

Cluj-Napoca/Kolozsvár/Klausenburg – 700. A Scientific Conference to Celebrate the 700th Anniversary of the First Town Privilege

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700 years ago, in a charter issued on 19 August 1316, King Charles I of Hungary granted new privileges to the inhabitants of Cluj (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg) as a reward for their help in his war against the oligarchs. By the same act, Cluj was elevated to the rank of royal free town. On this occasion, Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania together with Babeş–Bolyai University, the Transylvanian Museum Society, and the Romanian Academy Centre for Transylvanian Studies organized an international scientific conference in Cluj, Romania, between 10 and 13 November 2016.

Due to its long history and outstanding importance, Cluj has been the focus of the interest of historians, archaeologists, art historians, and of the general public for centuries, raising serious debates from time and again among scientists as well as the ‘lay’ public. The scientific answers to such inquiries are supposed to be re-evaluated from time to time, and this is true especially now when recent research has brought a number of new results.

The aim of the conference was to reveal the new trends in the research of the 700-year-old Cluj and to overview the latest results, taking into account the broader political, economic, and social context, considering the town as an organic part of Central European urbanity. The results of recent research on the history of the development of Central European towns are highly relevant, and thus the conference welcomed several presentations discussing this topic.

The conference concentrated on five major topics: the privilege from 1316, its antecedents and results, the legal status of towns – particularities and changes, the towns and their institutions, the topography of towns, the representative buildings and social space, and the everyday life of the towns. Since the conference was attended by almost seventy scholars, it was organized in two sections that took place at the two organizing universities.

The conference started with five plenary presentations. The first one was a historical approach to the town privilege of Cluj with special stress on the confusing political situation the king had been involved in before he issued the privilege (Attila Zsoldos: *The Antecedents of the Town Privilege of Cluj from 1316*). The author of the second paper, Adrian Andrei Rusu, was focusing on archaeological issues, especially on material culture revealed during archaeological excavations. He explained to what extent the activity of the local workshops was part of a process called the 'globalization' of the material culture in the late Middle Ages. The third author, András Kovács, analysed the first tax register of the Hungarian citizens of Cluj dated 1453. This is an important historical source concerning the medieval history of the town, and by using different methods of investigation the author tried to sketch the level of the town administration in the fifteenth century. The author of the last plenary paper, Maria Crăciun, explored the role of the parishes in the experience of the Anti-Trinitarian religion from the perspective of the theologians' discourse. Given both the religious transformation and reorganization of ecclesiastical space, the study attempted to predict how the parish church was used by the congregation and its role in the religious experience of the faithful.

An important number of papers presented at the conference was focusing on the town privilege, its antecedents, content, the political context in which the privilege was issued, and later transcriptions as well as the extension of the privileges. Katalin Szende presented the process how the status of the first settlers, called *hospites*, changed during the 13–15th centuries, Tudor Sălăgean stressed the importance of King Ladislaus V in establishing the hospes-type settlement in the second half of the 13th century, while Boglárka Weisz called our attention to a possible forgery of a privilege transcription dated 1336. The evolution of the status of the town was another issue largely debated, the fifteenth century being an important moment in this process (László Blazovich). Based on the mentioned presentations, it was once again stressed that the privileges obtained in 1316 were of outstanding importance in the life of the settlement. As a sign of self-government, the inhabitants of Cluj were free to elect their own town judge and parish priest and were exempted from customs duty on the whole territory of the country.

The town walls, indispensable and, at the same time, strongly symbolic elements of the status of town, were started to be built in these times, together with St Michael's parish church on the market square, today's Main Square. Against the abuses of power committed by the neighbouring landlords, the succeeding kings continued to strengthen and extend the above privileges, which ensured the dynamic political, social, and economic development of the town. Gradually, Cluj transcended its regional status, and became a town of national importance. This is clearly shown by the grants of King Sigismund of Luxembourg, who bestowed in 1405 not less than seven further privileges on the citizens of the town.

The archaeological investigation of the town, especially of its buildings, has flourished over the past few decades. The architectural research revealed also some important remains of the historical buildings. Those related to the town fortification were interpreted by Radu Lupescu. On the same topic but covering the Hungarian Kingdom, István Feld delivered a paper. Archaeology-related issues were discussed by Erwin Gáll (the early medieval settlement), Zsolt Csók (rescue excavations in the town), and Daniela Marcu Istrate (medieval burial customs). Architecture-related topics were covered by Szilárd Papp (the first parish church of the town), Sanda Salontai (identified some of the chapels and cloisters of Cluj, Braşov, and Sibiu), Ciprian Firea (the parish priests as patrons), Attila Weisz and Zsolt Kovács on some early modern houses, and János Orbán (architectural connections between Cluj and Târgu-Mureş).

The disintegration of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary in the 16th century and the rise of the independent Principality of Transylvania did not produce any recoil in the development of the town. On the contrary, Cluj started to flourish in this period. It was called ‘wealthy Kolozsvár’, ‘*civitas primaria*’, and the ‘key to the country’. Although Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár in Hungarian) was the capital, Cluj remained without any doubt the cultural centre of the principality. It gave home to a number of general assemblies and national markets (these latter were organized several times a year), and sent more and more students to western centres of higher education. As a result, Cluj was one of the first towns in Transylvania to give home to the different currents of the reformation and itself became an important centre for the spread of the new religious ideas. Some of the conference papers were focusing on this historical period, reflecting the important changes that took place in the evolution and economic life of the town (Enikő Rüsç-Fogarasi, Emőke Gálfi, Zsolt Bogdándi, László Pakó). Changes occurred in the religious life of the town were also largely analysed. The changes in the early Protestant period were presented by Mária Lupescu Makó and Maria Crăciun. Following the Anti-Trinitarian period during the 17th century, the Calvinist community gained strength in the town, a process presented by Gábor Sipos. Interesting insights into the everyday life of the town were given by Klára Papp (the everyday life of the aristocracy in the town) and Andrea Fehér (delicts committed by women).

From the 16th century, Cluj was an important centre for education too. An overview of the educational establishments was presented by György Gaal, while some particular topics were covered by István Draskóczy (peregrination in Transylvania), László Szögi (the students from Cluj attending European universities), and Júlia Varga (the role played by the Jesuits in the town in this respect).

The end of the 17th century brought about the Habsburg rule in Transylvania and a number of changes in the life of Cluj. After a brief standstill in the first decades of the 18th century, a new period of economic and social prosperity followed.

Visible signs of this can still be perceived: baroque elements were introduced to enrich the general aspect of the town so far dominated by gothic- and renaissance-style structures. This was the period when the medieval privileges of the town were once again strengthened. The great effort made by the town in this respect was analysed by Ágnes Flóra.

By the end of the 18th century, Cluj became once again a political centre, and its inhabitants enjoyed a thriving cultural life throughout the 19th century. Quick and unbroken modernization continued to ensure the outstanding position of Cluj in the Hungarian Kingdom. The new stage of modernization was described by Miklós Székely (the foundation of a new museum for industry), Róbert Nagy with special focus on the period around 1900, and Ioana Rus Cacovean (the establishment of a house of correction). New tendencies in the life of the bourgeois, such as the *Flânerie*, were presented by Gábor Gyáni. Papers presenting visual sources of the town, such as postcards and advertising, were also of great interest (Radu Mârza and Ionuț Costea). The earliest drawings of the town were presented by Anda-Lucia Spânu. János Kristóf Murádin was focusing on the short period between 1941 and 1944, when the Transylvanian Party was active and played an important role in representing this historical region during war time. Among the last issues discussed was the role played by the local history research in strengthening local communities, with special regard to the Hungarian minority in Transylvania (Barna Bodó).

Besides Cluj, many papers presented at the conference dealt with different towns of the Hungarian Kingdom and especially of Transylvania, placing the topics related to Cluj into a wider context. The majority of them dealt with Sibiu, the most important town of the region for many centuries, but other towns were discussed as well: Baia Mare, Caransebeș, Focșani, Lipova, Satu Mare, Sighet, and Pécs.

Considering all the papers delivered, the conference may be regarded as a successful initiative, where many topics were discussed and many new scientific results were presented, laying down the basis for further research. It was also a great opportunity for Romanian and Hungarian scholars to have direct discussions and to establish scientific contacts.