

THE SUPREME INSTITUTE OF TRANSYLVANIAN KNOWLEDGE

ABSTRACT

Following the occupation of the central regions of Kingdom of Hungary by the Turks, the Eastern part of the country became a separate state, the Principality of Transylvania. In the same time the teachings of Reformation reached Transylvania. All the Transylvanian princes were interested in education and school-affairs. In 1557 three colleges were founded by the Diet of Transylvania in Cluj/Kolozsvár, Târgu Mureş/Marosvásárhely and Oradea/Nagyvárad. Prince Gábor Bethlen is the founder of the Alba Iulia/Gyulafehérvár Calvinist Academy, where German and British professors taught for some years. It had besides the Philosophical Faculty a Theological Course, too. The Tatars burnt up its buildings, so Prince Mihály Apafi I. moved it to Aiud/Nagyenyed. In Cluj/Kolozsvár the oldest was the Unitarian College with Philosophical-Theological courses. The Calvinist College started its higher courses due to János Apáczai Csere, the greatest scholar of those times. He also made a recommendation to Prince Barcsai concerning the foundation of a real university with three faculties. The Marosvásárhely Calvinist school in 1718 was united with the banished Sárospatak College, and so the Marosvásárhely Calvinist College took birth, its Law Department was very important.

The Catholics organized their school-system in the spirit of the counter-reformation. Prince István Báthory, then Polish king, opened a Jesuit school in Mănăştur/Kolozsmonostor in 1579. This school was moved to Kolozsvár in 1580, and raised to the rank of academy in 1581. According to some opinions it can be considered a university though its foundation was not confirmed by the Pope. In 1583 a Theological Seminary was also founded in the town by King Báthory. In 1607 the Jesuits were driven out from Transylvania. They could come back only at the end of the century. They restarted their academy. After the prohibition of the Jesuits in 1773 Queen Maria Theresia there founded a Faculty of Law (1774) and a Faculty of Surgery (1775) in the town. The lower classes were overtaken by the Piarist Order.

Most of the learned men up to the XIXth century studied in foreign countries. At the beginning in Italy, then in Germany and in the Netherlands. Especially

the University of Vienna was important in educating the Hungarian intellectuals. During the 1848 revolution there were discussions about the foundation of a university in Kolozsvár. The Academy of Law was (re) opened in 1863. The Faculty of Surgery, now as an Institute continued to prepare surgeons and midwives.

Following the 1867 Compromise between Austria and Hungary there was a great need of learned people, the single university from the capital was not enough. There was a need to open a second Hungarian university. In Cluj/Kolozsvár a lot of conditions were already existing for a new university. The bill for founding the university was drawn up by József Eötvös, the famous writer and politician of those times. King Franz Joseph gave the permission for opening the university on 29th of May 1872. After long discussions the Parliament passed the bill of foundation. The opening ceremonies and festivities took place on 10th of November 1872. The four faculties had altogether 40 professors and 258 students.

The next chapters present the first and longest historical period of the university: 1872–1919. Its first part up to 1897 is considered the period of consolidation, the second one of being on the top. In both periods the teaching staff, the students, the buildings, scientific results of the four faculties (Law, Medicine, Philosophy, Mathematics–Natural Sciences) are presented. It is worth mentioning that in 1881 the king consented that his name be used in the denomination of the university (Hungarian Royal Franz Joseph University). In 1898 the founding act of the university was signed by the king. In these 47 years the number of departments grew from 40 to 61, the number of students from 258 to 2500. A lot of buildings were built.

The chapter entitled Years of Banishment presents the period of 1918–1921. Following the end of World War I. Cluj/Kolozsvár got under Romanian rule. The Romanian politicians “took over” the university on 12th May 1919. In the buildings a new Romanian University was opened in November. The Hungarian churches tried to found a new interconfessional university at Kolozsvár, but this was not accepted by the authorities. In autumn 1920 the Calvinist Church

opened a Teacher-training Institute in the building of its Theological Faculty, in 1921 the authorities suppressed it. Most of the professors preferred Budapest, where they tried to continue their work: on the 25th of February 1920 they started to deliver lessons of the second semester of the school-year. The town Szeged invited the Franz Joseph University to get settled in this town. The Hungarian parliament passed the bill in June 1921 according to which Szeged would be the temporary seat of the university.

A new chapter presents the 19 years of the university spent at Szeged. A lot of new buildings were raised, scientific research work was carried on, scientific reviews started. The most famous professor, Albert Szent-Györgyi was awarded with Nobel-prize. In August 1940 as a result of the Second Vienna Award the Northern part of Transylvania returned to Hungary. The Romanian University moved to Sibiu/Nagyszeben, the Hungarian parliament passed the bill according to which the Franz Joseph University returned to Kolozsvár.

The last chapter presents the 1940–1945 period of the university. To the existing four faculties a fifth one

was added, that of Economics. The number of departments was about 85, the number of students around 2500. To help the research work the Transylvanian Scientific Institute was founded. The Soviet Army occupied the town in October 1944. The university survived one more schoolyear. The Romanian Government on the 29th of May 1945 with a decree founded a new university with Hungarian teaching language and by this put an end to the Franz Joseph University after 73 years of activity. All the buildings and equipment were given to the Romanian university which soon returned from Sibiu/Nagyszeben. The new Hungarian university got but a school-building. Soon it got the name of the famous mathematician János Bolyai.

At the end of the volume there is a chronology of the rectors and deans, a list of honorary doctors and a complete list of the teaching staff. In the Appendix the text of the laws referring to the university, the bibliography, the list of abbreviations, as well a chronology of Transylvanian higher education (1557–1945) is given.

This volume celebrates the 150th anniversary of the founding of the university in 1872.