bible. In contrast, Germans usually cited contemporary German poems. At the end of the century, the number of French and English quotations increased sharply. Mostly famous figures of the Enlightenment were cited.

For my dissertation, I have processed five friendship albums: those of Sámuel Cseh-Szombaty [DRK R 693, R 694], László Teleki [MTAK Tört. Napló 8°1, Tört. Napló 8°5], and Freysmuth Joseph [OSZK Duod. Lat. 118]. I have used them to deduce the mentality, attitude and habits of their owners. Furthermore, I have drawn conclusions on the social classes these persons represent.

### 3. Diaries and correspondence from students' peregrination

Many students kept diaries. A diary reveals a subjective point of view: how a Hungarian student saw the foreign countries, what he felt like, how he reacted to certain issues. We know the diaries of István Halmágyi (1752-53) Zsigmond Katona (1789-90), Sámuel Cseh-Szombaty (1790-92), János Kis (1791-92), Sámuel Fogarasi (1796-97) and János Körmöczi (1796-97) from this time.

The correspondence of Gergely Berzeviczy is almost diary-like: he regularly wrote to his mother about his student years, his journey etc. The correspondence of Ézsaiás Budai with his mentors in Debrecen is also an important source of knowledge about student mentality. Their correspondence was published, just like most of the diaries.

### 4. Construction

In my dissertation, I have looked for the reasons of students' peregrination to foreign universities. I have investigated the financial, bureaucratic challenges which students had to meet. Higher education and foreign experiences not only fostered the individual's career but also provided a mission for the homeland and for their protestant churches. My investigations are focused on the University of Göttingen. This university was relatively expensive, offering only few scholarships. Nevertheless, the number of Hungarus students studying here was high compared to other nations, even the highest. I have attempted to identify the reasons for this. Furthermore, I have attempted to find the answers to the following questions:

- How did this enlightened, liberal and modern education affect the Hungarus students?
- What was the social network of the Hungarus students like? What were student–student and student–professor relationships like?
- How did the return of these students to Hungary affect the Hungarian cultural and scientific life?

The “Hungarus” topic has attracted my interest in the course of my research. Only 50% of the students were ethnic Hungarian. 35% were German, and approx 7% were Slavic. As for the rest of the students, their mother tongue is unclear. 35% of the Transylvanian students were German, too. Thus, the term “Hungarian” student is delusive, just as the term “Hungary” is, too. This is because Hungary and Transylvania were administratively separate at the time. Therefore, I use the term “Hungarus” in my thesis, and I use the term Hungarian only to refer to ethnically Hungarian persons.

The thesis is structured according to the faculties of the university. I have introduced the infrastructure, the famous professors, educational structure, the subjects of science, and the students. As other publications usually introduce Göttingen education only in a general way, I give a detailed list of the subjects taught. I list the subjects from that year when the investigated Hungarus students attended the university. In case of the medical faculty, I have compared the list of subjects in the early years to the best years of the university. These lists of subjects prove that this university was outstanding at that time. The intense exchange between the faculties resulted in interdisciplinary education.

For all three faculties I have introduced a typical Hungarus student. This is based mostly on so far unpublished sources. Sámuel Cseh-Szombaty, a Calvinist Hungarian, became a

physician. He financed his studies by himself, attended three different universities; he got his degree in Vienna. After that, he started on longer travels in Western Europe, to become acquainted with different physician education systems and to get practical experiences in hospitals. His unpublished diary and friendship albums refer to these experiences. Joseph Freysmuth was a Lutheran German. He studied theology with the financial support of his family. He was not obligated to be a pastor; his situation had some resemblance to a modern intellectual freelancer. He became a private tutor, worked for the state administration, travelled much, and did not leave a lot of traces behind. It was possible to reconstruct his life from friendship albums and documents in archives. László Teleki studied law following the traditions of a Transylvanian aristocratic family. In addition to law, he attended lectures in arts, economy and studied foreign languages, too. Building a social network, making friends, and getting to know foreign attitudes were also very important to him. He used all the knowledge he gained, and all his experiences after returning to his home country, where he occupied a high position in state administration. The personal character of Teleki can be deduced from his friendship albums and from his university notes. For the gentry BudaiÉzsaiás, it was essential for his studies to get the financial support of the Calvinist church. This resulted in strict obligations: he had to use his time and money frugally, and he was obligated to lead a modest lifestyle. I have investigated his correspondence to his church tutor and his promotion documents. There was an obvious conflict between the intellectual life he wanted to live and the obligations he had.

All this leads to the field of mentality history. In Göttingen, foreign students faced the usual challenges that people living abroad had to face: challenges of integration and acceptance; how to balance diligence, conscientiousness and braveness, liveliness. These questions turned up with especially high intensity during the Göttingen student upheaval in 1790. This story was never investigated from the Hungarian point of view, although many of the main characters of this story were Hungarian students. The key person for finding a peaceful solution was the Transylvanian Zsigmond Katona. The proclamation of the students was formulated by the German Károly Nitsch from Pressburg (Pozsony/Bratislava). The spokesman of the wealthy students was Lajos Schedius, who became a professor at the University of Pest later on. The Hungarian students took part in the upheaval. For them, it was a question of honour to stand by the

students in this case of humiliation. Most of them became significant leaders in Hungary later on.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

In my research I have intended to follow up on the curriculum of all Hungarus students in Göttingen in the 18th century. I could not follow the lifespan of about one third of them. This is because many documents, especially those of the church, have not been published yet. 35 out of the 55 unidentifiable Hungarus students attended theology. Most of them very likely became pastors in Hungary after their university years. We do not know the later whereabouts of 14 law students either; most likely, they became civil servants or counsellors. The curriculums of the students from the different faculties were interesting to study: all students of the medical department became physicians. All theology students from Transylvania either became pastors or teachers, most of them being obligated to do so. In contrast, merely 50% of the theology students from Hungary became pastors or teachers. Many of them became civil servants, mostly in high positions. After establishing the university in Pest, the number of students from Hungary in Göttingen decreased sharply. In contrast, the number of students from Transylvania increased. There were some interesting connections to Freemasonry among the Hungarus students. I have provided some hints on this topic in this dissertation.

27% of the Hungarus students at the University of Göttingen were from the nobility, one third of them were aristocrats. They could easily pay the tuition fee, and the high living cost was not a problem for them, either. The other students either obtained scholarships, or they were supported by their families. This investment yielded a good return. In the university years, students collected highly regarded knowledge, foreign experience, and they returned to Hungary with reform plans. Their Hungarus identity was strengthened as they had to define themselves in a foreign environment. Many of these people never lost their European contacts, some of them became members of international scientific communities. Others became famous through their performance in Hungarian public life. Yet others did not achieve anything special after returning from their studies. In this thesis, I have intended to point out that even persons who vanished into oblivion after

their student years were very much appreciated at their time, in the century of the enlightenment.

The kind of research presented in this dissertation cannot yield simple, explicit results. However, I believe my findings in unpublished sources could complete our present knowledge on the peregrinatio academica. It could be the subject of a further work to collect the publications of Hungarus students in Göttingen, and to investigate how these papers affected Hungarian sciences and arts.

## VI. PUBLICATION LIST

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10. **Peregrinatio hungarica: Student Mobility Hungarians at European Universities from the Beginning until the End of 18th Century.** 2015, Kaleidoscope, 10:130-140.

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12. **Rab I.** Felső közép fok Bajorországban. *Köznevelés*, 1996
13. **Rab I.** A svéd iskolaügy. *Köznevelés*, 53. 4. 1997., 50.
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15. **Rab I.** Irodalomtanítás Németországban. 2001, *Iskolakultúra*, 5. 93-96.
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