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The University of Kraków and its Hungarian Students

*The Hungarian academica peregrinatio*¹

About 11,000 students from Hungary² studied at foreign universities during the medieval period (i.e. up to 1525) according to data from known university *matriculae*³. About 500 of them attended more than one place of higher education.⁴ The *academica peregrinatio* from the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary was mainly towards Western Europe starting from the late 12th century. One reason for this large scale migration was the lack of a permanent university in medieval Hungary. The universities in Pécs and Óbuda and the Academia Istropolitana in Pozsony (now Bratislava, Slovakia) could only sustain themselves for ten or twenty years at a time.⁵ Our present calculations show that the largest number of Hungarians studied in Vienna, and more than 90 per cent of them studied either there or in Kraków. There were also many Hungarian students in Italian universities and probably in Prague as well, but the rolls of Prague University have unfortunately been destroyed.

Hungarians at the University of Kraków

The University of Kraków was founded in 1364 by Casimir III the Great of Poland (1333–1370) and refounded in 1400 by Vladislaus II Jagiellon (1386–1434). Hungarians first appeared there in the early 15th century. It received donations from Hedwig, daughter of Louis the Great (King of Hungary: 1342–1382, King of Poland: 1370–1382) and the first wife of Vladislaus II Jagiellon. In her will from 1399, she left all of her jewels to the re-foundation of the University of Kraków.⁶ Between 1400 and 1525, a total of 4471 persons⁷ may be identified as Hungarian students, an annual average of 35–36. These are high figures compared with other universities. An annual average of 48 Hungarian students matriculated in Vienna compared to 7–8 in all other universities. The University of Kraków became very popular in the second half of the

15th century. In terms of the numbers matriculating there, it started to catch up with the University of Vienna and even overtook it in some periods (see Fig. 1). The medieval University of Kraków had a high international reputation. Between 30 and 50 per cent of its students were foreign⁸ and Hungarians made up the largest proportion of these, averaging 17.4 per cent. It is therefore hardly surprising that the Hungarians regarded Kraków as their Alma Mater.⁹ The number of Hungarian students was at its highest during the heyday of the university in the final quarter of the 15th century¹⁰ (See Fig. 2).

The figures show the greatest period of Hungarian attendance in Kraków to have been the second half of the 15th and first half of the 16th centuries. The Black Death had a strong impact on the total number of Kraków students. The epidemic of 1439, for example, resulted in the complete absence of students, mentioned in the matricula as *pestilencia*.¹¹ The plague of 1508–1509 was the most devastating of the early 16th century and many students succumbed to it. In the winter of 1509, the seniors and councillors of *Bursa Hungarorum* fled the city itself, and its *Regestrum* records its inhabitants in the summer semester as survivors of the dreadful plague¹² (See Fig. 3).

So many Hungarian students came to the University of Kraków that initially they could only find accommodation in a room above the *Collegium Maius*.¹³ Later, at an unknown date, they set up their own *Bursa Hungarorum*.¹⁴ There is information that Jan Długosz, a canon of Kraków, founded the *Bursa Hungarorum* in 1454. What is certain is that a Polish nobleman called Nicolaus Bieloński de Nowa villa (a.k.a. Nova wesz) offered his house in Kraków and ordered it to be reserved for Hungarian residents; if there were too few Hungarians to occupy the space, it would be given to the German students.¹⁵ The Bursa was certainly operating and was a venue for lectures and examinations by 1464. In 1476, it was transferred to the Melsztyńszki house in Bracka Street.¹⁶ The heyday of the Hungarian Bursa, like that of the university, was between 1493 and 1506. Its number of residents steadily declined in the early 16th century and it was closed in the autumn of 1541 due to a lack of students. There was also a short-lived *Nova Bursa*; this finally closed due to lack of residents at the start of the winter term in 1558, barely a year after its opening.¹⁷ The *Bursa Hungarorum* could not have had many beds because many students lived

◀ Planispheric astrolabe (copy). Original: Hans Dorn, Buda, 1486; copy: Vienna, Naturhistorisches Museum, 2000. Muzeum Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego (cat. 4.P.48.)

elsewhere in the city, either with residents of Kraków or in other bursas. The Hungarian bursa had a good reputation among the other students and lecturers in the university and was a true humanist centre. In 1489, Konrad Celtis held his introductory Kraków lecture on the art of letter writing here.¹⁸ Polish kings – John Albert (1492–1501) and Sigismund I (1506–1548) – supported the bursa with an annuity from the income of the Wieliczka salt mines.¹⁹ The Hungarian chapel in Kraków was the side chapel of the Franciscan church, receiving many donations from Hungarians. Students of the Hungarian bursa sang in the church choir, and Hungarians who died in Kraków were buried there.²⁰

Most Hungarian students in Kraków came from North Hungary, which is logical given its proximity to Kraków and the wealth of the Saxon towns in Szepes (now Spiš, Slovakia). The university was also popular for students from Transylvania, mostly the Saxon areas (see Fig. 4). An average of 20 per cent of graduates of the *artes* faculty²¹ in the years 1480–1500 came from Hungary, and seven out of ten of the masters inducted in 1491 were Hungarian.²² Only about a quarter of Hungarian students took examinations, a fact which shows that for most, the primary purpose of the *academica peregrinatio* was personal interest, thirst for knowledge and building contacts rather than gaining a degree. The cost of studies and examinations must also have played a part in deterring many students from putting their knowledge to the test²³ (see Fig. 5). There were also Hungarian professors in the University of Kraków. A total of twenty-one taught there between 1487 and 1525, usually after completing their studies. Hungarians made up the largest group of foreign professors at that time.²⁴

Some students from the University of Kraków attended other universities also. Of these, 80 per cent came from or went to the University of Vienna. Some went to more than one other university. The flow of students was roughly equal in each direction in the case of Vienna, but almost one way – from Kraków to other universities – involving students from the faculty of *artes* seeking to further their studies in other faculties. The most common destinations, after Vienna, were Italian universities such as Padua and Bologna, especially in the second half of the 15th century. Students from Kraków started to go to German universities in the early 16th century, attracted by the spread of the Reformation; then the principal destination was Wittenberg.

Students from Buda, Óbuda, Budafelhévíz and Pest in Kraków

A total of 111 students from Buda, Óbuda, Budafelhévíz and Pest attended Kraków, compared with 264 who went to Vienna. The proportions have a greater bias towards Vienna than those towards Kraków, no doubt partly owing to family traditions. For example, three members of the Haller family were students at the University of Vienna.²⁵ It is notable that after the Haller family of Nuremberg settled in Buda, three of Ruprecht's five sons studied in Vienna, two in Kraków and one studied in both.²⁶

The presence of students from these four towns in Kraków peaked in the second half of the 15th and the first half of the 16th centuries (see Fig. 6). Among the first students to matriculate was Ladislaus Siebenlinder (*Ladislaus Sibenlinder de Budin*, 1415),²⁷ son of Hans – a burgher and judge of Buda and castellan of Óbuda.²⁸ Students from the four towns excelled in their studies, certainly in respect of the title of *baccalaureus* which they obtained at the above-average rate of 33 per cent. They gained masters degrees at about the average rate (9 per cent, see Fig. 6). Two Buda students named John took their examinations in 1487: *Joannes Maior de Buda* and *Joannes Brevior de Buda*.²⁹ An indication of the students' thirst for knowledge, and no doubt of their wealth, is that a higher than average proportion could afford to study at more than one university (21.6 per cent). It was nearly always Vienna that was the second, and most transferred only between these two universities. Standing out among them is John Kakas of Buda (*Johannes Michaelis de Buda*, 1504)³⁰ known particularly for the diary he started during his studies in Kraków. He had started in Vienna and gained his master's degree in 1507, when he returned to Hungary, became a schoolmaster in Eger and went on to Bologna and Padua.³¹

One of the Hungarian professors was *Franciscus Gregorii de Pest* (1490),³² a scholar who gained bachelor's (1491)³³ and master's (1495) degrees,³⁴ and then taught Horace's *Satire*, but left unfinished his *Epistle to the Philippians* (1502).³⁵

Nearly forty per cent of students from the four towns lived in the Bursa Hungarorum.³⁶ They included the later reformer Johann Kresling (*Johannes Johannes Cresling de Buda*, 1510), who was a councillor of the bursa,³⁷ and *Stephanus Stephani de Pesth* (1501) who was its senior.³⁸

Besides excelling at their studies, the students were active in Kraków's student life. For example, *Sigismundus Stephani de Buda* (1483) attacked a compatriot with a stick, knocking him to the ground and seriously wounding him on the arm, shoulder and other parts of the body. Sigismund admitted the deed, and explained it by saying that his victim had frequently insulted him.³⁹

Finally, it is interesting that the first appearance of the word *Budapest* refers to the place of origin of a Kraków student (*Gregorius Jacobi de Budapest*, 1499).⁴⁰

It is also probably true that in addition to those born in the four towns students registered themselves as coming from Buda or Pest if they came from other nearby towns, for the sake of simplicity of dictation.⁴¹ This shows up in the case of *frater Andreas de Tuczelmasz alias de Buda* (1468), who alternately gave his place of birth as Tóalmás, near Buda.⁴² A similar phenomenon is the entry *Mathias Stephani de Pescht* (1505)⁴³ who, upon taking his bachelor's degree, gave as his place of origin another town in Pest county, Berki (*Mathias Berky alias de Pest*, 1507).⁴⁴

NOTES

¹ The author is a member of the MTA-ELTE History of Universities Research Group (2013TKI738).

² University attendance.

³ For the sake of simplicity, all students from the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary will be referred to as Hungarian, without any implication of ethnicity. Ethnicity cannot be determined from the medieval *matricula* in any case, and it would be difficult to do so from the students' other biographical data, even where such is known.

⁴ University roll, which recorded the name of the student (Christian name, name of father and place of origin) upon matriculation and occasionally other information (diocese, latterly denomination, father's occupation, etc.).

⁵ SZÉKELY 1985, SZÖGI, 2011.

⁶ SZÉKELY 1996, 81–85.

⁷ SZÉKELY 1967, 155, 157–158, 162, 166; VETULANI 1967, 23–28, 42–43; KOCZY 1969, 12–14; BÓNIS 1972, 134–139; TONK 1979, 26–27; DYBIEC 1994, 37; SCHMIDT–RÖSLER 1996, 25; DZIEDZIC 2005, 16, 20; OZÓG 2009, 85, 89–91.

⁸ It should be noted that Hungarian origin cannot be definitely established for 269 of the 4471 students, because many place names sound the same or similar and are difficult to identify for certain. KUBINYI 1971, 61; BACZKOWSKI 1997, 119.

⁹ LAMBRECHT 2000, 213.

¹⁰ DZIEDZIC 2005, 22.

¹¹ DĄBROWSKI 1969, 56. TONK 1979, 29.

¹² *Metryka* 2010, 180–188.

¹³ LDFAC 86–87, NKP 275, RBHC 13–14, 43.

¹⁴ Students were provided accommodation and teaching in the colleges for a fixed amount of money. Students in the Collegium Maius, founded around 1400, studied theology and the liberal arts. Its building remains one of the main sights of Kraków. WŁODAREK 2000, 25–30, 83–142.

¹⁵ The meaning of the Latin word *bursa* means purse. It refers to the money the students had to pay for accommodation. Later, the word meant purely a place where apartments were let to students. WŁODAREK 2000, 33–34. n. 144.

¹⁶ KOVÁCS 1964, 31, WŁODAREK 2000, 39–40; 410–429.

¹⁷ Now ulica Bracka 5–7, Kraków.

¹⁸ RBHC XVI, 34–36; KOVÁCS 1964, 33, 41; KAPRONCZAY 2000, 39–40.

¹⁹ KOVÁCS 1964, 39; TONK 1979, 108.

²⁰ RBHC IV, 2–3; NEUMANN 2007, 39, 41, 144–145.

²¹ DĄBROWSKI 1969, 58; PETNEKI 2001, 130.

²² Studies in the liberal arts. It was graduation from this faculty that formed the foundation for further studies in other faculties.

²³ The percentage relates to graduation by all students in Kraków. GAŚSIOROWSKI 2004, 248; CAPROŞ 2013, 88.

²⁴ KINTZINGER 2001, 168.

²⁵ SROKA 2014.

²⁶ KUBINYI 2009/a, 539.

²⁷ KUBINYI 2009/b, 716–717, 721–723.

²⁸ *Metryka* 2010, 88.

²⁹ KUBINYI 2009/a, 527–528. KUBINYI 2009/b, 710.

³⁰ NKP 249.

³¹ *Metryka* 2010, 604.

³² KUBINYI 1999, 193–211.

³³ *Metryka* 2010, 485.

³⁴ NKP 254.

³⁵ NKP 259.

³⁶ LDFAC 55–56; SROKA, 2014.

³⁷ It is remarkable that half of the students from Pest, but barely a quarter of those from Buda can be found in the register of the Hungarian bursa.

³⁸ RBHC 15, 46–47.

³⁹ RBHC 9, 18, 48.

⁴⁰ *Acta rectoralia* 1893, 933.

⁴¹ *Metryka* 2010, 551; DRENYOVSKY 1967, 15.

⁴² Iulia Caproş has found the same for the case of Kassa (now Košice, Slovakia). CAPROŞ 2013, 81.

⁴³ *Metryka* 2010, 327.

⁴⁴ *Metryka* 2010, 617.

⁴⁵ NKP 273.

Appendix

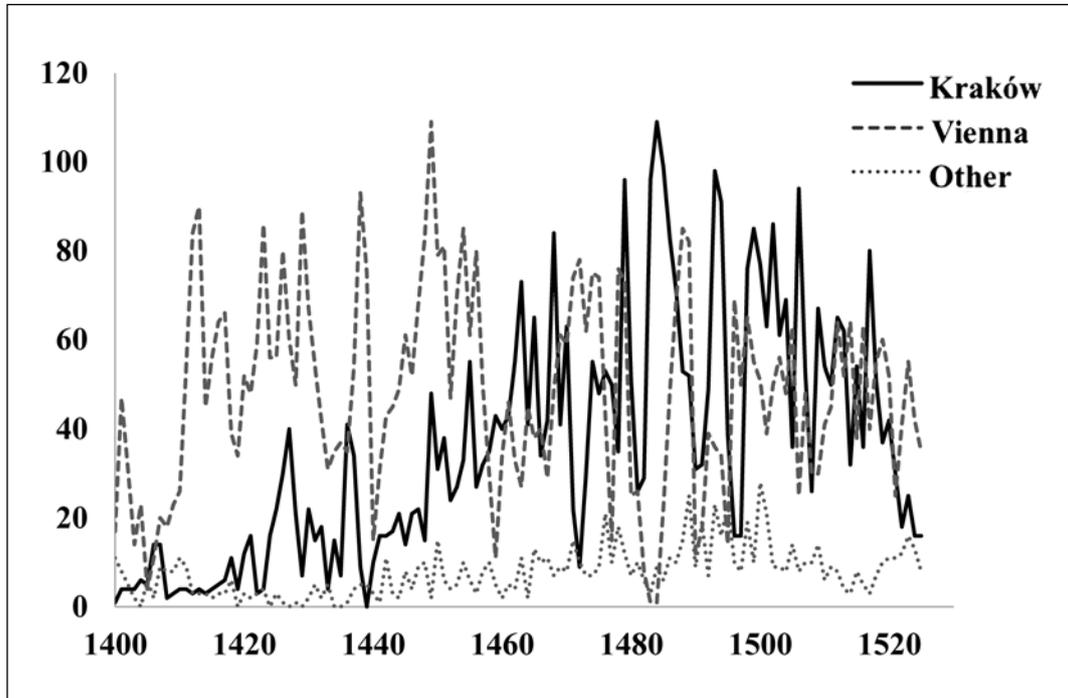


Fig.1: Hungarian students in Kraków and in other universities

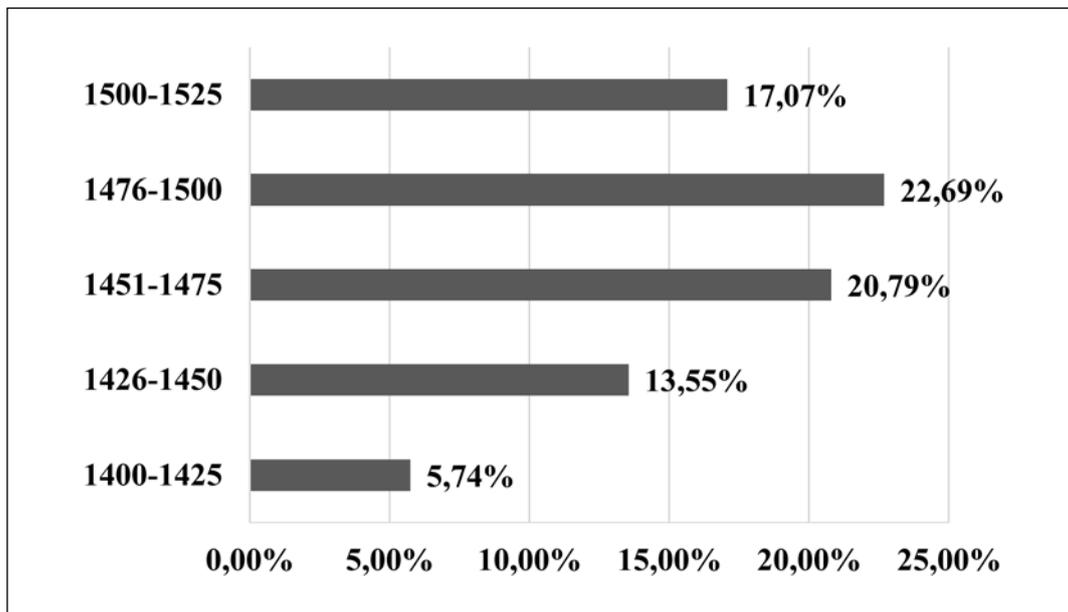


Fig 2: The rate of Hungarian students at the University of Kraków

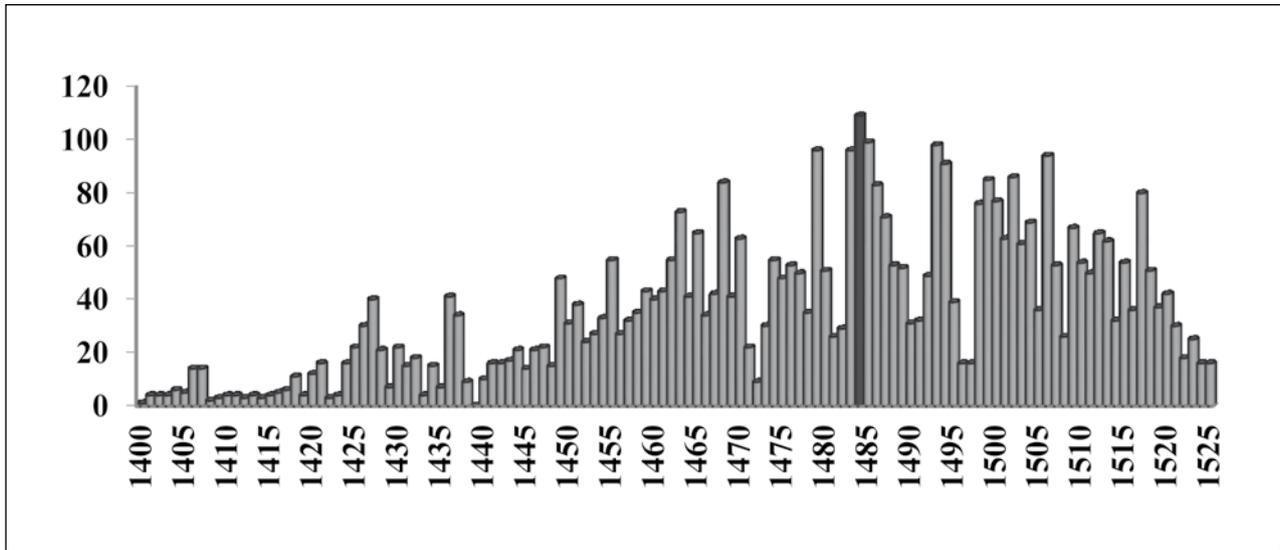


Fig 3: The number of Hungarian students at the University of Kraków in chronological order

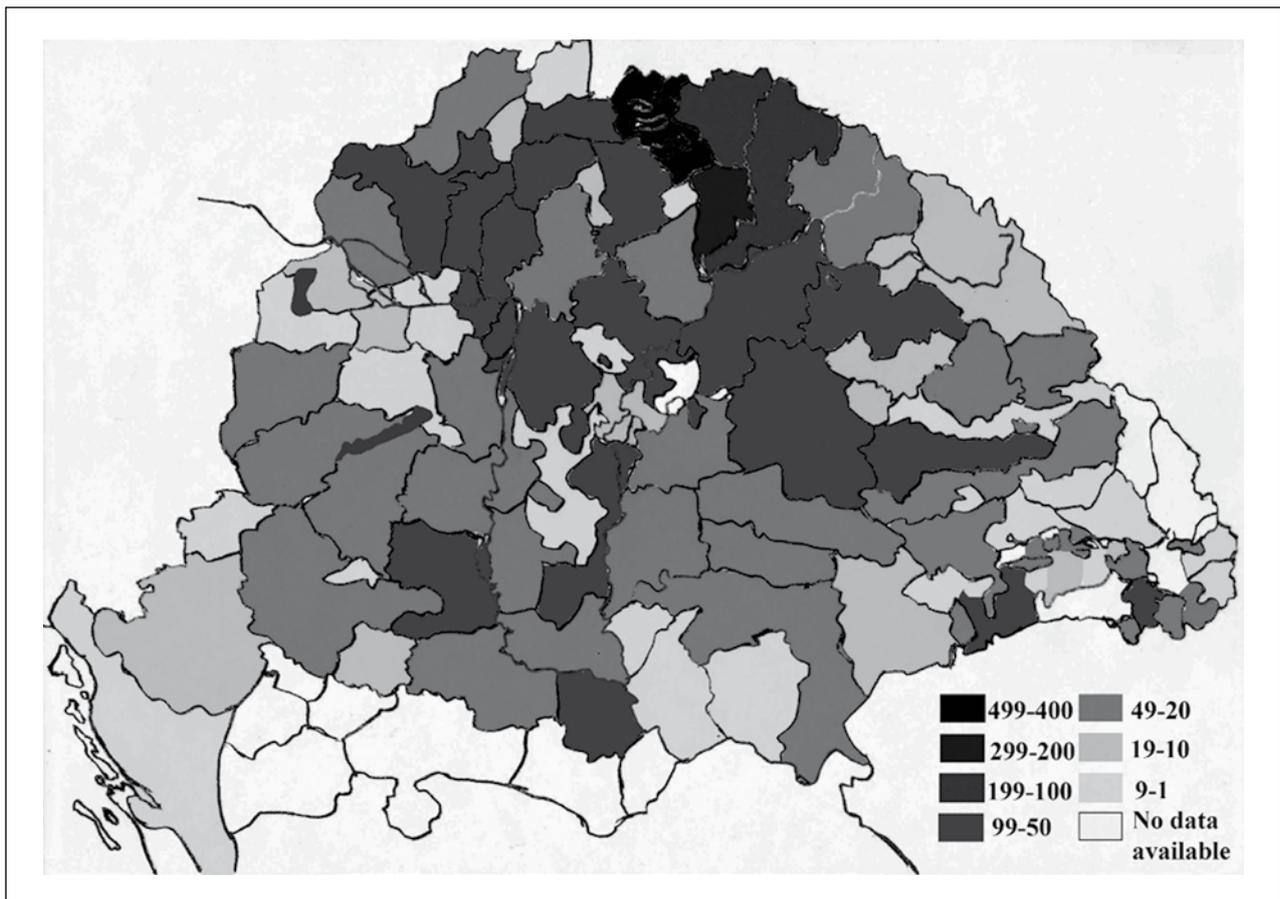


Fig 4: The regional distribution of the origin of Hungarian students at the University of Kraków

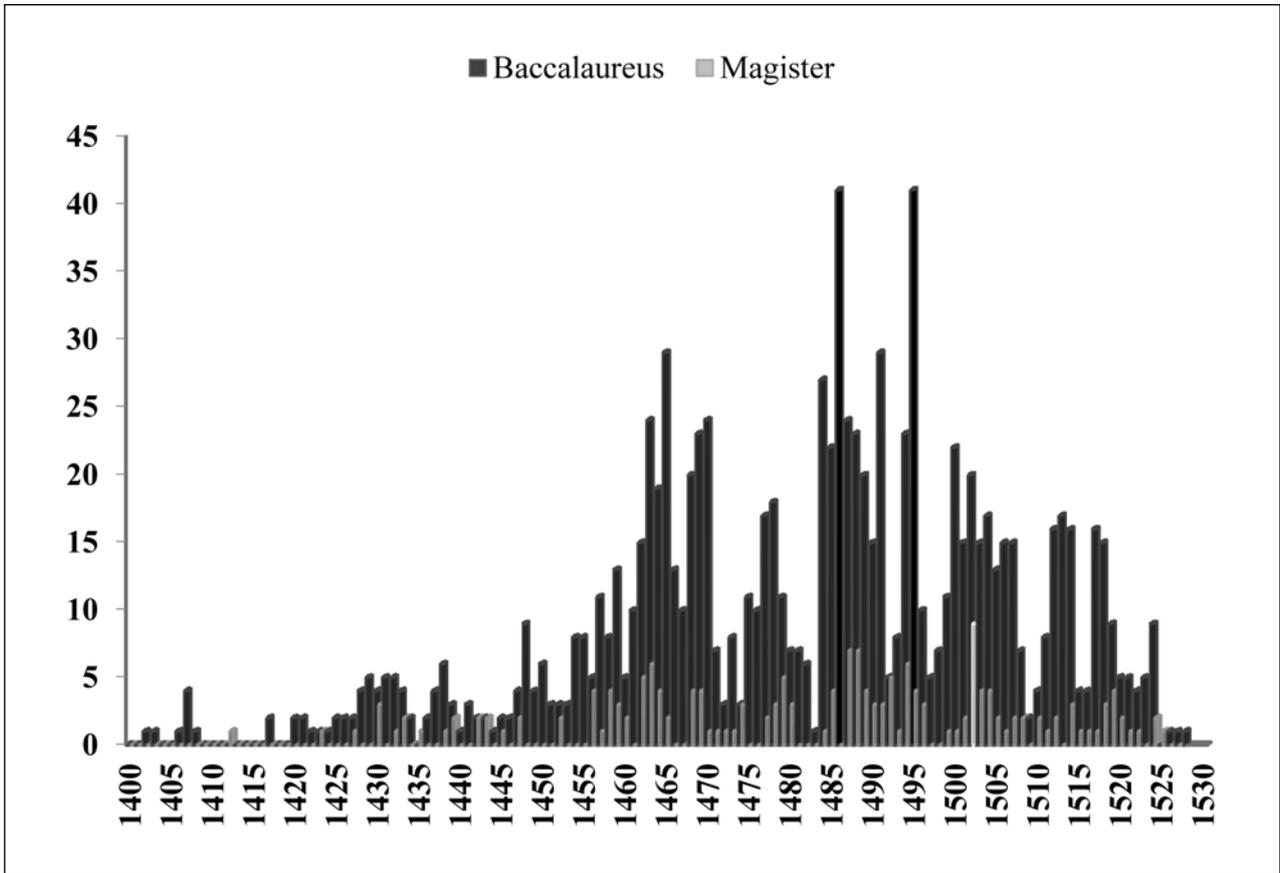


Fig 5: The degrees of Hungarian students at the University of Kraków in chronological order

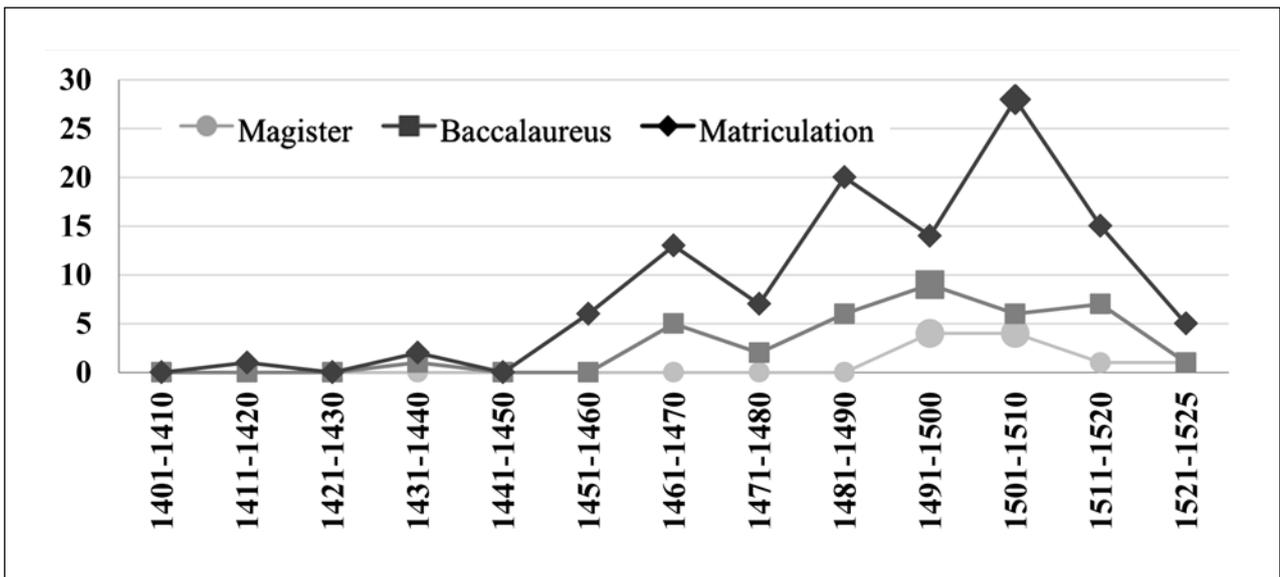


Fig 6: The numbers and the degrees of the students from Buda, Óbuda, Felhévíz and Pest at the University of Kraków in chronological order